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Cover photographs by: (top to bottom) Ed Freeman, Loungepark, Robert Glusic (all from Getty images)

EFCA TODAY (ISSN 0014-3332) is published quarterly as the official leadership publication of the Evangelical Free Church of America. Inclusion of an article or advertisement does not necessarily indicate endorsement by the Evangelical Free Church of America.

EFCA TODAY PURPOSE STATEMENT: To unify church leaders around the overall mission of the EFCA by bringing its stories and vision to life, and to sharpen those leaders by generating conversations over topics pertinent to faith and life in this 21st century.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: \$10 per year (U.S.); for single-copy prices, call (877) 293-5653, e-mail (today@efca.org) or write to *EFCA Today*, Circulation Office, 901 East 78th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55420-1360.

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES: 418 Fourth Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902. Telephone: (434) 961-2500.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *EFCA Today*, Circulation Office, 901 East 78th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55420-1360. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, and additional offices.



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The Heart of the EFCA

Our compassion stems from who we are.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the EFCA family for their generous spirits and warm hearts toward those in need. It has been more than a year since Katrina devastated New Orleans, but today—like every day since several weeks after the event—volunteer teams are rebuilding homes and lives and have enough work to do through 2008! So far, 6,000 individuals have invested 210,000 hours of labor in EFCA-related work in New Orleans, in addition to the \$2.4 million given to the rebuilding effort.

One of my colleagues just returned from Lebanon, where the generous giving of the EFCA is helping the EFC of Lebanon rebuild lives. Many of those they are ministering to are Muslim, and there is at least one Muslim family now attending church. Again, the EFCA family has demonstrated compassion and generosity.

Across our globe—New Orleans, Indonesia, Philippines, Congo, Thailand, China, Malaysia, India and Russia, to name just a few—compassion projects under the leadership of TouchGlobal and ReachGlobal (EFCA International Mission) are demonstrating in real ways the love and compassion of Jesus. When real needs are met, hearts become soft to the gospel.

A people's generosity is an indication of a people's heart and a direct reflection of the heart of God. I could not be more proud of the "heart" of the EFCA in meeting needs like this. It has always been my conviction that God blesses those who are generous, and I have no doubt that some of the reason God's hand of blessing has been on the EFCA stems from the generous heart of the EFCA.

If you desire to keep up with needs and developments related to compassion, I would encourage you to check www.touchglobal.org. Within hours of a natural disaster anywhere in the world, the TouchGlobal team is evaluating needs and is in touch with local church leaders. Their ability to respond so quickly is a result of both their experience and their conviction that EFCA churches and individuals will quickly respond as well.

In addition, TouchGlobal is involved in ongoing projects of development, microenterprise, medical projects, poverty relief and orphan care, and in helping indigenous leaders become self-sufficient. The EFCA literally has one of the most effective and experienced compassion staff teams anywhere in the world. They're your family, and together we are seeing God open hearts for the gospel.

A commitment to meeting physical as well as spiritual needs is part of who we are as a movement. To that end, in this issue you'll see an update on TouchGlobal's leadership on the Gulf Coast. But you'll also receive an extensive update on important conversations taking place across our movement—revisiting who we are and what matters most to us as we consider our Statement of Faith.

Ministry to the whole person based upon a well-articulated theology: This is the Evangelical Free Church of America. ■



DR. WILLIAM J. HAMEL