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Pilgrim Community Church, where Metro Transit Security Sgt. John Davis serves as pastor, was destroyed by a 90-foot pine tree that toppled over during a wind storm on Oct. 27.

Metro Transit Security Sgt. Davis and Lt. Cook Team Up to Restore Their Damaged South L.A. Church

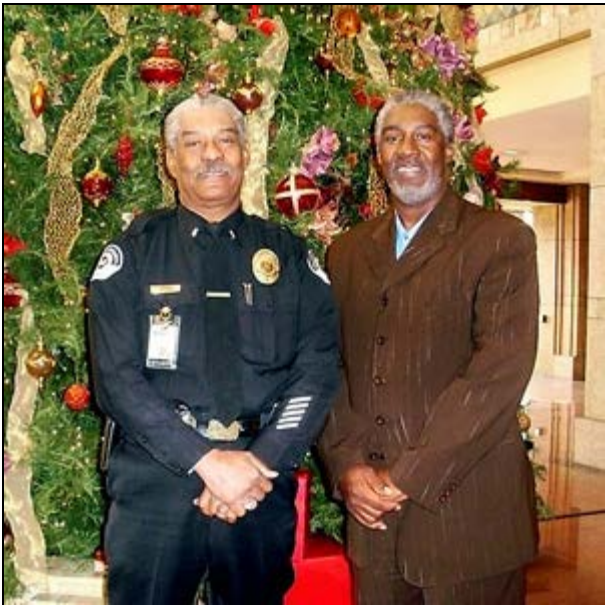
By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Dec. 8, 2009) Metro Transit Security Sgt. John Davis says he had a vision one day.

He pictured the Pilgrim Community Church in South L.A., where he serves as pastor, unveiling a new sanctuary -- a bright new peaceful dwelling for its 97 members to gather, sing and worship.

But Davis is now realizing that visions, at times, can be blurry.

On Oct. 27, the small white church building -- built in 1898 -- was destroyed by a 90-foot pine tree that toppled over during a freakish wind storm.



Transit Security Lt. James Cook and Sgt. John Davis have worked together at Metro for some 28 years, and are now

The fallen tree damaged pews, crashed through windows, and left only a rear wall of the church intact.

working together to restore their Pilgrim Community Church damaged by a wind storm.

The event was heavily covered by the media and local businesses like Home Depot began stepping in to donate equipment to help with the clean up.

"It took a Herculean effort to move that tree. The men of our church did it. We had a least five different trash removals," said Lt. James Cook, a church member, who has worked with Davis at Metro for some 28 years.

Members began holding services in a smaller building situated behind the original structure. Now the congregation, led by Davis, has begun working toward rebuilding.

"It's a small church but it has this long term reputation as a place that developed ministers. And there are many people around the world who can trace their start to it," said Cook, whose father founded the church in 1948.

"We've had seasoned ministers, pastors of other churches that had a long ministry, and when they get tore up, they come (here) for healing." Davis added, saying the church had served as a type of refuge for both he and Cook. Davis and Cook joined the church in 1994, after Cook began attending again, after having been gone for several years, and he invited Davis to attend with him.

Davis was recruited to take over leadership of the church by the then pastor who was well into her 90s and nearing retirement.

Over the years, Cook and Davis, who also served in the same Army National Guard unit, said they have leaned on the church and each other's families during difficult times.

Cook said Davis's family stepped in to help raise his young daughter, now 27, when his wife died. "Literally, my daughter's mom on her death bed asked his [Davis'] wife to look out for Sarah," Cook said.

Cook's family reciprocated more recently when his 26-year-old son, John Jamel Davis was tragically murdered Nov. 7, 2008.

Davis said he has begun sending out letters to private and public organizations including churches soliciting assistance to raise up to \$60,000 to completely rebuild the church within eight months.



The fallen tree damaged pews, crashed through windows, and left only a rear wall of the church intact.



Pilgrim church members were elated recently when a member of the Mariners Church in Newport Beach made an anonymous donation of \$10,000 toward the construction.

Davis said raising the funds shouldn't be too difficult because "a lot of people are really coming around," and Pilgrim has always been there with clothing, food and other assistance for other churches.

"People want to know what they can do to help...now's the time to let them know," Davis said, adding the church hopes to launch a website soon.