The Response of the Church to the Needs of People in Post Katrina New Orleans

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On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi/Louisiana Gulf Coast. As winds pushed the water of Lake Pontchartrain south toward the city of New Orleans, several levees failed and flooded much of the city. Although most of the city’s population had evacuated ahead of the storm, thousands of residents who remained behind were forced to climb onto roofs and into trees to escape the flooding waters. Over 1,000 persons died and more than 110,000 of the 180,000 houses in New Orleans were flooded. Now, nearly 30 months after the storm, vast areas of the city still are struggling to recover.

The impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans area has been immense. Although the Central Business District has recovered enough to host the thousands of fans who attended two major college football games, other areas have not fared so well. Entire shopping centers have been demolished. Major hospitals and schools remain closed. The people of New Orleans are frustrated with the slow pace of recovery; the inaction of government; and increased crime, particularly murders.

While many institutions have failed to deal with the needs of the people of New Orleans, faith-based organizations have come from all over the United States to minister to the hurting people in the city. This paper will present an overview of the actions, difficulties, and lessons learned from the efforts of faith-based groups to help the people of New Orleans recover from the impact of Katrina on their lives.