
From: Robert Edgar [mailto:redgar@nccusa.org]
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2006 10:03 AM
To: NCC Governing Board
Subject: NCC joins with six denominations to rebuild New Orleans

Churches Together to Rebuild New Orleans, Recreate Community

Monday, May. 29, 2006 in the Christian Post

Eight months have passed since the Gulf Coast was nearly wiped out by Katrina and the hurricane season is set to officially begin this week. Yet the devastated lands seems to have been barely touched with little signs of recovery, said one Episcopal bishop, after touring New Orleans last week.

"We toured the area and, I have to tell you, very little has been done in a lot of ways outside of cleaning up most of the muck and garbage which lined the streets for weeks and months last fall," said Bishop C. Christopher Epting, deputy for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations for the Episcopal Church, according to the **National Council of Churches**.

The NCC has partnered with six denominations to sponsor Churches Supporting Churches, part of the council's Special Commission for the Just Rebuilding of the Gulf Coast. The partnership will help foster the rebuilding of 36 destroyed or damaged churches in 12 predominantly African American neighborhoods of New Orleans.

Many churchgoers have been lost in the duration of the devastation and delayed aid responses and churches are trying to get the houses of worship back up and running before more "drift away," said William Perkins, editor of the Baptist Record, the Mississippi Baptist Convention's weekly news journal, according to the Associated Press.

Opening church doors once again is not only for the healing of the congregations though. It's also a community cause.

The goal of Churches Supporting Churches (CSC) is to "restart, reopen, repair or rebuild the churches in order for them to be agents for community development and to recreate their community," said Dr. C. T. Vivian, CSC chair and longtime activist in the civil rights movement, in a released statement.

Churches are appealing for urgent recovery and rebuilding and congregations across the country are being offered the opportunity to help for community recovery. The network of churches in New Orleans will run a yearlong training program in community development to equip pastors and lay leaders for their expanded work as community developers.

Additionally, churches have begun planning affordable housing initiatives as community services such as daycare centers. Church organizations plan to help get the schools, hospitals and other public services back in operation in order to draw back the residents that were displaced by the storm.

"How can we assure that those who wish to return home can do so safely and with security? How can we stand against those landlords who are now charging 1,100 dollars a month in rent for shoddy apartments which used to go for 300 – because housing is so scarce?" These are some of the questions asked to facilitate just rebuilding.

As the Church prepares for Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit after Jesus' ascension, Epting said in a sermon last week at St. James the Less in Scarsdale, N.Y., "Christ ascended into heaven 'that he might fill all things' and, 'according to his promise, he abides with his Church on earth, even to the end of the ages.' Well, I can testify to you that Jesus is abiding with the Church in Louisiana. Our church and all the churches."

Audrey Barrick > audrey@christianpost.com