

# SAMARITAN CLERGY CONNECTION

Samaritan Counseling Center of Southwestern Michigan

A United Way Agency

*“Where Faith and Counseling Meet”*

Rev. Glenn Chapman, D. Min., Executive Director, Editor

Fall 2005

*The SAMARITAN CLERGY CONNECTION is an expression of the partnership with churches that has been so vital a part of our 29-year history of providing professional psychological counseling with the added dimension of faith. We hope to provide you with relevant, helpful information that enhances your own ministry, in a monthly easy to read format. Contact us by phone (926-6199), fax (926-67 80) or email ([gchapman@samcounseling.org](mailto:gchapman@samcounseling.org)) with issues you would like to see us address*

## A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO KATRINA

**B**y now, there is little left to be said about the unspeakable devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. There is, however, much left to be done. As the floodwaters of Katrina reach Michigan embodied in the victims who are seeking refuge here, we are challenged not only to respond to their physical needs, but to their emotional and spiritual needs as well. This edition of **Samaritan Clergy Connection** will speak to that ongoing concern.

### Ministering to the Enormous Sense of Loss

It is all but impossible for a society that grieves over the loss of the cable connection for a few minutes to absorb the enormity of the loss for Katrina victims. Not only the loss of life, but the loss of virtually everything we take for granted on a daily basis is wrenching the souls of the hurricane survivors. A wise pastor will keep a caring eye open to the signs of the emotions of loss:

- Emotional numbness
- Intense sadness
- Survival guilt
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Hopelessness
- Social withdrawal

### Responding to the Spiritual Crisis

Human tragedy has the uncanny ability to both shake and strengthen faith with the same blow. If you personally encounter Katrina victims, you will see evidence of both. A healthy pastoral response might include:

- Encouraging victims to talk about their experience and emotions
- Asking what this has meant to them spiritually
- Giving permission to express questions and emotions (anger, doubt, etc.) about God’s role in their tragedy
- Resisting the urge to defend God, which only increases guilt
- Instilling hope by “grace-ful” listening

### Creating a Caring Environment for Recovery

As you well know from your own reaction to Katrina’s wrath, your parishioners are far from untouched by the human tragedy unfolding in Mississippi and Louisiana. Many of them will experience some of the same symptoms, in milder form, as the victims. They, too, may grieve and become depressed, or experience a spiritual crisis themselves. As we are seeing, however, there can be the very positive response of feeling called to do something. That call to respond creates the opportunity to create a congregation that provides a caring environment for any victims who might come your way, while giving your parishioners

something to do about emotions they are feeling. Steps in that direction could include:

- Becoming informed and informing your congregation about specific needs and ways to meet them. Red Cross (927-2288) and United Way (925-7772) are good sources for that information.
- Sensitizing parishioners to the emotional and spiritual needs of survivors
- Equipping and encouraging parishioners to become involved in ministry to all affected by Hurricane Katrina.

**May we all reflect Christ's compassion  
for the poor and suffering  
in our response to this massive need.**

## Samaritan News

### **CHURCH COVENANT PROGRAM**

An opportunity to support the Samaritan Center and let the Center support your ministry.

### **STAINED GLASS FOLLIES**

Take a group of ministers, add talent or the lack thereof, and you have a fun-filled fundraiser for the Center on March 25, 2006, 7:00 p.m. at Lakeshore High School.

For more information call 926-6199 or email [gchapman@samcounseling.org](mailto:gchapman@samcounseling.org)

***NOTICE:*** In order to eliminate printing costs, future quarterly editions of the Samaritan Clergy Connection will be available either on our website at [www.samcounseling.org](http://www.samcounseling.org) or by email. Please let us know if you would like to receive the Samaritan Clergy Connection by e-mail.

**926-6199    637-6236    683-7604**

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