

# **National Black Church Initiative**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **NATIONAL BLACK CHURCH INITIATIVE CONGRATULATES CHURCHES THAT ASSISTED VICTIMS OF HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA**

### **CHURCHES RAISED AN ESTIMATED \$1 BILLION IN CASH DONATIONS, FOOD, SHELTER, CLOTHING AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

**Washington, DC** – The National Black Church Initiative applauds the massive outreach efforts by tens of thousands of African American faith communities to help survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These faith-based communities – many of them NBCI members – raised an estimated \$1 billion in cash donations, food, shelter, clothing and social services. Although hundreds of churches were destroyed by the twin storms, congregants gave generously of their time and money.

This extraordinary outpouring of goodwill cut across denominational lines. All denominations worked together to ease the suffering of survivors on the Gulf Coast and in Texas.

“The church has always responded to crisis,” says Rev. Anthony Evans, NBCI president. “However, the huge scope of the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused the church to jump into the fray immediately and – along with FEMA, and other relief organizations – serve the emergency needs of victims...”

“Regardless of their stations in life or the colors of their skins, congregants from all walks of life displayed the true character of the church – God’s compassion, mercy, and grace,” says Rev. C.H. Johnson, former president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention Eastern Regional.

The stories of compassion and love are too numerous to list. In Houston, where thousands of survivors were relocated, hundreds of local churches participated in Operation Compassion, an interfaith effort to provide shelter and distribute food, clothing, and other donations. In nearby Windsor Village United Methodist Church sent congregants to volunteer at one shelter. In fact, one congregant’s son flew a helicopter from Houston to New Orleans to help with relief efforts. Second Baptist Church provided the overall leadership of the interfaith initiative.

Saint Agnes Baptist Church operated a distribution warehouse and assembled volunteers to unload trucks, stock shelves, and transport donations to shelters. These are just a few examples, but tens of thousands of African American churches demonstrated an extraordinary act of compassion. We want to make sure that the African American church is recognized for this contribution, as it has never been down before. It also demonstrates the enormous potential of the Black church and what can be done when they focus on an issue.

The Rev. Mark McCleary, Chair of NBCI's Minister Alliance, says, "I am so proud of how these churches – NBCI members and non-members -- responded. We should all recognize the enormous contributions provided by the church to FEMA, the American Red Cross, and other disaster relief agencies."

"Nonprofit and voluntary organizations were and continue to be critical partners in responding to the needs of victims of Hurricane Katrina, fulfilling a role they play in every disaster but to an unprecedented level in this response and recovery," said the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Acting Director David Paulison. "The compassionate actions of the National Black Church Initiative and others in the faith community serve as impressive examples of the outpouring of generosity following this devastating hurricane season. I commend them for their commitment to those in need and thank them for their partnership in the recovery efforts now underway."

### ***About the National Black Church Initiative***

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 16,000 African-American and Latino churches dedicated to erasing racial disparities in healthcare. We are a faith-based health organization that provides critical wellness information and pre-screening to all of our members. The African-American community ranks first in 11 different health risk categories. NBCI's purpose is to partner with national health officials to provide health education, reduce racial health disparities, and increase access to quality healthcare.