

**Worship & Action for Peace Letter**  
**September 9, 2005**

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting:

I've heard newborn babies wailin' like a mournin' dove  
And old men with broken teeth stranded without love.  
Do I understand your question, man, is it hopeless and forlorn?  
"Come in," she said,  
"I'll give you shelter from the storm."  
(From "Shelter from the Storm" by Bob Dylan [1974])

In the wake of the disaster along the coast of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, our hearts are broken. Destruction on this scale is beyond comprehension, and we may feel helpless, at a loss to know what to do. In the presence of such misery and need we may experience guilt at our own abundance.

In these times, we can remember again the words given George Fox while in the depths of despair:

When all my hopes ... were gone, so that I had nothing  
outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, O!  
then I heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Christ  
Jesus, that can speak to thy condition," and when I heard it,  
my heart did leap for joy.

If we, like Fox, take our brokenness, our helplessness & despair into communion with the Spirit, we may be opened, our lives may also be changed. Can we be open that leadings and gifts of the Spirit may find us? What new leadings might arise? May we, like John Woolman, know the promptings of love, and experience the clarity of vision that transforms.

There is much Friends in New York Yearly Meeting can do to respond to the misery and suffering wrought by Hurricane Katrina.

The American Friends Service Committee, the "service arm of the Religious Society of Friends in the United States" (from its charter), has already made an initial contribution of a million dollars in immediate assistance for survivors of Hurricane Katrina and activated its emergency response team to coordinate its work in the affected regions and in cities receiving evacuees. AFSC intends to "focus on vulnerable populations – the poor and immigrant communities who have borne the brunt of the hurricane's wrath." It will seek to "assist communities that are being underserved *and* ... address the larger systemic issues that contributed to this tragedy." (From AFSC Web page

"Hurricane Katrina Response," [www.afsc.org/hurricane/default.php](http://www.afsc.org/hurricane/default.php).) AFSC has created a Crisis Fund to help support this work. Contributions may be made to the fund by credit card online at: [www.donatefast.com/donate/index.cfm?id=afcrisis](http://www.donatefast.com/donate/index.cfm?id=afcrisis), or by telephone at 1-888-588-2372; or by mailing a check to:

AFSC Development  
1501 Cherry St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

The following information was provided via a conversation with a member of Live Oak Friends Meeting on September 9, 2005: Live Oak Friends Meeting in Houston, Texas, is feeding, arranging hospitality and housing, and gathering clothing for persons evacuated from New Orleans and other affected areas. Contributions to support this effort would be welcome. Checks should be made payable to "LOFM - Katrina Relief Fund." Live Oak Friends Meeting also would welcome contributions of canvas tote bags and new cotton underwear in large sizes for men, women and children. Funds and goods should be sent to:

Live Oak Friends Meeting  
5304 Feagan Street  
Houston, Texas 77007

The following information was also sent from Live Oaks Meeting: The Live Oak Meeting and the Interfaith Ministry of Greater Houston have organized six canteens to serve food to the 25,000+ refugees from New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina. They anticipate having to do this for three months at a cost of \$4,500,000 per month. Besides the Quakers, the Interfaith Ministry includes the Southern Baptists, Catholics, Presbyterians and the area's Synagogues and Temples. All the religious groups are arranging for hospitality in homes and that region's Salvation Army is taking responsibility for a clothing drive for families who have lost everything. Money to support this effort can be sent to Live Oak Friends Meeting, 1318 W. 26th Street, Houston, TX 77008. Or you can send it directly via a direct bank draft to the Interfaith Ministry's special account for this purpose, with no organizational overhead via: The United Way Katrina Food Relief Fund at Chase Bank Acct. #00113475207 Route ABA 113000609.

South Central Yearly Meeting has a message board online (<http://www.scym.org/messageboard.php>), with current news of Friends, notices of needs, etc. Friends may want to check this message board for new and updated requests for assistance, as local meetings identify what they will do and what they need assistance with. Don't send anything without a clear request and a way it will be delivered to people in need: warehouses were filled with teddy bears, walkie talkies, dog food after 9/11 that were never distributed. Be patient, keep checking; needs will unfold. Several years ago when the Mississippi flooded in the northern part of the country a Quaker meeting there rebuilt and then months later asked for hymnals.

Many Web sites provide abundant information on ways in which people can volunteer or contribute money, goods, accommodations, or time. One of these, maintained by USA Today, is updated regularly and includes numerous links to other useful sites: [www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-09-02-katrina-help\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-09-02-katrina-help_x.htm).

The Network for Good Web site contains a comprehensive list of organizations (with links) through which persons can make donations, with descriptions of the work being done by each of the organizations. It can be found at: [www.networkforgood.org/topics/animal\\_environ/hurricanes/](http://www.networkforgood.org/topics/animal_environ/hurricanes/).

The *Journal News*, a Gannet newspaper in southern New York, in its September 8th issue, offered information on how persons can offer housing to those displaced by the hurricane and flooding. The list contains the following Web sites:

- [www.hurricanehousing.org](http://www.hurricanehousing.org)
- [www.katrinahousing.org](http://www.katrinahousing.org)
- [www.katrinahome.com](http://www.katrinahome.com)
- [www.adoptastormfamily.com](http://www.adoptastormfamily.com)
- [www.hurricanehousingsearch.com](http://www.hurricanehousingsearch.com)

Our clerk has sent letters to the clerk of South Central Yearly Meeting, Friends in Live Oak Meeting and Friends in Bayou Quarterly Meeting expressing the grief and prayers of Friends in NYYM, and inquiring how we could help. The clerks of Live Oak Meeting and its Care and Concern Committee have written back, describing some of the good and bad news:

We deeply appreciate your kind message!

While active in helping some of those many thousands displaced from their homes in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama we are still in shock at the enormity of the damage and the tardy response of federal authorities.

Only now is the awareness of the toxicity of the flood water becoming known. So too with the soil as water recedes. It will not be safe for many to return until all of the infected deposits are removed. Schools, hospitals, utility companies, roads—all must be rebuilt! It will take years.

And, the beautiful news is that people throughout the country are dedicating their time, skills, clothes, furnishings and finances in an unprecedented manner to aid all those suffering. The suffering is terrible beyond the telling of it. Suicides, orphaned children, grief and despair as

people are left with just the clothes on their backs....their medications lost, legal papers swept away, lacking even water!

So dear Friends, please continue to hold these millions in the Light each day and Live Oak Friends Meeting as well so that we may be guided to provide the most needed help and in the most generous manner.”

Peaceable greetings,

Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer, Lu Harper  
NYYM Worship and Action for Peace working group

God is our shelter and our refuge,  
A timely help in trouble;  
So we are not afraid when the earth heaves  
and the mountains are hurled into the sea,  
when its waters seethe in tumult  
and the mountains quake before his majesty.  
There is a river whose streams  
Gladden the city of God,  
Which the Most High has made his holy dwelling;  
God is in that city; she will not be overthrown;  
And he will help her at the break of day.

*Psalm 46; 1–5, The New English Bible*