

KATRINA FOLLOWUP

# New Plan Supports Hard-Hit Southern District

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod President Gerald B. Kieschnick and Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, in early September announced a plan to assist and support congregations and church workers in the Synod's hard-hit Southern District in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The plan partners LCMS districts with affected congregations of the Southern District, which includes Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and the Florida Panhandle. LCMS World Relief/Human Care is matching districts with specific Southern District congregations as districts express their willingness to participate.

The Florida-Georgia District has been matched with Grace-Pensacola, FL, and Ascension

and Concordia, both located in Daphne, AL.

Southern District President Kurt Schultz expressed support for the plan, which was described



in a memo from Kieschnick and Harrison as "the best way to cope with the current overload being experienced by the Southern District staff and infrastructure due to the inaccessibility of and damage to the Southern District office and due to the traumatic affects of Katrina on

the congregations and church workers of the District."

That memo was distributed to members of the Council of Presidents, which is comprised

of leaders of the Synod's 35 districts.

The new plan represents a shift away from LCMS World Relief/Human Care shouldering the challenge of matching the multitude of needs in the Southern District with the multitude of offers of assistance from the greater LCMS community. Both requests for assistance and offers of support have poured into the ministry's St. Louis-based office since Katrina hit August 29.

The basic points of the new disaster assistance and support plan are:

- Prayer: LCMS World Relief/Human Care is providing districts with information about

the needs of Southern District congregations and church workers so those needs can be remembered in prayer.

- Presence: Following a quick needs assessment, districts are asked to send support personnel (clergy, counselors, critical care personnel, etc.) as soon

supplies should be sent without a specific local request for goods and a specific destination.

- Advocacy: Districts will help direct congregations and church workers to assistance opportunities. These opportunities include Concordia Plans Services, which is waiving all



as possible to their assigned Southern District congregations.

- Work: Affected congregations will supply districts with information about specific needs for assistance with clean-up, debris removal and eventually repairing and/or rebuilding severely damaged homes and churches. Guidelines for shipping material aid will be provided. To ensure that recipients are prepared and equipped to handle relief shipments, no

premiums, co-pays, deductibles, etc., for employees covered under its benefit plans. The Lutheran Church Extension Fund will provide consolidation loans for rostered workers and Laborers For Christ teams to assist congregations in damage assessment and repair.

- Funds: Districts are encouraged to provide fiscal resources for immediate hurricane relief needs. LCMS World Relief/Human Care will distribute funds according to greatest need. □



## Lutherans Raise \$20 Million for Hurricane Disaster Response

As of October 6, Lutherans from across the United States and around the world had raised about \$20 million to support Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita relief efforts in the U.S. Gulf Coast.

Members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod contributed \$8.5 million of that total.

Lutheran Disaster Response — a ministry of the LCMS and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America — is allocating a total of \$3 million to support the process of resettling survivors of the hurricanes, said its Director Heather L. Feltman. Hundreds of thousands of people who evacuated the Gulf Coast continue to live in hotel rooms and other shelters across the United States, she said.

Given the unprecedented number of "displaced Americans" caused by the hurricanes, Lutheran Disaster Response's partner organizations working to resettle hurricane survivors may apply for grants to support their work, said Feltman.

"The purpose of the request for proposals is to address the diverse issues facing displaced Americans from Hurricane Katrina and/or Hurricane Rita," said Feltman. □

