

Return to the 7th Ward

On Aug. 29, 2005, **Hurricane Katrina** struck the southeast coast of Louisiana. The devastating storm was responsible for an estimated 1,800 deaths and caused a reported \$108 billion in property damage. On Sept. 24, 2005, **Hurricane Rita** hit the Southwestern area of the state. Many will recall the tremendous devastation caused by these two massive storms that covered the entire Gulf Coast of Louisiana and neighboring states.

The Louisiana Annual Conference deeply felt the impact of Hurricane Katrina in its ministry to the 7th Ward in New Orleans. The local churches in that historic area were greatly affected by the loss of members due to the storm. These already smaller churches basically were either abandoned and sold or merged; those members left without a church home are worshipping with other area local churches.

Return to the 7th Ward is an initiative that is part of the commitment of the Louisiana Conference to develop new faith communities and to reestablish a United Methodist presence in that part of New Orleans. Despite major damage to the homes, churches and businesses in this hard-hit section of the city, many people have returned to the 7th Ward to start over in New Orleans.

This ministry is known as The Spirit Church, and is led by Rev. Hadley Edwards. A growing and active volunteer force are the “hands and feet of Christ” in this exciting and important ministry.

On one visit into the 7th Ward, an area resident named Noel told Rev. Edwards that he had been a lifetime member of the neighborhood Roman Catholic church. Strongly hoping for a church located in his immediate neighborhood, he did not care which denomination it represented “as long as I get to worship God in my neighborhood.” “I truly believe that Noel is representative of others in this community starved for the presence of the church,” said Edwards.



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Spirit Church events slated for the early fall of this year include a block party, “invitational” neighborhood prayer walks and the launching of share groups (Circles of Conversation and Care—3 Cs) and Bible studies.

A “Back to School Bash” held Aug. 8 at Hardin Playground and organized by Spirit Church volunteers drew bigger than expected crowds. The free event featured live music, food, a bounce house, line dancing, a petting farm and lots of fun for youth and children. Much needed free school supplies, book bags and books were given to children present at the event.

Although this initiative is driven by church volunteers, financial support is imperative to help make this ministry a success!

Today’s special offering provides us a tangible way to continue our support with the rebuilding process that has been ongoing for the last 10 years. Your financial gifts and your prayers are key for undergirding the work of The Spirit Church. *If your gift is a check, please write “Seventh Ward- #4701” In the memo portion. Thank you!*

There are many stories that could be told of the destruction of the storms of 2005. At the same time, we have amazing stories of the efforts of our great church connection and those of thousands of volunteers helping Louisiana to rebuild. We stand as a witness to the fact that good can come from even the worst of times. We know because “God is with us.”



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