

Prayer Service for Victims of Hurricane Katrina
Stauffer Chapel
September 2, 2005
8:00 am

Call to Prayer – D’Esta Love, University Chaplain

We gather today to mourn with those who mourn, to pray for those in need—and the need is great, and we gather to comfort one another as we embrace those of our community who have been directly impacted by this tragedy.

In sorrow and with anguish of heart we come before our God. We are at a loss for words but our hearts cry out on behalf of the suffering to our God for help.

With compassion and humility we lay ourselves out before our God – maker of heaven and earth and sustainer of all living things. We offer the prayers of our hearts.

In your mercy, Hear our prayers, O Lord.

Introduction to the service – D’Esta Love

This morning we will enter a season of prayer together. We have designated several movements of prayer to help guide our petitions before God. **After each movement of prayer is announced, there will be a pause to allow time for you to continue the prayer standing or sitting where you are.** We will pray concerning the vast devastation and the depth of human need as we confess before God our anguish. We will pray for those who have died and those who have yet to be found by their loved ones. We will pray for the living who have lost all they have, who have become refugees, who need medical care, who need shelter and the basic necessities of life. We will pray for the relief workers as they work against time to provide basic necessities, security. We will pray for open hearts among all peoples to respond to such great needs. We will also pray for members of our own community who have family and friends impacted by this great disaster.

Throughout the morning we will give opportunities for members of the audience to raise specific prayer requests and to speak the names of individuals who have been impacted by this storm.

Let us begin with a period of silent prayer.

Movements of Prayer

We raise our laments before God in the wake of the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina.

We share the names and circumstances of loved ones who have been impacted.
We pray for members of our community who have been impacted by the storm.

Remember the Poor: The following are excerpts from an article written by Jim Wallis regarding the impact of this disaster upon the poor.

“During hurricanes, floods, and other natural disasters, those who have the least to lose are often those who lose the most. . . . The places where poor people live are also the most vulnerable. The rich often live at the tops of hills, the poor in the valleys and plains that are the first to flood. The living conditions in these neighborhoods are also usually the most dense and overcrowded.

It is harder for the poor to evacuate. They don’t own cars, can’t afford to rent them, and often can’t even afford a tank of gas—especially at today’s prices. They can’t afford an airplane, train, or even bus ticket. And, as one low-income person told a New Orleans reporter, they have no place to go. People in poverty can’t afford motel or hotel rooms, and often don’t have friends or family in other places with space to spare. In New Orleans, there were many people who desperately wanted to leave but couldn’t.

Low-income people are the least likely to have insurance on their homes and belongings, and the least likely to have health insurance. If jobs are lost because of natural disasters, theirs are the first to go. Poverty makes long-term recovery after a disaster more difficult—the communities that are the weakest to begin with usually recover the slowest. The lack of a living family income for most people in those communities leaves no reserve for emergencies.

New Orleans has a poverty rate of 28%—more than twice the national rate. Life is always hard for poor people—living on the edge is insecure and full of risk. Natural disasters make it worse.”

Let’s remember the poor today in our prayers.

Report on Pepperdine’s response to this disaster.

We pray for hearts of compassion as we reach out to help.

Benediction – D’Esta Love

Give ear to our prayers, O God. In your mercy pour out through us and those who call on your name your compassion, your limitless mercy and your abundant grace. Bring healing to the land and the sea, restoration to all living things, comfort to all who mourn, hope to all who have experienced loss, and strength and resolve to all who offer help. May we not grow weary in our commitment to prayer and our acts of loving kindness. O God, your steadfast love is better than life. Therefore, we will trust in you. In the name of Jesus, Amen