

CHURCHWORK

OUR VISION: The Diocese of Louisiana is one church, faithful to Jesus Christ, united in mission, reaching out to seekers. We live in joyous witness to the power of grace and divine compassion in our lives.

Bishop celebrates first post-Katrina mass at St. James

As dazed evacuees and residents of south Louisiana began to emerge from their ravaged homes following the devastating destruction of Hurricane Katrina, Aug. 29, many sought solace in the exercise of their faith — they chose to worship.

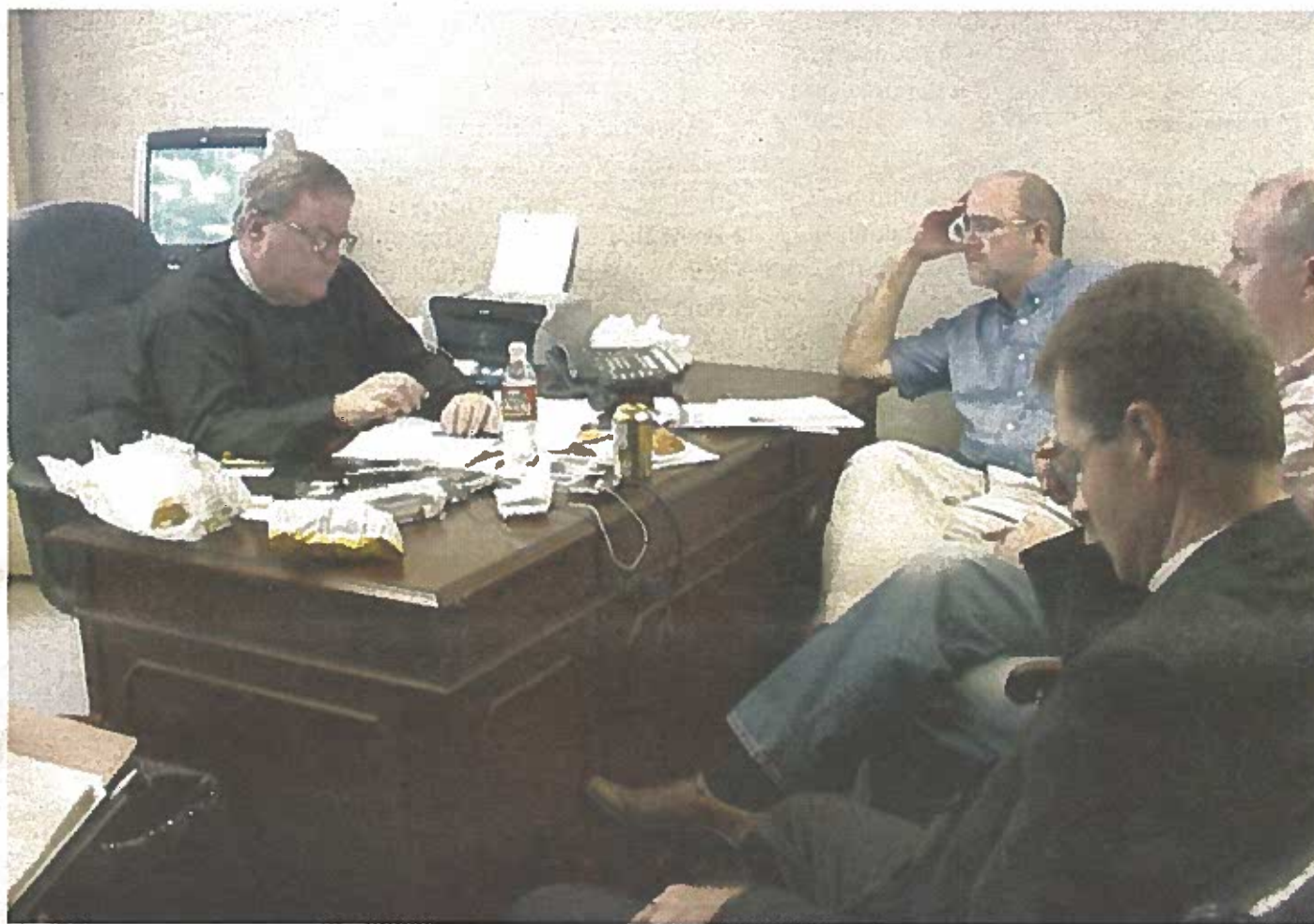
Bishop Charles Jenkins celebrated his first Holy Eucharist following the hurricane at noon on Thursday, Sept. 1, to a full church. People from congregations across New Orleans, from Metairie and from Baton Rouge attended the service.

Intercessions were offered for those who were displaced from their homes, for the relief workers, and for people who were lost in the turmoil.

“When I’m praying for perseverance and patience, I’m praying for you too,” Jenkins said. “Your life — all our lives — are going to be different.”

He added that people need to have time to allow themselves to grieve, even for their possessions.

Given to humor even in stressful times, the bishop pointed out that as a refugee himself, this was the first time he had ever celebrated the Eucharist in brown shoes.



WORKING LUNCH — [L-R] Bishop Charles Jenkins, Consultant Paul Gudaitis, Episcopal Relief and Development President Robert Radtke and the Bishop’s Canon for Administration Mark Stevenson engage in a conference call on Sept. 5 with the Episcopal Church Center concerning the relief effort for the Diocese of Louisiana. [EDITOR PHOTO]

Diocese sets up in Baton Rouge, appoints director of disaster response

The Diocese of Louisiana was able to put into action its plan for evacuation which Bishop Jenkins had arranged with St. James Church, Baton Rouge, to provide office space for the diocese in the event of emergencies. St. James has provided ample room on the second floor of the Manship Ministries Center adjacent to the church at 205 N. Fourth St., Baton Rouge, LA 70821, the new temporary address for the Diocese of Louisiana until further notice.

St. James provided computers, a network system, telephones and supplies for the diocesan staff. Staff members were able to make two trips to New Orleans to retrieve some of the equipment from the Noland Diocesan Center. St. James also has provided office space for Christ Church Cathedral and Trinity Church, New Orleans.

Within days of the disaster, Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD), the national church’s social service agency, sent its president, Robert Radtke, and consultants Peter Gudaitis and Abigail Nelson, to give

counsel, advice and assistance funds for immediate needs.

The Rt. Rev. George Packard, bishop suffragan for chaplaincies, and his associate, the Rev. Gerald Blackburn, from the Episcopal Church Center came to offer pastoral advice on crisis counseling and care of clergy. They arranged a Day of Reflection and Preparation for the clergy on Sept. 16 to address the specific needs that they will face as their congregations return to damaged homes, businesses and churches.

ERD funds have made it possible for Bishop Jenkins to appoint Mary Sutton of New Orleans as director of disaster response. She will lead the program over the coming months. She may be reached at the diocesan address or the St. James telephone number, 225.387.5141 or email, msutton@stjamesbr.org. (See more information on p. 3.)

Other support staff have been added to assist during the relief phase: Ken Elder and Eric Murrell, both of New Orleans. Other assistants may be added as needed.

Members of the diocesan Executive Board at their Sept. 11 meeting voted to give the bishop exceptional authority in order to take immediate action regarding protection of diocesan and church properties. The board resolved: “The Tenth Bishop of Louisiana is hereby granted plenary power and authority to act for the Diocese, which authority shall continue for the indefinite future. He shall consult as regularly as time permits with the Executive Board and Standing Committee, which shall vote on the ratification of his actions. The Bishop may delegate this authority as he deems fit and appropriate. Recognizing the separate corporate existence of many Ecclesiastical Units, the Bishop is authorized to issue directives pursuant to his moral, theological and ecclesiastical power, to said Ecclesiastical Units through the Rectors or leadership, in the form of pastoral directives. The Bishop’s pastoral leadership shall be construed as broadly as possible during this critical time. For those Ecclesiastical Units with no separate



Mary Sutton of New Orleans is the newly appointed director of disaster response. [EDITOR PHOTO]

corporate existence, time does not permit convening of their separate boards, the Bishop is hereby empowered to act subject to ratification by the Executive Board or Standing Committee, as appropriate.”

Office of Disaster Relief sets out strategic plan of action

Immediately after Hurricane Katrina slammed the Gulf Coast, the Diocese of Louisiana began taking concrete steps to address the suffering caused by the storm. The diocese established an Office of Disaster Response, funded by Episcopal Relief and Development, hired a director for it, and drafted a plan for responding to the crisis.

The diocese has submitted a proposal to Episcopal Relief and Development to fund the Office of Disaster Response, and is sending requests to funding agencies and donor prospects for immediate gifts of \$50,000 to \$100,000 or more to provide emergency assistance.

ODR is a "pro-active emergency management office of the Diocese of Louisiana which seeks to link the needs of those affected by disaster with the resources they need to survive and ultimately return to some semblance of life as it was prior to the onset of disaster," according to the strategic plan.

The plan was drafted by Mary Sutton, the new director of ODR, and Brother Charles Lafond. The Society of St. John the Evangelist sent Brother Charles, Brother Mark Brown and Brother Timothy Solverson to Louisiana at the request of Bishop Jenkins to help provide pastoral care after the storm. With a background in strategic planning and fund development, however, Brother Charles was soon pressed into service to help draft the ODR plan. It sets forth specific goals for "an augmented work force, financial resources, provision of emergency diocesan services and effective internal and external communication." Response to this disaster, the plan notes, will take place over "a matter of years and not months." Strategic planning, it continues, "will be essential to response and recovery."

The plan identifies a number of tasks that have already been accomplished, including the evacuation of the diocesan staff to St.



ODR Director Mary Sutton confers with Brothers Mark and Charles about the strategic plan for disaster relief in the temporary office at St. James, Baton Rouge.

James, Baton Rouge, and salvaging of vital files, archives and the diocesan database. Also completed is the evaluation of insurance on church property, the establishment of the Office of Disaster Response, the drafting of a grant proposal to Episcopal Relief and Development, and liaison management with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD).

Brother Charles notes that the diocese is on the front lines of relief efforts in the area, and that the Episcopal Church is one of the few faith-based organizations with its own desk at FEMA. The diocese is engaged in relief efforts for all of those in need, as well as pastoral care for congregations, diocesan clergy and their families.

The plan identifies several needs in the area of human resources, both salaried and volunteer. Full-time, grant-funded positions proposed by the plan include a

donations coordinator, a case management coordinator, a volunteer coordinator and an administrative assistant.

Two volunteer groups will assist ODR staff: a resource development committee and a pastoral care committee. ODR will design and implement a database to coordinate volunteer resources.

The plan also identifies a need for immediate staffing assistance through an "Emergency Loaned Executives Program." The program aims to provide support and respite for staff in "varying states of loss and grief." Episcopal Relief and Development agreed to pay the expenses for two positions — one to help the Office of Disaster Response, the other to assist in communications. Anson Burch of New York City, was recruited for a temporary position in the Office of Disaster Response. Sarah Bartenstein, the former Executive for Communication in the Diocese of Virginia — now communications director

for Commonwealth Public Broadcasting in Richmond, Virginia — arrived Sept. 14 to assist with diocesan communication.

A Day of Reflection and Preparation was held Friday, Sept. 16 at St. Margaret's Church beginning at 10 a.m. for clergy, staff and their spouses. The day included workshops, information sharing and a presentation of the strategic plan, a meal and a liturgy. Bishop Jenkins presided at the event, which was designed with assistance from Bishop George Packard, bishop suffragan for chaplaincies.

What can I give?

People throughout the diocese — and across the country — wondering what they can give or send to those affected by Hurricane Katrina should consider sending gift cards, says Mary Sutton. Cards from gasoline retailers, department, discount or grocery stores, drug stores, restaurants (fast food or sit-down), and long distance telephone cards, empower people in a way that sending new or used goods cannot.

Cards allow displaced persons to obtain the goods and services that are most useful and appropriate for them. Sutton advises, however, that you take care to purchase cards from national retailers, since you cannot be certain where the recipient will be living at the time that he or she needs to use the card. A card from a southeastern grocery chain will not be useful to someone who has temporarily relocated in California. Also, cards from online merchants may not be as welcome since shipping costs will reduce the amount of their purchasing power.

The gift cards have the added feature of being easy and inexpensive to send. Mail them to the Diocese of Louisiana, P. O. Box 126, Baton Rouge, LA 70821. They will be distributed through the Office of Disaster Relief.

A message from the new Canon for Administration

Editor's Note: Canon Mark Stevenson began his first day in the diocese at St. James following Hurricane Katrina while his wife drove their belongings from Florida. Members of the diocese may recall that Canon Stevenson was rector of Annunciation, New Orleans, prior to his post in Florida. We welcome his return.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Much has been happening throughout the Diocese of Louisiana over the past several days as we continue our recovery from the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina.

I have been mightily impressed by the hard work and dedication of countless individuals and groups as we have organized, planned and ministered in this time of need. Many congregations (the "mission stations" of the church) are very involved with response and relief efforts, and I am thankful that strong leaders

have stepped forward to do the work of Christ in a tangible and immediate way.

As you may know, I have only just returned to Louisiana from Central Florida, and was expecting a much different set of challenges than those before us at present. However, the feeling of family and Christian charity that exists in this place have made me grateful to be here — even in the aftermath of Katrina.

There are two steps in our response in particular that I would like to explain. First, thanks to the efforts of Episcopal Relief and Development and a generous grant, we have hired Mary Sutton to head



Canon Stevenson

the Disaster Response for the Diocese of Louisiana. Mary is working with Canon Chad Jones to ensure a thorough and coordinated effort is made to reach the victims of Katrina. Mary's work experience with Catholic Charities, FEMA and other volunteer agencies will serve us all well.

Second, the Rev. Ken Ritter has been asked to chair the diocesan Rebuilding Committee. The work of this group is envisioned in three stages.

The committee is beginning with a process of determining the status of the afflicted churches and other diocesan entities, as well as insuring that all of our assets are secure. Soon, it will begin to

coordinate our efforts to restart the various entities and ministries as is practical. Finally, it will make recommendations to the bishop, Executive Board and Standing Committee as to the future structure of diocesan ministries. These tasks are monumental yet very important. Each phase will require different sets of expertise and the ongoing makeup of Fr. Ritter's committee will reflect this need.

As Canon for Administration, it is my hope and goal that the bishop's staff, as well as the various committees of the diocese, be a help to all in our disaster response. Our goal is not to micro-manage, but to put the proper resources in place to meet the needs before us. May the love of Christ Jesus be our guide.

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Canon E. Mark Stevenson
Canon for Administration
Diocese of Louisiana

Churches' Shower Service provides respite for weary evacuees

First Baptist Church and St. James Episcopal Church are cooperating to provide services to evacuees from Hurricane Katrina. Evacuee mothers and their newborns, additional family members, and others are residing in transformed classrooms at First Baptist. St. James, their next-door neighbor, delivers breakfast every morning, and provides shower facilities in the evening.

A team of over 25 St. James volunteers delivers breakfast prepared every day by the church and day school dietician, Gail St. Pierre, and her staff.

The evening shower service for evacuees, a morning shower service provided for FEMA workers and the accompanying towel service involves over 135 volunteers.

Some wash and dry the towels in their homes, others provide hospitality, listen to the stories of these survivors, offer solace, and hold the babies during the 5-9 p.m. shower sessions.

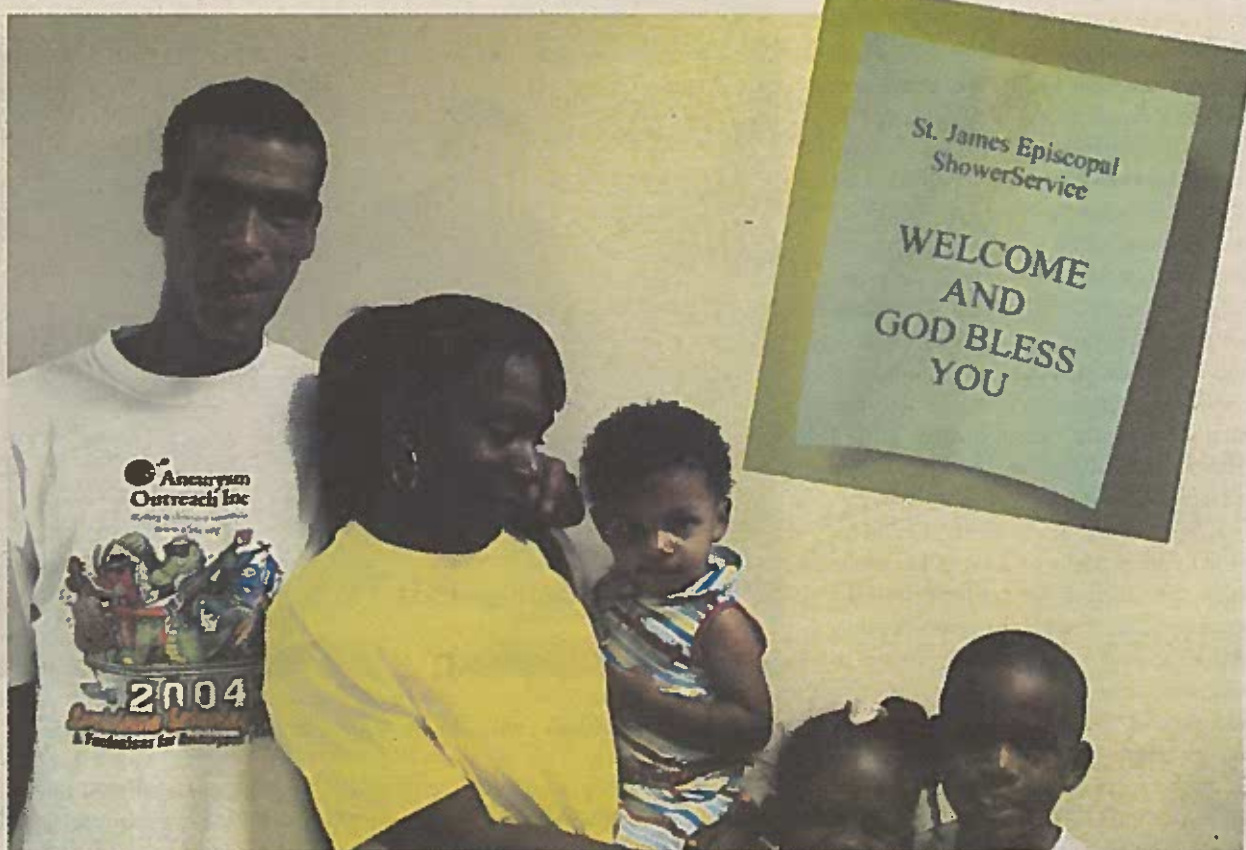
The recently constructed Bishops Hall on the church and day school campus is the location of the four shower facilities.

Adult volunteers and several pre-teen volunteers are involved in the shower service. Often, while the moms and families shower, pre-teen volunteers come to sit in the hallway and hold the babies. Some of these young girls have taken a class in helping mothers with babies.

New friendships are developing between the caregivers of all ages and those receiving their loving attention.

"The use of computer communication facilitated the birth of these new ministries in less than 24 hours," Nancy Poirrier, volunteer chair of these St. James Evacuee Ministries states.

"A daily newsletter evolved as well to keep volunteers informed. Reaching out to a stranger in need nourishes the



A family of evacuees housed at First Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, cues up for the shower service at St. James Church. (MICHAEL HACKETT PHOTO)

caregiver and those receiving the care. We create a community for these days together. Long after the evacuees are gone, the seeds of love sown in helping others will grow a stronger faith community," she said.

In addition to these ministries, over 75 volunteers are maintaining the Distribution Center for the downtown churches' donations of evacuee supplies housed in the Manship Ministries Center of St. James.

Episcopal Schools shine

The leadership of the Diocese of Louisiana and the heads of Episcopal schools in Baton Rouge and New Orleans came together for several meetings during the Labor Day holidays to make ninth-hour decisions concerning the best procedures for handling the hundreds of students from the New Orleans area who would need to attend school away from their normal setting.

The diocesan-owned Episcopal High in Baton Rouge provided office space for the head of school of the diocesan-owned St. Martin's Episcopal School, Metairie, and created an evening division of classes to accommodate some 700 additional students.

Baton Rouge parochial schools - St. James, St. Luke's and Trinity - plus Christ Church, Covington, and St. Matthew's, Houma, also opened their doors to extra students.

The logistics for providing space, supplies, books, teachers, meals and a host of other support for the increased enrollment was a daunting task which the leadership teams performed with virtually no preparation time.

Bishop Jenkins led the effort to keep the lines of communication open and provided the meeting space and necessary legal advice for the schools to proceed.

Kudos to Episcopal Life

Churchwork is indebted to the editor of the national newspaper Episcopal Life, Jerrold Hames, who volunteered to print and mail for free the October and November issues of Churchwork as "wraparounds" of Episcopal Life for the next two months.

We are very grateful for the generous offer and happy to be able to be visible in the diocese again. The newspaper will not be delivered to New Orleans zip codes in October.

St. Luke's, B. R., helps mothers and preemies

St. Luke's, Baton Rouge, has been at the forefront of service for the most vulnerable of evacuees due to their unique proximity to Women's Hospital on Airline Highway.

Many women who fled the New Orleans area during the hurricane were about to give birth or had given birth to premature babies who needed hospital care. St. Luke's provided a place for the mothers to stay while their babies were in incubators at the hospitals, according to the Rev. Ernie Saik of St. Luke's. The parish has provided food, clothing and shelter in Pope Hall for up to 40 women at a time, Saik said. At the same time, the church's Witter Hall housed 30 federal agents.

St. Luke's has helped to reunite many of the mothers with

other members of their families who became separated during the hurricane. As the families are reunited, the church is placing them in homes all over the country.

The Rev. Jerry Kramer, of Annunciation, New Orleans, who lost his home and church to Katrina, has been helping with the evacuees at St. Luke's. He reported that the parish is serving as a "command post" to supply communities along Interstate 12 all the way to Slidell with needed supplies.

Saik added that the church sent two 18-wheelers full of basic needs to Bogalusa and Covington. Another five pick-up truckloads of supplies had been sent at the time of the interview.



SACRED STORIES - The Rev. Tommy Dillon shares stories with a volunteer from Emmanuel Church, Athens, Georgia, and the children of Allen Chapel AME Church in Baton Rouge. Dillon's congregation, St. Augustine's, Baton Rouge, has been involved in the relief efforts in the Baton Rouge area.