



Being the Church in a Post-Katrina World New Orleans Area Prayer Pilgrimage February, 2007

Welcome to New Orleans!

You are about to embark on a journey. It's a journey of great sorrow and loss. It's also a journey of incredible generosity and hopefulness.

The impact of Hurricane Katrina and the flood waters that followed in its wake is widespread. Many neighborhoods and churches were dramatically impacted. This prayer pilgrimage is designed to take you through some of the more significantly damaged areas of the city. You will also see the most severely-damaged ELCA churches.

The story of Katrina cannot be told without the church. The neighborhood congregation has been the first responder, the beacon of hope, and the source of community and strength. Although much work is yet to be done, there has been much already accomplished thanks to the prayers, generosity, and hard work of countless volunteers. We are grateful for all these gifts.

As you journey, you are encouraged to stop at each prayer station and take some time for personal reflection and prayer. You are also encouraged to go off the main path and drive through some of the neighborhoods surrounding the stops, for it is on the typical streets and avenues that you will see the "disruption of normalcy" that has resulted from the storm and its aftermath.

Thanks for coming! Your presence means so very much! And thanks for helping tell the story of the church in a post-Katrina world.

Your sisters and brothers in Christ
The Bayou Conference of the TX-LA Gulf Coast Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Scope of the Storm

- ❖ 90,000 square miles of the Gulf Coast region were declared federal disaster areas – an area roughly the size of the United Kingdom.¹
- ❖ The American Red Cross estimates that more than 350,000 homes were destroyed by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, while an additional 146,000 had major damage. Overall, 850,791 housing units were damaged, destroyed or left inaccessible because of Katrina. In New Orleans alone, 228,000 occupied homes (45% of metro New Orleans total) were flooded by Katrina.²
- ❖ 83% of New Orleans schools were damaged or destroyed by Katrina. As of February 2007, 56% of the public schools and 69% of all day care centers in New Orleans remain closed.³
- ❖ One-fourth of the population of Louisiana was displaced by the storm, resulting in what some have called "the single greatest migration since the Great Depression."

¹ The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, "New Orleans After the Storm" November 15, 2005.

² USA Today, Nov 6, 2005

³ "The Katrina Index," February 15, 2007, Greater New Orleans Community Data Center.

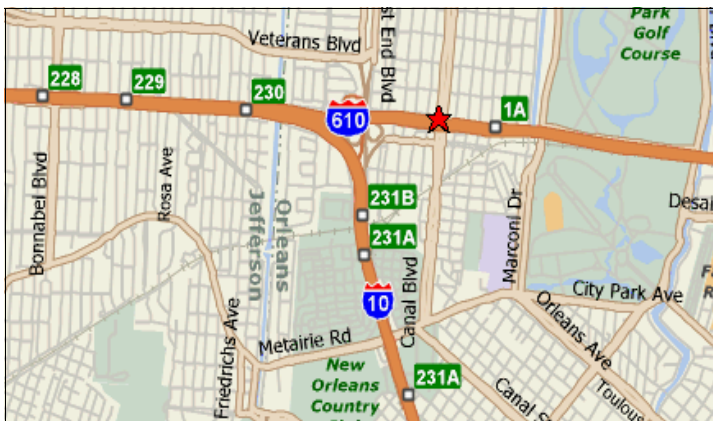
Station 1

Neighborhood: Lakeview

Church: Grace Lutheran Church
5800 Canal Street New Orleans, LA

Lakeview was one of the harder-hit neighborhoods of New Orleans. Portions of the area sustained 10 ft of standing water from the breach of the 17th Street Canal levee. Grace Lutheran Church had 8 ft of water standing for about two weeks.

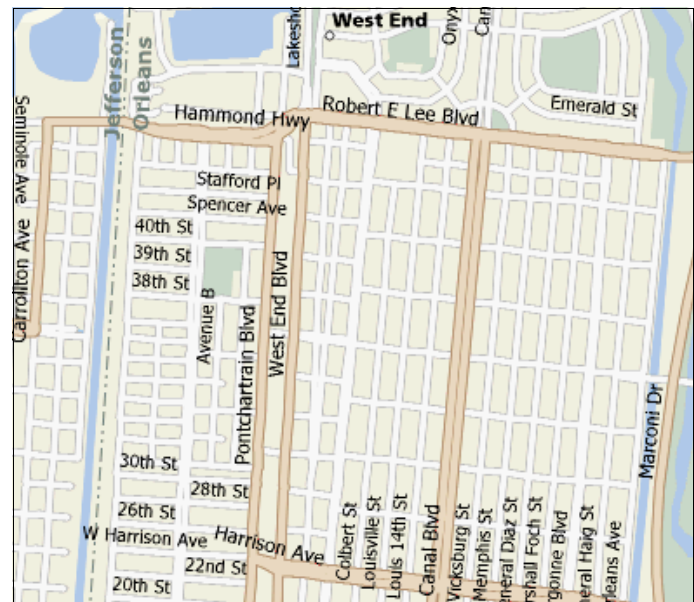
The congregation has received wonderful support and assistance from throughout the ELCA. A letter was sent on its behalf to all ELCA churches named "Grace Lutheran" across the country, inviting them to assist their namesake congregation in New Orleans. The progress that has been made has come about through the generous response and gifts of many across the country.



Map 1: To Grace Lutheran Church

Driving in the Area (Map 2):

Be sure to drive through some of the streets around Grace Lutheran Church while here. And if you want to see the rebuilt levee (just a short drive from the church), continue North on Canal St to Robert L Lee. Go left on R.E. Lee, and continue on Hammond Highway. As you cross the bridge over the canal (which is the dividing line between Jefferson and Orleans Parish), you will see the repaired area to your left and a new floodgate on the right.



Map 2: Lakeview and 17th Street Canal

Driving Directions (map 1):

Coming into New Orleans on I-10 via car from Baton Rouge or from the New Orleans airport, get on I-10 East; stay on I-10 East 7.2 miles past the Williams St/airport exit; merge left off of I-10 (exit 230) onto I-610; take West End Blvd/Canal St exit (1A) to Canal St; go left on Canal under I-610; go left as if getting back on I-610 West; Grace Lutheran Church is on the corner of Canal and I-610.

Station 2

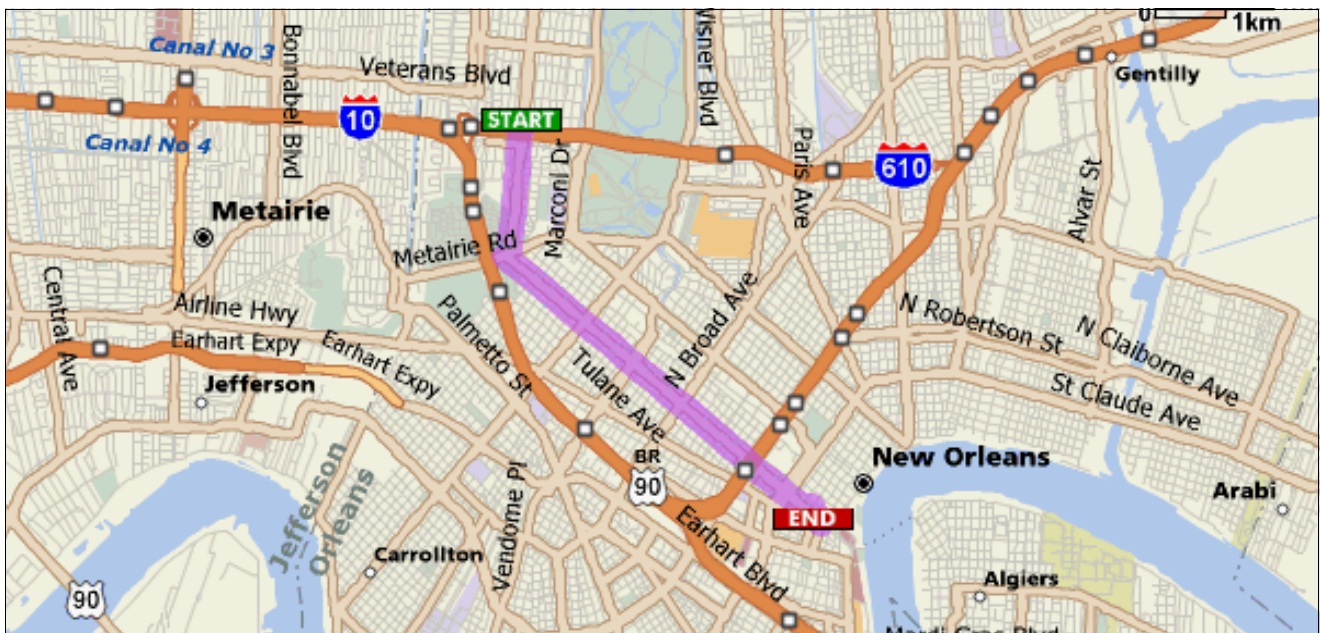
Option A: The French Quarter via Canal Street through the Cemetery

This option will take you down Canal Street, through one of the city's cemeteries, to Downtown New Orleans and the French Quarter. Be sure to venture off Canal Street and drive through the cemetery. The high water table prohibits "in-the-ground" burials. Note too that several generations of family members are buried in the same tomb.

Driving Directions

(See Map 3):

Go South (left) from Grace Lutheran Church on Canal Street. (Note the "jog" in Canal Street at City Park Ave/Metairie Rd. You will take a right and then an immediate left to remain on Canal St.) Remain on Canal about 4.5 miles to Bourbon St. The area to your left off Canal St is the French Quarter, with wonderful restaurants and sights to see.



Map 3 – Grace Lutheran to the French Quarter via Canal St

Station 2

Option B: St Charles Ave and Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Neighborhood: The Garden District

Church: Bethlehem Lutheran Church
1823 Washington Ave New Orleans

This option will take you via I-10 to the downtown New Orleans area, historic St. Charles Ave with its beautiful homes and gardens, great restaurants and Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church is the only predominately African-American ELCA congregation in New Orleans. It is located in a neighborhood of contrasts – just three blocks off of St Charles Ave and the beautiful Garden District, yet in a changing, economically depressed area. Although Bethlehem did not receive significant damage from Hurricane Katrina, many of the members' homes and businesses were affected.



Map 4 – Grace to Bethlehem via I-10

Driving Directions (See Map 4; total distance 6.75 miles):

From Grace Lutheran Church, go on I-610 West to I-10 East. Take I-10 East to US 90/West Bank Exit (Exit 234A). Take Carondelet St exit to St Charles Ave; go right on St. Charles for 1 mile; go right on Washington Avenue 3 blocks. Bethlehem Lutheran Church is on the right.

(You can also combine options 1 and 2 by following Option 1 to the French Quarter and turning right off Canal St to St Charles Ave, traveling on St Charles to Washington Ave, and right on Washington Ave to Bethlehem Lutheran.)

Station 3

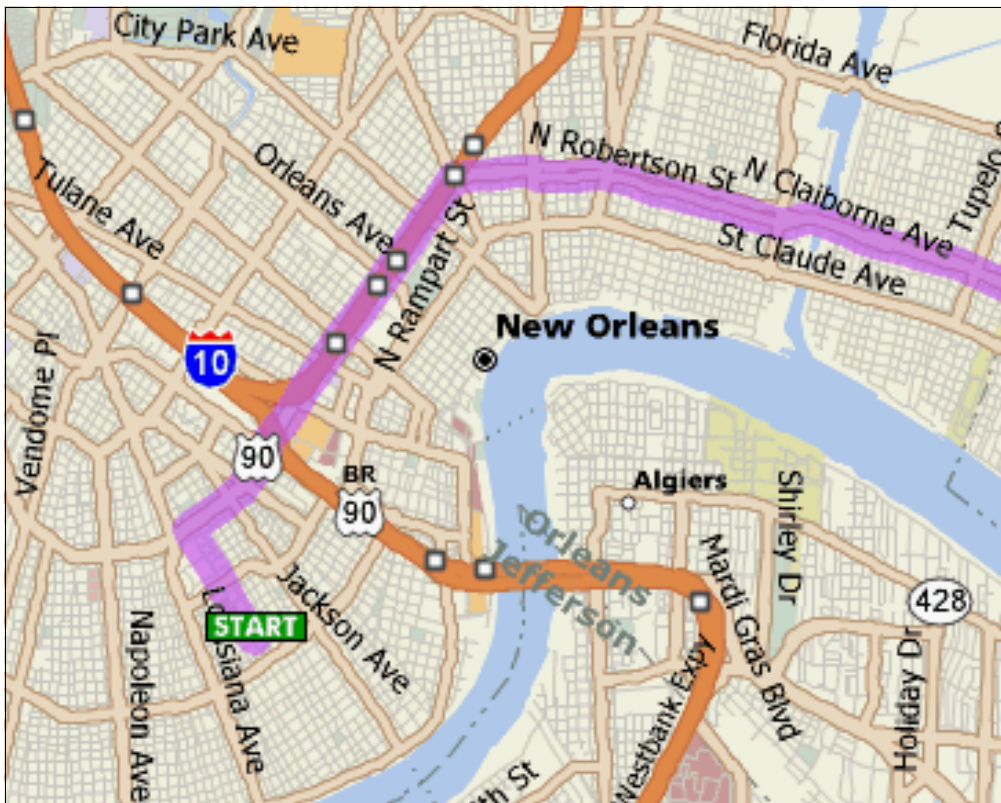
Neighborhood: The Lower Ninth Ward

The Lower Ninth Ward was catastrophically hit by the waters of Katrina. The storm surge from the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet and Lake Borgne, and well as the failure of the Industrial St Canal, caused homes to be swept off their foundations and neighborhoods destroyed. Many of the homes had been in families for generations. Very few of the residents of the Lower Ninth have returned.

Driving Directions (See Map 5):

From Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Go back to St. Charles Ave, turn left, and go to US 90. Go left under US 90 to I-10 East (toward Slidell). Go on I-10 East to exit 236B (N Clairborne/LA 39 South). Continue with the directions from N Clairborne below.



Map 5 – From Downtown to the Lower Ninth Ward

From the French Quarter:

Go North (right) on Canal Street to N Clairborne.

From N Clairborne to the Lower Ninth Ward:

Go right on N Clairborne/LA 39 S. At Elysian Fields, N Clairborne becomes one way. You will veer to the right to go on N Robertson St running parallel to Clairborne. (Note the “jog” on N Clairborne at Elysian Fields.) Continue on North Robertson until it merges into Clairborne again. As you go across the draw bridge, you will be entering into the Lower Ninth.

Take time to turn off Clairborne into the neighborhood. Note that there are very few FEMA trailers in this neighborhood. Most residents have not returned due to the extent of the devastation. Many homes have been demolished, leaving only the foundation or footings.

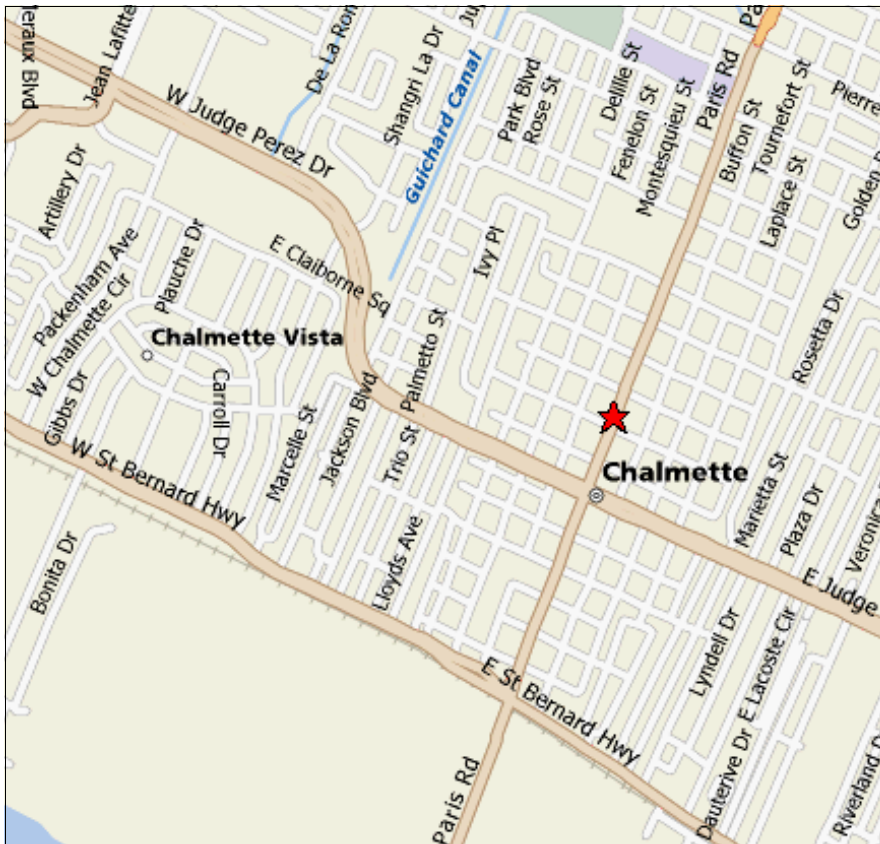
Station 4

Neighborhood: Chalmette, LA

Church: Gethsemane Lutheran Church
2825 Paris Rd. Chalmette, LA

Chalmette is in St Bernard Parish. (A parish in Louisiana is equivalent to a county elsewhere.) This area experienced devastating flooding from the storm surge and failed levees. As you travel from the Lower 9th Ward to Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Chalmette, you will see many homes and businesses empty and abandoned. Chalmette was a city of 60,000; only a handful of homes in Chalmette were not flooded.

Two Bayou Cluster Area ELCA pastors lost their homes in Chalmette. Both had over 10 feet of water in their homes. Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Chalmette sustained major damage. The congregation worshiped in a tent on the church grounds for many months until they were able to gather in the gutted sanctuary. Through the generosity of many volunteers, the buildings of Gethsemane Lutheran Church are slowly being rebuilt.



Map 6 – From Lower Ninth Ward to Gethsemane, Chalmette

Driving Directions (See Map 6):

Continue East on N Clairborne, which eventually becomes West Judge Perez Drive. Continue through the community of Arabi on W Judge Perez Drive to Paris Rd/LA 47; turn left on Paris Road; the church is on the right.

Be sure to drive in the neighborhood adjacent to the church by going down some of the streets behind the church building. Many of the homes are scheduled for demolition.

Station 5

Option A: *Returning to Grace Lutheran via I-10*

Neighborhood: *New Orleans East*

If you are pressed for time, you may return to Grace Lutheran to complete the pilgrimage. You will travel approximately 19 miles from Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Chalmette back to Grace Lutheran Church in New Orleans. The entire length of this leg of the drive (the area known as “New Orleans East” was flooded. You will see miles and miles of neighborhoods (Gentilly and New Orleans East) which were under water. Note the destroyed apartment complexes and the empty shopping centers.

If you have time, take one of the exits off of I-10 West (Chef Menteur Highway, Read Blvd or Crowder Blvd, for example) to get a sense of the neighborhoods affected.

Driving Directions

(See Map 7):

From Gethsemane Lutheran Church, go North(right) on Paris Rd/LA 47 N 7.7 miles to I-10 West; take I-10 West 8 miles to Exit 238B/I-610 West; Go 3.3 miles on I-610 West to Canal Street Exit (1A); take this exit to return to Grace Lutheran Church (on the corner of Canal St and I-610), or remain on I-610 to merge onto I-10 West to head toward Baton Rouge and the New Orleans airport.



Map 7 – From Gethsemane, Chalmette to Grace via I-10

Station 5

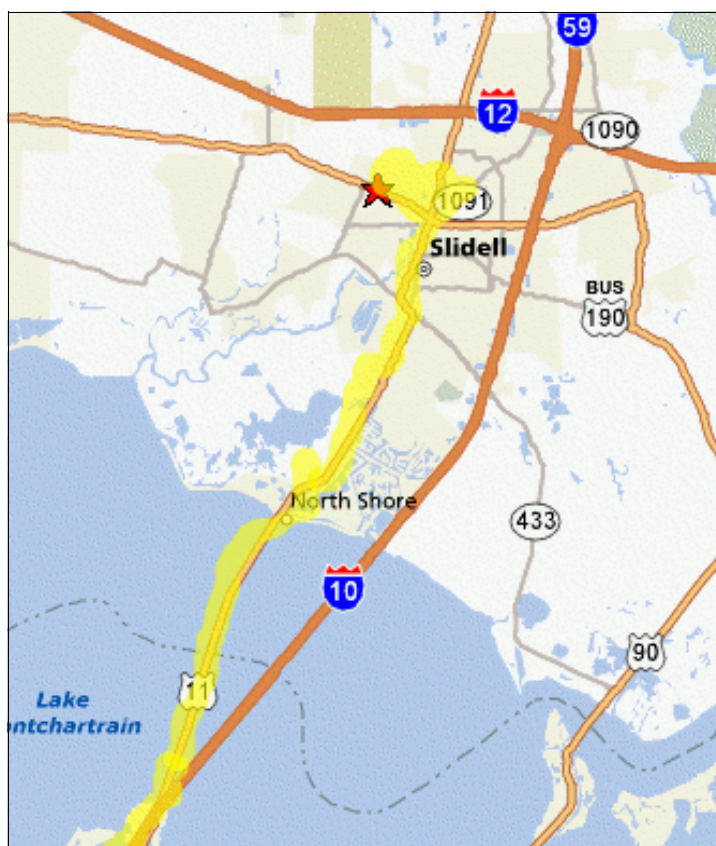
Option B: Northshore around Lake Pontchartrain

Neighborhood: Slidell

Church: Peace Lutheran Church
1320 W. Gause Rd, Slidell, LA

This option will take you around Lake Pontchartrain to the “Northshore” and the communities of Slidell and Mandeville. (The loop around Lake Pontchartrain from Gethsemane Lutheran in Chalmette, through Slidell and Mandeville, and back across the Causeway to New Orleans is about 80 miles. Or you can go to Slidell and leave the area on I-12 is you are traveling by car. This would not add many miles to your trip.) Slidell was near the eye of Katrina as the storm moved across the lake. The community experienced a 25-foot storm surge and hurricane force winds. One ELCA pastor and one Associate in Ministry (AIM) experienced extensive damage to their homes and belongings.

Peace Lutheran Church quickly became one of the staging sites to house volunteers after the storm. It is presently a Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) site. A new building has been erected to house volunteer groups coming into the area to assist in the recovery efforts. You will see areas of destruction as well as the LDR site on this leg of the journey.



Map 8 – From Gethsemane, Chalmette to Peace, Slidell

Driving Directions

*from Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Chalmette to Peace Lutheran Church, Slidell (34 miles)
(See Map 8):*

Go North (right) on Paris Rd/LA 47N from Gethsemane Lutheran Church 7.7 miles to I-10 East; go East on I-10 to Exit 254 (US 11); turn left on US-11 and cross the lake into Slidell (Pontchartrain Drive).

(If desired, you can turn right on Westchester St in Slidell and drive through an area neighborhood. Many of the neighborhoods have FEMA trailers in the front yards as the homes are being repaired.)

Stay on US-11 as it veers to the left near downtown Slidell, then turns right as the road becomes Front St; stay on US 11 (Front St) to US 190 (Gause Blvd); turn left on US 190/Gause Blvd to Peace Lutheran Church about a mile on the right.

Station 6 – From Peace, Slidell to Hosanna, Mandeville (24.34 miles)

Neighborhood: Mandeville, LA

Church: Hosanna Lutheran Church
2480 Highway 190 Mandeville, LA

Mandeville is in St. Tammany Parish on the Northshore. The community has seen exponential growth from people moving from Chalmette and New Orleans after the storm. Mandeville did not experience widespread flooding but did have significant wind damage with roofs needing repair and downed trees.

Hosanna Lutheran Church reflects the incredible mission opportunity which has arisen since Katrina. Thousands of new residents – wounded, searching, trying to put their lives together again – have settled in the area.

Driving Directions

*from Peace Lutheran Church, Slidell to Hosanna Lutheran Church, Mandeville
(24.34 miles – See Map 9):*

Turn right from Peace Lutheran Church onto Gause Rd; go 2 miles to Northshore Blvd; turn right on Northshore and go 0.7 miles to I-12; take I-12 W 17.4 miles to 190 E/Causeway (Exit 63A); stay on N Causeway/190 East 2.4 miles to 190 East/ LA 22 exit; turn left on 190 E and go 1 mile. Hosanna Lutheran Church is on the right.



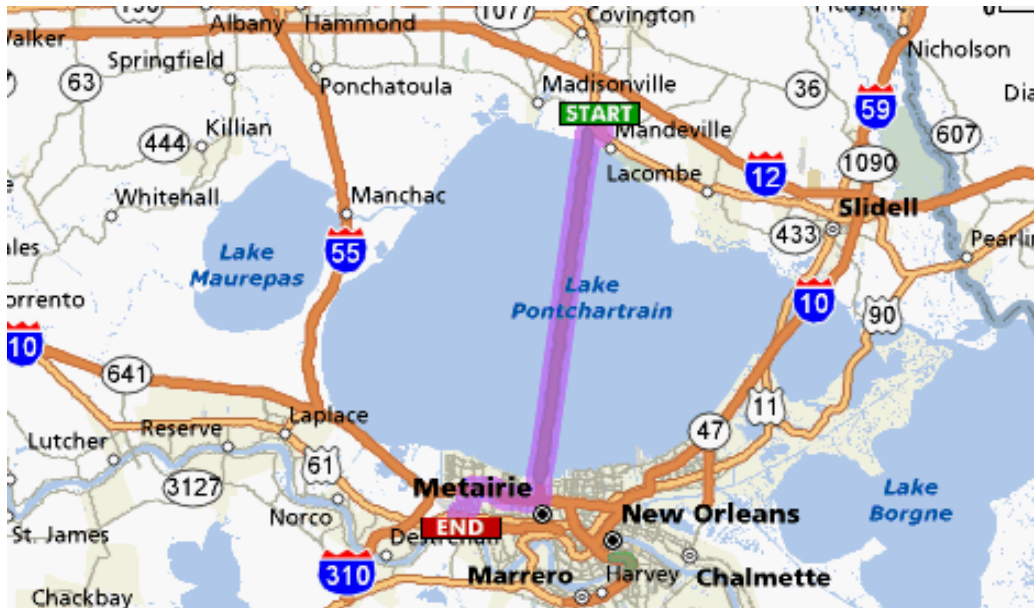
Map 9 – From Peace, Slidell to Hosanna, Mandeville

Station 7 – Leaving the Area

Prayers for the Bayou Conference, ELCA and for You as You Travel

As you prepare to leave the area, take time to pray for all the congregations of the Bayou Conference. Offer prayers as well for yourselves as you travel and for all the faithful people of God everywhere.

If you want to return to New Orleans from Mandeville, you will travel across one of the longest bridges in the country – the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway (24 miles long). The Causeway connects with I-10 in New Orleans.



Map 10 – From Hosanna, Mandeville to New Orleans Airport

(which becomes Lake Pontchartrain Causeway); go south on Causeway 24 miles to shore; remain on Causeway Blvd until it merges onto I-10. Go West on I-10 to Exit 223B. Follow signs to the airport. (Or to return to Grace Lutheran, go to I-10 East to I-610, and exit Canal Street.)

Driving Directions (See Map 10):

If you leaving the area via car, you can either go across the Causeway, or simply return to I-12 from Hosanna Lutheran Church and take I-12 West to Baton Rouge (65 miles) or I-12 East towards Biloxi, MS.

If you are leaving via the New Orleans airport from Hosanna, Mandeville, turn left on US 190 and go one mile back to Causeway

We hope you have been blessed by your visit to the New Orleans area.

Thanks for your presence, your prayers, and your support!

Blessings on your journey!

Other Resources

- ✦ Visit the Gulf Coast Synod, ELCA web site dedicated to the relief and recovery effort. There you will find photos of the ELCA churches following the landfall of Katrina and Rita, as well as opportunities to help. (web site: www.futurewithhope.org)
- ✦ For a helpful animated graphic of the flooding in New Orleans showing the neighborhoods impacted, go to: (www.nola.com/katrina/graphics/continuous.swf)

Books by ELCA Leaders

- ✦ God in the Raging Waters: Stories of Love and Service Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, by Bishop Paul Blom, edited by Pastor Kathy Haueisen
Augsburg Fortress (web site: www.augsburgfortress.org)
- ✦ Voices of Faith in the Midst of the Storm: Reflections in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, by New Orleans area ELCA clergy and AIMs, edited by Pastor John McCullough Bade
Future With Hope Press (web site: www.futurewithhopepress.org)