



SAMUEL DEWITT PROCTOR CONFERENCE, INC.

*With Vision...By Faith...Through Action
Strengthening Churches...Empowering Leaders... Transforming Communities*

PRESS RELEASE

**Contact: Rhoda McKinney-Jones ~267.218.4023 or
rmjwriter@comcast.net & The Rev. Joan R. Harrell~
773.269.1416 or joan.harrell@gmail.com**

June 29, 2007

The Greater New Orleans Clergy for Restorative Justice are Mobilizing: Rebuilding Communities And Advocating for Change in Public Policy in Washington, DC

A delegation of New Orleans' African American clergy mobilized and traveled to Washington, DC to collaborate with hundreds of other clergy, theologians, laypersons, seminarians, national healthcare advocates and labor leaders of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference on Capitol Hill. U.S. Senator Mary L. Landrieu (D-LA) met with the New Orleans delegation of male and female clergy while they were in Washington and made a firm commitment to fight for the financial resources to support the ministers' capacity to rebuild their churches and communities. Senator Landrieu affirmed, "Hurricane Katrina and the federal levee breaks that followed devastated the New Orleans region. It was the worst hurricane our country has ever experienced and was quickly followed by the wrath of Hurricane Rita. Every day, I work to educate my colleagues about the magnitude of the disaster, and I will continue fighting for the resources we need to rebuild our homes, our schools, our churches and our communities."

Just last month, literally 20 months after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita killed thousands of women, children, and men and destroyed billions of dollars worth of homes, hospitals, and schools, finally Congress passed and the President signed into law \$6.4 billion for the hurricane victims and survivors. This funding for the victims was attached to the \$120 billion emergency supplement bill that included \$95 billion to support U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We are very concerned about how long it is taking our governmental leaders to respond to the needs of the people. This is why we went to Washington to tell members of U.S. Congress we need their help. We are religious leaders committed to working with politicians and business owners to ensure that New Orleans offers more employment opportunities than it offered before Katrina and to ensure the restoration of all communities in New Orleans," said the Reverend Tom Watson, chair of the Greater New Orleans Clergy for Restorative Justice and member of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference Board of Trustees.

New Orleans City Councilwoman Cynthia Willard Lewis also participated in the briefings on Capitol Hill. Lewis added, "The members of the Greater New Orleans Clergy for Restorative Justice are looking forward to Senator Landrieu working with them to help them help the 'least of these' who are still in need in New Orleans and the surrounding communities devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita." The 135 mph winds of the Category 4 Hurricane Katrina destroyed the unstable levees of New Orleans on August 29, 2005, causing the water to rise above the rooftops of the ninth ward and killed hundreds of children, women, and men.

The Greater New Orleans Clergy for Restorative Justice determined their agenda to repair and build houses, rebuild churches, reopen schools, rebuild neighborhoods, and to find resources to provide medical and healthcare services for New Orleans, which is still suffering, nearly two years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the Crescent City. Dr. Iva E. Carruthers, general secretary for the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc, contacted clergy and social justice workers in New Orleans, facilitated a recovery retreat in Point Clear, Alabama for ecumenical and interfaith religious leaders and assisted in the development of the Greater New Orleans Clergy for Restorative Justice. According to Carruthers, "The Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference has partnered with the Greater New Orleans Clergy for Restorative Justice to reclaim their prophetic voices for social justice, provide resources, public advocacy training and activities, and to create networks with other churches and faith centers across America to rebuild neighborhoods and improve the lives of all citizens in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region."

The Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc., America's fastest growing ecumenical and interfaith social justice network will return to New Orleans, Louisiana February 11-14, 2008 at the Astor Crowne Plaza on Canal Street for its 5th annual meeting "*Reawakening the Sleeping Giant: Mobilization for a Prophetic Social Justice Ministry.*"