

January 31, 2008

An open letter to the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We represent the five presbyteries most severely affected by the violent hurricanes of 2005 (Katrina, Rita and Wilma); and we want to share with you our thoughts from the frontlines of recovery and rebuilding. First, let us affirm that we are witnesses to the Scriptural truth that God's people do indeed gather from the north and south, east and west, and come together around the table. Our table has been filled by the unprecedented generosity of prayer, time and gifts that followed the storms. Your prayers for and with us have supported us; your presence through the many visits, letters, and mission teams have encouraged us; and your gifts given through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and directly to us have made it possible for continued ministry in areas ravaged by the storms. Truly the partnership we share as people of faith working for the future is a witness of hope.

During the continued chaos of response and rebuilding, your love and concern for us have been communicated through the work made possible by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. We wish to celebrate with you the ongoing commitment, patience and trust shown by the General Assembly Council through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance that have allowed our presbyteries the time needed to create and establish plans for the effective use of the resources which were made available to us through your gifts. Your gifts have made possible the volunteer villages, building supplies, tools, truck and trailers, and challenged us, in the face of great chaos, to create infrastructures to support this lengthy recovery process. Each of our presbyteries has responded in different ways to the chaos and trauma of the storms of 2005.

Our work is not done; progress is all too slow; recovery seems still a dream. Yet we continue. Our five presbyteries recently met together with our partners in Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to review the experience of the last two years and to look forward to the coming four years. We together have agreed upon a plan that makes, we believe, effective and efficient use of the remaining financial resources (including your continuing gifts to the recovery process plus accumulated interest). This plan will be interpreted to the coming meeting of the General Assembly Council and then to the entire General Assembly meeting in San Jose. In the meanwhile, please allow us to share with you some of the basic financial facts, so that you may be assured that we all together are seeking to be faithful stewards of the gifts you have entrusted to us.

Initial amount of financial gifts received in 2005:	\$22,415,091
Total financial gifts received as of Nov. 30, 2007, including interest, village fees, specific gifts:	\$26,797,451
Total amount of gifts spent as of Nov. 30, 2007:	\$13,157,245
Projected amount for four year (2008-2011) recovery plan:	\$17,400,000
Estimate of resources to be available including interest and village fees	\$15,900,000
Needed additional gifts to meet the challenge of this ministry:	\$ 1,500,000

Our five presbyteries will also continue the partnership we have established together to tell the stories of faith and recovery for we are witnesses that, through your prayers, presence, and gifts, the plenty of the “loaves and fishes” is coming true in our lives.

Thank you again for the financial gifts that you so generously have given in the past to this ministry of compassion, and for your continuing prayers and participation. May Christ likewise be a blessing unto you as you have been Christ blessing into those who are in need.

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General Presbyter
New Covenant Presbytery

Harland Merriam
Pastor, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Beaumont, TX
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Peace River Presbytery

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Chair, Peace River Presbytery Disaster Preparedness and Response Task Force

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General Presbyter
Presbytery of South Louisiana.

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