

Missions accomplished

Lamb's Ministry participants return from mission field

by Gene Culbertson

Ron, Zac, and Merin know what it's like to be in tough situations. All have lived the homeless life; sleeping in shelters, eating in soup kitchens. Last week the Missions Department of First Pres sent them all onto the missions field to help others in difficult situations. Ron and Merin were in New Orleans renovating the houses of flood victims. Zac was in Guatemala helping the farming families of Trapachitos, Guatemala where a number of First Pres teams have gone over the years.

Merin returned wearing her New Orleans T-shirt, splattered with paint. "People aren't getting the help they need to get their houses fixed up," Merin said. "That's why they're grateful that so many churches go down and help them out. One woman had a notebook with the names of everyone from every church that had worked on her house. She likes to keep in touch and send pictures."

This was Ron's second trip to New Orleans. "Things have changed since the last time I was there," he said. "There's been a lot of improvement."

Zac's trip to Trapachitos, Guatemala made a great impression on his life. "I was inspired by the people there. There's a discomfort in these mission trips, but seeing the determination of these people to make do with what they have showed me that there's a way that I can move forward in life."

What is it like to be so needy yourself, and to go on a mission trip to help others? "It gave me an insight on these people who spent their lives raising families and then lost everything," Ron said. "That's different than many homeless people who just don't want a life. It goes to

show what you can do to get your life settled back again."

"I found something in me that I thought I'd long lost," Merin said, "and that's a willingness to help others. I try to be a selfless person but it's hard when you're in my situation (living in a homeless shelter). I'm always looking to people to do something for me. But on this trip I was able to forget what was going on in my own life and concentrate on what I can do for these other people."

"Yeah," Zac agreed, "that for me is the underlying reason for going on a mission trip. You've no idea how grateful those people are. You only rarely find people in the United States that grateful. Some of the women on our team took crayons and markers to the school and had the kids draw what they wanted. At the end of the trip one of the women sewed all their pictures together on a cloth. We had a special ceremony and gave those cloth drawings to the village. I think that helped the kids to be creative and to see that there's more to their lives than what is abruptly in front of them. Some of them wanted to be doctors and nurses and teachers. It was good to leave something behind with the people."

"I think we left a sense of caring behind," Merin said. "That all these different churches that go down there care about them and that they haven't been abandoned."

"You need more than a week in New Orleans," Ron said. "But no matter how much time I spend there, I leave behind friendships that aren't going to end."



Living the homeless life hasn't stopped Merin, Ron, and Zac from helping others.

How was it spending a week with a group of people that you hardly know?

"There were frictions," Zac said, "but you just have to work them out in a mature way. You can't just go home and be by yourself." "You get to know people apart from church," Merin said, "That's when their real personality shows through."

One thing that made the trip special for each of them was to hear the stories of the people living in the places where they went.

"They need a listening ear," Merin said. "They have frustrations. They have anger. They need people to listen. One woman told me that the government isn't listening, but we were there to hear her. It made her feel like she was still part of the human race. I'd really like to go back and work with them until New Orleans gets fixed up."

"There's a lot of uncertainty in Trapachitos," Zac said. "What's going to happen when the project is over? I hope we can continue to go down there. Those people need the support."

PREACHING SCHEDULE

Sunday, April 26
Dr. Carl Hofmann
"Climbing Partners"
Hebrews 12:1-13
Good climbers never climb alone. We need each other; we especially need Jesus.

Sunday, May 3
Rev. Keith Vandegrift
"Training for the Ascent"
Hebrews 12:1-13
Getting to the top with Jesus requires intentional training and discipline.

Sunday, May 10
Rev. John S. Hess
"Choosing the Narrow Path"
Matthew 7:13-14;
Psalms 16:11; Proverbs 4:25-27

Following Jesus is following the narrow, hard path—but it's joyful because He goes with us and the path leads to life.

Sunday, May 17
Mr. Forrest Buckner
"Nourishment for the Journey"
Ezekiel 37:1-14; Acts 2
As you ascend with Jesus, air gets thinner. You may need supplemental oxygen (special reliance on the Spirit).

Sunday, May 24
Rev. Jane E. Filkin
"The View from the Summit"
Revelation 21
From the heights of life in Christ, you can glimpse the joyous future—new life and hope with God and God's people.

PASTORAL TRANSITION

For an update on the Pastoral Leadership Transition please go to the First Pres website at www.fpcboulder.org.