

# GRACE Community Services team begins assistance care in LaPlace area

Elizabeth Brady, director, public relations

The diocesan Office of Disaster Response (ODR) announced the opening March 27 of an office in LaPlace that offers case management for the thousands of New Orleans evacuees housed in the area by FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Authority, as well as the many local residents who were severely affected by Hurricane Katrina. This effort, funded by the ODR and Episcopal Relief and Development, is administered by our partner in ministry, GRACE Community Services.

"The need is so great in LaPlace," explained Ruama Camp, director of GRACE Community Services (GCS). "There are 19,000 people registered for FEMA assistance and two trailer parks with 500 units and another opening soon with 380 units. The need is tremendous. And, in a small town like LaPlace, where everyone knows everyone, word travels very quickly that we are here to help."

In addition to Ruama, GCS has a construction manager, Mitchell Beasley, and two full-time case managers, Brenda Taylor and Joanna James, who help people assess their needs brought on by disaster. GCS is not a social service agency, but a disaster recovery agency that specializes in helping people connect with the resources they need to recover.

"Some people may just need a new refrigerator,"

explained Ruama, and others need more serious assistance with mental or physical health. "When I started visiting homes this week I was concerned to see children sleeping on moldy mattresses. So, this week I need to find clean mattresses."

The partnership with GCS is an important piece in the vision for the diocese's Urban Ministry. By working on the ground with GCS, the evacuees will then be connected with resources through the ODR which will be housed in the Glimmer Inn. The needs of each family will be different: some may need the assistance of visiting teams of volunteers to muck out their home while others may need help securing a loan to repair or purchase a new home.

"Katrina unveiled what was already here," said Ruama referring to the poverty and poor health she sees in LaPlace. "I believe that God touched the hearts of people like Bishop Jenkins who can help us secure the resources we need to help these people."

"This is an opportunity for the Episcopal Church to partner with an African-American entity," said Ms. Camp. "We have a Kingdom vision; disasters strike people of all races and we are many members of one body. Our mission stretches from roof repair to healing in the community."

ODR's Archdeacon Dennis McManis added, "Without Grace Community Service's experience and expertise our ability to touch the lives of so many displaced people would be much more difficult. This is truly a win-win partnership."



Ruama Camp leads the work at the LaPlace center.



GRACE Community Services, 2015 Airline Hwy., LaPlace



Case manager Joanna



Construction manager Mitch Beasley



Case manager Brenda Taylor

## Compassion Centers to provide places of rest and rejuvenation for workers

The Office of Disaster Response has designated five Compassion Centers in the Diocese of Louisiana where volunteers and those returning to care for their properties may find housing and a place of rejuvenation while they undertake the work of restoration.

### St. Luke's, New Orleans

Located in an historic neighborhood of New Orleans, St. Luke's was founded in 1873 and is a traditionally African-American community of faith. Every member of the congregation lost their home, but the congregation has committed to serving others by opening their rectory, church and Gaudet Hall to be wholly available for Compassion Center work.

St. Luke's needs bedding and other equipment, artwork, musicians, and food service volunteers to create an urban work camp in St. Luke's Gaudet Hall.

This space will house 100 volunteers who will come to clean out houses. A community center will be created where residents can rest and pray. Financial donations are needed to support two summer interns, and an on-site case worker. Volunteers are needed to help run the ministry.

### St. Paul's, New Orleans

Located in the Lakeview neighborhood which suffered horrific damage from the



Cots line Gaudet Hall at St. Luke's, New Orleans

17th Street canal break, St. Paul's is a large congregation with a church and school that took eight feet of water. The church's two large Ascension windows and beautiful side windows remain in tact but the worship space has been gutted.

St. Paul's has a new interim rector, a retired Navy chaplain recently returned from duty in Iraq, who is not deterred by the obstacles the neighborhood faces. The Rev. Will Hood is working to re-establish the church as a Compassion Center that will focus on providing respite to those coming back to recover their properties and the workers who are helping them. St. Paul's will be a contemplative space with innovative worship and music. It will be a center for meals and hospitality. Financial donations to fund two summer interns will be needed.

Fr. Hood has already made plans to continue the church's popular "Camp Care-alot" summer day-camp program. Four large-size trailers will be brought to the property for the children's indoor activities.

### GRACE Community Services, LaPlace

Located in a civil parish with 19,000 displaced residents who have registered with FEMA and who have no other social services, LaPlace is currently the hub of the diocesan Office of Disaster Response's case work management operation for that area. It is being run by GRACE Community Services. GRACE is

a faith-based organization that has partnered with ODR to manage the thousands of cases so far unaided in that part of our diocese. (See article above.)

Through the case workers in La Place, the center is helping families who are hosting displaced relatives in cramped hurricane-damaged homes, often without walls or roofs, to repair these homes. Eventually the center will help those in temporary shelters make their way back to their pre-Katrina community.

The Compassion Center in LaPlace needs volunteer crews with construction experience and construction supplies. It also needs financial donations to the emergency relief fund to provide direct cash assistance to destitute families in that area.

### Chapel of the Holy Comforter, New Orleans

Located on the lakefront across from the campus of the University of New Orleans, Holy Comforter's Compassion Center is the New Orleans hub of ODR's work with daily crews fanning out around Gentilly to help the most vulnerable – the elderly, single parents, the terminally ill – clean out their destroyed homes to prevent further deterioration of their property. This ministry is averaging 80 volunteers per day! But there is the capacity for 140 per day. This Compassion Center needs more volunteers! We also need financial donations



Yumiko Takeishi (left) of the Diocese of Toboku, Japan, joins local volunteers for a clean-up day near Holy Comforter, New Orleans.



The Glimmer Inn in New Orleans

to support two additional crew chiefs and to continue to purchase cleaning supplies.

### The Glimmer Inn, New Orleans

Located on Seventh Street off St. Charles Avenue next to the Noland Diocesan Center, the Glimmer Inn is a former bed and breakfast establishment purchased by the diocese to become the fifth Compassion Center. The Glimmer Inn will serve numerous purposes following its renovation from hurricane damage.

It will house offices of the ODR on the first floor, displaced residents of the city otherwise financially unable to return to oversee the reclamation of their property on the second floor, and volunteer mission groups on its third floor. ODR has broken ground on the renovation work to bring the inn up to code but is still seeking \$100,000 in funding for the renovation and equipping of the inn. The Glimmer will later become an urban ministries center wholly devoted to service low-income people. In the meantime it will be the central headquarters serving all the other compassion centers and a gathering place for visitors from near and far.

For more information, contact ODR's Courtney Cowart at: 504.895.6634 or email: cowart2@att.net.



Frs. Dub Brooks and Will Hood stand in the shadows of the nave of St. Paul's, New Orleans.

## Grants available to repair churches

The Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund has announced that it will begin accepting applications from religious organizations in the region hit by Hurricane Katrina.

The grants can be used to rebuild churches or to reimburse costs for temporary houses

of worship.

Applications will be accepted until July 31. Churches are eligible for up to \$35,000.

Go to [www.bushclintonkatrinafund.org](http://www.bushclintonkatrinafund.org) or call the Rev. Angela Williams at 202.289.2732 or Alva Brown at 202.477.9657.

## EFM potluck planned at St. Philip's

Tuesday May 16, the Education For Ministry class at St. Philip's, New Orleans is holding its last EFM class for the year.

The group will be celebrating with its third annual potluck meal: "What Would Jesus Eat?" The evening begins at 6:30 p.m. with Holy Communion celebrated by the Rev. Stephen Craft, followed by the meal. The event will close with the yearly Metaphor and Liturgy of Farewell.

Anyone who is interested in joining the class in September 2006 may call the church office: 504.394.2408.

St. Philip's parishioner Frances Webb serves as EFM class mentor with Deacon John Holbert as co-mentor.

## DOCC Day off

A Disciples of Christ in Community (DOCC) program day at Advent House in New Orleans on Saturday, May 13 has been canceled. The presenter, the Rev Margaret Austin of Lubbock, Texas, is unable to attend due to an illness in her family.



Members of the St. Thomas Men and Boys Choir of New York City sing a selection during their presentation at Trinity Church, New Orleans, on March 24. [YUMIKO TAKEISHI PHOTO]

## St. Thomas Men & Boys Choir sing at Trinity, New Orleans, during Lent

The St. Thomas Men and Boys Choir of New York under the direction of David Scott were the featured musicians at this year's Bach Around the Clock music festival at Trinity, New Orleans, March 24-25.

The world-renowned choir was invited to participate by the Rev. Dabney Smith, rector of Trinity, New Orleans, who is a friend of

the rector of St. Thomas, New York, the Rev. Andrew Mead.

The choir processed using The Lent Prose. They performed ten pieces, several *a capella*. They sang seven arrangements by Bach in honor of the Bach festival. The group received a standing ovation and sang two short African-American Spirituals in response.

## Churchwork columnist Fr. Morris wins Award of Excellence for editorial writing



The Rev. William C. Morris, veteran columnist for Churchwork and former chair of the Department of Communication for many years, has garnered another Award of Excellence for editorial writing and commentary from the annual Polly Bond competition sponsored by the Episcopal Communicators, a professional organization of church-wide communication specialists.

## Lost at Diocesan Convention: Cow Bell

Sorely missed by Harriet Murrell's sons for whom it meant 'come home' and for School for Ministry participants for whom it means 'end of small group time.' Return or information of bell greatly appreciated. Contact Harriet at [hmurrell@stjamesbr.org](mailto:hmurrell@stjamesbr.org).

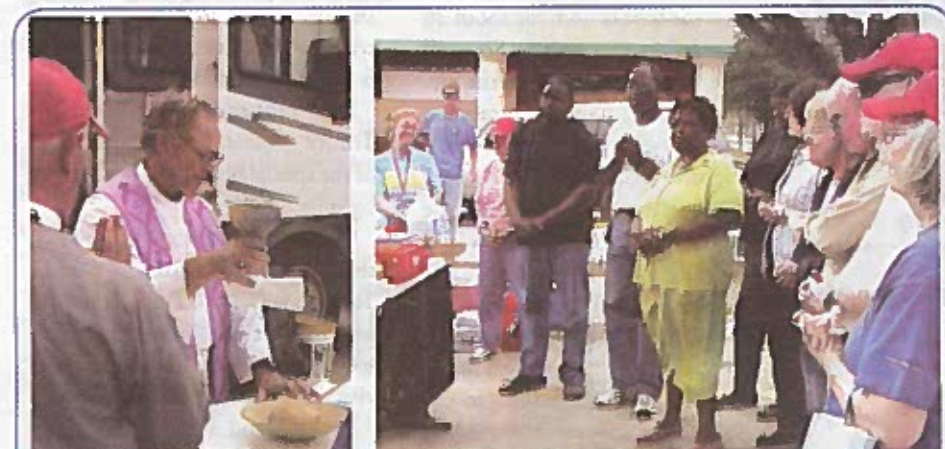
The results of the independently juried competition are announced at the Communicators annual conference which was held this year in Sarasota, Florida, April 19-22.

Morris' timely winning entry was his column entitled, "On being a deputy."

The judges noted: "Good exposition... plus memorable lines make this very readable. Nice job. Excellent commentary. Fr. Morris gives the reader something to take home - an appreciation of a complicated and sometimes unpleasant role in the church."

In summary for the award they wrote: "Fr. Morris takes a dry, ordinary subject and makes his opinion not only readable, but memorable. He writes with confidence and makes good use of the simple declarative sentence. Morris should give lessons in writing editorials."

Your Churchwork editor, who has won at least one award in the Polly Bond competition every year since 1990, came home from Sarasota with no Polly Bonds - a bitter defeat in this time of misery! Next year in Jerusalem! Actually, the Communicators will be in Jamestown. It will be the 400th anniversary of the Anglican Church in the new world.



The Rev. Joe Rhodes consecrates wine for Holy Eucharist; Deacon Quin Bates serves at the altar.

Volunteers from Holy Spirit, Baton Rouge, and people in the Ninth Ward gather on the sidewalk for Holy Eucharist, March 30. [HEIDI ROBBETT PHOTOS]

## First Episcopal celebration of Holy Eucharist in Ninth Ward after two-decade absence

The Rev. Joe Rhodes and members of his congregation, the Church of the Holy Spirit, Baton Rouge, travel to New Orleans every Thursday as volunteers for the diocesan Mobile Respite Ministry Unit. In recent months the big RV has been stationed at the corner of Caffin and St. Claude avenues in the lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans where volunteers hand out cleaning supplies, water and snacks. Team members pray with those who seek prayers and offer a listening ear to those who want to talk about their problems.

During Lent, Fr. Rhodes decided to add another healing aspect to the ministry presence of the Mobile Unit. He offered an outdoor noon Eucharist for anyone who

wished to partake of the Lord's Supper. Deacon Quin Bates, who also helps at the Mobile Ministry on a regular basis, served as deacon of the Mass.

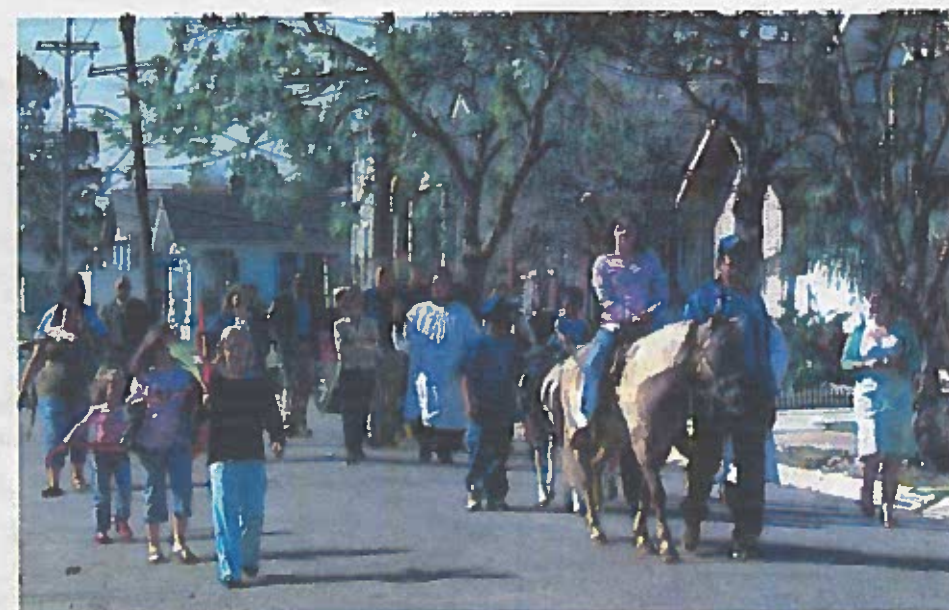
In addition to the Holy Spirit members, volunteer workers from other states came to the service. Local residents gathered alongside the worshipers as they came to the site.

Following the worship service, Rhodes explained that this was the first Episcopal Eucharist celebrated in the Ninth Ward since the closing of the Church of the Holy Apostles Mission in New Orleans East in the early 1980s.

Rhodes plans to continue holding the noon Eucharists while the Mobile Unit is in the Ninth Ward.



CALL TO WORSHIP - Luther Gray (left), teacher of drumming and original founder of Bamboola 2000, presents an African drum to St. Luke's, New Orleans, Senior Warden Elvia James (right) and drummers Ryan Terrell (2nd, left) and Clark Richardson on the occasion of the dedication of the drums at St. Luke's following a Sunday Mass. The drum was the gift of Bishop Jenkins who had learned that the church's original drum had been ruined by Katrina's flood waters. [MORRIS JONES JR. PHOTO]



PALM SUNDAY - Members of the Church of the Annunciation, New Orleans, process through their Broadmoor neighborhood with banners, palms and a pony in observance of the beginning of Holy Week. [CAM DAVIS PHOTO]