

Mississippi, too, struggles to rebuild: Still numb

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Driving west from New Orleans along the water's edge toward Mobile, Alabama, one sees that the boulevard stretching along the Mississippi coastline now has flora and fauna, but piers are ruined and homes are missing.

The Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi has been coping with its own losses for two years and has struggled to address the spiritual, emotional and physical deficits of the coast area pummeled by Hurricane Katrina, according to Episcopal News Service.

"Residents are still numb from the catastrophic forces which turned their world upside down on August 29, 2005," said David Johnson, Episcopal canon in Mississippi. "The work to recover will be at least a decade in being accomplished. For many, the magnitude and long-term impact is just now setting in."

Many clergy sustained major or total damage to their homes near the Gulf of Mexico. Six of 11 churches on beachfront properties were destroyed by the storm. Three have made long-term plans and are building or rebuilding. Three others—in Biloxi, Bay St. Louis and Long Beach—were among the hardest hit and have not gone beyond the planning process.

Episcopal Relief and Development grants helped fund projects for the wider community. ERD, as a major partner with Lutheran Episcopal Services in Mississippi, has allowed Camp Coast Care and Mission on the Bay to function as volunteer work camps.

Later this year, said the news service, LESM will take over as the directing body for other established work camps with ties to Lutheran Disaster Response. Funds from the two cooperative bodies have permitted five-to-eight year plans to be put in place.

Another Episcopal project, with other partners, has created the “Hallelujah Housing” initiative for building affordable housing in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties.