

UUA-UUSC Gulf Coast Relief Update

April 2, 2006

Joe Sullivan, President, Southwest District of the UUA

Many are interested in the progress of recovery of our New Orleans and Beaumont congregations and in the good coming from the monies raised through the UUA-UUSC Gulf Coast Relief Fund (GCRF). Two accompanying articles here provide a glimpse of conditions at this time and the work ahead. Ann Duffy, President-elect of Community Church UU and Deanna Vandiver, President of First UU offer an inspiring and hopeful commentary on the recovery of their New Orleans church communities, while the other article provides an overview of the unique hurricane relief community ministry centered at the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge that is being funded through a GCRF grant.

To date the GCRF has raised just over \$3.5 million in donations and a matching grant from the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock. A Funding Panel chaired by the Rev. Meg Riley of the UUA is charged with distributing these funds to help restore impacted UU congregations and to help provide relief and recovery to marginalized and needy communities. The Rev. Steve Crump and Becky Cureau of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge and District President, Joe Sullivan, represent the Southwest District on the Funding Panel. The Panel also includes representatives of the Mid-South District and the UUSC.

Three advisory boards support the charge of the GCRF Funding Panel – “New Orleans Strategic Planning for Unitarian Universalism,” “Mississippi Strategic Planning for Unitarian Universalism,” and a “Community Funds” advisory group. These advisory boards evaluate and recommend specific proposals for funds to the Funding Panel in accord with the purpose of the GCRF. The Southwest District’s UUA Trustee, Rev. Burton Carley, chairs the New Orleans advisory board. Former District President, Mark Westergard, Becky Cureau of UCBR and representatives of the three New Orleans-area UU churches serve on the New Orleans group. The Rev. Steve Crump serves as the SWUUC representative on the Community Funds group.

Through March the Funding Panel has granted nearly \$1.3 million to impacted congregations and to approximately 12 organizations aiding communities in New Orleans, SE Louisiana and the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The GCRF Funding Panel and its advisory boards expect to continue working at least through 2006.

See the UUA website < <http://www.uua.org/news/gulfcoastrelief/> > for reports from the Funding Panel and for a complete summary of grants made to date. GA in St. Louis will feature reports on the results of the GCRF and a worship service jointly celebrated by Rev. Marta Valentin Chase of First UU New Orleans and Rev. Jim VanderWeele of Community Church UU New Orleans.

This article appeared in the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference Spring 2006 Newsletter. For more information, visit <http://www.swuuc.org/>.