

## DEVASTATION – TRANSFORMATION – JUBILATION

St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
2005

**Jeremiah 29:11,13 “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord---plans to give you hope and a future...You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”**

To all brothers and sisters in Christ, we send you our love and prayers this Advent season, this blessed time for reflection and expectation.

It is a happy thing to reflect upon the wondrous community that has been St. Paul's Episcopal Church and School in New Orleans.

A stately old edifice, first built in 1837, with magnificent windows, carved walnut pews, a marble altar with the Last Supper chiseled across the front in perfect details. An angelic Baptismal font where we enter into our Christian life. This font stands before the Columbarium where the remains of our loved ones who have entered into the Church Expectant lie. These are but some of the things and signs we as humans offer to honor our Maker, to make our house of worship a delight to the eye and an inspiration to the soul.

St. Paul's Episcopal School, the major outreach of the Church to the surrounding community, is not so old. Most of it is brand new, as we have just completed a \$4,000,000 expansion project. It was founded in 1960 as a center for special needs children. Adapting to the changing needs of the area over the years, it is now an exceptional learning place for 270 children, pre-K through eighth grade, and is accredited by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and the Southwest Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES). The school also offers extended day care.

This is what St. Paul's is (or was) ~ physically. But we, and all of you, are so much more than a physical entity. Before Hurricane Katrina ravaged the corner of Canal Blvd. and Harrison Ave., as well as 80% of the city of New Orleans, this was the place from which we set out to do the things our Lord would have us do. For the children – beginning with our babies, a Guild of the Christ Child – Sunday School with the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (at one time, St. Paul's was a training center for this program for other churches), a handbell choir, youth programs and Happenings. For adults there were Wonderful Wednesdays ~ a time for potluck dining and Christian fellowship followed by educational and/or motivational programs. And a Book Club, Sunday morning Bible Study, Beth Moore Bible Study series, a men's Bible Study group. An active ECW, a devoted Altar Guild. A Labyrinth hand etched into our southern patio, once a place of serenity and meditation, now stained and partially obliterated. Our Stephen ministers, no doubt coping with their own losses now, keep walking with others on difficult journeys. The choir was, and is, a marvel and a blessing to all of us. And, although the music library is destroyed, they still lead us in making “a joyful noise unto the Lord.”

As you surely do also, St. Paul's has sought to minister beyond our own family. Partly because of the relative safety of the neighborhood, but more so because of the belief and commitment to its worthiness, the church has sponsored New Orleans' most sought after GED program. We have supported and participated in the Shepherd Center, a neighborhood activity center for seniors. The Church is a meeting place for Alcoholics Anonymous. We had begun a unique fine arts program for toddlers called Art Start. We prepare food every Tuesday for the homeless. This September we missed our annual Blood

Drive. There are many other ministries that are very caringly performed; we mention but a few so you will know some of our story.

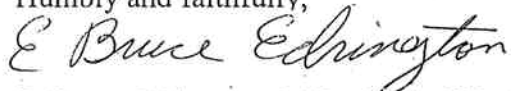
To say we are devastated is a trite understatement. The website for the Church, [www.stpaulschurch.org](http://www.stpaulschurch.org) is being updated as our staff and volunteers return. The ruins can be seen at the School's website [www.stpauls-lakeview.org](http://www.stpauls-lakeview.org). But pictures do not convey the depth of the tragedy our community has suffered, a diaspora that is far worse than our material losses. We are scattered and separated from one another. Families live apart. Friends are not here to share a hug.

It is faith and grace that unite and sustain us. That is why we send this appeal to you now. Will you partner with us in hope as we come back together to transform this seemingly hopeless mess into a place of joy and service once again? Pray for us. We cannot do this alone.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church Restoration Fund has been established to receive financial aid. Gifts, of any amount, may be forwarded to the Fund at PO Box 56297, Metairie, LA 70055-6297. We would most gratefully receive whatever is given, freely offered or specifically designated. As of this asking, we have gutted the church and school to bare bricks and studs. That means replacing sheetrock, flooring, pews, and major fixed equipment such as furnaces, blowers, and air conditioning systems. But we also want to replace such items as vestments, altar linens, needlepoint, the music collection, our organ, pianos, prayer book, hymnals, and Bibles; Sunday School supplies, kitchenware and equipment, books for both the school and church library, computers for GED and the administrative staff, parlor and office furniture, even wheelchairs for our disabled communicants. The list is as endless as the special loves and ministries you have within your own church community.

We have a monumental work to do, but we (and that includes you, dear people) "can do all things in Him who strengthens us"...Phil 4:13. And we give thanks and praise to God for having spared us to some extent so as to rebuild and one day again, to rejoice.

Humbly and faithfully,



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Philippians 1:3-7 "...thankful for your partnership in the gospel...for you are all partaker with me of grace..."