

Lake Edge → New Orleans

January 2-10, 2010

Timeline in a nutshell: Leave early Saturday morning, caravan down. Arrive Sunday afternoon. Work Monday-Friday. Leave Saturday morning, caravan up. Back home Sunday evening.

Main focus: Service work – approximately 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Late start Monday due to orientation; early dismissal Wednesday for tour of disaster recovery work in the city.

Our work: Rebuilding, either homes for people in need or working on Beecher Memorial United Church of Christ. Recipient homeowners are not required to be affiliated with the United Church of Christ, but many are members of New Orleans area UCC churches or friends, relatives or neighbors of UCCers. Our specific task will not be determined until just before our trip.

Skills needed: General carpentry skills, putting up sheetrock, mudding, installing trim, windows and doors. Skilled carpenters are essential, but there will be plenty for unskilled folks to do too. Unskilled folks will be expected to learn new skills under the supervision of skilled Lake Edgers and UCC staff. You must be 16 to participate.

Rebuilding Homes, Rebuilding Hope program: National UCC program in cooperation with the UCC South Central Conference has been running since shortly after Katrina, headed by Rev. Alan Coe. Staff include skilled disaster recovery construction supervisors and long-term volunteers.

Our residence: We will live at Little Farms United Church of Christ in suburban New Orleans (technically, River Ridge, LA), about 25 minutes from downtown and close to the airport. Little Farms is a small, open and affirming congregation with a laid-back, middle-class feel. Our hosts cook dinner for us one night and welcome us with true southern hospitality. We sleep in two Sunday School rooms converted into a men's dorm and a women's dorm, each with bunks with twin-size air mattresses. The men's and women's restrooms are each equipped with a hot shower. We cook, eat and hang out in the church's fellowship hall.

Cost: \$290 trip fees include: transportation in the caravan and around town, 2 nights in hotels en route, our lodging fee to Little Farms church, breakfasts, packed lunches for the worksite, parade participation, and suppers at church Monday, Tuesday and Thursday night. NOT included in the trip fees (on your own): fast food/restaurant meals en route, restaurant meals in New Orleans Sunday, Wednesday and Friday night, any music clubs, museums or other activities you choose to do, taxi fare (if you choose not to ride with the group), or alcoholic beverages.



“This is nothing glorious, nothing glitzy, but this is really important to these people, and it’ll be important to you too.”

*Rev. Alan Coe,
Minister of Disaster Recovery*

I am a very different person now after these experiences down here in New Orleans.”

2009 participant Scott Zuberbier

“I was deeply affected when I saw the house we were working on with the lettering and numbers in the front, sprayed on by the National Guard, indicating if any bodies had been found in the home. The reality of it was brought to mind when I saw that.”

2009 participant Nancy Schultz

“The only way this world can keep moving forward is if people give of themselves. People think church is about showing up once a week and touching base. And at Lake Edge it’s something more than that.”

2009 participant Tom Royston

Spiritual Stuff: A short devotion every morning is our only formal spiritual activity (and maybe Sunday worship if we're lucky). Yet we will spend our days in hands-on service work and will see the problems facing New Orleans first-hand, and we will break out of our routines and will connect with each other, with our UCC partners, and with the people of New Orleans in a significant way.

New Orleans culture: YES, we will take time to have fun, and you will get off the beaten track and see the real New Orleans tourists rarely glimpse. Sunday afternoon & evening are on your own in Jackson Square; Monday we have a lovely dinner with Little Farms UCC members; Wednesday we will be marching in the parade; Friday we will have a nice dinner out together with music.



Dorm Room with bunks

Orientation: You will get some background reading and have an orientation/planning meeting Dec. 6 with Amanda, and you will get an orientation from the UCC program on Monday morning before we start work. Our dinner with our host church and our tour of disaster recovery work by the UCC and other groups provide additional big-picture perspective.

Travel Plans: Yes, you can make alternative arrangements such as flying to and/or from New Orleans. In past years we've also had one van-load of folks come early or stay late to get an extra night in a French Quarter hotel to play tourist for a night.

Key dates:

Tuesday October 13: Deadline to register for the Holy Wisdom Retreat

Saturday November 21: Costume Workshop/Retreat at Holy Wisdom 8-6:30.

Sunday December 6 12:30-2 (after 11 am worship): Planning/orientation meeting for the trip. As mandatory as we can make it, lunch included. TRIP FEES, REQUIRED FORMS and PROOF of up-to-date TETANUS will be required at this meeting.

Saturday January 2: Caravan leaves for New Orleans.

Sunday January 10: Caravan arrives home in Madison.

What's all this about this crazy parade?

Clarifications about Mardi Gras: For New Orleanians, Mardi Gras is primarily about costume balls and parades, frequently with quirky satirical themes. Contrary to the impression often given by media coverage of tourists in the French Quarter, these parades are family friendly (with a few duly labeled highly satirical exceptions). Mardi Gras beads are thrown from parades. Elaborate costumes, floats and collectible parade "throws" are the hallmarks of the season, which runs Epiphany until Lent. This season of festivals culminating in "Fat Tuesday" is celebrated in many cultures (particularly those with a Mediterranean – French, Spanish, Portuguese or Italian heritage) and is more commonly called Carnival. This year Mardi Gras falls on Feb. 16, but we will be there for Epiphany, when a few activities inaugurate the start of the Mardi Gras season.



Lake Edgers in the 2009 Joan of Arc Parade

Krewes: Krewes are private social clubs which put on the public parades and private costume balls that make up the primary Mardi Gras festivities. Each krewe funds, organizes and produces its own parade – ranging from elaborate floats and thousands of dollars in throws to groups of friends wearing matching T-shirts and beads recycled from other krewes' throws from previous years. Each krewe has its own style and parade theme. Dues for exclusive krewes run in the thousands.

Krewe de Jeanne d'Arc: Lake Edge belongs to this brand new krewe in a special group membership created just for us. Joan of Arc is the patron saint of New Orleans (remember, this is Catholic country).

- 1) Unlike most krewes which are purely social, the Joan of Arc krewe emphasizes education, history and culture and collaborates with scholars.
- 2) Unlike most krewes which emphasize decorated floats, the Joan of Arc krewe marches in the style of the oldest Mardi Gras parades, on foot and horseback, with torches, at dusk.
- 3) Unlike most krewes which emphasize political and social satire, the Joan of Arc krewe is a more serious celebration of a woman of faith as a symbol of courage and French culture, mostly parade but partly religious processional, and the costume theme is of the Joan of Arc story and medieval times (1400s). The krewe has been getting a lot of positive press for lifting up this rallying symbol of courage and cultural pride during this time of struggle and recovery for the city.
- 4) Unlike most krewes which throw Mardi Gras beads, plastic cups and other favors, the Joan of Arc krewe hands out handmade throws such as prayer cards, rosaries, Joan of Arc saint medallions, crosses, etc.
- 5) Most likely the Joan of Arc parade will coincide with our volunteer trip every year.

Last year: Lake Edge marched last year in the first-ever Joan of Arc Epiphany parade and had a great time. Now a real krewe has formed, and the parade will be more elaborate.

Parade Theme: Joan of Arc, 1400s France. Authentic medieval costumes and handmade relevant throws are required (Mardi Gras beads are specifically banned!)

Lake Edge costumes: Lake Edgers will be costumed as 15th century Benedictine monks and nuns, carrying candles, accompanied by Gregorian chants (on an authentically hidden boom box), and sprinkling the crowd with holy water and giving out holy water as our "throw." The costumes will be one-size, owned by Lake Edge and will be used in future years....courtesy of our 2009 New Orleans Team, who donated the money left in their kitty for costumes.

Costume Workshop/Retreat: A few of us (hopefully including some crafty people from the rest of the congregation) will get together to sew the costumes in a retreat at Madison's contemporary Benedictine monastery Saturday Nov. 21.



S. SCHOLASTICA

Deadline to register Oct. 13. Retreat will run 8 a.m. to 6:30 (opening with morning prayer with the sisters and closing with their evening prayer and dinner). **If you can't make it for the whole workshop/retreat or can't stand crafting, members of the New Orleans team are especially invited to join us for evening prayer with the sisters at 4:30, followed by a chat with one of the sisters about modern day Benedictines and the Benedictine tradition, followed by supper with the sisters and the monastery community – you can thank your fellow Lake Edgers who made the costumes while you're there.** The supper costs \$10, and is the part we need to make reservations for, so let me know by Oct. 13 if you are coming for supper.

