

To Give is to Receive

Bishops Lee, Johnston and Jones Participate in Group Workday in New Orleans and Mississippi

By Emily Cherry

NEW ORLEANS, La. -- Bishops traded purple shirts and collars for t-shirts and baseball caps during a group workday in New Orleans on September 22. After convening in House of Bishops conversations for two days, the approximately 150 bishops present were dispersed to various locations in the dioceses of Mississippi and Louisiana to repair, restore and renew the areas that were devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

"I was so impressed with how the churches in the Diocese of Louisiana have responded to serving the community at large," said Bishop Peter Lee, who spent part of the day clearing brush and debris from a New Orleans house. His group of bishops also visited St. Paul's Episcopal Church in the Lakeview area of New Orleans—a church that, during Hurricane Katrina, was flooded by nine feet of water.



While Bishop Lee "mucked" in New Orleans, Bishop Shannon Johnston got a lesson in hanging sheet rock in Mississippi. Joined by Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and other bishops and spouses from the Episcopal Church, Bishop Johnston spent the morning touring devastated areas of the Gulf Coast before stopping at Camp Coast Care, an organization sponsored by Lutheran Episcopal Services that coordinates relief and reconstruction efforts and houses volunteers in Long Beach, Miss. After hearing from some of the families who have benefited from Camp Coast Care's work, the bishops were dispatched to different homes to install sheet rock and paint.

Back in New Orleans, Bishop David Jones helped wire a newly built house for electricity thanks to the Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative. Formed in March 2006 as a partnership between the Diocese of Louisiana and Episcopal Relief and Development, the Initiative is rebuilding communities and neighborhoods, not just buildings and houses. "I was so pleased to be able to participate myself," said Bishop Jones, noting that he will be able to better understand the experience of the hurricane victims and the Virginia mission workers who travel to the area.

And the bishops didn't just give—they received as well. Gratitude was a major theme for the day. When Kay Jones, Bishop Jones' wife, finished her day of painting for the Jericho Road Housing Initiative, a diocesan coordinator pointed out one of several trucks donated to the Diocese of Louisiana from the Diocese of Virginia. At a block party in the Ninth Ward, Bishop Jones was approached by a Louisiana staff member who wanted to personally thank the Diocese of Virginia for relief aid and contributions. And while Bishop Lee was touring the neighborhood around St. Paul's Church, he saw a mobile restroom trailer that travels around the area for residents without plumbing. On the trailer were the words "A Gift of the Diocese of Virginia." "They know that we've been supportive and they're very grateful," remarked Bishop Lee.

Returning to the Diocese of Mississippi, Bishop Johnston noted that "the progress has been very strong. They now have overcome initial logistical problems." Work, however, remains to be done. Some report that to fully repair and reconstruct all of the homes damaged or demolished by Hurricane Katrina, 50 houses would need to be completed every day for the next 10 years. When Bishop Johnston returns to the Diocese of Virginia later this week, he'll bring back "a sense of the unimaginable ongoing need." The need for volunteer labor remains high in both dioceses to accomplish the massive amount of recovery and rebuilding that remains to be done. It may be true that time may heal all wounds, "but we need 10 years of time," said Bishop Johnston.

On Sunday, all three bishops will travel to churches in the dioceses of Mississippi and Louisiana to join in worship. The House of Bishops will reconvene for two more days of meetings starting on Monday, September 24. "I am optimistic that there will be greater understanding between representatives of the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church," said Bishop Lee.

PICTURE ABOVE: During a House of Bishops group workday in Mississippi, Bishop Shannon Johnston (center) hands off a load of insulation as Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori (right) looks on. This team of bishops worked to install sheet rock at a home that Camp Coast Care is renovating.



The Work is "Just Beginning" *House of Bishops Engages in Conversation with Archbishop of Canterbury, Looks towards Mission*

By Emily Cherry

September 21, 2007

NEW ORLEANS, La. -- Conversation was the order of the day for the start of the House of Bishops meeting on September 20 and 21 at the InterContinental Hotel in New Orleans. Over 150 bishops from the Episcopal Church were joined by invited guests Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, four members of the Primates' Standing Committee and nine members of the Anglican Consultative Council's Standing Committee.

The private meetings included an exchange of ideas, as well as a set of working questions posed to the bishops by Archbishop Williams regarding their roles as bishops, and how they see themselves being able to provide appropriate pastoral care for the entire Church. Media briefer the Rt. Rev. John Rabb, bishop of the Diocese of Maryland, characterized the conversations as both "respectful" and "rich in content." The bishops' sessions will resume on Monday. "The work here is not finished," emphasized Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori. "It is in fact just beginning."

No decision emerged regarding the hot-topic of the House of Bishops' response to the communiqué issued by the primates of the Anglican Communion after their February 2007 meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Among other issues, this communiqué requested that the Episcopal Church "make an unequivocal common covenant that the

bishops will not authorize any Rite of Blessing for same-sex unions in their dioceses or through General Convention" by September 30.

In a press conference on September 21, Archbishop Williams made clear that the requests of the communiqué were by no means an ultimatum. Any decisions made by the House of Bishops will be examined by the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates Joint Standing Committee and the Archbishop. "I hope these days will result in a constructive and fresh way forward for us all," said Archbishop Williams, making clear that he and his fellow bishops felt that "the need that we have for each other is very deep," adding, "I think it would be rather an admission of defeat if we said we were incapable of working together."

Bishops with a Mission

"Humanity renewed, restored, re-centered in God" was the theme of the evening at an ecumenical service for 2,000-plus attendees at the Morial Convention Center on September 20. To help achieve this renewal, restoration and re-centering, Bishop Jefferts Schori issued a challenge to each bishop prior to the meeting to bring a \$10,000 contribution for the dioceses of Louisiana and Mississippi. Generous giving from Virginia Episcopalians in response to a request issued jointly by Bishop Lee, Bishop Johnston and Bishop Jones resulted in a gift double that amount. At the ecumenical service, each bishop processed to the front of the auditorium to present his or her donation, reaching a grand total of \$931,000 for rebuilding homes and parishes.

Mission remains a crucial component of the bishops' gathering. On Saturday, September 22, the bishops will travel throughout the dioceses of Mississippi and Louisiana for a group workday. Bishop Lee is scheduled to work at St. Paul Homecoming Center, while Bishops Jones and Johnston will report to the Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative. "One of the greatest privileges of being here has been the chance to see something of the quite outstanding work being done by the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana in the ongoing work of social reconstruction in a city still deeply scarred by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina two years ago," said Archbishop Williams.

When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, jazz musician Irvin Mayfield's father, Irvin Mayfield Sr., was reported as one of those missing. When his body was found, his son retired a song that he had played for his father while he was missing. On Thursday evening, Irvin Mayfield took "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" out of retirement for the bishops and attendees present at the ecumenical worship service. Playing a unique trumpet created to honor the memory of his father, the Elysian Trump, Mr. Mayfield and his quartet closed the evening, inspiring a procession of attendees to dance through aisles, throw their handkerchiefs in the air and sing "When the Saints go Marching in," making the evening a uniquely New Orleans-style celebration. As Bishop Charles Jenkins of the Diocese of Louisiana said, "I told the archbishop that the only thing Elizabethan about this service tonight would be him."

For continued updates from the House of Bishops, please visit http://www.episcopalchurch.org/89878_ENG_HTM.htm.