

Tornado destroys Virginia church

by [Robert Dilday](#)

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DELTAVILLE, Va. (ABP) -- The sanctuary of Zoar Baptist Church in Deltaville, Va., was destroyed by a tornado that touched down at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 16 -- just hours before the building would have been full of worshippers.



Zoar's steeple was toppled and sanctuary walls destroyed by a tornado April 16. (Photo by Kristi Snow)

The tornado, which toppled the church's steeple and left gaping holes in the side of its sanctuary, did extensive damage to the small Middlesex County town on the Chesapeake Bay. No casualties at the church were reported, according to the [Southside Sentinel](#), the county's newspaper.

Zoar cancelled its Sunday worship service April 17.

Tornados swept through much of the South and the Mid-Atlantic April 16, killing at least 37 people before heading out to sea. At least 23 people were killed in North Carolina alone. In Surry County, Va., about 70 miles south of Deltaville, an apparent tornado cut power to two nuclear reactors, causing them to shut down automatically, according to the [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#).

"Deltaville is alike a war zone," Zoar member Ed Harrow told the *Religious Herald*. "I was in Germany at the end of World War Two and I told my wife, that's exactly what it looked like."

Harrow said the sanctuary -- including all its stained-glass windows -- was totally destroyed. The church's educational wing suffered only moderate damage.

The church is committed to rebuilding, said Harrow, though it was too soon to know how that would be accomplished.

Middlesex County administrator Charles Culley told the *Southside Sentinel* some people in Deltaville called the damage worse than that caused by Hurricane Isabel, a deadly storm in 2003.

"Tree damage is extensive," he said. "Zoar Church has had tremendous damage, and homes that were in the tornado's path have been flattened or picked off their foundations and set down somewhere else."

"If we have gotten out of this [storm] without any fatalities or injuries it will be a miracle," Culley said.