



**IN SERVICE TO THE COMMON GOOD:  
REBUILDING OF NEW ORLEANS INSTRUCTS, INSPIRES  
YOUNG LEADERS ON A VOCATIONAL JOURNEY**

***Students Seeking Direction for Life's Next Step  
Find Support for Countercultural Calling in Stories of Post-Katrina Renewal***

**WHAT:** A diverse cross-section of college and seminary students from 40 U.S. states and Canada convene to explore vocation through the stories of community leaders who revived New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. They gather at the 2011 Fund for Theological Education (FTE) Leaders in Ministry Conference, "*In Service to the Common Good.*" FTE is an ecumenical organization; it provides fellowships and leadership development for young people exploring a call to ministry.

**WHERE:** Dillard University, New Orleans

**WHO:** Nearly 100 top college juniors, seniors and seminary students from more than 30 different Christian denominations. Recipients of 2011 FTE Fellowships, they come from widely diverse social, economic and racial/ethnic backgrounds.

**Interviews available:**

- **2011 FTE Fellow college graduates and seminary students.**
- **Rev. Gail Bowman**, Dillard University chaplain, religion professor and FTE Fellow. Bowman helped students and campus neighbors cope with Katrina's impact on their families, faith and future.
- **Rev. Lois DeJean**, community activist, Baptist minister and Gospel singer led rebuilding efforts and advocacy to help displaced Gert Town residents return home after Katrina. DeJean's family and finances were uprooted by the disaster.
- **Kim Hearn**, FTE director of Ministry Fellowships, counsels students discerning their vocation: "Students are connecting decisions about what to do with their lives to a larger story—rebuilding entire communities through the church."
- **Erik Schwarz**, board member, HandsOn New Orleans, for volunteers engaged in Gulf Coast recovery; managing partner, Interfaith Works and co-director of the Institute for Faith and Service in Washington, D.C.
- **Cory Sparks**, New Orleans director, Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations. A nonprofit leader and FTE Fellow, Sparks worked for sustainable recovery of the Gulf Coast as pastor of congregations in Lafayette and New Orleans, including a church plant, Faith Community United Methodist Church.

**WHEN:** **June 15-19 (9 a.m. to 7 p.m. EDT – schedules vary daily)**  
*Interview/photo opportunities in **Lower Ninth Ward** and **Church of All Souls** (built on site of Walgreens destroyed by Katrina.) Thursday June 16 1:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.*

**STORY IDEAS:**

- **Youth Build Lives of Meaning by Rebuilding Social Focus of Church:**  
While one-in-four Americans ages 18-29 say they are not affiliated with any religion ([Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life](#) study), a segment of Gen Y is 'opting in' to church as a pathway to meaning and social engagement. Their

take on the church's role in renewing communities—inspired by rebuilding efforts on the streets of New Orleans—may rewrite their own stories and the future of Christian congregations in North America.

- **When the Church Shows Up:** Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in August 2005, destroying neighborhoods and lives. Since then, churches and faith communities have been at the center of rebuilding efforts. A new generation of socially engaged faith leaders is coming to the Crescent City to learn from those who are on the front lines of the city's renewal. Students considering a call to ministry see their own stories and futures linked with social justice and an imperative for action that they don't want the church to lose.

## **ABOUT FTE**

FTE supports the next generation of leaders among pastors and scholars, providing more than \$1.5 million annually in fellowships to young people from all denominations and racial/ethnic backgrounds ([www.fteleaders.org](http://www.fteleaders.org)).

## **ABOUT DILLARD UNIVERSITY**

Dillard University was selected by FTE as the event host site because of its leadership role in recovery in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. After the storm, which left much of the university under water, Dillard offered students and their families special support on multiple levels to cope with the disaster. The University also completely restored and refurbished 32 campus buildings and three off-campus residential complexes, and built two LEED-registered (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) buildings. Dillard is a fully accredited private, historically black university. In 2010, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Dillard among the nation's Top 10 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). As part of its engagement in the revitalization of New Orleans, Dillard is creating a Gulf Coast Public Policy Center to address key social issues.

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