

# VFCC

## Vermilion Faith Community of Care



## Annual Report 2006

**Office:** 100 W. Vermilion St. Abbeville, Louisiana 70510  
**Mail:** PO Box 554 Abbeville, Louisiana 70511

**Voice/Fax:** (337) 893-5589

**Website:** [www.vfcc.net](http://www.vfcc.net)

**E-mail:** [vfcc@cox.net](mailto:vfcc@cox.net)

### Our Mission

To unite the faith community  
in Vermilion Parish in service  
through meeting critical human need.

**Executive Director:**

Dr. Jim Grant – (337) 652-2058

**Program Director/Treasurer:**

Mrs. Liz Touchet – (337) 652-6779

**Board Chair:**

The Rev. Keith Milligan – (337) 898-9331



## Board President's Message The Rev. Keith Milligan+

Dear friends,

While you read our Annual Report, listen for God's still, small, quiet voice tugging at your heart. There are ways that you can be a "hurricane hero" and become someone's "angel."

Vermilion Parish is the forgotten Parish from the forgotten hurricane. You may not know that southeast Vermilion Parish had not one, but **two** hurricane surges from Hurricane Rita that occurred nearly five hours apart, and that over 6,500 homes in our very rural parish were either flooded and/or devastated by the first surge or flooded by the second, and far more widespread, surge. In fact, almost the entire towns of Delcambre and Erath, which straddle Louisiana Highway #14 between Abbeville and New Iberia, were flooded by the second surge.

**The recovery from Hurricane Rita will take three – four more years to complete, so the need for money, manpower, and materials is long-term.** Please don't respond just once, because the need will go on for a long, long time. Of course, the need in southwest Louisiana, in Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes, will last **nine to ten years**. The need in the southeast parishes Louisiana will continue much longer, perhaps for a quarter century. Yes, I said, that it will take southeast Louisiana, including New Orleans, **25 years** to recover from Hurricane Katrina!

First, you can raise and contribute money to **VFCC** and/or other worthy nonprofit organizations who are actively involved in hurricane recovery efforts. If it took over **\$20,000** in building supplies and over **\$35,000** in volunteer labor to restore the moderate sized (1,500 sq. ft.) two bedroom, wood frame house featured in this report, imagine what it will take to restore hundreds more before the job is done.

Second, you can help to organize a volunteer crew to help with reconstruction. It's amazing what committed people can accomplish with the help of God. With one or two skilled, a few semi-skilled, and lots of willing unskilled laborers, **God** can and will do the seemingly impossible; "for God all things are possible".

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, keep **all** who were affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and **all** who continue to respond to their, often overwhelming, needs in your continuing prayers. Many suffer from post-traumatic stress and from depression. Many have little or no means to recover. Many responders are spread too thin and don't have the resources to meet the needs with which they are faced, day in and day out. **All** are in need of our prayers. **SO, PRAY, AND KEEP ON PRAYING.**

*Keith L. Milligan*

Board President

## Executive Director's Message James A. Grant, Ph.D., GSW

### Recovery from the Inside Out

*Work in the invisible world  
at least as hard  
as you work in the visible.*  
- Rumi



So many things to do in the world around us as we try to recover from some trouble that has beset us! As we continue our struggle to recover from Rita's devastation: Get materials for rebuilding. Go to Road Home appointment. Get copies of insurance papers. Find an electrician. The list seems endless, the delays intolerable, the outcome impossible. As we turn our attention outward to things that we lack, it is often difficult to keep away discouragement, even depression or despair.

Every difficulty has a silver lining, which we can turn to our own advantage. In our hearts, our souls, we have an Infinite Source, ever-present, ever-available, a spring of living waters, a treasure chest of blessings. While we ordinarily remain on the surface level of consciousness, responding to the impressions that come to us through our senses, troubles can turn us inward and draw us closer to the Source.

In our hopes and our prayers, we can find images and feelings of the conditions that we desire. A restored home. A healthier body. Meaningful employment that pays well. A strengthened, safer community. Favorable weather conditions.

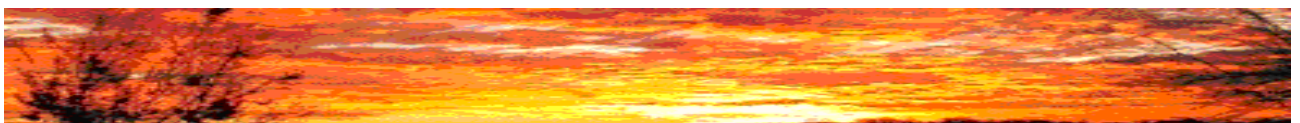
At every moment we have a choice of what we give our attention to, and what we dwell on is brought more and more into our experience, whether positive or negative. The more attention that we give to things in "the invisible world" through the use of Creative Imagination, by thought, image, feeling, etc., the more real they appear to us to be, and the more they turn into the **FAITH** that is the **SUBSTANCE** of things hoped for.

For all who are still recovering from either Hurricane Katrina or Rita – and in some way that is everyone in Vermilion Parish – we say: **Hold on to your dreams, for your lives to be restored and renewed.** Your/our persistent prayers and sustained, heartfelt visions are calling forth resources and changed circumstances, some of which will pass through VFCC, that will enable these dreams to become realities.

For our supporters and contributors, we send you sincere thanks and blessings for your assistance, both outward and inward, to those in need.

Peace be with you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be the initials 'J.A.G.'.



## Our Faith

By the end of the 2005, after the most destructive weather in US history, forecasters were predicting that 2006 would bring another very active hurricane season. Led by the Spirit, we at VFCC began broadcasting far and wide a call for a Day of Prayer for Protection from Hurricanes.

Jesus promises us that, if we “abide in him, and let him abide in us,” we can “ask what we will, and it will be granted.” It is important, as we pray, that we “believe that we have received” what we are asking for. Knowing that our faith is strengthened by our holding visions and feelings of our prayer answered in our imagination, we encouraged people to see calm seas in the Atlantic and prayers forming a Bridge of Peace from the Gulf Coast to the West Coast of Africa.



Sunrise prayer service on the Vermilion Parish Gulf Coast on June 1<sup>st</sup> Day of Prayer. Photo by Claudia B. Laws, [claws@theacvertiser.com](mailto:claws@theacvertiser.com), The Daily Advertiser

And look at what astounding results we have had! The only tropical storm that dared come into the Gulf was immediately blown eastward across Florida. Only one tropical storm, Ernesto, made any significant damage on the US mainland. Later storms – the only powerful hurricanes – were shunted to the middle of the Atlantic where they could do little damage. And no tropical storm formed after the end of September – over three months earlier than the end of the 2005 season! Wikipedia

estimates the total damage from 2006 Atlantic storms to be less than \$500 million, – **a fraction of 1%** of 2005’s \$200 billion!

Of course our prayers were joined with those of countless others still reeling from the devastation of the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons. Meteorologists have again predicted above average activity during the 2007 Atlantic hurricane season. VFCC will again take the lead in calling for prayer, and we expect to see its growing effectiveness.

### Louisiana Interfaith Disaster Recovery Network

Everywhere there has been a need, faith-based organizations of all kinds have risen to the challenge in the chaotic times following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The recovery process in Louisiana, which could last as long as 25 years in the most seriously affected areas, will require the continued effective involvement of the faith-based sector. With this in mind, Church World Service, FEMA, and the Louisiana Interchurch Conference began early in 2006 to call these groups together for Communication, Cooperation and Collaboration. VFCC’s Executive Director, Jim Grant, has been involved in the planning of the two Summits held in 2006 and the one coming up in February 2007. From these efforts, the Louisiana Interfaith Disaster Recovery Network (LIDRN) is emerging, with participation from members of Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Baha’i, and Unitarian communities. Jim and a co-worker from Lafayette, Emilia Bellone of the Baha’i Fellowship, presented the Day of Prayer idea to LIDRN, who agreed to co-sponsor it with VFCC. Through collaboration with LIDRN, we were able to get proclamations from both Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco and the Louisiana Legislature declaring June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, as a Day of Prayer for Protection from Hurricanes.

## Our Works – Direct Service to Families

Our work with local families affected by Hurricane Rita's storm surges began almost immediately afterwards. By early October 2005, VFCC had set up a Volunteer Reception Center to receive and direct volunteers to homes for cleanup and 'mucking out.' By the end of the year, 250 volunteers had worked on about 100 houses.

By the beginning of 2006, a number of other organizations, many with larger staffs and deeper pockets, had set up operations to move forward with cleanup and repair in Vermilion Parish. VFCC has continued with these efforts throughout the year, often in collaboration with other organizations.

In this process, 152 volunteers have worked with VFCC under the direction of our Construction Coordinator, Elbert Dawson, on 30 homes, putting in over 5,000 volunteer hours, valued at \$95,000. \$40,600 of donation and grant funds were also used for the purchase of building materials and supplies.

Our most extensive project, the reconstruction of the home of Mrs. Pat Trahan in Erath, is an example of the kind of collaboration that is both necessary and possible. Thirty volunteers from Nova Scotia, Abbeville, and Pineville, La. put in 1700 hours of volunteer labor, and over \$20,000 was donated for building materials by churches,

local nonprofits, and FEMA, for a total estimated value of materials and labor combined of over \$55,000.

VFCC has also had a major role in getting recovering families major appliances. We assisted 107 families



*Volunteers from Pineville, La., helping out in Erath. Fred gives Gary a hand. Or two.*

in Vermilion Parish in acquiring 161 new major appliances, which include refrigerators, ranges, washers, dryers and hot water heaters. The total combined value of these appliances is \$90,150.

Several truckloads of clothes, furniture and household goods were donated to us for distribution, and most of these items have found their way into the homes of recovering families. Both our first Program Director, Elizabeth Bodin, and our current one, Liz Touchet, as well as other board and staff, have made numerous referrals of clients to other agencies that had services they needed.

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### Liz Touchet – Hurricane Hero



Liz Touchet, Food Coordinator for Vermilion Parish in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and VFCC Treasurer and Program Director, was one of eleven people from throughout the State of Louisiana who were honored as "Hurricane Heroes" by the Arthritis Association of Louisiana (AAOLA) in December 2006. These awards are made "to individuals who devoted time and effort to improving the quality of life for fellow Louisianans through their commitment and dedication to nonprofit organizations and those they serve." For 2006, AAOLA honored "those who served others in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita."

## Our Works – Community Building

After a local disaster such as a hurricane, a Long Term Recovery Coalition, which serves as a meeting place for local organizations and a springboard for collaboration, is a natural development. Seeing the need to develop such a coalition in Vermilion Parish after Hurricane Rita, VFCC and United Way of Acadiana spearheaded its development in November 2005. Over 20 organizations, ranging from the American Red Cross to Volunteers of America to the Vermilion Parish Police Jury to Habitat for Humanity, gathered together to address the recovery needs of local residents. VFCC Executive Director Jim Grant was selected Coalition Chair; Abbeville United Methodist Church Pastor John Vining was selected Vice-Chair; and VFCC board member Rebecca Shirley was selected secretary.

Throughout the first half of 2006, the coalition met once or twice monthly. Significant accomplishments of these meetings were networking and information sharing. As various aid organizations developed and changed their programs, others were eager to hear details so that they could begin to incorporate them in their own programs.

One of the primary functions of such a coalition is to collectively address cases of Unmet Needs, where the needs of a client family are greater than a specific agency is able to meet by itself. Moving to where we were able to function as an Unmet Needs Committee was a slow process: families were developing their personal recovery plans in a confusing and constantly changing environment, and service agencies took time to assemble their programs, to marshal resources, and to connect with clients.



*Long Term Recovery Coalition meeting*

Partly because of the common ground of Coalition meetings, some agencies developed close working partnerships – VFCC with Southern Mutual Help Association, United Way of Acadiana with Rebuilding Together, etc. – as progress was made meeting families' needs. By early summer, cases were being presented to the Unmet Needs Review Committee for presentation to the whole committee – those organizations that had Money, Materials, and/or Manpower to offer. The Unmet Needs Committee process has been carried out under the able direction of Sarah Berthelot of United Way of Acadiana.

There were a number of planning processes throughout 2006 designed to both assist Vermilion Parish families and communities with their recovery and to look at long-term opportunities in such areas as economic development, coastal restoration and protection, and town planning. We have been involved with many of these efforts, both in locations where information was being gathered and opportunities explored, and in inviting representatives of these planning groups, particularly Louisiana Speaks and the Road Home, to make presentations at Coalition meetings. We look forward to a continuing role in helping develop and coordinate planning efforts so that all Vermilion Parish citizens benefit in the growth of a safer, stronger, healthier, more unified parish community.

As a faith-based organization, we have a special calling to work with local churches. We have been very pleased by their spontaneous informal responses to the needs of their own members as well as others, and have worked with many of these efforts in some way. Our 11-member board/staff/advisory committee consists of members of 9 churches representing 8 different denominations.

# Vermilion Faith Community of Care Financial Summary 2006

	CASH	IN-KIND
<b>Beginning balance January 1, 2006</b>	<b>\$ 107,850</b>	<b>\$ 6,500</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Hurricane relief donations	\$ 48,550	\$ 58,650
Volunteer Labor		\$ 125,900
Use of space		\$ 10,800
Grants		
Church World Service	\$ 43,030	
Christian Reform World Relief Committee	\$ 25,000	
Oxfam-America	\$ 16,400	
Other	\$ 500	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 133,480</b>	<b>\$ 195,350</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Administration		
Contract services	\$ 17,100	\$ 30,900
Dues/subscriptions/conferences	\$ 840	
Insurance	\$ 840	
Professional fees	\$ 680	
Office equipment	\$ 3,230	
Office supplies/postage/printing	\$ 2,680	
Travel - contractors	\$ 1,780	
Utilities/occupancy	\$ 880	\$ 10,800
Miscellaneous	\$ 510	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 28,540</b>	<b>\$ 41,700</b>
Program		
Contract services	\$ 8,500	
Housing assistance - rebuilding	\$ 40,600	\$ 95,000
Appliances/household goods	\$ 37,500	\$ 60,150
Tools/trailers	\$ 12,540	
Travel – contractors	\$ 370	
Partner donations	\$ 2,500	
Other direct client assistance	\$ 2,390	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 104,400</b>	<b>\$ 155,150</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$132,940</b>	<b>\$196,850</b>
<b>Total value of contribution to community efforts</b>		<b>\$329,790</b>
<b>End of year balance, December 31, 2006</b>	<b>\$ 108,390</b>	<b>\$ 4,000</b>

## Our Staff

**Executive Director:** Jim Grant  
Mt. Triumph Baptist Church, Abbeville

**Program Director/Treasurer:** Liz Touchet  
St. Theresa Catholic Church, Abbeville

## Our Board

**Chair:** The Rev. Keith Milligan  
Pastor, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Abbeville

**Construction Coordinator:** Mr. Elbert Dawson  
Briggs United Methodist Church, Mouton Cove

Mrs. Marilyn Mitchell  
St. Mary Congregational Church, Abbeville

Mrs. Rebecca Shirley  
St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church, Abbeville

Rev. Kevin Williams  
Pastor, St. Mary Congregational Church, Abbeville

Mrs. Becky Broussard  
St. Theresa Catholic Church, Abbeville

## Our Advisory Committee

Rev. Tommy Faulk  
Pastor, Lafayette First Assembly of God, Lafayette

Mr. Calvin Broussard  
Lighthouse for Jesus, Abbeville

Mr. Francis Plaisance  
Abbeville Church of Christ, Abbeville

## Our Logo

The background is an outline of Vermilion Parish, our home. The foreground shows a person – you or me – lifting hands in praise to God for his protection and providence, under the shelter of his promises, symbolized by the rainbow. The rainbow, many colors unified in one resplendent display, represents the unity and the diversity of our varied faith traditions. This image calls to mind verses 9 and 11 of Psalm 29, a psalm about the Voice of the Lord in a mighty storm, which appeared in the reading of *Our Daily Bread* for October 3, 2002, the morning that we saw our prayers dramatically diminish Hurricane Lili:

<sup>9</sup>“The voice of the Lord spins and topples the mighty oaks. It strips the forests bare. They whirl and sway beneath the blast. But in his temple all are praising, ‘Glory, glory to the Lord.’

<sup>11</sup>He will give his people strength. He will bless them with peace.”  
(*The Living Bible*)

The drawing is derived from an original work by Michael Green, internationally renowned artist, in *The Illustrated Rumi*, and is used with permission.