

Southern District Recovery News

Partner's Edition

November 2005

"Praise be to our

God and Father for your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now!"

All we can say is "Praise God" and thank you for the amazing love and generosity your districts, congregations, organizations and people have shown to the people of the Gulf Coast since September. The outpouring from every corner of the church has been amazing and you need to know it is changing lives and it is appreciated.

I wish I could tell you that things were back to normal, but I can't. In the hurricane zone we've begun to use the term, "the new normal." We're trying to help people get back to a "new normal" but it is hard, the destruction doesn't go away and the frustrations are ever present. That is why your compassion, care and concern mean so much to us. This little news letter is an attempt to bring you up to date and provide some information for your ongoing efforts. Please share it widely with your people and your congregations. Again, on behalf of the people and the congregations of the Southern District, "Thank You! We Praise God for you!

Peace in Christ,

David Lewis

Southern District Disaster Coordinator

What Do We Need?

VOLUNTEERS! VOLUNTEERS! VOLUNTEERS!

More than anyone else we need people to come to the area to help with all kinds of tasks. From cutting and hauling trees, cleaning out homes, helping in the church office, cooking at one of our volunteer camps, packing Christmas boxes, hosting Advent family festivals, working at a distribution center. The list goes on and on. Cleaning, hauling and cutting are at the top of the list but there are a lot of other opportunities to serve. If you have a group interested in coming from your church please register at <http://lcmworldmission.org/relief>.

Three volunteer camps have been established across the area and a number of congregations are still housing volunteers in their buildings. You can get more information about those arrangements from Pastor Dave Buss by emailing him at tlcbrvol@yahoo.com.

EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES AND DONATIONS

Specific Equipment and Supplies are still needed. These items (both big ticket and small) would be very helpful. Do you know of any sources for these items:

Equipment

Mosquito Traps
Posthole Diggers
Power Tools -
Skill Saws
Electric Screw Drivers
Nail Guns
Air Compressor

Supplies

Leather Work Gloves
N95 Respirators
Dishwashing Gloves
Coverall suits
Men's Rubber Boots (size 9-13)
Supply of Drywall
Supply of Plywood
Supply of Pallets

Major Equipment

Forklifts
Bobcats
Pallet Jack

Penske Truck (to haul supplies, equipment, help people move, etc.)

Where are We Now?

Everyone who comes to the area says the same thing, "You can look at the pictures but you really don't understand until you see it." Damaged church buildings are only one measure of the effect of last summer's storms. The real damage is in hurting people, shattered lives, displaced people and uncertainty in almost every aspect of earthly life. It is estimated that 850,000 homes are uninhabitable (25,000 homes were unlivable after Hurricane Andrew). Nearly 60 Southern District congregations were directly impacted by Katrina. Hurricane Rita added another 10. Approximately 40 congregations suffered significant impact to their members through the loss of homes, jobs and the ability to live normal daily lives. Nearly 20 suffered major damage to their facilities and at this time, about half of them are still unable to use their sanctuaries for worship. The members and pastors at a number of the Orleans Parish churches have been so displaced that it has been impossible to gather them for worship. There were also three preschools, eight elementary schools and one high school in the heavily effected areas. At this time, all but two of the elementary schools have reopened. Most of the schools have opened with fewer students than pre-Katrina and that has led to significant financial struggles. Families are unable to keep up with tuition payments in the face of lost income. The damage from Rita was less severe for our churches. One church had major roof damage while the others dealt mostly with downed trees and limbs. Some members have request assistance to help with damaged homes and the reports are that many communities are in need of assistance.

All of these factors have combined to put a significant financial strain on our district, congregations and workers. To help alleviate the immediate need, our partnership with LCMS World Relief has allowed us to assist our pastors, educators, DCE's and support staff members financially. Since the middle of September, over \$500,000 has been given in direct worker support or to assist congregations in meeting their salary obligations. We are seeking additional ways to encourage and support our congregations and their professional workers.

Good things are happening too! Most of our churches are again able to assemble either at their building or in borrowed space. Plans are being made for the future and new opportunities for ministry seem to abound. The presence of the Lutheran Church and our members has been felt in many areas of our district.

Christmas Projects for Your Congregations

Christmas Gift Boxes

The idea is simple. "Yes, the people of your church are concerned about you and thinking about you." The boxes we are planning won't fill every need but they will communicate compassion and concern from the members of the LCMS.

Your district and congregation can be part of the plan to have Boxes filled with a few things to help prepare families affected by the hurricane for Christmas. The goal is to have about 5000 to 6000 boxes distributed through the Family Advent Activity Events, through direct mail (for some families whose congregations are totally dispersed) and to the community.

Place all of the following in a 12 x 12 box::

- 1- 6" to 12" Nativity set
- 2 rolls of scotch tape
- 1 scissors
- 2- 12" x 12" packages of Christmas wrapping paper
- 1 Advent/Christmas Devotional Book
- 1 Christmas CD
- Non Chocolate, individually wrapped hard candy
- Added will be a \$50 Walmart gift card

Your congregation may either assemble a number of boxes (10 minimum please) and ship them to the area before December 8th or sponsor a box for \$20 without a gift card or \$70 with a gift card and we'll assemble them for you. If your congregation would like to be responsible for a number of boxes (either by assembly or by sending the money) please email us at katrinainfo@southernlcms.org and tell us how many boxes you would like to provide. We'll distribute the boxes to families at one of the churches in the effected area before Christmas.

Family to Family

A mom who's family lost their home and all their possessions told us that the first normal night they had in their borrowed home was when the kids were fighting over a game of Risk. The game of Risk and a few other things were a gift from someone across the country. This family had been paired up with this family in an effort arranged by the father's company. They made contact with their partner family and found out things that were part of "normal" life before Katrina. That is the idea behind our "Family to Family" project.

Family to Family helps connect individual families from around the country to families from Southern District congregations that may have loss everything. If you would like to adopt a family please email kathyw@southernlcms.org. Kathy will provide you with the name, contact information and wish list of an individual family. You and your people will be able to develop a ongoing relationship with a family from the hurricane area.



For More Information Contact

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