



# Grace Church of West Feliciana Parish

*"A loving congregation seeking unity with God and each other in Christ"*

Newsletter for  
August 21 and 28,  
2016

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## *Observations of a Disaster Volunteer*

Sunday, August 14, 2016, 9:00AM: Twitter and Facebook announced that Celtic Studios in Baton Rouge had opened Stage 7 as a temporary shelter for victims of the Louisiana Floods and they were expecting 800 people by the end of the day. (By Tuesday morning that number had swelled to 2,000 people.) The posts stated that they didn't have enough resources or volunteers. The posts also asked that people "spread the word" via Social Media. My family and I decided to go down right after church to see if there was anything we could do to help. We knew there were people affected in West Feliciana Parish, but local officials were just beginning to do an assessment and it was unclear what would be expected of us at that point. We thought we would start at Celtic and move our efforts to our community as soon as we became aware of the need.

Sunday, August 14, 2016 12:00 Noon: We arrived at Celtic Studios and witnessed a remarkable scene. The line of vehicles waiting to deliver supplies was three blocks long and moving slowly. There were civilian volunteers with makeshift traffic signs directing us to where we needed to go. There were dozens of people who parked as far back as half a mile away, walking their supplies to Celtic. Yellow school buses and public transportation buses kept arriving every minute with hundreds of displaced people from various points in Baton Rouge, Central, Denham Springs, and Walker. National Guard helicopters were landing every two minutes with more evacuees. Other than transportation, this was a purely volunteer-led effort and we didn't see local security forces, Red Cross, or FEMA people that first day. The Healing Place Church had about 100 young people helping, but they were not alone. Most churches in the area were well represented, with many young folks wearing camp shirts and apparel that displayed Biblical quotes. LSU students were there by the dozens, and even some older Boy Scouts and their leaders were helping.

We arrived at a drop off point and a swarm of people ran to us to help us unload the car. We had brought blankets, comforters, pillows, and some food. I asked the oldest person I found, "What do you all need?" He answered, "Pillows, man! We can't seem to get enough." We left two of our children behind to help the volunteers and drove to Target where we spent whatever money we had on pillows and bedding supplies. We returned about an hour later and started helping in the warehouse. The scene was chaotic, as no one seemed to be in charge, but things were getting done. Throughout Stage 7 volunteers were sorting out clothes, piling diapers in a specific section, taking over-the-counter meds to a nurse and two volunteers who had set-up a table at a corner of the building, and bringing water and food to their own section. Everyone was running, everyone seemed to be talking at the same time, no one had any answers, and most people just found a spot where they could be of use and started doing what everybody else was doing.

In the mean time, the buses kept arriving and Celtic opened Stages 5 and 6 to accommodate them, because it was obvious we were going to need Stage 7 for supplies. From time to time we would get an older volunteer who would ask us, "Have you had any water? Here! Grab this and take a break!" At some point an older couple arrived with a huge cooler of home-made sandwiches and we all grabbed one and kept working. We didn't care what was in the sandwich, all we cared about was that it was good. At some point someone showed up with 4 piping hot boxes of Starbucks coffee. For a few seconds she became the most popular person on Stage 7. The now caffeinated volunteers kept unloading trucks, building piles of clothes to sort out later, and making space for other volunteers as they arrived. The mood was elevated, energies were high, adrenaline was coursing freely through our veins, and work was getting done. We left in the evening as a new wave of volunteers arrived. On our way home we decided to make Jackson Hall a drop off center for supplies and to blast the needs at Celtic Studios via Social Media. My wife and daughter wasted no time and began to Facebook everyone they know locally.

Monday, August 15, 7:00AM. Jackson Hall was opened for business and people started arriving to drop off supplies. A number of youth arrived early to help unload cars and trucks. A group of volunteers were inside Jackson Hall separating items into various tables for easy packing and delivery. My wife was coordinating the efforts, but many community volunteers became involved that first day. At around 8:30AM we got our first volunteer driver. We loaded up her car and mine and my oldest daughter, my 14 year old son, and I, headed out to Celtic. By the end of that first day Jackson Hall had sent 15 loaded cars and trucks with supplies to Celtic Studios. Our local Sports Medicine doctor, Dr. Travis, also turned his office into a makeshift drop-off center and began sending packed trucks to Celtic that same morning. He also had a small army of volunteers helping him. Social Media kept buzzing with instructions as to where to go, addresses of new shelters opened during the night, and what specific volunteers were needed.

When we arrived at Celtic we were surprised that the scene was now orderly. The Red Cross and the National Guard were now on site and they were in charge. All volunteers had to register, we were assigned to where we were most needed, and the atmosphere was no longer as chaotic as the day before. There was a need of translators and I got to work immediately at the medical tent, while my daughter joined the "Gofer Crew" getting supplies for people in the various stages, and my son joined the "Water Crew" with a friend from Saint Francisville. In fact, there were many volunteers from Saint Francisville working at Celtic that day. In between translations at the medical site, I walked around and introduced myself to the Spanish speaking families. They willingly told me their stories. There was a large group of people from Mexico who lived in Central. They lost their trailers and all their possessions. The men work for a grounds-keeping service, but haven't been able to get in touch with their boss. They didn't know what they would do for housing, start-up money, or schooling for their kids. They were grateful they were safe and asked for prayers. They liked their boss and believed he would help them re-settle, but the longer they were unable to get in touch with him the more anxious they became. By the end of the day, the work supervisor came and took all the families away to a fishing camp in North Louisiana. he had been delayed in getting them because he was setting the camp with enough provisions for the large group. I was moved by his generosity and by the love with which he was welcomed by the worried families and their children.

There was a group of about 30 nursing home patients from a home near Walker. I stopped to say hello and soon engaged an older lady in conversation. She was grateful the doctors at Celtic had been taking good care of her because she has Diabetes. She recounted how she had to be rescued in a boat and how scared she was. She says the "boy" who rescued her and several of her friends looked to be no more than 12, but, "He was a strong little fella!" She didn't remember his name, but was very grateful to him and his friends for saving her life. I have heard story after story about this "Cajun Navy." A group of local young men who rescued hundreds of people and continue to do so. Within 24 hours the nursing home group was relocated to another

*Intercessory prayers are asked for Grace Church members who are ill:*

David Barnes, George Black, Wayne Blake, Cecil May Dwyer, Tom Morris, Sara Nelson, Jim Roland, Margie Sheets, Jim Tengler, Wendell Wade, Pam Willson, Jake Wray, Madeline Wright.

#### Birthdays

Karina Mulkey, Jamie Farmer-Aug. 21; Sophie Treppe-dahl-Aug. 22; Eliza Ann Barrow-Aug. 23; Turner McClendon, Arlene Hughes-Aug. 24; Bobby Holmes-Aug 25; Ivey Kendrick, Thomas LaCroix- Aug. 26; George Silbernagel -Aug. 27; Charlie Schneider, Bobby Wilson-Aug. 28; Suzie Silbernagel-Aug. 29; William Fort, Susan Willis-Aug. 30; Mary Jane Opperman-Aug. 31; Tony Horn-Sept. 3.

#### Wedding

##### Anniversaries

Billy and Helen Williams-Aug. 23; George and Suzie Silbernagel-Aug. 25; Bruce and Carol Stamey-Sept. 2.

*Other persons prayers are asked for:*

Charles Barham, Walker Bell, Micaela Kell Bennett, Jolie Berry, Tommy Bishop, Phillip Bowen, Leo Brown, Ben Brown, Steve Brown, Willie Bryant, Randy Bryant, John Caruthers, Jenny Clark, Kitty Claus, Kathleen Davis, Debbie Desmar, Helen Desselles, Molly Douglas, Mark Ellison, Jennifer Erickson, Mark Feltner, Juanita Ferguson, Dennis Flynn, Matthew Gill, Roy Hardin, Parke Henderson, Elmo Hegwood, Wayne Hudnall, Joel James, Michelle Jean-sonne, Jill Joffrion, Mary Jo Kaly, Cecil Kelly, Jody Lemoine, Bob Lewis, Jessica Liddle, Max, Paul McGuff, Ralph McKenzie, Laine Martrain, Mary Anne McCrory, Ruby McKee, Robin Michel, Dorothy Anne Millikin, Jim Mire, Jimmy Mitchell, Rusty Melton, Alice Mier, Mike Morris, Randall Nachman, Barton Platte, Susanna Prescott, Peter Purpera, Carol Ratcliff, Tammy Riggs, Cole Rourke, Stephen Seale, Gwin Shanks, Kaitlyn Shockley, Cade Stapleton, Glenn Thomas III, Terri Thompson, Roland Touns, Denham Turner, Darold Whitmer, Zane Woodward.

*Those serving in the armed forces:* Parker Blanche, Amanda Browning, James Boucher, Jay Christopher, Ryan Coacher, Ben Colia, John Davis, Joseph Dooley, Bryan Geltz, Edward Jenkins, Laura Latson, Shawn Lemons, Terry Palmer, James Powers, Jeff Ragusa, Christopher Willis, Matthew Young, 745th & 746th Exped Squads, 379th & 926th Exped. Support Squads.

nursing home owned by the same company in Lafayette. Their departure opened a large section of Stage 6, which was filled with new evacuees within hours. This was a fluid scene with many people coming and going as National Guard helicopters landed with more evacuees and relatives arrived to rescue their loved ones.

Tuesday and Wednesday were just as busy as Monday: A fluid scene with many people leaving and more “official” government types arriving. I have been at Celtic now for 5 days and the scene has changed dramatically. The volunteer force has become “professionalized” as the Red Cross and National Guard are in charge. The problem with this is that bureaucracy has also taken charge and overwhelmed people are now seen everywhere filling out dozens of pieces of paper, waiting on line for hours to speak to FEMA, and frantically trying to get the attention of the few Social Workers on-site. They now have to fill requests or speak to people in charge to get almost anything. This professionalization of the crisis is necessary for security reasons, but, some people are getting exhausted and, as time passes, tempers are flaring up and people are becoming more desperate. By now, those with a place to go, resources, or support networks, have left. Those who remain are the most fragile: the very poor, the mentally ill, the elderly, the homeless, and the addicted. I worry most about the old and families with children. The few Social Workers on site have been invaluable, but our efforts are insufficient. At times I feel like my work is just a drop of water in an ocean of need.

In the mean time, the scene in West Feliciana Parish has been a true model of public and private partnership. My wife coordinated the efforts at Grace, Lauren Field and her team coordinated the effort at a Parish Level, Dr. Travis remained a collection site in constant communication with other leaders, we have fed hundreds at hotels and in affected neighborhoods, we have done a needs assessment of every home affected and now know who lives where, how many children belong to each home, what immediate resources are needed, and what the long term plan might look like. The leadership team has done a great job and now we have moved the collection sites to Market Hall on Royal Street, from which the efforts will become more centralized and systematized. Our community has been wonderful, donating tons of food, supplies, and even money. Grace volunteers, working alongside dozens of community volunteers, have been wonderful. I am so proud of all of you and your love for all our neighbors regardless of faith tradition. I feel fortunate to be a part of this amazing community.

I have met people from all backgrounds, races, and ages who are now safe because of hundreds of volunteers from around the state. I have felt extremely moved these last few days as I have seen the best of humanity. This is the Louisiana many of us love. Together in spite of our differences! United in common purpose for the sake of those in need. We are more alike than many people think. It is easy to polarize us when it comes to politics, but when it comes to our humanity, no rhetoric can divide us. This week we are neither black nor white nor Hispanic. We are fellow travelers working together to alleviate the needs of our brothers and sisters. I don’t know about you, but this brings me great hope. The hard work is just beginning. Please consider contributing financially to our cause. Make checks to Episcopal Relief and Development, The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana” “Bishop’s Fund”, or the Saint Francisville Area Foundation. Please mark your checks “Louisiana Flood Relief.” Soon I will write another article with additional information about how you can help as we move from emergency assistance to rebuilding and restoration. Please continue to keep us in your prayers. May God continue to bless you, Fr. Roldan+

**St. Mary’s Chapel** at Weyanoke will celebrate the Feast of St. Mary’s on Saturday, August 20th with a communion service at 10am followed by light refreshments. Everyone is welcome to attend. **St. John’s** has a communion service at 10am this Sunday, August 21st.

**Grace Church**  
of West Feliciana Parish  
P.O. Box 28  
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## Sunday Ministry Assistants & Calendar

### Sunday, August 21, 2016

**Acolytes:** Elizabeth Hughes, RE Barrow,  
Charles Fox Smith, Mathilde Fox-Smith  
**Chalice bearers:** 7:30am: Carol Stamey  
10:00am: Sara Klein, Rucker Leake  
**Ushers:** Rob Howle, Richard Kendrick  
**Lectors:** Landon Anderson, David Bunch  
**Vestry Rep:** Tiger Olsen  
**Altar Guild Team 1**  
**Altar flowers:** Tim and Kathy Kane  
**Sanctuary Candle:** Tapper and Betty Sessions  
**Coffee Hour:** Christian & Jamie DeJean  
**Babysitters:** Lorna Klein, Madie Kane

### Sunday, August 28, 2016

**Acolytes:** Mary Elizabeth Barrow, Mathilde  
Fox-Smith, Ella Corinne Howle, Lilly Higgins  
**Chalice bearers:** 7:30am: Lucie Butler  
10am: Mark Mulkey, Drew Nordgren  
**Ushers:** Tom Morris, Tiger Olsen  
**Lectors:** Missy Higgins, Heather Howle  
**Vestry Rep:** Robert Singer  
**Altar Guild Team 2**  
**Altar flowers:** Ronnie and Pat Martin  
**Sanctuary Candle:** Ronnie and Pat Martin  
**Coffee Hour:** Christian & Jamie DeJean  
**Babysitters:** Emma Olsen, volunteer??

### August 21, 2016

7:30am - Eucharist  
(Grace & St. John's)  
8:45-9:45 - Bible Study  
10:00am - Eucharist  
Coffee Hour  
4-6pm Youth Group

### August 28, 2016

7:30am - Eucharist  
8:45-9:45 - Bible Study  
10:00am - Eucharist  
Coffee Hour  
4-6pm Youth Group

### Wednesday, August 24

5:15pm - Holy Eucharist

### Thursday, August 25

10:00am - Worship at SF Country Manor

### Friday, August 26

7:00am - Eucharist  
8:30am - Lectionary Bible Study

### Sunday, August 28

7:30am - Eucharist  
8:45-9:45 - Bible Study  
10:00am - Eucharist  
Coffee Hour  
4-6pm Youth Group

### Wednesday, August 31

5:15pm - Holy Eucharist

### Thursday, September 1

9:15am - Morning Prayer  
10:00am - Worship at SF Country Manor

### Friday, September 2

7:00am - Eucharist  
8:30am - Lectionary Bible Study