

RHINO: *Rebuilding Hope in New Orleans*
St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church
1545 State Street
New Orleans, LA 70118



Dear Group Leader,

Thank you, thank you, thank you for volunteering to be a group leader! You have signed on to shepherd a group of willing and able volunteers from your community as they travel to New Orleans to help rebuild hope in a city plagued by poverty and despair. The leadership role you've accepted is extremely important to the success of your week with RHINO. It requires much patience and some work behind-the-scenes, but comes with a great reward: seeing lives changed.

As the group leader, you are the primary contact for the RHINO staff. We will rely on you before, during and after your stay to keep your group on schedule and relay any messages. We hope you will communicate with us about your group's experience and let us know if you have any suggestions, either now or in the future, to enhance it. We think of ourselves as a resource, live and in color, so please use us to make this a challenging and rewarding week. If your group has two leaders (for instance, one logistical and one spiritual), please let us know which person is the primary contact.

This introductory packet contains vital documents, so please read through everything to make sure you don't miss an important detail.

St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church and the people of New Orleans thank you for investing in RHINO. You are an integral part of this ministry and one of the reasons we are able to positively impact the lives of many people in this city. If you have questions or concerns leading up to your trip, please contact RHINO Program Manager Avery Strada at avery@scapc.org. If your business is urgent, you may call her cell phone (251.209.0540). **Please do not give this number to other participants or people interested in coming to work with RHINO.**

Happy planning, and we'll see you soon!

...The RHINO Staff

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Checklist:

- Print and review group leader letter and packet
- Return “Two-Month Confirmation” form to Avery – DUE 2 MONTHS PRIOR TO ARRIVAL
 - Send payment along with form
- Make and/or confirm travel arrangements
- Distribute “Health & Liability” form, “What to Bring” list, and “RHINO Devotional” to group members
 - Collect completed “Health & Liability” forms and bring them to New Orleans
- Return “Few More Details” form to Avery – DUE 1 MONTH PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

Two-Month Confirmation Form

General Group Information

Group Name: _____ City of Departure: _____

Arriving: _____ Departing: _____

Total Group Size: _____ # of Men: _____ # of Women _____

Group Contact Person: _____

Cell Phone #: _____ Contact Person's E-mail: _____

Payment Information

Please send one check to RHINO. ****PLEASE DO NOT SEND INDIVIDUAL CHECKS FROM GROUP MEMBERS.**** The current RHINO fee is \$225/person. This is a flat fee and covers various expenses including, but not limited to: administration, food, accommodation, t-shirts, etc. The fee is the same for all groups (including groups that stay only 5 nights) and group members (including clergy).

*Make checks payable "SCAPC" and mail to:
St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church
1545 State Street
New Orleans, LA 70118
Attn: RHINO*

****Beginning in October 2012, our fee will be \$250/person.** This is due to the newly implemented fee that Habitat for Humanity will be charging all volunteers. Here's more information about that fee from Habitat: *"In light of the economic challenges facing all non-profits, and the increased number of clients who desperately need our services, we are asking our volunteers to make a one-time tax deductible gift of \$25 to help us cover the costs of registration, insurance, administration and materials. By offering financial support you ensure that all of NOAHs projects have expert instructors, and are safe and productive for all volunteers. Your generous cooperation ensures that the funds we raise can be spent on the most important people...our families."*

Accommodation Information

Groups are housed at Brent House Hotel, just minutes from Ferry Place. More information about the hotel can be found on its Web site: www.brenthouse.com. RHINO houses 3 people of the same sex per room, as your numbers allow. If your group would like fewer people per room, please contact Avery. Additional rooms may be reserved at a cost of \$554.70/room (in addition to regular RHINO fees) depending on availability at the hotel.

One month prior to arrival, a sales representative from the hotel will contact you with information about the check-in process. Please be prepared to submit a rooming list to the hotel via e-mail prior to arrival. Groups will be checked in as a whole, so if your group is not arriving at the same time, you need to make arrangements for the first person who checks in to be able to distribute keys to the group members who arrive later.

What to Bring

Suggested Personal Items:

- Prescription and over-the-counter drugs
- Contacts/eyeglasses (spares)
- Special First-Aid needs (we will have a generic kit on site)
- Appropriate Health and Personal Records
- Soap/shampoo
- Sunscreen
- Insect-repellent and itch-relief cream
- Snore strips
- Ear plugs
- Sleep masks
- Swimsuit – Brent House has pool and hot tub this year!!!
- Wristwatch (or other time-telling device)
- Cash for meals and snacks
- Coins for washer/dryer at hotel
- Laundry detergent/dryer sheets

Work-related Items:

- Refillable water bottle
- Powdered sports drinks (if you wish)
- Work boots with hard soles (recommended) or old tennis shoes
- Long pants (recommended but shorts are fine – especially during warmer months!)
- Protective eyewear (most pairs of glasses or sunglasses will work, but make sure you cover a large portion of your eye area)
- Hat/visor
- Bandannas

Rental Car Discounts



Dollar Rent-a-car

Corporate code BR0878

5% off the lowest price

www.dollar.com

1-800-800-4000

Enterprise

Corporate Account# 14N0959

Online password: HAB

10% off the lowest price

www.enterprise.com

1-800-rent-a-car

For 15 passenger vans contact:

Monique Judice

(985) 240-6042

Metairie, LA 70002

Hertz

CDP discount code: 1696501

5-20% off

www.hertz.com

1-800-654-3131

Alert Transportation LLC

504-525-0500

or

504-628-3834

Fun things to do in New Orleans

Legend:

\$ - Cheap \$\$ - Modest \$\$\$ - Expensive

M – Monday T – Tuesday W – Wednesday Th – Thursday F – Friday

Sa – Saturday S - Sunday

U - Uptown FQ - French Quarter CBD - Central Business District GD – Garden District

MC - Mid-City RB - River Bend MET - Metairie

Sweet Treats:

Café du Monde: 1039 Decatur St. \$ FQ 24/7. *Beignets and Café au Lait: a classic New Orleans experience.*

Creole Creamery: 4924 Prytania St. \$ U M-Th noon-10p, F-Sa noon-11p. *Excellent ice cream in quirky flavors made with the freshest ingredients. **Cash Only.***

Hansen's Sno-Bliz: 4801 Tchoupitoulas St. \$ U T-Su 1-7p. *Home of the original sno-ball machine. Closes at the end of September.*

Plum Street Sno-Bliz: Corner of Plum St. and Burdette St. \$ U M-Sa 11a-8p. *Serves sno-balls in fun little Chinese take-out containers. Closes at the end of September.*

Praline's by Jean: 1728 St. Charles Ave. \$ U M-F 10:30a-5p. *Excellent pralines. Owned by a SCAPC member.*

Sucré: 3025 Magazine St. \$ U Su-Th 9a-10p, F-Sa 9a-midnight. *Fun and funky sweet shop with excellent gelato, chocolates, desserts, and coffee.*

Watering Holes:

The Bulldog: 3236 Magazine St. \$ U Open Late. *Extensive draft selection (50 beers, plus 100 more in bottles). Nice outdoor patio with shade trees and fans. Delicious cheese fries.*

Cooter Brown's: Corner of St. Charles & S Carrollton. \$ RB *Just a stone's throw away from the work site. Pool tables. Great beer selection. TVs tuned to local-interest sporting event.*

Finn McCool's: 3701 Banks St. \$ *Irish Pub. Trivia on Mondays @ 9p. Great place to watch a soccer game.*

The Rivershack Tavern: 3449 River Rd. \$ RB 11a-??? *All-around good time. Grill open until 10p.*

Divine Dives:

Camellia Grill: 626 S Carrollton. \$ U Open Late. *Be prepared to stand in line for NOLA's best diner. Breakfast all day. Cannot seat large groups together. **Cash only.***

Franky & Johnny's: 321 Arabella St. \$ U M-Sa 11a-9p. *Great place for a group on a budget. Be sure to try the fried bell pepper rings.*

Guy's Po' Boys: 5259 Magazine St. \$ U M-Sa 11a-4p. *Excellent Po' Boys. Be sure to check the blackboard for equally-savory daily specials. **Cash only.***

Ignatius: 4200 Magazine St. \$ U Closed Tuesdays. *Inexpensive local food. Serves bottled beer in a brown paper bag.*

Mother's Restaurant: 401 Poydras St. \$ CBD M-Su 7a-10p. *A New Orleans institution since 1938. Mix of local cuisine w/ soul food. Great Po' Boys. Validates parking.*

Parkway Bakery & Tavern: 538 Hagan Ave. \$ MC 11a-11p. *Never-fail Po' Boys and sandwiches.*

Creole Food:

Acme Oyster House: 724 Iberville St. \$\$ CBD Su-Th 11a-10p, F-Sa 11a-11p. *Great menu including all your favorite bayou classics.*

Casamento's: 4330 Magazine St \$ U Th-Sa 5:30-9p. *A Creole menu. Locals recommend the oysters. Closed June-August.*

Clancy's: 6100 Annunciation St. \$\$\$ U M-Sa 5:30-10p. *Exquisite neighborhood restaurant with a Creole-based menu to match the ambiance.*

Gumbo Shop: 630 Saint Peter St. \$ FQ 11a-10p. *The name speaks for itself.*

Jacques-Imo's: 8324 Oak St. \$ RB M-Th 5:30-10p, F-Sa 5:30-10:30p. *A local favorite for real "Nawlin" food.*

Mandina's: 3800 Canal St. \$\$ MC M-Th 11a-9:30p, F-Sa 11a-10:30p, Su noon-9p. *Extensive menu featuring Creole and Italian classics. **Cash Only.***

Entertaining Eats:

The Columns Hotel: 3811 St. Charles Ave. \$ U *A relaxed set inside a restored, historic New Orleans mansion becomes a happening bar scene late at night. Live, local music nightly.*

Houston's Live Jazz: 1755 St. Charles Ave. \$\$ *Upscale American cuisine. Call to make reservations. (504-524-1578)*

Mulates: 201 Julia St. \$\$ CBD 11a-11p. *Cajun food. Live music beginning at 7p. Call ahead to see if they are offering free Cajun 2-step lessons that night. (1-800-854-9149)*

Rock n' Bowl: 4133 S Carrollton. \$ U T-Sa 5p-?? \$18/lane per hour + \$1 for shoes. Menu includes typical "bar"-type food.

Snug Harbor: 626 Frenchmen St. \$\$\$ FQ Where the locals go for good jazz. Call to book tickets for dinner and a show. (504-949-0696).

Not to be forgotten:

New Orleans's Hamburger: 4141 St. Charles Ave. \$\$ U Classic American fare. No checks. Reservations are recommended. (504-247-9753)

Commander's Palace: 1403 Washington Ave. \$\$\$ GD New Orleans' classiest restaurant. Dress is upscale. Jackets are preferred for men. No shorts. Call ahead to make reservations. (504-899-8221)

Drago's: 3232 N Arnoult Rd. \$\$ MET M-Sa 11a-9p. Charbroiled oysters are out-of-this-world. All entrees are impeccably prepared. Do not take reservations, but can accommodate a crowd.

Dante's Kitchen: 736 Dante St. \$\$ RB 5:30-10p every night except Tuesday. Impeccable Creole fusion menu.

Felix's Restaurant and Oyster Bar: 739 Iberville St. \$\$ CBD M-Th 10a-10p, F-Sa 10a-midnight, Su 10a-9p. Menu features Cajun and Creole classic. Great oyster bar. TVs are always tuned to LA sports.

Mat and Naddie's: 937 Leonidas St. \$\$ RB M, Th-Sa 5:30-9:30p. Quaint setting for small parties. Eclectic wine selection.

Reginelli's: 741 State St. \$ U Su-Th 11a-11p, F-Sa 11a-midnight. Good pizza and Italian hot-pressed sandwiches. Can handle a larger group.

Juan's Flying Burrito: 2018 Magazine St. \$ U M-Th 11a-10p, F-Sa 11a-11p. Su 12p-10p. Traditional Mexican food with a New Orleans twist.

Theo's: 4218 Magazine St. \$ U M-Sa 11a-10p, Su noon-9p. Excellent pizza.

Vincent's: 7813 St. Charles Ave. \$\$ U 5-10p. Incredible Italian food. Be sure to save room for dessert!

Ye Olde College Inn: 3000 S Carrollton. \$ U T-Sa 4-11p. Great vibe. Great food.

Coffee Shops:

CC's Coffee House: Corner of Jefferson Ave and Magazine St. \$ U 6a-10p. Free high-speed WiFi (unsecured).

PJs: 7624 Maple St. \$ U 6a-10p. Free high-speed WiFi (unsecured).

Rue de la Course: Corner of Oak St. and S Carrollton. \$ U M-F 6:30a-midnight, F-Sa 7a-midnight. *Free high-speed WiFi (unsecured).* **Cash Only.**

Fueling Stations (for your vehicle):

Shell: Turn left on Jefferson Hwy. The station is 2-3 stoplights away on your right. There is also a Shell station at State and Magazine (between the church and the river) and another on Claiborne between Broadway and State.

Chevron: Near the corner of S Carrollton and Plum St.

RHINO Devotional

Reflection 1:

Amos Diasa, Associate Pastor, Eastminster PC, Columbia, SC

Based on Mark 4:2-20

My father is the only person I know who still talks like Jesus. I don't mean that he goes around pronouncing the end of the world as we know it and telling people to follow him because he is the Son of God. But, like Jesus, he does talk in parables. One of my favorites is the one that he shares each time my best friend John comes around about the horse and the donkey. He loves to tell John with his thick Ethiopian accent that if a "horse spends too much time with a donkey, he will eventually start acting like a donkey." If you are curious, John is the horse and I am the donkey. And if you still don't get it, it's usually not a good thing to be called a donkey.

You have to know these little details to get it – to understand what exactly he was trying to say. And of course, the thick accent suggested more credibility to the crude and common description of our friendship than it probably deserved. But each time he tells us about horses and donkeys John and I have a hearty laugh (like it's the first time we heard it) and then a heated discussion about who is the horse and who is the donkey. That's what parables do; they reveal truth through common things. So it shouldn't really surprise us that Jesus manages to describe the in-breaking of the kingdom of God into this complicated world by pointing out the various places in which a sower might happen to toss seed. But that's what's here: a seed, a sower, a few thorns, some weeds, a footpath, some fertile soil, all coming together to describe in mesmerizing detail what happens when the good news of the Gospel story encounters real people like you and me.

Horses and donkeys, seeds and sowers – if only it was that easy. Its not though; with parables there is always more to the story than meets the eye. Maybe that's why we have such a hard time getting it. We want the fireworks, and a happy ending that doesn't leave any stone unturned. The parable would rather take that same stone and turn it back right side up, or throw it throw it at one of our glass houses. Now all this would be minor nuisance if Jesus didn't use this truth-telling technique as his primary teaching tool. Between the miracles and the conflicts with the religious elite, Jesus keeps stopping on hillsides and on boats, on long walks and in gardens, to teach about the kingdom of heaven. And more often than not these living lessons about the beginning of a new kingdom and the end of life as we know it, these living lessons, employ the most crude and common things as characters.

For me, RHINO is a living parable. Each time I return to New Orleans to serve in this small way my enlightened sensibilities about how the world is supposed to work are turned upside down. The persistent irony is unavoidable: insufferable pain in a city that prides itself on having a good time, a rich sense of history in a city whose fate might be determined by what happened just a few years ago, pilgrims from afar (like you) journeying to rebuild a city that

they do not call home. My enlightened sensibilities about how the world is supposed to work betray me in New Orleans. There are no easy answers here. But there is hope and hope cannot wait for causes and effects to be contested. Hope pulls us forward into the kingdom of God which is being (re)constructed even now – right on the streets of New Orleans.

Reflection 2:

Bob Marye, Co-Director of Development and Church Relations, Habitat for Humanity, New Orleans, LA

On September 1, 2005, I found myself out of work for the first time in 30 years. That was in many ways harder to bear than the destruction of my home. I had not realized how much I drew my sense of purpose from my work. In the loss and devastation, I remembered the words of the Psalmist whose foes mocked his tears saying, “Where is now thy God?” In December, I started with Habitat and began a healing and a deepening of my faith that still continues. Speaking at a church a few months after starting with Habitat, I closed my remarks saying that I considered myself the luckiest person I knew and then sat down. The pastor stood and shook his finger in my face and said, “You are not lucky; you are blessed and don’t ever forget it.” RHINO has been a big part of that blessing.

RHINO has done so much of what its name stands for. Beyond the gutted out homes and the new Ferry Place camel-backs, is the hope that Partner Families, neighbors and staff have drawn from you all. The members of St. Charles, the staff of RHINO and all the volunteers and donors have blessed this city far beyond my ability to express it. The strength of the program has been its grounding in and obedience to God’s love.

My answer to the Psalmist’s lament has been confirmed by experience and come from a Latin hymn sung in the very early days of Christianity. “*Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est. Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor.*” Roughly, this is, “Where charity and love are, there is God. Christ’s love has gathered us into one.”

Reflection 3:

Jim and Bonnie Hobden, nationally acclaimed RHINO chefs, New Orleans, LA

Romans 12:12-13

We were camping at Rocky Mountain National Park in Estes Park, Colorado, blissfully unaware of weather events in Louisiana. On Sunday, August 28, 2005, a neighbor informed us that an evacuation, a routine event, was taking place. By Monday, our phone calls to the city were not going through. Jim insisted on forging ahead to Scotts Bluff, Nebraska, the site of Chimney Rock, an old wagon train landmark. Tuesday, we went to the local library for internet news. Katrina hit the Mississippi Gulf coast early Monday morning, but did not begin flooding

until late Monday night. Whereas New Orleans residents celebrated on Monday, by Tuesday, their joy had become horror as water rushed to cover the city.

We headed for Baton Rouge, while the SCAPC ministers hunkered down in Houston. Everyone was making plans to return, but Associate Pastor (and former contractor) Paul Seelman had something more than business-as-usual in mind for SCAPC. Paul, along with the pastoral team, envisioned a ministry of hope to help get the city back on its feet. This vision became RHINO.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Metro New Orleans was a war zone. Eighty percent of the city flooded. A half-million residents were displaced. The city was a ghost town, brown in color with a smell of mold. No traffic lights, only makeshift, four-way stop signs. Debris piled three stories high. The “starfish story” became RHINO’s theme. Despite this climate, RHINO and even the whole of New Orleans seemed electric with purpose and good will, creating a sense of togetherness. (See question 1)

The face of God shone through the volunteers from so many churches who cheerfully put faith into action. Jim remembers well a group of college students from Marshall University in West Virginia. The group included several disabled students. One young man was paralyzed and in a wheelchair. At the worksite, the leader had one participant sit and pray when others worked. They did a great job. (see question 2)

At times, the witness of the homeowners, mostly poor and without insurance, evidenced a faith that most would be hard pressed to equal. In particular, one elderly woman had invested her life of housekeeper savings to purchase her shotgun home in the Broadmoor area. Her faith and cheerfulness will not be forgotten. (see question 3)

What began as a tragedy has become a blessing for many.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Natural disasters bring in a swarm of first responders and a community sense of good will. How is it possible to keep this alive in family, church, community? Do you really believe in the theme of the starfish story?
2. Can you think of a situation where you have misjudged a person’s effectiveness or character? Is church the last place where effort counts as much as effectiveness? Is this a good thing?
3. “I felt sorry for myself because I had no shoes, until I saw a man with no feet.” I have heard someone say that, “Until you can look back on your life and see it as a blessing, then you have not accepted God in your life.” Is this true?

Reflection 4:

Dave White, RHINO Task Force Member, New Orleans, LA, with Woodie and Carolyn Horn, Ferry Place residents, New Orleans, LA

“Life is tough sometimes, but God is great,” says Carolyn Horne as husband Woodie nods in agreement.

Woodie lost his job when the steel plant where he worked left town, at the very time his mother was dying. He spiraled into deep depression and early dementia. Carolyn picked up a part-time maintenance job. But when her heart condition limited her work and Woodie’s unemployment checks stopped, they could no longer cover the family’s needs, including their shotgun house on Jackson Ave. At times, they had to choose between electricity or food for their daughter and granddaughter.

Then came Katrina. In the chaos, they became separated: Woodie ended up in Boston, Mass., and Carolyn arrived by evacuation bus in Houston. After weeks, they were reunited in Texas. But it was there they got a dreaded phone call. The house on Jackson Ave., their furniture, clothing, papers and family pictures had gone up in flames.

“We had no idea what to do next, except pray for God’s mercy,” says Carolyn.

They didn’t dare hope when they learned that Habitat for Humanity was taking applications in New Orleans. But they did apply. The tortuous process required long bus trips, camping on their daughter’s apartment floor, and another time of separation because Woodie simply could not cope with the uncertainty in New Orleans. The Habitat folks were friendly and eager to help, but there were discouraging glitches and long delays in the process. With no income and no home, Woodie and Carolyn’s health problems gradually worsened. But on May 16, 2007, Caroline’s birthday, she received a surprise phone call.

“We got accepted,” Carolyn recalls. “We all cried and hugged and laughed. I called Woodie and he said he wanted to come New Orleans if he could help.”

Woodie did come, and boy-oh-boy, he did help. For months he rode city buses and his bicycle to Habitat’s Musicians’ Village and then to Ferry Place, putting in more than 800 hours of work — far more than the 350 hours required of new homeowners. And as he helped, his days with Habitat and RHINO volunteers changed him.

“It was like with every nail he pounded and every board he cut, he was rebuilding himself,” says Carolyn. “For Woodie, it was better than depression medicine. For me, having a home for us and our granddaughter is like an impossible dream. For both of us, we know for sure that God is good and he’s alive in your wonderful church.”

The Hornes moved into their home on Ferry Place in December 2008.

Reflection 5:

Paul Seelman, Pastor, Preston Hollow PC, Dallas, TX (former SCAPC Associate Pastor and Co-founder of RHINO)

Exodus 12:25-27

I was recently back in the city now some four years after Katrina and the flood. I was walking along one of those fashionable streets that cuts across St. Charles in Uptown, the kind with the grassed median and the brightly painted, two-story houses with the wrought-iron fences. The look was quintessential New Orleans.

I did a double-take at one perfect example on the corner – a bright, sunny yellow, well-maintained home – as I passed by. On that beautiful facade, almost like a badge of honor, under the balcony porch and near the doorpost, was a red, slightly-faded, spray-painted “X.” Those of us who were in the city after the storm became familiar with seeing these on every structure. I can’t remember what the numbers on each side of that “X” stood for, but the date emergency crews inspected the home was still legible.

And here it still was. The sight took me back to some of the best and the worst times in my life, times of purpose and times of seemingly unending challenges to hope and new life. A closer glance revealed that the house had been painted since the flood. The yellow paint of the siding that encircled the red “X” was many shades brighter than the yellow under the “X.” Someone was going to remember it all.

Questions for Reflection:

1. The most vivid memories I have of working in flooded homes after the storm are the smells. Now that you are here, doing different work, what are the smells of your day? What do they tell you about life in the city and a life of faith?
2. The home I saw was in Uptown, an upscale, wealthy neighborhood that didn’t flood. The devastation passed over this area and hit every other neighborhood in the city that was built after 1876. Who are the Egyptians in this story? What signs of the destruction are still visible? What signs of the Promised Land can you see today? Do you think anyone in the city got to pass through the flood?
3. What will you, who come from the seemingly unbroken places in this world, take back home with you? What will you remember about your time here? What connections do you see between physical brokenness and the brokenness that exists in all the places we live and move and have our being?

A Few More Details...

We look forward to seeing you next month!

Please reply to these questions one month before your arrival:

1. What is your confirmed group size?
2. What is your approximate arrival time? (Brent House asks that you check in after 3 p.m. on Monday.)
3. Would your group like the city tour guided by our church members? If so, how many of your vehicles have one extra space for a guide?
4. Any dietary/health concerns? The church is able to provide dinners Tuesday-Thursday. The church members who prepare and host your meals are flexible, so please let us know if you have vegetarians, allergies, etc. Also let us know if your group does not plan to eat all three church-provided meals.

Check out is at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday.

If your travel plans allow, we hope you can join us for worship at 8:30 or 10:30 a.m.