

West Virginia Mission

July 26 – Aug 1, 2009

Trip Report

Fifteen First Folks left South Boston one week ago shortly after 11:00 worship headed to Montgomery, West Virginia. Three more joined us on Wednesday, and what transpired in the meantime was nothing short of amazing.

After all the dust was settled, we had served three families as well as our host church. At the beginning of the week, our work crew was split into two groups. One group worked at the home of Rosie Reynolds, a divorcée with two young sons, Dakota age 10, and Hunter Wayne, age 5. The roof on the back part of their home was leaking, and we worked to tear off the old metal roof and repair and replace it. Hunter Wayne's bedroom had a rotten spot in the floor and the ceiling was damaged, due to the leaking roof. He was afraid to sleep in his bedroom because he thought there were monsters in the walls. We repaired the floor, put in a new ceiling, and gave the entire room a fresh coat of paint. Hunter Wayne was very excited about his new bedroom, and we are praying that he is sleeping there now free from worry about wall monsters.

Another crew worked at the home of Gary and Loretta Welch. This was the house that Loretta grew up in, but she had told her sister that she was probably going to have to move out because of the structural problems. We tore three layers of shingles off one section of the roof, and repaired and replaced it. We demolished the entire floor of the back bedroom which was rotten, and replaced the joists and the subfloor, and installed new vinyl floor covering. This will probably become the bedroom for little Emily, their toddler daughter. Emily endeared herself to all of our crew who were interlopers in her home. In the words of Gary's mother who was babysitting one day, "She's usually pretty shy, but I've never seen her take to anyone like she takes to you people!"

Three of our folks were fortunate enough to encounter a third family. On Friday morning, Tim, our construction supervisor, suggested one more project that we might undertake and we immediately had a crew to volunteer. They worked to replace a floor that had been damaged by yet another leaking roof. This job was so "spur of the moment" that we have no pictures or details, but we know that some of our crew blessed and were blessed yet once more.

Our First Folks worked so efficiently that we ran out of work at the end of Wednesday. Therefore, on Thursday we were asked to take on a non-traditional project - we were asked to do some work at the church. Generally, mission groups don't work for the benefit of the host church, but as God would have it, this was a unique situation. Montgomery Presbyterian Church, through whom we were working, is a huge structure, much larger than our own beloved First Pres SoBo. However, they have an average Sunday worshipping attendance of 10-15. The town of Montgomery has an unemployment rate of 42%. Because of these circumstances, the church has evolved into an important community outreach center. They host a food pantry, a clothes closet, and a crisis center. They asked us to build three walls with doors which would help them better manage the traffic of patrons coming to avail themselves of these services. Mission accomplished. We even helped them move shelving and supplies from the previous storage areas into the new space. They will be blessing the results of our efforts at their Sunday morning worship today (Aug. 1).

Long story short, blessings all around once again. We never imagined that we would be able to complete the scope of work that was done. Accomplishing the task asked of us at the church was beyond anyone's wildest imagination. The pastor and the construction supervisor (who happened to be the pastor's husband) said they felt like "Extreme Home Makeover." They helped bring us to that place so we could work directly to help families, and then we were able to help them so that they can better serve other families. Mission begets mission begets mission.

The growing together and getting to know one another that happened among our mission team members is indescribable. We had long-time church members, short-time church members, regular visitors, and non-members. The witnessing to God's goodness happened daily. We shared devotions at breakfast in the church, at lunch sitting on the ground at the job site(s), at dinner in the fellowship hall, or late at night in the pool room (yes, they have one, too, just like we do, only bigger than ours - they have ping pong, air hockey, and foose ball!) The testimonies to the power of the Holy Spirit never ran dry.

Everyone on the team is so grateful to all of the First Pres congregation who helped to make this mission possible. You helped us to help others so that we in turn could be blessed by the recipients of your generosity and kindness. We will have photos to share with you soon.