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Lagniappe embarks on exciting transition....

Over 20 new homes....over 400 rebuilds/rehabs....more sheds than we could count....and nearly 17,000 volunteers- God *has done* wonderful things in Bay St. Louis. God is doing something else wonderful now! I As I have told hundreds of volunteer teams, 'Lagniappe is NOT a construction company, we ARE a church.' That truth has never been more evident or needed than it is today in Hancock County. As of June 1, 2009 Lagniappe will no longer be constructing or rebuilding homes on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. We are transitioning from 'relief' to 'development'. Please note- this has ALWAYS been our plan, always. (see [6 Year Strategy](#) & [Spiritual Presuppositions](#)) We were never sure what the perfect timing would be, but there were several providential factors that led to the decision at this time:

- [Habitat for Humanity](#) is a viable, thriving ministry in Bay St. Louis providing homes for low-moderate income residents. As we have moved further away from Katrina our clientele have begun to mirror their clientele. We don't feel called to duplicate the work that another ministry, by design, does extremely well. At this time, we are VERY comfortable with their ability to keep pace with the need and continue providing homes for local, low-income families.
- Commercial builders have now moved into the area who share our desire to see needy families get back in homes. Some of these are able to provide housing for families at prices that are in the ballpark with our homes. One builder in particular is able to pair the home with some creative and accessible mortgage underwriting which is a real plus for our families. We feel comfortable that this market niche can continue to be addressed by these commercial builders.
- Grant funding for rebuilding that was proposed to be available in January 2009, will not be available until, at best, the 4th quarter of '09. We had budgeted and planned to be using that funding for all of our building in 2009. We are not able to put our construction staff on hold until the monies 'hopefully' come available. It is also unmanageable to have have staff searching for 'fill-in' work during that time. We did not want to provide our valuable volunteers with 'busy' work. We would rather re-direct those efforts to needy areas of the country for which the timing better coincides with their needs and funds.

At the present time we are working to complete all the homes that are in process. ALL TEAMS booked until May 31, 2009 should still plan to come and work on those projects. We are assembling a list of other opportunities for teams that will have to re-book in other places. That list will be posted on our website when available.

With regard to the future, Lagniappe is making plans to move toward community development and restoration as well as continuing our worship and work as an ecclesiastical body. The preaching and teaching of the Word will continue to be preeminent. Demonstration without declaration has no place in a Gospel believing church. We will continue to worship together, gather new believers, enjoy the Lord's Supper and have community Bible studies on a weekly basis. We plan to spend the months following construction dreaming, planning and implementing ways to be involved in the needs that Katrina exposed. Creation has been 'groaning' as the Scripture says, since the fall of man. That Fall touched all areas of life. We seek to bring the restorative

power of the Gospel to all these areas.

With regard to specific strategies for what 'demonstration' without construction might look like please consider the following:

- Hurricane Katrina created physical needs, but it more profoundly unearthed underlying spiritual needs.
- Many residents found themselves without the personal resources to move toward recovery because of a myriad of issues that 'made landfall' in their lives long before Katrina entered the Gulf.
- Most of those issues are symptomatic of deeper spiritual needs.
- We MUST be willing to answer the deep questions that the hurting lives of our residents are asking as well as provide triage and healing for the symptoms which they deal with every day.

With those presuppositions in mind, we will be working toward redemptive relationships with residents that:

- Address generational issues which have compounded and finally culminated in the lives of our residents i.e. single parent families, multiple children with multiple partners, divorce, estrangement and 'normal' dysfunctional homes. This might look like parenting classes, pre-marital seminars, post-marital counselling and education on healthy family structures.
- Address financial issues including the ability of many residents to make and keep a budget; the ability to secure employment which is beneficial to their family's stability; the education of individuals with regard to basic consumer math, predatory lending, credit issues and the value of saving money.
- Address a myriad of other issues which might broadly fall under the heading 'other.' These could be as broad as personal health, addiction, substance abuse and mental health issues.
- Address these issues not only at the adult level, but seek to enter into the lives of our youth in order that when the 'Katrinas' of the next generation come they might not only be prepared to recover personally, but to be propelled into the lives of others that hurt.

After making pages of notes with observations of 'pre-Katrina' issues I showed them to one of our other staff members. We both exhaled deeply and I said to her, "This makes building homes look easy...." She laughed and agreed. One must not misperceive our ultimate desire in addressing these 'symptomatic' issues in the culture. I had a pastor at the church planting assessment center tell me the following, "The answer to everyone's question is the Gospel. Ministry is spending enough time with people to help them figure out what question they are asking." Profound. Our primary desire is to see the hope of Christ implanted in every heart. We must understand however that to ignore the 'thirst' of their present lives thinking that we are only called to give 'Living Water' is to actually give thirsty and parched men a pseudo-gospel which is as malnourished as their present lives are.

We are VERY EXCITED about this transition! That is not the 'spin' on a really sad event that has a 'fake evangelical smile' plastered on top because we know we are supposed to

believe that 'all things work for good.' Our intention has always been to be a 'normal' church (those of you who know us well are smiling here....as you should). We have been and will continue to be a transformational community of believers in this city. A church MUST be willing to take the pulse of it's community and address the places where the community is asking the questions that ONLY the Gospel answers. We have been and will continue to be that kind of church.

With regard to our staff: some staff will remain to be part of this new stage at Lagniappe, some staff will be moving on to new adventures, some will be seeking other employment in the area and others will relish the opportunity to become Bay residents who are simply members of this church they love so dearly.

Please keep us in your prayers. Please remember us when you give. Our little mission church has 29 members. You helped us till the soil of this area during the rebuilding, please consider continuing your support as we water the soil and see God bring the growth.

-Jean F. Larroux, III