September 3, 2005

Dear Episcopal Parents,

A little less than a month ago, I sent you my first letter as Episcopal's new Head of School. At that time, I never imagined that I would be writing to you today asking for your prayers for those who have suffered the ravages of Hurricane Katrina and to let you know how Episcopal hopes to respond.

While many of us feel frustrated that we cannot do more to help in this time of great need, and while the School's response will take many forms, one of the most pressing needs represents our strongest suit – the education of young people. As Helen Keller eloquently expressed, "I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can still do something, and because I can not do everything, I will not refuse to do the something I can do."

In formulating a plan to address this terrible crisis, representation from the Board of Trustees, Bishop Charles Jenkins, the Administrative Team and I were mindful of the comprehensive hospitality of the Episcopal tradition. Episcopal schools are grounded in a unique tradition to create communities in which the students entrusted to our care experience God's unconditional love for all people.

In keeping with Episcopal's mission, our goal is to respond to those in need in a graceful and inclusive manner.

- We are accepting a limited number of students into our existing programs. We know you will join us in welcoming them to our community as we continue to provide your children with the Episcopal education to which you and they are accustomed. Class size will be held at 21-22 students per section in Middle and Upper School. Lower School applicants are being guided towards St. James, St. Luke's and Trinity, unless they have siblings in the other EHS divisions or are the children of alumni.

- To accommodate the many students for whom we will not have spaces in our regular programs, we are developing an adjunct program for students in grades 6-12. This program will be offered from 4:00 – 9:00 p.m. (Monday – Thursday) and from 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. on Saturday. It will offer chapel and core courses: English, mathematics, social studies, science, and foreign language. Counselors and chaplains will be available; extracurricular opportunities will be limited. This program is still in the developmental stages, and additional information will be forthcoming.

- Additional security measures will be taken to ensure the safety of our students. We have increased both the hours and the numbers of deputies on campus. Episcopal picture ID's will be issued to all faculty, staff, and students. Additional lighting has been contracted for and will be installed as soon as possible in the parking lots and other areas of the campus. We are arranging for an adult (other than the driver) to be present on all school buses until we are certain that the Baton Rouge community is stabilized. We urge you to be prompt for your child's bus pick-ups and drop-offs.

We have made a few adjustments to the School's September calendar and wish to alert you to these changes.

- New student and new parent orientations will be held next week.

- We will hold an Episcopal community gathering on Tuesday, September 6th, at 7:00 p.m. in the Chapel to communicate with parents in more detail about the School's developing response to Hurricane Katrina.

- The Lower School and Upper School Parents' Nights will be held on the same evening, September 15th. Additional information will be forthcoming.

- Episcopal's ten-year re-accreditation visit by the ISAS (the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest) and SAES (the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools) will be rescheduled for 2006-2007. No lapse in accreditation will occur.

- The Grade Level Coffees with the Head of School, scheduled throughout the first two weeks of September, have been postponed. We will notify you when they have been re-scheduled.

- Senior Night has been postponed. We will notify you when it has been re-scheduled.

Please be sure to check the Episcopal website and master calendar daily. That is the best way to access updated information.

Over the past few days, I have been reminded repeatedly that Episcopal schools exist not merely to educate, but to demonstrate and proclaim the unique worth and beauty of all human beings as expressed in the Baptismal Covenant, which reminds us that every one of us is "sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own for ever."

I encourage you to join with me in welcoming our new students to the Episcopal community.

God be with us in this trying time.

Deborah Kay Betts