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SEND TO FRIEND



# Lamplight

A Newsletter of the US Disaster Program



*"Be dressed, ready for service and keep your lamps burning."* — LUKE 12:35

Issue #14 | June/July, 2012

## A Note from Katie

*Hello Everyone,*

*Two quick things:*

1) *It's General Convention! I will be there from July 4-6. I'll be at the Episcopal Relief & Development booth with free coffee most of the time, and would love to say hi. Let me know if you are planning to be there or just stop on by and find me.*

2) *We've just completed the 2012 regional Diocesan Disaster Coordinator trainings--five trainings in five cities in five months. I have loved doing these trainings--getting to see so many of you, so many beautiful parts of this country, and most of all to hearing your stories, triumphs and learnings. Now I am back in the office and getting used to different, but no less exciting, work. This more grounded time means that all of those resources we have been promising--the adult forum curriculum, the diocesan disaster plan template, the disaster devotional etc. -- will be moving forward. As you develop your preparedness work at your diocese or your parish, please continue to let us know how we can support*



## In this Issue:

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[Partners in Response Visit Southern Indiana](#)

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## News:

**Fire Recovery in Texas**  
 A coordinated effort to help Bastrop County families recover from last September's wildfires has begun. Read more from the Diocese of Texas [here](#).

**Flood Relief in Pennsylvania**

you.

Peace,  
Katie

## God is Still Good: *Partners in Response* Visit Southern Indiana

by The Very Rev.  
Canon Michael  
Bamberger and the  
Ven. Russ Oechsel

At the invitation of  
the Episcopal  
Diocese of  
Indianapolis, we  
visited the area  
affected by the  
March 2, 2012



"God is Still Good" sign in  
tornado-impacted Indiana

tornadoes, rated EF-4 (second most destructive). This storm left a swath of death and destruction approximately 49 miles long and up to half a mile wide. Eleven people were killed and dozens more were injured. Hundreds of homes and businesses were destroyed and hundreds more were damaged.

We were immediately struck by the scale of the devastation. Whole communities were destroyed. While cleanup efforts have been ongoing, debris and evidence of what were once homes, buildings, and vehicles were everywhere. Yet a robust recovery effort is already underway. Under the auspices of a long-term recovery group formed within days of the tornado--March2Recovery--eight new homes are already under construction and many more are being repaired.

Using the Henryville Community Church as a base, groups of volunteers are arriving from all over the country to assist in the recovery. The diversity and interfaith spirit struck us as remarkable. There are Jewish and Muslim communities from Louisville, Kentucky, who come up every weekend to work together side by side with Christians of every persuasion. Clearly there is a need for volunteers in rebuilding, donations of money, and prayers. The Episcopal Relief & Development website is a starting place for those wanting to join the effort.

Accompanied by Kathy Copas, Coordinator for Communication and Evangelism in the Diocese of Indianapolis, we made contact with community leaders and survivors. Pastor Rich Cheek of Henryville Community Church has been a central figure since the first moments after the event. He told us of a

68 parishes in 14 counties in the Diocese of Bethlehem have come together to establish a regional disaster recovery and outreach center. Read more about their efforts to support neighbors flooded last September [here](#).

### Hurricane Irene Relief Efforts

Diocesan Disaster Coordinator Wade Chestnut discusses continuing Hurricane Irene response efforts along the Eastern seaboard. Watch that interview and learn about interfaith relief efforts [here](#).

### Join "Ready to Serve"

Offer your services to your vulnerable neighbors after a disaster. [Sign up here](#) to be called upon to volunteer.

## Volunteer Opportunities:

### Diocese of [Alabama](#)

Tornado Recovery

### Diocese of [Louisiana](#)

Home rebuild program

### Diocese of [North Dakota](#)

Flood recovery and home rebuild program in Minot

### Diocese of [Texas](#)

Home rebuild program in Bastrop

### Diocese of [North Carolina](#)

Hurricane Irene recovery program

## Current Disaster Recovery Projects:

### [HELP NOW!](#)

### The Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts

St. John's Episcopal Church in Williamstown is working with ecumenical partners to respond to Irene-related flooding.

### The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

All Saints Episcopal Church in Minot is coordinating with volunteers to rebuild flooded homes.

### The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

vision to not only replace what the people of the five affected counties had lost, but also to improve the quality of life there. Prior to the tornado, the local food bank had been serving 2,000 people a month. As in many disasters, low income individuals and families took the brunt of the damage. An estimated 40% of the people affected were uninsured and ineligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Small Business Agency (SBA) assistance.

During our visit, we met with the clergy and lay leaders of the three closest Episcopal congregations - Christ Episcopal Church in Madison, St. Paul's Church in Jeffersonville, and St. Paul's Church in New Albany. They immediately began efforts for relief and were quickly joined by the other 43 congregations in the Diocese of Indianapolis as well as parishes throughout the Episcopal Church.

As the recovery effort gains pace, the need for staff housing has emerged. In conjunction with Episcopal Relief & Development, the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis has applied for a grant to address this need. Initially, housing will be rented while the diocese builds a permanent structure, working with the Henryville Community Church. After the recovery effort is concluded, the permanent structure will serve the larger community as emergency housing for people needing refuge from personal calamities-- fires, domestic violence, and incarceration of family members. The grant request is envisioned as a way to care for the caregivers, serve the most vulnerable, and transform the community after the recovery is achieved.

*The Very Rev. Canon Michael A. Bamberger is Rector of Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Sierra Madre, California, and Diocesan Disaster Coordinator for the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. The Ven. Russ Oechsel is Archdeacon and Diocesan Disaster Co-Coordinator for the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. They serve as members of the Episcopal Relief & Development Partners in Response program.*

## When We Come Together: A community's disaster response

*by Wade H. Chestnut,  
Diocese Disaster  
Coordinator Diocese of  
North Carolina*

The morning of Saturday, April 16, 2011 was a beautiful spring morning - perfect for being outside, planting



Working with the Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, a case manager is connecting residents impacted by gradually rising flood waters to Church, non-profit and government services.

### **The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama**

Local programs and parishes are helping to provide long-term rebuilding and recovery assistance for the unmet needs of families affected by tornadoes in Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, Cullman, Sawyerville, Madison County and Dekalb County.

### **The Episcopal Community Services of Louisiana (ECSLA)**

Case managers are supporting affected communities as they adapt to the financial, emotional and social changes caused by the oil spill.

### **Jericho Road**

A neighborhood-based home-building organization is working to revitalize Central City, a New Orleans neighborhood recovering from Hurricane Katrina and decades of disinvestment.

### **Episcopal Diocese of Vermont**

The Episcopal Diocese of Vermont is working through a network of churches to support families affected by the floods resulting from Tropical Storm Irene.

### **Episcopal Diocese of Texas**

Calvary Episcopal Church is working with its ecumenical partners in Bastrop to rebuild homes destroyed by the fires in the fall of 2011.

### **Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem**

Trinity Episcopal Church in West Pittston is working with ecumenical partners in Northeast Pennsylvania to support neighbors affected by flooding as a result of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee in September 2011.



U.S. Disaster Program

### **Contact Us:**

Add your name to the "Ready to Serve" volunteer and skills roster at [volunteer@er-d.org](mailto:volunteer@er-d.org)

Katie Mears, Program Manager  
[kmears@er-d.org](mailto:kmears@er-d.org)



flowers, mowing the lawn or having a picnic with neighbors.

Home in Stony Brook Mobile Home Park, destroyed by tornado on April 16, 2011

However, shortly after noon, the sky became overcast and the local television stations began to interrupt 'normal programming' with weather alerts of possible tornadoes headed to the area. Tornadoes? In central North Carolina? Shortly after 3:45p.m., they arrived.



According to the National Weather Service, a tornado cut a path over a quarter-mile wide for 63- miles through central North Carolina that afternoon. By the time the tornado hit the Stony Brook Mobile Home Park in Raleigh, the winds were greater than 110 mph, strong enough to toss some mobile homes 30 to 50 feet when the tie-downs snapped from their anchor points. Breaking trees like toothpicks, the tornado came across a mobile home where two brothers and a cousin, ages 3, 8 and 9, had taken cover in the bathtub with the mother standing in the doorway with a 6 month old baby. The trailer was hit, taking the lives of the 4 children.

Ninety-five percent of Stony Brook residents identify as Hispanic or Latino. Many struggle with language barriers and documentation, thus facing extra challenges in accessing government assistance. This was already a vulnerable community before the storm, so this damage and the deaths posed particular challenges to recovery. When the tornado hit the 141-unit park that day, only 10 homes escaped damage. Approximately 25 were destroyed beyond repair and would need to be replaced. The more than 100 remaining homes would become the focus of volunteers over the course of the year.

Six Episcopal parishes and Diocesan House are all within five miles of Stony Brook, and all survived the storms without impact. The response of these parishes to those affected by the tornadoes in Wake County, and in particular to the residents of Stony Brook, was significant. There were also generous contributions made by a number of other parishes across the Diocese. In addition to countless volunteer hours, there were abundant contributions of food, clothing, gently used furniture and funds to the Bishop's Disaster Relief Fund, which funded the purchase of some of the construction materials used in the repair. Parishes located in other major cities as far as 200 miles away organized a 'white goods' drive, delivering a 24-foot U-Haul packed with new pillows, blankets, sheets, kitchen and bath towels, wash clothes, comforters, bed sets, mattress covers and other household linens to residents of the Park. Raleigh area parishes organized furniture drives that required several trucks to collect and deliver. Youth

groups from parishes across the Diocese spent their holiday weekends painting, building decks, installing doors and locks and installing skirting for residents in the Stony Brook Park.

Given the compactness of any mobile home park and the type of structures located in them, there is an acute need for disaster preparedness. In the case of Stony Brook Mobile Home Park, there were not any procedures or guidelines in place for residents to follow in case of a disaster. The Park's owners now realize that this must be rectified. A series of CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) classes are now being offered to residents. The Park owners are in conversation with a large recreational facility a block over, where residents can take cover when there are future severe weather warnings. Episcopal Relief & Development is working on 'Individual & Family Preparedness' brochures to be distributed to families living in the Park.

Perhaps the greatest lesson learned from working in the Park was that people of different faiths can indeed work together. This was visibly illustrated when groups from different denominations arrived shortly after the disaster. Each group was wearing brightly colored T-shirts that represented their organization or denomination. There was a sea of yellow T-shirts in one area of the Park, a sea of green in another, and purple and red in another. In just a few days all of the colors could be seen evenly dispersed across the Park as individuals left their respective groups to work with people of another faith tradition or denomination. A rainbow covenant shone over the Park that particular weekend as we came together to show our neighbors God's abundant love, alive in our working hands and open hearts.

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