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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 #2 - October 2010

In This Issue

[A Note from Katie: Visit to Yonkers](#)

["Ready to Serve" -- A Volunteer Sign-Up](#)

[Hurricane Ike: Two Years Later](#)

 Forward to a Friend

NEWS

Welcome Alison!
 Alison Hare joined the US Disaster Program team to work on the resource library and other preparedness tools. Alison has worked extensively internationally, but most recently, spent the past six months leading crews with the Episcopal Relief & Development-supported program in the

A Note from Katie: Visit to Yonkers

One of the things that continually surprises me about this job is just how many Episcopal churches around the country are actively engaged in disaster response. So many think of this ministry as just part of who they are, part of what they do, their posture toward the world, and they don't apply for outside funds so the projects never cross my desk. But their stories and their experiences need to be spread around the Episcopal Church community to remind others what is possible and to encourage others to respond in the same way.



Recently, Alison and I had the opportunity to visit one of those parishes. We took the train up to Iglesia San Andres in Yonkers, NY, a quick half hour ride north from New York City. I had read that the Rev. Yamily Bass-Choate had just won an award from the American Red Cross for the parish's response to an apartment building fire in their community, and I wanted to be able to speak with her about this ministry.

I expected to hear a powerful story - and I did - but I didn't expect to be so inspired.

Diocese of Texas. We're glad she's here.

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.

-[Resource library and preparedness tips](#): find tools and stories to help you with preparedness planning and emergency response.

-**Interactive volunteer program map** (coming soon!)

Current Emergency Relief Projects:

Destin, FL

Oil spill recovery, St. Andrew's by the Sea.

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.

First the story: Bass-Choate is the priest at a small, Spanish-speaking church. One afternoon last February, while she was working with the children at the parish after-school program, they heard emergency vehicles just up the block. Bass-Choate walked over to see what was going on and arrived to see fire fighters rescuing people from the building. In the chaos, these people, many of them elderly, were being left on the sidewalk with only what they had in their hands: no warm clothes, no medication, no food - remember, on the sidewalk in February in New York. Bass-Choate knew that there were coats that had just been donated back at the church, so she brought them up to those that needed them. Soon she invited everyone to come back with her to the warmth of the church. Seventy-five people ended up spending the next few days and nights at Iglesia San Andres - eating, sleeping, and getting information about recovery programs. The San Andres community pulled together to make it happen; some parishioners brought food, some watched the kids, some cleaned the bathrooms. After a few days, the Red Cross was able to find all the families more long-term housing in area motels, and the church operation shut down.

What was most inspiring about hearing Bass-Choate tell this story was just how matter of fact she was - there were people suffering down the block and she knew that somehow she and her church could be of service. They opened the doors of San Andres and trusted that between what they had, the generosity of strangers and the grace of God, they would be able to meet the needs of the people. And they did.

Ultimately, the Rev. Bass-Choate has faith in the world we live in, that people are basically good and ready to serve each other. The church just needs to be the example of that faith in human goodness, needs to provide people with the opportunity to let that version of themselves shine.

I hope we all can live in that vision. To learn more about this program and others around the country, visit our resource library. If you know of any other stories like this one, please let us know - we'd love to help share it.

-Katie

For tips from Bass-Choate on how to set up an emergency temporary [shelter](#), visit our resource library.

"Ready to Serve" - A Volunteer Sign-Up

Imagine that towns along the Skunk River in Marshall County, Iowa have flooded after heavy rains. A local church in the area has talked with the affected community and decided it wants to set up a home repair program. In their discussions with the community, parish members have also discovered that language may be a barrier for many people who need help, since there is a large immigrant population in the affected area. The program will probably need construction specialists and people with Spanish language skills to help them out, but the

St. Bernard Parish, LA
Oil spill recovery, St. Anna's Episcopal Church and Episcopal Community Services of Louisiana

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, which works to revitalize Central City, a New Orleans neighborhood recovering from Hurricane Katrina damage and decades of disinvestment.

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas: rebuilds homes for elderly and disabled residents affected by Hurricane Ike in Galveston and the surrounding communities.

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

Contact Us:

To add your name to the "Ready to Serve" volunteer and skills roster:
Volunteer@er-d.org

priest at that Iowa church may not know who to turn to, or who is available to help. Access to a regularly updated database of Episcopal volunteers willing to help in times of disaster would be key for this parish in the creation of its program.

As part of the preparedness initiative of Episcopal Relief & Development's US Disaster Program, we aim to assist dioceses in utilizing local volunteers in times of need. "Ready to Serve" is a database that maintains information about anyone willing to serve in a disaster response. Anyone who might be interested in volunteering should visit the [US Disaster Program](#) page of the [Episcopal Relief & Development](#) website and click on the link to the ["Ready to Serve"](#) volunteer database under the US Disaster Preparedness Initiative. You can fill out a form with your contact information and any useful skills you have. Special skills include: language, social work, construction, first aid training, having led/participated in emergency response projects before, etc. After you sign up, Episcopal Relief & Development and your local church leaders will know how to reach you to ask for your help.



Hurricane Ike: Two Years Later

September 13 marked the anniversary of the second year since Hurricane Ike made landfall in Galveston, TX, a barrier island off the southern coast approximately 40 miles from Houston. Supported by Episcopal Relief & Development, the Episcopal Diocese of Texas began recovery efforts as early as October, and eventually created a diocesan Hurricane Ike response program. Over the past two years this volunteer-based reconstruction program has used 3,000 individual volunteers to help 175 families return to their homes. These volunteers have completed over 50,000 hours of work, valued at over \$1 million worth of labor.



This program targeted the most vulnerable - often those like the handicapped, mentally ill or elderly. While working on another house in his neighborhood, Program Coordinator Maggie Immler met Terry, a 58-year-old cabinet maker. The Episcopal Diocese of Texas was able to help Terry, whose home took in five feet of water. Terry had also lost his leg in the storm and though he received a prosthetic limb, he still struggled to find work. With funds from Episcopal Relief & Development the house was completely rebuilt in four months,

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including installing carpets in colors he chose and cabinets he built himself. Terry now builds cabinets for other homes reconstructed by the Episcopal Church, and has also been able to rebuild his client base and his livelihood.

For Immler, the Episcopal program is important because "we are here to fill in the gap." The program rebuilds homes for people who don't qualify for enough federal assistance to fully repair or who lost money through fraud. But most of these people have now been helped, and it is time to start winding down the operation. They believe that volunteer-based projects will continue through the end of January, with any remaining jobs being completed by staff through the end of February. But, Immler says, the impact of the diocese's Hurricane Ike response program does not end there. "One of our goals is and has been to leave the diocese better prepared for the next time a disaster hits. The idea is that the diocese will be able to assess community needs quickly, then plan and respond efficiently." To accomplish this goal, the approach has been threefold: the first step has been to advise parishes and congregations on preparedness. Second, at the diocesan level, the program has trained spiritual care teams in pastoral care and assessing community needs, so they are ready to deploy when necessary. Finally, the staff has been working on developing documents of lessons learned and best practices, guaranteeing institutional memory for use in case of another disaster.

Throughout the program's run, Immler believes they've made a substantial difference in many families' lives, as well as in the community. A significant impact, she thinks, comes from the presence of volunteers. "Having homeowners meet thousands of people from all over the country, and understand that all these people care, is half of what we do." For Immler, though, what has been most powerful is the level of commitment of the Episcopal Church in helping the community of Galveston.

"What has made our program meaningful is that we were there working not only a month after the storm, but have had a continued presence for over two years. It has allowed us to work with people like Terry, who might not have necessarily received help otherwise."

If you're interested in volunteering in Galveston, please contact Luke Blount, Volunteer Coordinator, at:

volunteer@epicenter.org
or 713.252.9693

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