

MISSION  
TO NORTH  
AMERICA

Presbyterian Church in America

# Multiply

*Profiling God's Great Work in North America*

## Dear Friends:

This year's hurricane season has devastated portions of the United States, especially areas in the Gulf Coast. Millions have been affected. Loved ones were lost. Homes were destroyed. Lives were tattered and bruised. Just in the last few months, we've experienced some of the strongest storms in our country's history.

In this issue of *Multiply*, we feature the incredible response of the Body of Christ to those affected by Hurricane Katrina. Churches and individuals in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) came to the aid of their brothers and sisters in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama through Mission to North America (MNA) Disaster Response. By volunteering practical support, offering housing, and donating money and supplies, these individuals exhibited Christ's love to thousands. They offered hope where there was none and answered God's call to feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

The hurricane season was not over when we went to press. Hurricane Wilma had just hit and we were still in the process of assessing damage. Rita earlier had devastated parts of Texas and Louisiana. To keep up-to-date on relief efforts, visit [www.pca-mna.org](http://www.pca-mna.org) and click on the link to the MNA Disaster Response Web page. Please pray for those who have lost so much to these storms. Pray that the Lord will comfort them and provide for them. Pray also for those involved in relief and rebuilding that the Lord will strengthen and encourage them. I also ask you to prayerfully consider how the Lord would have you participate in these efforts. Let us wrap our arms around our neighbors in the loving nature of our Savior Jesus Christ.

In Christ,



Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator



Hurricane Katrina slammed the Gulf Coast as a strong category four storm. Its fierce assault toppled trees and buildings and tossed cars around like toys. In New Orleans, two levees failed, adding to the already rising flood waters. Government officials estimated that 80 percent of the city was under water.

Like so many New Orleans residents, Kedrick Levey, a staff member of Desire Street Ministries, and his family were devastated by the hurricane. All they had left after the storm was loaded into the back of a pickup truck. They headed to Atlanta, Ga., where they stayed in temporary housing provided by Westminster Presbyterian.

Mo and his family evacuated New Orleans, as did about 100 other people from Desire Street Ministries. They went everywhere; some sought shelter in Texas and Arkansas, while others headed to Mississippi and Georgia. Then, they waited. "We watched it as it barreled its way toward New Orleans," Mo said. "The closer it got the more the reality began to sink in. It was the storm everyone had feared. We tried to focus on our one eternal city. ***We knew that no matter how much we loved New Orleans, we needed to prepare our hearts for the worst.***"

For residents in New Orleans, where Mo and his family have lived for 15 years, the chance of a devastating storm like Katrina was always in the back of their minds. They knew the layout of the city and position below sea level made it vulnerable to heavy damage and severe flooding. Knowing is one thing, but when it actually happened, the reality became so much more than anyone ever imagined.

Katrina made landfall in the early morning hours of Monday, August 29, hitting the Gulf Coast region from Louisiana to Alabama. Ron and Judy Haynes waited out the storm in St. Louis, Missouri. As director of MNA Disaster Response, Ron was no stranger to the pattern of a hurricane. In 2004, Ron and Judy spent more than eight months in Florida helping several communities recover from four hurricanes. The PCA General Assembly assigns

## The Body of Christ Embraces Those Hit by Hurricane

***The news channels confirmed it. It was the storm everyone had feared.*** The winds roared. The levees broke. The people cried for help. The Body of Christ joined hands.

Hurricane Katrina first hit South Florida. Mo Leverett, director of Desire Street Ministries in New Orleans, Louisiana, watched the storm. "It



was a category one storm in Florida, considered small. We kept an eye on it, but for the most part went on with our lives. A few days later, I was taking my daughter to an activity when my wife called me. She said it was a category four on the verge of a category five and heading straight for us."

First Presbyterian in Biloxi, Miss., is located right on the beach; damage to the church building was substantial, but it was still usable. The church served as one of several staging areas for MNA Disaster Response. "These staging areas are a central place to coordinate outreach in the surrounding communities and to support the volunteers while they work," explained Ron Haynes.

(Continued)



Above, left to right:

In Biloxi, Miss., volunteers served 40,000 pounds of food in one day. The church also served as a shelter. "Even though this congregation had personally suffered through the storm, they turned around and sacrificed and served everyone. It was an incredible picture of Christ," said Brandon Presbyterian Pastor Tim Muse.

Another staging area was in Picayune, Miss., at First Presbyterian. Pastor Stan Layton, left, with Elder Jim Delaney, described the first week: "So many people wanted to help. Working out the logistics of housing volunteers and planning the work was hard at first, but everything came together. This relief work of the Lord's has been a great witness in many ways."

Faith Presbyterian in Brookhaven, Miss., for the most part made it through the storm with little damage. Pastor Rob Oates reported: "About 12 of our families had significant damage to their homes. In addition to helping our own, the congregation was also able to provide shelter and food to about 200 evacuees, many from the New Orleans area."

Below: The force of the storm crumpled Brandon Presbyterian's steeple in Brandon, Miss. Despite this damage, the church had power and water. These resources, as well as the church's location just north of the affected areas, made it a key site to serve as MNA Disaster Response's main administrative staging area and as a shelter for volunteers.

to MNA the responsibility of assisting churches and presbyteries in responding to disasters in North America that are beyond the resources of the presbyteries affected. ***It is the PCA who responds – churches and presbyteries helping one another.*** MNA's role is to assist in coordinating that grassroots response.

When Katrina brushed Florida, Ron and Judy checked in with the churches in the areas hit. With minimal damage there, they determined needs could be addressed through volunteers within the state. They then sat and waited, like many others, to see what the storm would do. Once Katrina hit the Gulf Coast and the weather cleared, Ron and Judy headed down. They reached Brandon Presbyterian near Jackson, Mississippi, where the familiar face of Pastor Tim Muse greeted them. Tim serves as the chair of the Disaster Response sub-committee for the Mississippi Valley Presbytery. "We were working with Ron and Judy before Katrina to be prepared for something like this," Tim said. "Those initial steps turned out to be instrumental in the effectiveness of our response."

***Within a day, several volunteers began working together to set up the staging area for the relief efforts*** in the fellowship hall of Brandon Presbyterian. The Brandon church provided their facilities as the base for relief operations, along with many volunteer hours from church members. "It was an awesome sight to see how the resources came together," related Judy, who oversees the administrative aspect of MNA Disaster Response. "The day after we arrived we had a task force set up, laptops and cell phones loaned to us, and volunteers to answer the phones."

Sherry Lanier, wife of Assistant Pastor Steve Lanier at Redeemer Church in Jackson, Mississippi, used her administrative gifts to establish a system for handling calls and coordinating the volunteers. "We needed to create an administrative infrastructure that was adequate to the task at hand. We placed our needs before the Lord, and He raised up the right people at the right time."

One of those right people was Will Hinton, a member of Intown Community Church in Atlanta, Georgia. "The Tuesday after Katrina hit I put a posting on my online blog asking if anyone could offer temporary housing for those displaced by the storm," he said. "Within two days, 20 churches responded. I spoke with the Disaster Response team to try to figure out an effective way to coordinate the housing. We saw an additional need for an online home for the PCA relief efforts."

Working with several other PCA members in various parts of the country, Will helped create a Web site, [www.pcarelief.org](http://www.pcarelief.org), which allowed volunteers to sign up to offer housing and practical support, as well as provided MNA Disaster Response with an easier way to accept online donations. "These men designed a database so that anyone anywhere who wanted to offer help could," Sherry explained. ***"They accomplished in three days what would normally take 6 to 12 months of work. That was just a testimony to the Lord answering the need."***



With the administrative support in the hands of Judy and Sherry, Ron was able to assemble teams to go in and assess the damage. "The first two days we drove around to see where the worst areas were. We contacted the churches to find out about damage and to check on the pastors and the people. We started with four staging areas at four churches and then expanded out into the surrounding communities."

One staging area was in Picayune, Mississippi, at First Presbyterian, which sustained only minimal damage from the storm. Jack Ewing, an elder of Westminster Presbyterian in Fort Myers, Florida, headed up the effort and had firsthand knowledge of what it was like to live through a hurricane and receive support from Disaster Response. "Last year, we



***“A large part of ministry in this situation is to appreciate the horrific nature of the storm and the incredible reality these people have endured.”*** Roger Collins, pastor, Grace Presbyterian, Jackson, Miss.

were hit by Hurricane Charley,” he recalled. “I was a recipient of Disaster Response’s services, so I knew what was needed. It’s hard to live through difficult circumstances like these that are beyond your control.”

First Presbyterian Pastor Stan Layton was overwhelmed at the support his community received. “One group came from Pennsylvania and another from Nashville. Everyone worked together, helping one another. It’s a real blessing to be the object of such incredible love. The Lord has reminded us that the church is not just us. It is so much bigger than us.”

Keith Garehan, pastor of Trinity Presbyterian in Slidell, Louisiana, had evacuated with much of his community. “We watched the news after the storm, but there was no news about Slidell. A few days later, we found out that 60 percent of the town had flooded after a 15 foot storm surge. The damage and devastation was heartbreaking. When the first team of volunteers came in and led worship on that first Sunday, we shared stories and cried together. It was a rich reminder that God is faithful and good.”

***Within the first two weeks after the storm, more than 1,300 volunteers had signed up with Disaster Response.*** Judy said the outpouring of support was incredible, but also warned that the recovery is going to be a long-term process. “When we bring in volunteers, there are several factors to consider. Road closures, no fuel, no water, no electricity, health issues, and housing are all barriers to overcome in this work. We are so thankful for those offering help, but it’s going to be a long road. ***We need the volunteers to work with us throughout the rebuilding, which, in this case, will take many months.***”

Arklie Hooten, MNA ShortTerm director, has been working alongside Ron and Judy, not only to support the immediate response but also to assess the long-term needs. “After Ron and Judy determine that the need for MNA Disaster Response is no longer necessary, MNA ShortTerm will help with the longer term work. When there is no longer a need for volunteers with chain saws, we work on bringing in volunteers to help rebuild.”

For Mo Leverett, his focus after the storm was locating his staff and members of the ministry. He also felt renewed in his commitment to the Lord’s work in New Orleans, ***“We lost everything, as did our neighbors, but the Lord is working. I’ve seen the Body of Christ kicked into high gear.*** They’ve put their arms around us and the family that is Desire Street Ministries and have responded heroically. I have a greater love for the church and for the Kingdom of God than ever before in my life. We are going to be a part of rebuilding New Orleans.” ■

Six PCA churches experienced major building damage or loss of congregation income due to Katrina. All that remains of the beautifully built First Presbyterian in Gulfport, Miss., are its four walls. Water gutted the sanctuary and wiped out the first level, taking everything – even the furniture bolted to the ground.



**Above, left to right:**

In the first few days after the storm, Ron Haynes called upon experienced volunteers to help clear trees. “We went to one church member’s house to clear a tree and passed another house with a tree on the roof. We stopped to clear it, and the homeowner asked, ‘Why are you doing this for me?’ Even with chain saws, we are sharing the love of Christ.”

Members of Redemption Fellowship in Fayetteville, Ga., provided supplies to displaced students. “We had 80 book bags that were donated by Redeemer Presbyterian in New York, and we were able to distribute all but six,” said church member Beverly Black. “We weren’t sure what to do with the remaining bags until we got a call from a woman desperately searching for book bags. Showing how God plans these things, she needed exactly six!”

Many of the members of Trinity Presbyterian in Slidell, La., were deeply affected by the storm. But even in the midst of such personal tragedy, the congregation worked with Disaster Response volunteers in the surrounding neighborhoods to offer practical support. Pastor Keith Garehan called it a “miraculous work of the Lord.”



Left: Desire Street Ministries offices, New Orleans, Louisiana

## Ongoing Support Imperative for Rebuilding Hurricane Ravaged Areas

The impact of this year's hurricanes is wide-spread. In order to adequately support those whose lives were shattered by the storms, a long-term commitment to the rebuilding efforts is vital. MNA ministries are working together to meet the needs of the communities and to link PCA churches and individuals to opportunities to get involved.

**MNA Disaster Response** works with churches and presbyteries to handle the immediate needs after a disaster. In response to the hurricanes, Ron and Judy Haynes will remain in the area as long as the needs demand and there are volunteers to place. Skilled volunteers are needed to support construction projects and to offer lay counseling to individuals and families.

**MNA ShortTerm** focuses on developing and implementing short term ministry opportunities within North America, which will include meeting the longer term needs of the churches affected by the storms. Arklie Hooten, MNA ShortTerm director, works with churches and individuals to identify needs and match volunteers to opportunities based on skills. In many of the storm-ravaged areas, the churches have lost a substantial portion of their congregations, as many people are rebuilding their lives in other cities and states. These churches need not only financial support, but also require volunteers gifted in community outreach and evangelism to help reestablish vital ministries.

**Hurricane Recovery Church Sponsorship** is designed to pair those PCA churches and ministries damaged by the hurricanes with sponsoring churches from other parts of North America. This effort will allow the affected churches to continue at least a minimum of their ministry programs and maintain critical full-time staff. MNA invites concerned churches and individuals to sponsor these churches as they rebuild and grow back to good health. For more information, contact [MNChurchRecoverySponsorship@pcanet.org](mailto:MNChurchRecoverySponsorship@pcanet.org).

"These churches and ministries have basically been run over by these storms," Arklie explains. "This relief and rebuilding effort will take many months, even years. It is important for the PCA to stand with our brothers and sisters as they reclaim their lives."

Please prayerfully consider how you might be involved with the long-term rebuilding efforts in the areas hit by the hurricanes. *For up-to-date information on the needs and volunteer opportunities, visit [www.pca-mna.org](http://www.pca-mna.org).*



Trinity Presbyterian, Slidell, Louisiana

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

*From Embers to a Flame* will be held Jan 19-22, 2006, at Briarwood Presbyterian in Birmingham, Alabama. Visit [www.emberstoafire.org](http://www.emberstoafire.org) for more information . . . **The English Ministry Korean Pastors Conference** will meet Jan. 23-25, 2006, at Korean Central Presbyterian, Vienna, Virginia. **For more information, visit [www.pca-mna.org](http://www.pca-mna.org).** . . . *The North American Church Planter Training Seminar* will be held Jan. 30-Feb. 3, 2005, at the Ivanhoe Plaza Hotel, Orlando, Florida. For more information, visit [www.pca-mna.org](http://www.pca-mna.org).

***"We'll need long-term solutions and response. My hope is that people don't just go back to life as usual when the media stops covering. It's natural to only deal with it while it's in the press, but the needs are going to be ongoing. Sponsoring other churches is the best means of establishing the long-term support that will be essential to rebuilding."***

Tim Muse  
Pastor of Brandon Presbyterian  
Brandon, Mississippi

Mission to North America (MNA) serves the churches and presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), providing leadership in church planting initiatives, as well as placement and training services for church planters in the US and Canada. In addition, MNA coordinates English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministry, Mercy Ministries, Leadership and Ministry Preparation (LAMP), Revitalization and Evangelism, Capitol Service, Chaplain Ministries, MNA ShortTerm and Disaster Response for the PCA in North America.

For a list of MNA staff, visit our Web site: [www.pca-mna.org](http://www.pca-mna.org).

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