

## INTRODUCTION

### CHURCHES SUPPORTING CHURCHES OUTLINE FOR RESPONSE TO KATRINA

JUNE 2006

This introduces the Churches Supporting Churches (CSC) National Working Group. This project is a comprehensive strategy to assist a small number of African America congregations in twelve areas of New Orleans where Katrina destroyed or seriously damaged their facilities to “Restart, Reopen, Repair or Rebuild the Churches in order for them to be agents for Community Development and to Recreate their Community”.

The Katrina catastrophe exposed again the triple evils of poverty, racial injustice and militarism in this region of the US identified by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. nearly four decades ago. This Kingian Legacy is the context we need to address the moral and practical challenges to address these conditions. This was King’s vision and is our vision.

Churches Supporting Churches, concerned about the total Gulf Coast sees the NOLA project as the beginning and a model for work in other areas of Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana. The CSC includes the Bishop for Louisiana and Mississippi African Methodist Episcopal Church, American Friends Service Committee, Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Church of the Brethren, Every Church a Peace Church, Mennonite Church USA, National Council of Churches, Presbyterian Church-USA and the Progressive National Baptist Convention represented by their First Vice President.

The strategy is designed to go beyond food and shelter issues and focus on expanding the capacity of these congregations to rebuild their communities. The National Council of Churches has endorsed it and agreed to be fiscal agent for contributions to the Churches Supporting Churches project. Foundations and major contributors who share the goal for justice in the rebuilding process can contact us. We're also seeking 360 initial partnering/adopting congregations in the north to help with this process (see Katrina Response Page at [www.ecapc.org](http://www.ecapc.org) and for links). A packet with a DVD and other information is included.

This three-fold strategy is first, to strengthen the health and unity of the pastors, spouses and members as they try to return to New Orleans. The first seven meetings (October 12, November 7-8, February 13, March 20, April 24, May 6, and May 22) with New Orleans pastors identified the need to process the trauma and destruction of their churches and homes in order to be able to help their members deal with reality as they return and for a series of CSC-Pastors Institutes. This is a re-preparation effort for their congregations’ future ministry. They need resources to do this while they reconnect with their members who are scattered across the US. We seek a pre-service sabbatical program to provide a stipend with expenses for the monthly residential Pastors-Institute program.

Second, the strategy is to rebuild the bricks and mortar and spiritual life of these congregations and to make the pastors and their members socially active agents for meeting present and returning peoples’ human needs in each community. In the first

fourteen congregations to be selected the un-met need aspect of these re-building costs will exceed \$10,000,000. In each of the 36 NOLA congregations we are asking for a 5-10 person leadership team for community development to participate in the Institutes. This aspect of the project is also designed to partner these initial 36 congregations in New Orleans with 360 local congregations nationally on a ten to one ratio over the next three years to accomplish this goal. It is a vision beyond the important food and shelter issues.

Third, the strategy extends and expands the capacity of the historical role of the African American Church as the key agent for community. John DiIulio's research has established that almost 75% of black, urban churches engage in significant community outreach programs, contributing billions of dollars per year to the "social capital" of America's cities through a myriad of programs, from after-school and mentoring programs." In their book, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience*, Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya surveyed 1,900 black ministers and more than 2,100 black churches. They conclude that black churches are more socially active in their communities than white churches, and tend to participate in a greater range of community programs.

Central to DiIulio's research is the notion that black churches support their members and their communities in time of trauma and dislocation, a fact borne out by the nation's post-Katrina experience, where we have witnessed the largest "transfer of capital" in black church history, as churches from around the nation came to the aid of their sisters and brothers in the Gulf region.

Most of the churches are committed to social activism and community organization. Funds are needed for continuing local and regional advocacy actions and leadership development, community organization and outreach, and community planning and development. In partnership with 360 national congregations it's designed as a comprehensive strategy and national Faith-based infrastructure in the tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King's strategy for nonviolent democratic social change. In this way we can address the issues of poverty and racial injustice represented by Katrina.

Contributions can be sent to the National Council of Churches, on Memo line designate it for Churches Supporting Churches, % Rev. Leslie C. Tune or Cassandra Carmichael, NCCC-USA, 110 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002 Tel. 202-544-2305 Fax 202-543-1297 [ltune@nccusa.org](mailto:ltune@nccusa.org) or [cassandra@toad.net](mailto:cassandra@toad.net)

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