

Faith leaders urge long-term solutions for Gulf Coast: A "moral crisis"

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More than 100 religious leaders have urged the federal government and both major political parties to develop long-term solutions to address poverty and environmental concerns along the Gulf Coast.

In an attempt to solve what they called a "moral crisis," the religious leaders sent the statement last month to national leaders of both parties to urge them to restore the Gulf Coast communities by creating resident-led partnerships that will enable residents to help in the rebuilding.

The statement also called for government officials to increase federal and state funding for affordable housing and coastal wetlands restoration, and to implement a flood control system to protect the communities from future severe weather.

"We have learned that acts of faith and mercy alone, no matter how profound, cannot provide everything needed for a sustainable recovery," the statement said.

Hurricanes Ike and Gustav reminded the nation this year that there is still work to be done in the Gulf Coast, and the slow recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita has left many survivors unable to return to their communities, the leaders said.

Among those who signed the statement were Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches; Richard Cizik, vice president of the National Association of Evangelicals; Richard Stearns, president of World Vision; Steve Gutow, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs; Ingrid Mattson, president of the Islamic Society of North America; and Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA.

"We believe it is a moral obligation for the federal government to fulfill its promises for Gulf Coast recovery: empowering residents to return and participate in equitably

rebuilding their communities,” they said. -*Religion News Service*