

# Members of caved-in church discover a friend

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When the roof fell in at Full Gospel Atlanta Church in north DeKalb recently, a close-knit Korean congregation found itself without a place to worship — but thankful the flock was OK.

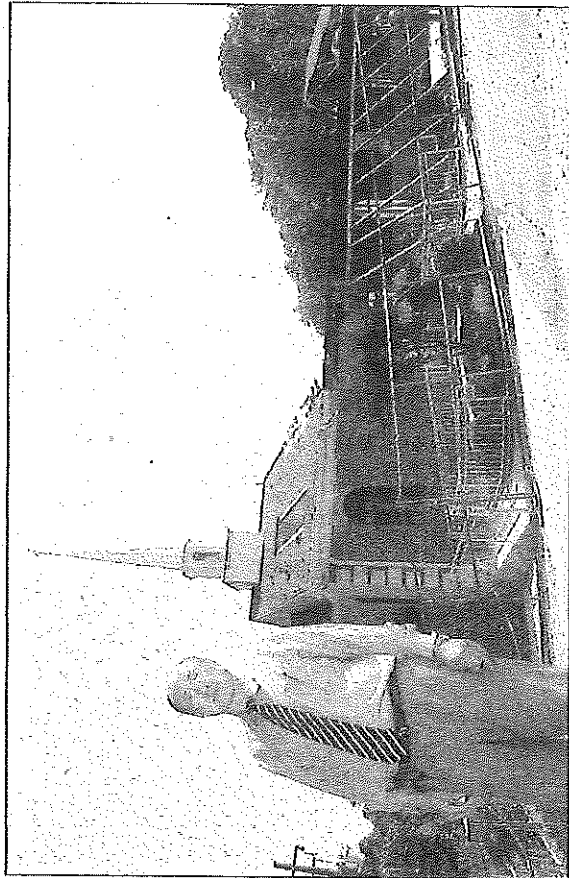
The church's roof caved in during the wee hours of April 27, when no one was in the building. Hours later, the first worshippers arrived for early-morning services and instead encountered a test of faith.

"Oh my God, it was unexpressable," said senior pastor Peter Chong, on seeing his 15-year-old church in ruins.

There are more than 400 members of the congregation. Had the roof caved in on a Sunday morning instead of a Friday, the accident would have been a horrifying catastrophe.

Insurance and county investigators are still looking into exactly what caused the roof to fall, Chong said.

Most members of the congregation are first- or second-generation Americans, and Full Gospel was more than a place for prayer. The church



RENEE HANNANS / Staff  
The Rev. Peter Chong, pastor of the Full Gospel Church on Henderson Mill Road, is keeping the church going while rebuilding the damaged structure.

functions as a bridge between two cultures for a rapidly growing Korean immigrant community. It provides English classes and support services on dealing with schools and the

government.

After the accident, Chong was determined his flock would have a place to worship with Sunday just hours away. He called neighboring churches to find

if they could temporarily hold services. Pastor Mark Westmoreland of Embry Hills United Methodist Church — whose membership is mostly middle-class whites — saw Chong's need as an opportunity.

"This is a chance to experience the body of Christ in its real meaning in a way that's not limited by language or race," Westmoreland said.

Westmoreland has attended Full Gospel services. He was struck by hearing traditional hymns sung in Korean, he said. He also hopes the two churches' choirs can combine to sing hymns in English and Korean.

Chong is pleased with their new relation with Embry Hills, as well.

Chong has to keep the church going, while trying to rebuild its structure. The fellowship hall next to the main church was spared from damage, and most functions now take place there — except for Sunday services at Embry Hills.

Chong said he has no idea how long the rebuilding process will take.

The congregation is asking the community for help in the reconstruction. For more information, contact Chong at 770-402-1111.

7/14/01  
A rude  
welcome  
for church  
members

Disaster barely missed a handful of Assembly of God believers early Friday when morning devotional worshipers arrived only to find the roof had collapsed overnight. The 400-seat sanctuary of Full Gospel Atlanta Church at 2550 Henderson Mill Road in DeKalb County was under investigation as structural engineers tried to determine what caused the collapse of the 33-year-old structure. Senior Pastor Peter Chong will hold Sunday services at Embury Hills United Methodist Church, according to the Rev. Mark Westmoreland of Embury Hills. The Korean congregation will meet at 1:30 p.m. after the Methodist church's 11 a.m. service. Church members pictured declined to be identified.



JOHN SPINK / Staff