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“Be dressed ready for service
 and keep your lamps burning.”
 -Luke 12:35



A Newsletter of the US Disaster Program

Issue #3 - December 2010

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NEWS

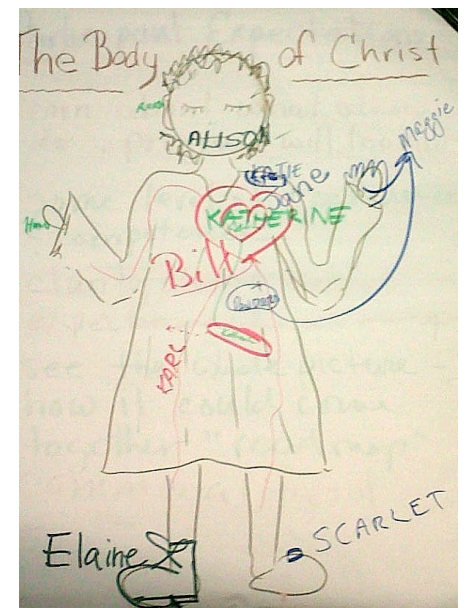
Happy Holidays!
 May the season be full of God's joy! This holiday season honor those you love with a purchase from the [Gifts for Life](#) catalog. This is a unique

Note from Katie: Prepare the Way

We held the first training for our new Partners in Response program a few weeks ago. You can read more about this group in the article below, but the purpose of this program is to be able to provide experienced responders to support newly affected congregations and dioceses as they recover from disasters. Our time together during the training led me to think a lot about the Body of Christ.

We did an exercise our first morning together where we read the passage from 1 Corinthians about the body being made up of many parts, all different but all necessary. We talked about who we are and where we think we fit in, and realized that as a group our diverse gifts and experiences are our strength. Together as a team, we can listen, support, guide and assess because each of us has different gifts; each of us is a different part. Instead of trying to be all things for all people as individuals, we need to support each other and our diversity of gifts.

This same lesson about the body and the diversity of gifts is true in our broader Church as well. Using the [Ready to Serve](#) volunteer database, you can identify the skills and talents in your own



opportunity for you to make a real difference in the lives of people living in extreme poverty.

We are building up our resource library!

Now you can go [online](#) to find tools and stories about preparedness planning and response programming. Do you have a document that might help another community? Do you have a story to share? Please send them so that knowledge can be shared around the country! Email Alison at ahare@er-d.org

Quick Links

Volunteer: join our "Ready to Serve" volunteer database so that you can help in case of a disaster.

Current Emergency Relief Projects:

Destin, FL

Oil spill recovery, St. Andrew's by the Sea. This program was featured in their local [newspaper!](#)

Diamondhead, MS

Oil spill recovery, St. Thomas Church.

Gulfport, MS

Oil spill recovery, St. Mark's.

Pass Christian, MS

Oil spill recovery, Trinity Church.

Terreborne Parish, LA

Oil spill recovery, Episcopal Community Services of Louisiana.

St. Bernard Parish, LA

Oil spill recovery, St. Anna's Episcopal Church and Episcopal

community and begin to see what "parts of the body" are available to serve your neighbors after a disaster.

As we enter this Advent season and think about preparing the way, this message is especially relevant. A great way of engaging in preparedness is to sign-up for Ready to Serve and to ask others to do so as well. You'll be recognizing your own gifts and beginning to build out the Body of Christ in its beautiful diversity.

Partners in Response - Supporting Those Newly Affected by Disaster

Earlier this month, a team of national Episcopal disaster responders assembled in New York City for training in the support of church leaders and congregations in the first days and weeks post-disaster. This team, called Partners in Response, was created to fulfill a need identified by church leaders for guidance and support after emergencies. The response team is made up of experienced disaster responders from around the US - they have planned and implemented response



Photo courtesy of NOAA

programs of various sizes and have worked with Episcopal Relief & Development. Their experience makes them an invaluable asset when assisting newly-affected clergy and congregational leaders as they develop their own disaster response programs. Episcopal Relief & Development's US Disaster Program believes that the creation of the Partners in Response team will lead to greater engagement and more efficient disaster response programs around the Church. Abigail Nelson, Senior VP of Programs for Episcopal Relief & Development said that this team is the result of many years of listening and preparing in cooperation with diocesan partners. "With this group we've reached the culmination of a long planning process. I'm very excited that this team has come together."



Virginia Snow Shelters - Preparing for Winter and for Disaster

Preparedness isn't necessarily an activity separate from regular ministries - it can be an ongoing activity that builds the resources of the church. Providing a hypothermia-prevention shelter during the winter is a great example of a ministry that can easily prepare a congregation for disaster response.

Current Disaster Recovery Programs:

The Episcopal Community Services of Louisiana (ECSLA): assists vulnerable, low-income Hurricane Katrina survivors to return to their homes and communities.

Jericho Road: a neighborhood-based home-building organization, working to revitalize Central City, a New Orleans neighborhood recovering from Hurricane Katrina and decades of disinvestment. Jericho Road planted an [urban fruit orchard](#) in late November as part of its continuing Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts.

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas: rebuilds homes for elderly and disabled residents affected by Hurricane Ike in Galveston and the surrounding communities. This program was featured in the Texas Tribune online in [pictures](#) and in an [article](#)!

The Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi: expands home-ownership opportunities on the Gulf Coast through the diocese's Hallelujah Housing program, and provides financial education and assistance through a parish-based ministry.

Contact Us:

To add your name to the

For the rector of St. Alban's in Annandale, VA, the Rev. Grayce O'Neill, if there were an emergency in her community she knows the church would be very willing to help. Said O'Neill, "As soon as we could gather, we would just get together and do it." She knows this because each winter for the last four years, St. Alban's has hosted the county's homeless for one week. These shelters meet an immediate need in providing a harbor for those who otherwise would be out during the coldest part of the year; but these shelter programs also prepare the parish for disaster response work.

A number of churches in Virginia and around the country have teamed up with local homeless outreach agencies to set up centers during the coldest parts of the winter. Some churches like St. Christopher's in Springfield have been doing this for 6 years, while others like Christ Church in Winchester have actually helped create a county organization to manage the program. These programs bring together houses of worship of all denominations to provide winter shelter to the homeless, for one week, from November through March. By participating Episcopal churches are providing an important ministry, as well as preparing their facilities and congregations in case of future emergencies.

Ministering to the homeless prepares a congregation for a wide array of activities that can be used to respond to disasters.

- Each church provides volunteers to greet guests and help them settle in; feeding crews plan, buy, prepare and serve food; cleaning teams care for the facilities; and volunteer coordinators provide on-site management.
- Volunteers may also help with intake - such as in Winchester where medically-trained volunteers assess the health of guests.
- Churches outfit the space for sheltering, with required safety precautions like emergency exit signs, etc.
- Each church is in charge of logistics when they host, managing everything on-site.
- Churches and organizations create and maintain partnerships.

These activities can all be critical for responding in emergencies - the church will have experience in sheltering large numbers of people, it will have built a network of trained volunteers, and congregational leaders will have experience in program planning and implementation.

To learn more about the Virginia hypothermia-prevention centers, see "[How To: Winter Shelters](#)" in our [resource library](#).

Hurricane Katrina Update: Lessons Learned

Because of Hurricane Katrina, both the Episcopal Dioceses of Louisiana and Mississippi have become deeply involved in disaster response work over the past five years. They have helped thousands of families and hosted thousands of volunteers. We wanted to know how this has changed them and the way they approach disasters.

In Louisiana, the staff from Episcopal Community Services of

"Ready to Serve"
volunteer and skills
roster:

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Louisiana (ECSLA) continues to visit local parishes and deaneries, asking them about their current or previous disaster response activities, their connections to the community and if/how they would like to respond to disasters in the future. In the Diocese of Mississippi, trainings are scheduled for the beginning of next year for congregations and deaneries in all parts of the diocese to learn how to prepare and mobilize in case of a disaster. For both, one of the ways Katrina has transformed them is by bringing the importance of preparedness to the forefront of their collective consciousness.



Brad Powers, Executive Director at Jericho Road, said, "Soon after the hurricane there was a gap in information. The Episcopal Church moved into that gap, providing leadership and offering information and guidance on preparedness." By leading the way in preparedness, the Episcopal Church has changed its relationship with the community, creating stronger ties and links of support.

Preparedness for both dioceses has led to a strong focus on building and maintaining relationships and partnerships - within the community, within the Church and with other response organizations. Nell Bolton, Executive Director of ECSLA, said, "Our strongest response to any challenge or crisis is rooted in our relationships. And the more we engage with people of all backgrounds, the more we extend ourselves into our communities, the more powerful we collectively can be."

For the Rev. Carol Spencer in Mississippi, partnerships need to be strengthened both within the Diocese and beyond. She believes that by strengthening and training a diocesan disaster response team that in turn will cultivate relationships within deaneries, the response in the Church will be more organized and therefore more effective. She also believes that while preparation as a diocese is important, collaboration and preparation with other churches and the local Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) branch is a must. Broader partnerships are important for completing the physical tasks of rebuilding, and also in working as a bloc to influence policy and legislation that benefits the most vulnerable members of the community.

Though one of the biggest lessons from Katrina is the need to be prepared and ready, as Spencer has discovered, it's difficult to keep people engaged in these activities as time goes on, the region isn't hit with another disaster, and the memory of past disasters begin to fade. So it's important that the Church maintain its leadership role and cultivate an interest in preparedness and in developing partnerships at all levels. That way, if and when the Gulf Coast is hit by another hurricane, the Church will be able to respond as a cohesive unit with its local partners.

The value of these partnerships, many of them ad hoc at the time of Katrina, can still be seen today. And for Bolton, "the recovery to

date of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast is a tremendous story of the power of human connection and solidarity."

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