

The Anna Journal Lent 2008

If I were not writing this and had I not experienced this myself, I would think that I was a conspiracy theory nut!

Last night we were honored to host the CDC (Center for Disease Control) at St. Anna's in a public forum. The subject was "Formaldehyde Levels in FEMA-Supplied Trailers." The officers of the CDC seemed a concerned that the crowd might get unruly so they asked that I open the meeting with prayer; which I did. The crowd did not get unruly and the meeting lasted about two hours with about 100 attending at one point or another.

It seems that the CDC has determined that "Average levels of formaldehyde in all travel trailers and mobile homes were about 77 parts per billion. Breathing this much formaldehyde over time at this level can affect health." In the crowd, many testified that they and particularly their children were experiencing profound breathing problems; watery eyes; etc. These are all symptoms of the "condition." When a person asked where can I go to get treated the CDC said they didn't it wasn't their mission. When asked about alternative housing the CDC said they didn't know for sure, it wasn't their mission. I do not condemn the CDC they were only supposed to alert the government and people of the potential health risk. They did. But no immediate help seemed available certainly no medical help.

FEMA set up tables with case workers in our adjacent Parish Hall but did not actively seek out nor announce alternatives to trailer housing. But they did advise the CDC that they would take quick action. Interestingly, Green Peace tried to inform Congress of this issue one year ago without result.

One man asked for help. He stood up and explained that he and his four children had been living under the bridge for a time. When his father moved out of his trailer back into his home he let his son and children live in the trailer. All four children were ill. The man didn't look well either. He wanted accountability. He wanted help. The CDC officer, unable to help, offered nothing. I told the man to call St. Anna's in the morning and we would get him immediate medical help. He wanted accountability. He was frustrated. He was angry. He was about to be homeless. Because FEMA could not get him housing; FEMA would not test the trailer; FEMA could not send him to the Doctor because the trailer was in his father's name. Live with formaldehyde or live on the street for now.

The red tape and lack of clear responsibility for a fellow citizen by "The Government", municipal, state, or Federal was a shame.

Please keep in mind that over 100,000 trailers housed people in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas after the hurricanes of 2005. This is perhaps, as one attendee noted the largest single health disaster by poisoning in U.S. history. The scientific reality is that we won't know the outcomes for about twenty years. To top it all off, guess who gets the used FEMA trailers after use by locals – NATIVE AMERICANS!

Yes, FEMA is recalling them but hey.....Katrina keeps on giving and no everything is not alright....

It is not all bleak!

Because of the support that we received from partner churches we were sustained through 2006 and 2007. I am pleased to report that the average Sunday has risen as follows:

January 2006	25
January 2007	45
January 2008	60
February 2008	70

Because of your support for mission we have caught the notice of many younger people who are seeking a spiritual home that lives what it prays and they believe that they have found it in St. Anna's. The Bishop will visit us this Sunday and we will Receive and Confirm over ten people! Easter, we already have lined up at least two baptisms and perhaps more and by late June we will have performed six weddings at St. Anna's!

In our quest to serve many, you know that we began an ESL (English as A Second Language) Class. God's will for us grew to more outreach to the Hispanic community. St. Anna's was able to secure the support of Bp. Alexander of Atlanta who is sending us his Hispanic Missioner to help us establish a **Hispanic Apostolate**. We received a grant to do so in the amount of \$100,000. Our task will be to establish a "Life Resource Center" for Latinos; establish a Latino church; and to support that work. In conjunction with that we have hired a priest associate to help run the Apostolate. His name will be announced as soon as his background checks are done. But, he is excited and we are very excited to have him!

Our budget, like last year, is over \$500,000! This budget, at the recommendation of the Summit attendees, contemplates continuing the Medical Mission; Mission to Musicians; and Hispanic Apostolate.

The challenge is that we have not yet secured a viable grant or funding source for the Medical Mission. Having served over 5,000 people since we hit the road we now have an opportunity to increase our services four fold in a partnership with Daughters of Charity. We still need commitments for \$120,000 on our part to keep the Medical Unit rolling. Funding appears to run out on the Medical Mission early summer of this year. A very large contribution was received from St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Louisville, KY. Having pledged their Christmas offering to St. Anna's!

We believe that the Mission to Musicians we also be more modest in 2008 relying on church sponsored fund raisers. Since starting this mission has issued over 300 checks to working musicians and attended to the medical needs of over 1,800 people by now. Partners in this mission of special note are: Christ Church Chippewa Falls, WI. St. Paul's, Hudson, WI.; St. Marks Church, Milwaukee, WI.; and Emmanuel

Church, Newport, R.I. each has held a special Jazz Fund raiser for the Mission to Musicians; other supporters include: Grace Church, Providence, R.I. , New Orleans Musicians Clinic, and individual donors and visiting mission groups.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Several areas of assistance still remain and we solicit your thoughts or updates:

St. Francis Church, our tireless friends, have agreed to set up a list serve of supporting parishes. We recently heard that it is still being worked on and not forgotten. We look forward to a free exchange of information.

We have a hole in our operating budget (\$220,000) of about \$20,000. Any congregation willing to take a leap of faith and pledge for the year 2008 will be most appreciated. Stability is a key factor for us right now.

We are undertaking some serious work that MUST be done on the 'Old Historic House.' The Old House is giving way. It must be shored up and some exterior repairs to the second floor balconies must be made or it may be condemned. We have formed a work group to study and report on this and to assist in raising funds. If you can help us with grant writing for 'restoration' it would be very helpful. This is a big project.

I hope to institute a letter writing campaign to the Presiding Bishop and all Bishops to support the Medical Mission here in New Orleans. Please help us to do this. We will be asking for funding from Diocese and from the National Church to help fund the Medical Unit for a three to four year term. We are seeking a total funding amount of \$400-500,000. Any thoughts?

We would really like to hear from you.

One of the points that were made at the Summit was that St. Anna's needed to communicate more and effectively in order to keep our 'cause' before congregations. We do write letters of thanks to each donor. We try to send out Anna Journals when possible. Recently, Diane Dawson sent out a Journal attempting to get some energy going and she received one reply. Help us to communicate. Tell us what you want and what you need.

We still need you. We are nearing sustainability but we are still dealing with Katrina. New Orleans still has not established a viable public health system; schools are still dysfunctional; and re-building is slow in many sectors. Crime is still high and frustration along with depression still higher. For many now is the time of brokenness. After reading all of the MDG's I can only think of one that does not apply to New Orleans. The more I am here the more I am convinced that the Katrina Disaster is a National shame.

Give us hope. Give us life. Remember us in prayer.