

An interfaith statement from clergy representatives of New Orleans delivered on August 29, 2007.

A Vision for a Renewed New Orleans

"May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy,
those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves."
Psalm 126:5-6 [NRSV]

We affirm a vision of a just, safe and protected city where every person is respected and the gifts of each are valued and utilized to plant seeds of recovery, renewal, and rebirth. Central to our belief in God's vision is that all, especially the poor, the vulnerable and those in need, are welcome here. All people must be able to find ways to a good life with adequate and affordable health care, housing, transportation, education and employment opportunities.

We voice urgent concern for the well-being of our neighbors. We are disturbed that some are prevented or discouraged from returning. We are alarmed that others have decided to leave.

The time is long past for our political leaders to fulfill the tasks entrusted to them by the people. Our circumstances demand from our political leaders cooperation rather than competition; dedication to the common good rather than to political or private advantage.

Our vision is for a New Orleans in which we

1. place our youth first in supporting the best opportunities for their education and holistic growth;
2. develop neighborhood plans to cooperate with police to reduce crime;
3. address the crippled state of our municipal judicial system and state courts;
4. provide fair housing opportunities for those who can least afford housing;
5. monitor plans for quality healthcare to ensure that all are well served with dignity;
6. encourage economic initiatives which expand the opportunities for wage earners to support their families;
7. ensure greater availability of public transportation to connect people with job opportunities and public services.

We believe God commands us, the clergy of New Orleans, to call men and women of faith to selfless and constructive action. Silence in our grievous circumstances amounts to sin. Information is power and so we labor both to inform our brothers and sisters of their obligations and to heal their wounded spirits.

All, who today sow seeds of recovery in New Orleans with tears still in their eyes, are given the responsibility to nurture tender shoots of renewal and to welcome others to join. With the blessing of God may all come home to share in our city's sheaves of hope and sing songs of joy.