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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 #8 - June/July, 2011

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NEWS

Do You Want to Volunteer for the Disasters this Spring? - Join Ready to Serve!

Offer your services to vulnerable communities after a disaster. Sign up [online](#) to be called upon to volunteer if a disaster affects your area.

We are building up our resource library!

Now you can go [online](#) to find tools and stories about preparedness planning and response

A Note from Katie

One of the things that I love most about my job is connecting churches with volunteer opportunities. Episcopal churches all over the country, especially since Hurricane Katrina, have experienced how powerful it can be to travel to a disaster-impacted area, live in tight quarters with your fellow parishioners, and sweat more than you thought possible doing manual labor you just learned how to do. Those experiences have been transformative both to individuals (myself certainly included) and to the volunteering church communities. And now as the Katrina programs end, people are looking for new places to turn that energy.



It might seem that this spring's tragedies would mean plenty of volunteer work right away. The problem is that meaningful programs take time to set up and scale up. Please be patient. This spring's storms caused damage all over the country, especially in the Midwest and the South. Local churches did amazing work responding to the immediate needs - to house,

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.

LINKS

Volunteer Opportunities:

Diocese of Mississippi
Building blitz in [July](#)

Diocese of Tennessee
Home rebuild program in [Nashville](#) - contact Denice O'Neil

Articles and information:

Diocese of Alabama
Deacons Give Voice to Needs of [Tornado Survivors](#)

Diocese of East Tennessee
Disaster Relief Ministry [news](#)

Current Emergency Relief Projects:

Diocese of West Missouri
Tornado response

Poplar Bluff, MO
Flood response, Holy Cross Episcopal Church

Hickman, KY
Flood prevention, St. Paul's Episcopal Church

White Swan, WA
Fire response, Christ Episcopal Church

to feed, to clothe. As the long-term programs begin to take shape, there will certainly be volunteer opportunities and we will need to draw on churches from all over the country to help with those ministries. But that need will be for the coming years, not only for the coming months.

You'll see links to our partner programs on the left side of this newsletter. These programs are only just beginning, and that list will expand in the months to come. I ask you to think about helping with reconstruction work in these impacted areas this coming fall and even into 2012, not just this summer.

Thanks so much for your willingness to serve those struggling in the aftermath of disasters, and please keep those who do this ministry in your prayers.

Peace,
Katie

From Relief to Recovery in the Diocese of Alabama



Tuscaloosa, AL. Picture courtesy of the Diocese of Alabama

In the two months since tornados ripped through the state, the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama has been busy. Days after the storms congregations were already helping their communities and neighbors with clean-up, debris removal, mass feedings and other immediate relief needs. The diocese and congregations provided emergency relief funds, volunteers, and other aid to people and families affected in over 17 communities.

St. Mathias Episcopal Church in Tuscaloosa became a volunteer coordination center as mostly untrained volunteers poured in from around the state. According to a story posted on the diocesan website, the center, run out of St. Mathias' parish hall, was staffed largely by St. Mathias' parishioners and operated by Compassionate Coalition, a group of area faith-

Newton Grove, NC
Tornado response, La
Iglesia de la Sagrada
Familia

Windsor, NC
Tornado response, St.
Thomas' Church

**Sanford & Raleigh,
NC**
Tornado response,
Diocese of North
Carolina

Current Disaster Recovery Programs:

**The Episcopal
Diocese of Alabama**
Diocesan case
management and home
reconstruction program.

**Episcopal Diocese of
East Tennessee -
Metropolitan
Ministries**
Direct assistance and
case management
program in impacted
rural areas
and Chattanooga.

**Episcopal Diocese of
Tennessee**
St. Luke's Community
House is now a
Restore the Dream
Center site and serves
the neighborhood of
West Nashville by
supporting home
reconstruction,
providing case
management services
and care for the care-
giver trainings.

**The Episcopal
Community Services
of Louisiana (ECSLA)**
Supports oil spill-
affected communities
as they adapt to the
financial, emotional and
social changes caused
by the oil spill through
case management and

based organizations. The center sent teams of volunteers in response to emergency needs identified by the Tuscaloosa Mayor's Office.

This sort of congregational response - jumping to action and responding to emergencies by helping communities however they can - is characteristic of Episcopal churches around the country. According to Katie Mears, Program Manager for Episcopal Relief & Development's US Disaster Program, this happens organically. "Episcopal churches around the country step in to help those in need, and many times they do this without ever asking for help or resources from others."

Spontaneous congregational responses are characteristic of the relief phase - those first few days after a disaster hits. The Diocese of Alabama is now slowly moving from the relief phase to long-term recovery. Soon after the storms, Bishop Henry Parsley appointed the Rev. Bill King and Judy Quick to conduct a diocesan-wide needs assessment to find out what kind of aid and programs would be of most use to impacted communities. Initial requests for grants had covered immediate needs like food and water, but the needs assessment showed that in the coming months, assistance with home reconstruction would be the greatest need for many families.

Episcopal churches can have a significant impact on their communities during the long-term recovery phase. They are in the communities long before a disaster hits and have well-established relationships with their neighbors; these churches will also be there in the future, and can continue to help long after the cameras and other organizations are gone. Episcopal Relief & Development partners with local Episcopal churches during this phase. "Episcopal Relief & Development supports and equips dioceses to work with congregations as they work with communities to recover in the long term," Mears said.

As the Diocese of Alabama transitions to long-term recovery, they have begun to plan a diocesan-wide program to assist the vulnerable rebuild their homes and their lives after the tornados. According to Quick, her job has been first to assess needs across the state, and then use that information to create a focused long-term program. "We want to be responsive to the needs of those communities, so we want to work with those congregations and communities to find what will work best at each site." With help from Episcopal Relief & Development, this program will hire case managers and construction supervisors as well as provide materials to rebuild homes all over the affected area.

Since the tornados hit, Episcopal churches across the Diocese of Alabama have been galvanized into action, extending a hand to those in their communities who are most in need. St. Paul's Church in Greensboro is one such parish, and the

supporting community resilience.

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.

congregation will continue to help throughout the long-term recovery process. As a congregation St. Paul's decided they wanted to help people that the media and everyone else had forgotten; to walk with them as they rebuilt their homes and lives. Their rector, the Rev. Richard Cobbs, believes that it is their mission to respond. "It's what we're called to do; not only that, it's fun!"

The Diocese of Alabama is now receiving volunteers to work with their recovery program. If you are interested in volunteering in Alabama please contact the diocesan volunteer coordinator, David Whetstone at whetstone@cablone.net.

Contact Us:

To add your name to the "Ready to Serve" volunteer and skills roster:

volunteer@er-d.org

Katie Mears
Program Manager
kmears@er-d.org

Alison Hare
ahare@er-d.org

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