

# **New Orleans Mission Team Presentation**

## **Sunday, April 15, 2007 during Bible Class (9:45 a.m. sharp)**

Opening Prayer - **Pastor Syens**

Mission Statement – **Pastor Syens** (this is on the power point presentation)

We, the servant mission team from Holy Cross, accept that God has called us to be servants for Jesus sake. God has called us to assist in the clean up after the devastation of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. We go as learners and servants sent by Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church in partnership with CAN-DO Missions and Camp Restore. Working as a team, following our leader, with a loving and caring heart we look for windows of opportunity, as God provides, to spread God's Word through word and action. Our mission is about building relationships and partnerships in the Gospel as we seek to help rebuild and bring restoration to New Orleans.

**Facts about New Orleans & Hurricane Katrina – **Pastor Syens** – Power Point Display**

In August 2005 the United States of America experienced its largest natural disasters ever!

Hurricane Katrina destroyed over 90,000 Square Miles or 145,000 square Kilometers the greatest area hit was New Orleans.

The state of Minnesota is 70,000 Square Miles or about 112,500 square Kilometers.

Population of New Orleans before Katrina 500,000

Population of New Orleans after Katrina 250,000

Katrina destroyed over 225,000 homes

500,000 Vehicles were flooded and destroyed by water damage.

\$100 billion dollars estimated cost to rebuild New Orleans.

3-6 months it takes to build ones own home with finances and resources.

3 weeks - 3 months water was in some homes.

Water totally destroyed everything in the homes and then came mold and mildew.

3,000 people lost their lives because of Katrina

People have had to leave their homes and move to other places, anywhere that would take them so they could start to rebuild their lives. Many are still paying off mortgages and now also have to pay rent and no money is left for anything else. If they do not keep their lawns cut in New Orleans then the tall grass attracts rats and the rats attract snakes and then it because a dangerous area so the government will come in an cut your grass and then charge the home owner \$100 to do this. Since many of the people live far away they can't always come to cut their grass and they can not afford the government to cut the grass and so Camp Restore truly provides a wonderful ministry because of Jesus.

To gut a home cost anywhere from \$3,000-\$8,000 dollars. Volunteer teams come and do it for free.

What a wonderful ministry Camp Restore provides to so many people and families who are already so devastated by loosing everything. Insurance companies argue over not paying, the government does not provide enough help and FEMA does not always help either. God's people come in from all over North America to reach out and help because of Jesus Love... Even from Canada ... what a wonderful witness of servants for Jesus sake!

## **Camp Restore – Anita Syens**

Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church is one congregation among many that are part of Lutheran Church Canada. Lutheran Church Canada is also part of a great church body in the United States called The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). The LCMS is divided into districts one of which is the Southeastern District in which New Orleans is located. After Hurricane Katrina the LCMS developed a mission to help bring restoration to that devastated city and her people. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and School one of the churches in New Orleans also suffered much water damage and was chosen to become the home of Camp Restore. Labours for Christ, a volunteer organization of LCMS and LCC, made up of retired trades people and volunteers came to Camp Restore and helped to renovate the Church and School to serve as a church and guest facility for the many volunteers that would come in to help bring restoration to a devastated area. A special semi trailer was brought in and made into a commercial kitchen with help from the Orphan Grain Train association. Tools were purchased and trailers to help equip volunteers from all over the United States and even Canada as people come from all over to care in response to God Love for them. What a blessing it has been to be part of Christ's body working together to help bring hope and restoration to people whose lives have been devastated. Camp Restore was the place that took care of us so that we could help take care of others. We also came in through the help of Can-do missions which provided the insurance and transportation for our team.

## **The Typical Day Overview – Alycia Kehn**

Well, our day started off pretty early. We all got up around 6:50 a.m. and got changed. After that, we had breakfast at 7:15 a.m. We left for camp at around 8:15 every morning to start off the day. Pastor Roland and Gord drove around in our two vans searching for our first task. Three of the five days was landscaping. We would mow the lawns, weed whack (some of us called it the wiper snipper), we would sweep, shovel, carry loads of waste over to the garbage pile we already made, and we would also do anything else possible for that job. On Wednesday and Thursday, most of us went out to gut houses. Since a couple of us were too young to go out, we stayed back and helped with various jobs around the camp. We would unload the equipment and start working away. Some of the days, the girls and the guys would split up and work on different sites. The guys usually went to the sites with more heavy lifting although most of us girls could do it just as well :) At around noon, we would stop for some bagged lunches the camp provided us. They were delicious. After eating and socializing for a bit, we would start work again. If the job was done, we would head on to another site. The day usually ended around 3:00 p.m. for us most days. The equipment had to be back by 4:00 p.m. every day. We usually finished our job early, so we got the benefit of getting in the showers first. After everyone showered and relaxed a bit, we all got up at 5:00 p.m. and went off to chapel for devotions. Now Nathanael will be talking about our devotion time.

## **Daily Devotional Circle – Nathanael Bugbee**

Everyday around 5:00 p.m. we would have a devotion where two people would read a devotion that they made or had read before and then we would continue by seeing how everyone's day was. Each person would tell what they didn't want to forget and what is God saying through these experiences we faced. If everyone worked together, the answers would be similar but if some were cleaning the church while others sprayed for mold while others pulled down ceilings; the answers would be very different. We would also tell who we met, their story and how God got them through the storm, and what we learned from that person. Then we would have a circle prayer with a list of people who have helped us get where we are and all those back home. The list would change day by day and the more people we met the bigger the list got. We also would give a thanksgiving prayer that the Lord had kept us safe and that he would keep us safe for the upcoming day. The whole devotion would last around 1-1 ½ hours and then after, Kim would lead a 'stretch time' where we would get some relief from our sore muscles.

and **Stephanie Bohl**

Each day of the week, became complete with our group circle time. This time together was a really significant part of the trip and helped us to grow a lot closer as a team. Each day (at either 5 or 7) we would gather in the chapel and discuss our day, write in our mission journals, share a devotion and pray together. This time that we set aside helped us to reflect on and share the events of the day that we didn't want to forget. It was our re-grouping time and allowed us to learn what other group members were up to that day, since we all experienced different things. Writing in our journals was really important, and it helped to remind us why we were there and to keep us grounded. Every evening a different person would take a turn leading the group in a short devotion, which helped us to just grow more comfortable with each other. At the close of our time we would go around the circle and take a turn to praying out loud. This time of reflection was a really key component in our mission trip, because we kept our focus of God and our mission. It also brought us so much closer to each other. Whether it was planned or unplanned, our circle time became a necessary part each of the day.

**Our Training to Serve (God's Call) & expectations set through CAN DO Missions - Liz Williams**

**God's Strength and the Power of God through Natural Causes in New Orleans slide show – Gord Collins**  
(after the slide show...segway into the **people** of New Orleans and how the team will let you meet them.)

The People - God is a God of Love and Hope

1. **Brother and Sister** who gave us cupcakes and root beer – **John Nesbitt**
2. **Stacie & Anthony** - **Caitlin Pritchard**

The people who lived in this home are Stacey and Anthony. Their house has been rebuilt following the hurricane and they have just started to live in it again. They had a big yard that needed to be cleaned up and mowed. Our team was given the job of yard clean up. We were removing garbage and digging up stuffed animals left in the ground and taking a fireplace out from the backyard. We removed a fence in the back and then mowed the lawn. We were given the opportunity to talk to Stacey, she had just had a baby and found that the work was very hard to do. Anthony, her husband is a police officer in New Orleans and he stayed in New Orleans through the hurricane. They were very appreciative of what we did. While working at their home we got to share God's love with someone, Jenn will now explain this experience.

**and lady** who joined our devotion – **Jen Kahlmeier**

3. **Audrey – Gord Collins**

I want to read some excerpts of the e-mail I sent to my wife, Susan, titled Wednesday's Highlights ...

*Today's word was "FRUSTRATION". It was a day full of it. After what we had accomplished the last two days, we were given a bundle of papers with eight jobs to do today. They were all going to be yard work. We were prepared. Then we woke up this morning to rain. It rained on and off all day. We could not do the orders we were given. They had to re-assign us to do something else. We then spent an hour this morning training to "gut" houses. This is where you go in and literally bring everything out, including furniture, carpets, cupboards, wall boards, etc. We were excited but with caution. We were told how to wear protective gear, including respirators, to protect our health ...*

*... we went to the first house to gut only to find out it was already gutted. We left three people (from another team) there to spray for mold. The rest of us went on to the next house to gut. It too was already gutted ...*

*... Everyone was frustrated. Things did not turn out as we had expected or hoped. It was a humbling experience. It taught us the we need to be prepared to do whatever God has planned for us to do, not necessarily what we want to do ..*

But, in the middle of that frustration were people like Audrey. She was the owner of the first home we went to. Although we did not stay to work at her home, we did stay long enough to hear her story. She left New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina hit but was the only one in her family who wanted to return. When she came home, she was alone and discovered that she had lost everything. In her own words, "I didn't even have a spoon." She was so thankful that we were there to help. Before we left the other team there and moved on to the next house, Pastor took time to pray for Audrey. When people ask me why we went to New Orleans, I think of the look in Audrey's face and say "That's why!"

Back to the e-mail ...

*We are learning many things here. God has opened our eyes to numerous lessons. We know we cannot expect those at home to understand our experiences, but we hope they will see, by our lives, what God has done for us.*

4. **Thelma Gipson – Michael Lyons**

Thelma Gipson will forever be remembered as the "fried chicken lady". During a gutting job we met Thelma and her friend. They pulled up to the house to ask the mailman across the street for directions. A lady that was helping us from another team went out to her to ask if she had a her cell phone to use to call our camp being our lunch had not arrived yet and it was well after lunch time. Thelma asked if there was anything we needed, and the lady from our team said we could really use some plastic cups for our water. We didn't even think that they would come back but when she did she had brought plastic cups along with a fried chicken and french fry dinner for everyone. It never felt so good to eat fried chicken on the ground in our contaminated suits. We felt so appreciated by someone who was not even being helped by our team but understood why we were here.

5. **Mike Romain – Nathanael Bugbee**

On our third work day, Gordon and I were placed in a gutted house to spray for mold. The house was good sized, had 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a kitchen, dining room and a living room, which turned into a bar. There was nice marble flooring in the bar area and then 2 trailers outside. There were 2 pump bleach

machines we used and one was twice the size of the other so when we would need to get more bleach one person would be waiting around till the big pump machine was finished. Soon on our last leg of the house, Gordon ran out and was waiting for me to finish and he saw that the man living at the trailer in front had come home so he went to his trailer and started talking to him. He was at the hospital earlier that day having blood work done and was feeling tired and weak, however that didn't dampen his spirits to welcome us. Although his house and his possessions were gone, that didn't bother him as much as the fact that the past Monday of when we came, his nephew was in a motorcycle accident and his family was taking it really hard. So we prayed with him and he thanked us many times and said if he were feeling better he would have bought ten Crawdads for us to eat. I feel and I think Gordon with me, that for us he was the most inspirational person for us

6. **Delores – Jennifer Lyons**

I met Delores while taking pictures as I was traveling down the street that we were doing a job on. I noticed her on the side porch of her FEMA trailer shaking out a mat. I went up to her in hopes to hear her story. She and her disabled brother stayed in her home during the hurricane. She wanted very much to tell how her dog had a litter of 9 puppies and all but one survived by showing up 3 weeks later. She was very proud of her dog. I explained that we were here with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod at Camp Restore and I would like to send some of our team down to cut her back yard for her. She said that it was too much of a mess to tackle but I guess it would be ok if you were allowed. Without hesitation from the group, several went down and got to work on her back yard. We enjoyed hearing her story as sad as it is and she enjoyed speaking with us.

7. **Ron and Connie - Kim Nesbitt**

8. **Jason McCoy – Craig Burek**

When we arrived in New Orleans, we were introduced to a man named Jason. When we met him he wasn't feeling too well, and was questioning his faith in God. He even had his mom and uncle flown in from Florida to cheer him up. Upon further conversation we discovered that a previous group, that he had been in charge of, refused to do the work that was assigned to them. They said that they had come to gut houses, not to mow lawns. Jason tried to explain the situation that these people are faced with, but the group refused. Pastor Ed couldn't even convince them otherwise. It ended up that they went home early because of this situation. That really bothered Jason that Christians would turn down the opportunity to serve the Lord. Then he saw us work, and I'm not trying to brag or anything, but he was amazed at the work "us Canadians" could accomplish. Even I was amazed at what we had accomplished. To tell you the truth, we didn't even

know how we could stand up after the work we had done. Gord was a prime example of this. He just sort of leaned in the direction that he wanted to go and basically swayed to that spot. Jason told us that God has given us the strength, not only to get the job done, but to also convince him that God was indeed his Savior.

On Wednesday and Thursday, we had rain all day, and I was too young to gut houses, so I was given the opportunity to help Jason out for the 2 days.

Boy, I thought we were tired after a day of work. Those 2 days with Jason were so tiring...Jason didn't stop. He would literally run from the office to Pastor Ed, back to the office, over to the supply sheds to get our trailers set up, back to the people in charge of documenting completed tasks, back to our group, back to the office, photocopy some papers, then run to the truck and drive over to see how our group was doing, and from there we would go and inspect some future job sites. Repeat about a dozen times, throw a 30 minute lunch in there, and you have the basic day in the life of Jason. Imagine doing this for nearly a year, I know I wouldn't last.

#### Thank you to the people – Jennifer Lyons

I have mentioned many times throughout the week how proud I was of each youth who went on this Mission. You too can be very proud of each person that represented Holy Cross. I have never experienced such team work like we had. Ron & Connie mentioned that we were taking care of their property like it was our own. That was our attitude throughout the week. We generally worked in a large group without any real direction when we were dropped off at a site, but we all dove in immediately like we had work orders. Granted, we were sometimes going in circles, but we got the job done. There was no grumbling about the mission chosen for the day, (ok. I'll admit –when we were waiting for instruction the day after I was already on a gutting team...I truly wished that I wouldn't have to go two days in a row. But, you guessed it. I was chosen to suit up again ... but quickly turned it into "This is where God wants me to be today), everybody pulled their own weight and we worked as one. In fact, we ate as one, and drove as one and we shared as one.

Even though the people of New Orleans have endured and continue to endure such tragedy – there is still hope in their eyes. It is hard to understand why this would be allowed to happen to them. All we know is that God is in control and the lessons learned by each resident and volunteer must outweigh the destruction. We have a God of LOVE and He pours it on us every day!

At this time, I would like to thank the behinds people who helped in putting this mission together. First of all...

**Pastor Roland Syens** for preparing the team so well with the right attitude to work for the Lord. To understand the we were personally chosen by God to be a part of this team and knew that no matter how trivial some jobs may have appeared, it was what God wanted us to do.

**Ask for her to stand**

**Steve Keczem & Madeline Honderich** (who was our travel agent) – they worked side by side in arranging our flight tickets and keeping Pastor Roland informed of changes that came up. Madeline gave us the 'heads up' that the Charlotte flight had been cancelled and made alternate arrangements and hotel reservations for part of the group. She also booked the 4 vehicles that we drove home from Cleveland through Hertz Rent a Car.

**Melanie Bridgemohan** –who contributed by notarizing all of the application forms free of charge.

**CAN-DO-MISSIONS** – this is the group that insured us to have minors on our team so that we could attend Camp Restore. We were the first Canadian, in fact, first International team to go through CAN-DO-MISSIONS.

**Camp Restore** – A special thanks to Pastor Ed Brasier as the administrator and pastor of Camp Restore.

**And last but not least**, YOU, the members of Holy Cross for generously allowing this team of 14 to be part of this amazing, Service Mission Event. **(Everybody loudly say) THANK-YOU!**

If time allows a question and answer period. So far, if we stay on schedule the presentation is about 50 minutes.

**Pastor Roland Syens:** Each One Reach One at home in our church in our community and in our world. It is wonderful when people can come together because of Jesus and serve others. That is what happened when we went to New Orleans. God brought together this team of 14 people (9 youth and 5 adults) and made us into His team. Each person on the team focused not on themselves, but focused on serving God by helping others. As I look back at our team I thank the Lord for each person and for the vision and the calling that He gave to each of us as He fashioned us into a servant mission team for Jesus sake. Did we make a difference? To those people whose homes we helped to gut and spray for mould and mildew and for those people whose lawns we cut and cleaned, they would say "yes!" and "thank you". For those people we prayed with and shared Christ with they too would say: "yes!" and "thank you." Yes, God did use all of us to help make a difference for a number of people in New Orleans but He also changed us and through Him we made a difference in each other's lives. We thank the Lord for this trip but we also want to thank all of you at Holy Cross for your prayers and financial support. In Ephesians 2:10 St. Paul writes: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Then in St. Matthew's Gospel Jesus teaches us: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me." It is wonderful to be part of God's family and to know that God's family is empowered to reach out to others where ever they may be. We, the servant mission team to New Orleans, and the people of New Orleans that we met and were able to help say: Thank you Holy Cross for your support.

**Anita Syens:** I am thankful that Holy Cross supported and sent our team to New Orleans to help those devastated by Hurricane Katrina. The devastation is still immense, but in the things we did and the conversations we had, God was glorified. What a privilege to work together as a team, youth and adults, all willing to do their part, whether physical labour, encouraging and praying for each other, or encouraging and praying for those we met. The devastation is still immense... but our God is even more immense and has done more than we could have asked or imagined. Our team was a great encouragement to me and I know it was a great encouragement to others.

**Gordon Collins:** Wow! What a week! Trying to find words to explain the experience is just impossible. It was a learning experience. I saw God's hand in every aspect of this mission, from the original planning, to the calling of the team, to the moving of the congregation to financially support the mission, to the opportunities to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ through actions and words, to safely bringing us home. I learned what it was to be strengthened by God to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks. I learned how to be humble. I learned to be patient and lean on God in every situation. But most importantly, not only does God bring people into our lives so He can bless us through them, He also brings people into our lives so that He can bless them through us. I learned that I need to make the most of every opportunity. Thank you Holy Cross for your financial and prayer support.

helped us understand why we were actually going on the mission's trip, and to get us ready for what was to be expected.

At first when we had heard about the mission's trip, we believed it was because we had wanted to go and help rebuild the lives of people who were affected by Hurricane Katrina. In fact, God had really chosen each and every one of us to go, for his own purpose. It was not because we wanted to go but because God called each of us to be servants and missionaries for his will.

The training taught us that the trip would challenge our comfort zone, exercise organized flexibility, and test our strength and stamina physically and emotionally. We had also learned from the training that it would take us a few days to adapt to their culture and customs. We would be fully prepared and able for anything to happen. The trip was to fulfill God's wishes.

Therefore we did not choose to go on this trip, but God called us for his own purpose, to aid and change the lives of many people devastated by the after effects of Hurricane Katrina.

**Jennifer Lyons:** It's hard to put in words the experience shared by the team. I have a deeper understanding of what it means to be 'called by God'. I realize the uniqueness of our team because we were all called by Him, not us choosing to go. We answered "yes!" to His call. I'm grateful for the spiritual growth and many blessings received. I will never forget what the people of New Orleans endured during their time of despair and continue to endure this present day. I am grateful that our God of love has instilled the hope in their eyes. It is hard to understand why this would be allowed to happen to them. All we know is that God is in control and the lessons learned by each resident and volunteer must outweigh the destruction. We have a God of LOVE and He pours it on us every day!

**Kim Nesbitt:** New Orleans was an absolutely amazing experience! Being at Camp Restore in a Christian environment gave me the much needed time and energy to focus my heart and mind on God's Word and His plan. Gone were the million worries, responsibilities, and distractions that Satan uses to take my eyes off God and His Word and His plan for me. God chose for me to be in New Orleans not only to help the survivors of Hurricane Katrina but to open my eyes and focus them on Him. That is exactly what I did!

People who know me well know that when I decide to do something, I do it to the best of my abilities. With fervor, I cleared yards, mowed lawns, ripped up floors, or made snack packs because that is what God chose for me to do that day. With fervor, I read my Bible, searched for passages, did devotions, wrote in my journal and prayed. I listened to God and followed His will and He blessed me over and over again. I learned how to be humble. I learned about patience. I learned that the little things really don't matter, my relationship with God does. I learned I have a servant's heart. I learned to trust God and to not lean on my own understandings. Go is in control of all things. I am not. My week in New Orleans taught me many things. O worked harder than I have ever worked in my whole life and I have never been so content. For me, serving God resulted in incredible peace and contentment. I am so blessed. God is so good!

**Stephanie Bohl:** New Orleans was an unforgettable experience that taught me a lot of different things. Some things I learned while I was there, and others I realized when I returned home. The people definitely taught me how to be more appreciative and grateful. The faith that they had was so inspiring to me and helped me to very grateful for everything that I do have. When I came home, I felt so blessed to have the life that I do have. I really understand that the only thing that actually matters in this world is God. The people that we met were a clear example of that. I am so thankful that God made it possible for me to go on this trip and benefit the way that I did. I thank Holy Cross for all the prayer support, and financial help.

**Nathanael Bugbee:** I was glad I attended the New Orleans Mission Trip this past March. It was a phenomenal feeling knowing that I was chosen by God to help give aid for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Not only did I feel that I impacted their lives, I know that the victims and God impacted and changed my life forever. Although we worked hard physically, we were trained and filled spiritually as well. I would love to go back to Camp Restore or try a new mission field in the future.

**Craig Burek:** The trip to New Orleans was a great experience and I have learned so much. The most significant lesson I learned on the trip was that not everything works out as you have planned it, but if you look up to God, everything will work out in the end. This was clearly displayed on the Saturday, when our flight home was cancelled, and the next available flight was on Wednesday. With some praying and a few phone calls later, God had given us a way home...we flew to Cleveland and drove the rest of the way home. When "us kids" heard this, we were a little disappointed because we didn't want to leave, but our leaders had to go to work.

If a trip like this comes up again, I'm going, without a doubt. The stories of the locals and the devastation of the Ninth Ward has made me emotionally attached to the city, and by the end of the week it felt like home, and boy do I miss it.

**Jennifer Kahlmeier:** During my time in New Orleans I learned a lot of things. Probably the most important thing I learned was that you should take any opportunity that comes your way. When I first heard about the mission trip to New Orleans, I was interested but wasn't completely sure if I wanted to go. It took some time for me to decide that I wanted to go, but the more I thought about why I wanted to do this, the more I realized it wasn't me making the choice. God called me, and everyone else to be a part of this experience. When I was there I did and saw things I never thought I would, because I took the opportunity to try new things I got so much more out of this trip than expected. Thank you to everyone who supported us and prayed for us, without that this would not have been possible.

**Alycia Kehn:** I certainly learned and saw a lot going down to New Orleans. It's one thing hearing and seeing the devastation on the news and radio, but it's a total other thing actually going there and witnessing it first hand. It made me think of all of the things I take for granted. Talking to the people who stayed through this storm have experienced so much and are still just happy as us, who have everything we would ever need. These people just didn't just loose their houses; they lost their lives

along with it. I've realized I have so many things I should be grateful for. Many people have asked me what I did for March Break and how it was. When I told them what we did, they were blown away. By sharing this experience with people, I am spreading the Word of God and really making them realize how great of an opportunity God gave me. I have also grown to learn that it is not us on this mission, or helping the people of New Orleans, or me who chose to go on this Mission, it was God, and this was all His doing. I don't see this as the end of my trip, I see it as the very beginning of something new.

**Michael Lyons:** Going down to New Orleans definitely got me thinking of how lucky and fortunate we are in Kitchener. After seeing the devastation down there and then knowing the people of New Orleans celebrated St. Patrick's Day and knowing they are still having fun made me see how strong these people are knowing that God will get them through this. I also saw much appreciation from the residents and by knowing they were so grateful to have us there made me and everyone want to work harder. Before I went, I decided to go not realizing that God called us to go on this Mission and it became clear that, that is what He wanted us to do. Also, that God does have a plan for everyone. I would just like to thank everyone who made this possible, especially the congregation for your continuous prayer and support.

**John Nesbitt:** When we went to New Orleans we didn't know what we were getting ourselves into.; As we drove out of the airport parking lot we saw beautiful palm trees and flowers. But when we actually got into New Orleans some of us just wanted to cry. The amount of destroyed homes was absolutely heart wrenching and this is a year and a half later. We had our mini devotions every day and we all had some emotional times. But we found that we weren't there because we wanted to be but because God had wanted us to be there. I feel touched and blessed to be one of God's chosen ones to be on this trip. And I thank Him for it.

**Caitlin Pritchard:** New Orleans was an amazing experience. To participate in a mission trip, put on a plane and taken to a place that has been hit by a hurricane that destroyed many homes and lives was something I had never experienced. It was beyond our comfort zones. We were there to help, it did not matter what you did - you did it because God called you to do it. The one thing that really touched my life in New Orleans was the people that we met. These people had lost everything they owned, they were some of the happiest people that I have ever met. The material things did not matter to them. Their trust in God was all they needed. This mission experience has taught me many things and has helped me to trust and rely on God more. I will never forget the lives we helped to rebuild. I thank you Holy Cross for giving the New Orleans team and me the opportunity to share God's love and to help rebuild lives in New Orleans.

**Elizabeth Williams:** The mission's trip to New Orleans was an experience full of learning, faith, passion and hard work for all of us. But before we could even put on gloves, we went through training to prepare us. The session before hand

**Our AFTER Mission  
Statements**

# Servants for Jesus Sake



HURRICANE KATRINA HIT August 29, 2005

These symbols were painted on the front of every home affected by the devastation left by Katrina.



## **POETRY IN ACTION**

**For we are God's workmanship, created in  
Christ Jesus to do good works, which God  
prepared in advance for us to do.**

**Ephesians 2:10**

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Water totally destroyed everything in the homes and then came mold and mildew.

3,000 people lost their lives because of Katrina

People have had to leave their homes and move to other places, anywhere that would take them so they could start to rebuild their lives. Many are still paying off mortgages and now also have to pay rent and no money is left for anything else. If they do not keep their lawns cut in New Orleans then the tall grass attracts rats and the rats attract snakes and then it became a dangerous area so the government will come in and cut your grass and then charge the home owner \$100 to do this. Since many of the people live far away they can't always come to cut their grass and they cannot afford the government to cut the grass and so Camp Restore truly provides a wonderful ministry because of Jesus.

To gut a home cost anywhere from \$3,000-\$8,000 dollars. Volunteer teams come and do it for free.

What a wonderful ministry Camp Restore provides to so many people and families who are already so devastated by losing everything. Insurance companies argue over not paying, the government does not provide enough help and FEMA does not always help either. God's people come in from all over North America to reach out and help because of Jesus Love... Even from Canada ... what a wonderful witness of servants for Jesus sake!

1Corinthians 12:5 says, "There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served." Clearing debris or mowing lawns or whipper snipping does not seem that significant, yet to Ron and Connie that day, all the work we did was a gift from God.

**Jason McCoy** – Craig Burek



When we arrived in New Orleans, we were introduced to a man named Jason. When we met him he wasn't feeling too well, and was questioning his faith in God. He even had his mom and uncle flown in from Florida to cheer him up. Upon further conversation we discovered that a previous group, that he had been in charge of, refused to do the work that was assigned to them. They said that they had come to gut houses, not to mow lawns. Jason tried to explain the situation that these people are faced with, but the group refused. Pastor Ed couldn't even convince them otherwise. It ended up that they went home early because of this situation. That really bothered Jason

that Christians would turn down the opportunity to serve the Lord. Then he saw us work, and I'm not trying to brag or anything, but he was amazed at the work "us Canadians" could accomplish. Even I was amazed at what we had accomplished. To tell you the truth, we didn't even know how we could stand up after the work we had done. Gord was a prime example of this. He just sort of leaned in the direction that he wanted to go and basically swayed to that spot. Jason told us that God has given us the strength, not only to get the job done, but to also convince him that God was indeed his Savior.

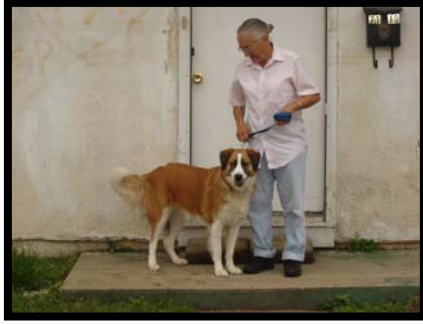
On Wednesday and Thursday, we had rain all day, and I was too young to gut houses, so I was given the opportunity to help Jason out for the 2 days.

Boy, I thought we were tired after a day of work. Those 2 days with Jason were so tiring...Jason didn't stop. He would literally run from the office to Pastor Ed, back to the office, over to the supply sheds to get our trailers set up, back to the people in charge of documenting completed tasks, back to our group, back to the office, photocopy some papers, then run to the truck and drive over to see how our group was doing, and from there we would go and inspect some future job sites. Repeat about a dozen times, throw a 30 minute lunch in there, and you have the basic day in the life of Jason. Imagine doing this for nearly a year, I know I wouldn't last.

**Thank you to the people** – Jennifer Lyons

I have mentioned many times throughout the week how proud I was of each youth who went on this Mission. You too can be very proud of each person that represented Holy Cross. I have never experienced such team work like we had. Ron & Connie mentioned that we were taking care of their property like it was our own. That was our attitude throughout the week. We generally worked in a

### Delores – Jennifer Lyons



I met Delores while taking pictures as I was traveling down the street that we were doing a job on. I noticed her on the side porch of her FEMA trailer shaking out a mat. I went up to her in hopes to hear her story. She and her disabled brother stayed in her home during the hurricane. She wanted very much to tell how her dog had a litter of 9 puppies and all but one survived by showing up 3 weeks later.

She was very proud of her dog. I explained that we were here with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod at Camp Restore and I would like to send some of our team down to cut her back yard for her. She said that it was too much of a mess to tackle but I guess it would be ok if you were allowed. Without hesitation from the group, several went down and got to work on her back yard. We enjoyed hearing her story as sad as it is and she enjoyed speaking with us.

### Ron and Connie - Kim Nesbitt



One of the things that Pastor Ed suggested that we do while working each day was to take time to talk with the people and hear their stories. Ron and Connie were the owners of the last two properties that we cleared and mowed before returning home. When we arrived at the property and began to work, Ron emerged from the FEMA trailer that they had lived in since Hurricane Katrina, and he was so excited to see us. He shared his story of sleeping on the roof of his house for 2 days before floating/swimming to the convention centre where he received aid. Connie had left New Orleans. It was over a month before she

received word that Ron was alive and well.

While we worked, Ron was like a kid in a candy store. He followed us around talking to us. He wanted so badly to help. He had a back injury that kept him from being able to clear the debris from the yards and now the lawns. At first, we did not realize that there were two properties that needed clearing and mowing. There was a lot of work to do, as the yards had not yet been cleared of debris. Ron offered us the use of his washroom and kept encouraging us as we worked. He was so thankful that we had come to help.

When Connie arrived home. She was so grateful for all that we had done. These people, who were struggling financially to rebuild tow properties, wanted to feed all 14 of us. We said we had eaten. It was very important to them to give back to us. They ended up going and buying us "snowballs" (because we were from Canada) to cool us down and refresh us when our work was done. We talked with them, listened to Ron's music and then prayed with Ron and Connie before going on our

### Camp Restore – Anita Syens

Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church is one congregation among many that are part of Lutheran Church Canada. Lutheran Church Canada is also part of a great church body in the United States called The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). The LCMS is divided into districts one of which is the Southeastern District in which New Orleans is located. After Hurricane Katrina the LCMS developed a mission to help bring restoration to that devastated city and her people. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and School one of the churches in



New Orleans also suffered much water damage and was chosen to become the home of Camp Restore. Labours for Christ, a volunteer organization of LCMS and LCC, made up of retired trades people and volunteers came to Camp Restore and helped to renovate the Church and School to serve as a church and guest facility for the many volunteers that would come in to help bring restoration to a devastated area. A special semi trailer was brought in and made into a commercial kitchen with help from the Orphan Grain Train association. Tools were purchased and trailers to help equip volunteers from all over the United States and even Canada as people come from all over to care in response to God Love for them. What a blessing it has been to be part of Christ's body working together to help bring hope and restoration to people whose lives have been devastated. Camp Restore was the place that took care of us so that we could help take care of others. We also came in through the help of Can-do missions which provided the insurance and transportation for our team.

### The Typical Day Overview – Alycia Kehn

Well, our day started off pretty early. We all got up around 6:50 a.m. and got changed. After that, we had breakfast at 7:15 a.m. We left for camp at around 8:15 every morning to start off the day. Pastor Roland and Gord drove around in our two vans searching for our first task. Three of the five days was landscaping. We would mow the lawns, weed whack (some of us called it the wiper snipper), we would sweep, shovel, carry loads of waste over to the garbage pile we already made, and we would also do anything else possible for that job. On Wednesday and Thursday, most of us went out to gut houses. Since a couple of us were too young to go out, we stayed back and helped with various jobs around the camp. We would unload the equipment and start working away. Some of the days, the girls and the guys would split up and work on different sites. The guys usually went to the sites with more heavy lifting although most of us girls could do it just as well ;) At around noon, we would stop for some bagged lunches the camp provided us. They were delicious. After eating and socializing for a bit, we would start work again. If the job was done, we would head on to another site. The day usually ended around 3:00 p.m. for us most days. The equipment had to be back by 4:00 p.m. every day. We usually finished our job early, so we go the benefit of getting in the showers first. After everyone showered and relaxed a bit, we all got up at 5:00 p.m. and went off to chapel for devotions. Now Nathanael will be talking about our devotion time.

## Daily Devotional Circle – Nathanael Bugbee

Everyday around 5:00 p.m. we would have a devotion where two people would read a devotion that they made or had read before and then we would continue by seeing how everyone's day was. Each person would tell what they didn't want to forget and what is God saying through these experiences we faced. If everyone worked together, the answers would be similar but if some were cleaning the church while others sprayed for mold while others pulled down ceilings; the answers would be very different. We would also tell who we met, their story and how God got them through the storm, and what we learned from that person. Then we would have a circle prayer with a list of people who have helped us get where we are and all those back home. The list would change day by day and the more people we met the bigger the list got. We also would give a thanksgiving prayer that the Lord had kept us safe and that he would keep us safe for the upcoming day. The whole devotion would last around 1-1 ½ hours and then after, Kim would lead a 'stretch time' where we would get some relief from our sore muscles.



and Stephanie Bohl

Each day of the week, became complete with our group circle time. This time together was a really significant part of the trip and helped us to grow a lot closer as a team. Each day (at either 5 or 7) we would gather in the chapel and discuss our day, write in our mission journals, share a devotion and pray together. This time that we set aside helped us to reflect on and share the events of the day that we didn't want to forget. It was our re-grouping time and allowed us to learn what other group members were up to that day, since we all experienced different things. Writing in our journals was really important, and it helped to remind us why we were there and to keep us grounded. Every evening a different person would take a turn leading the group in a short devotion, which helped us to just grow more comfortable with each other. At the close of our time we would go around the circle and take a turn to praying out loud. This time of reflection was a really key component in our mission trip, because we kept our focus of God and our mission. It also brought us so much closer to each other. Whether it was planned or unplanned, our circle time became a necessary part each of the day.

## Our Training to Serve (God's Call) & expectations set through CAN DO Missions - Liz Williams

The mission's trip to New Orleans was an experience full of learning, faith, passion and hard work for all of us. But before we could even put on gloves, we went through training to prepare us. The session before hand helped us understand why we were actually going on the mission's trip, and to get us ready for what was to be expected.

Audrey. When people ask me why we went to New Orleans, I think of the look in Audrey's face and say "That's why!"

Back to the e-mail ...

*We are learning many things here. God has opened our eyes to numerous lessons. We know we cannot expect those at home to understand our experiences, but we hope they will see, by our lives, what God has done for us.*

## Thelma Gipson – Michael Lyons



Thelma Gipson will forever be remembered as the "fried chicken lady". During a gutting job we met Thelma and her friend. They pulled up to the house to ask the mailman across the street for directions. A lady that was helping us from another team went out to her to ask if she had a her cell phone to use to call our camp being our lunch had not arrived yet and it was well after lunch time. Thelma asked if there was

anything we needed, and the lady from our team said we could really use some plastic cups for our water. We didn't even think that they would come back but when she did she had brought plastic cups along with a fried chicken and french fry dinner for everyone. It never felt so good to eat fried chicken on the ground in our contaminated suits. We felt so appreciated by someone who was not even being helped by our team but understood why we were here.

## Mike Romain – Nathanael Bugbee

On our third work day, Gordon and I were placed in a gutted house to spray for mold. The house was good sized, had 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a kitchen, dining room and a living room, which turned into a bar. There was nice marble flooring in the bar area and then 2 trailers outside. There were 2 pump bleach machines we used and one was twice the size of the other so when we would need to get more bleach one person would be waiting around till the big pump machine was finished. Son on our last leg of the house, Gordon ran out and was waiting for me to finish and he saw that the man living at the trailer in front had come home so he went to his trailer and started talking to him. He was at the hospital earlier that day having blood work done and was feeling tired and weak, however that didn't damper his spirits to welcome us. Although his house and his possessions were gone, that didn't bother him as much as the fact that the past Monday of when we came, his nephew was in a motorcycle accident and his family was taking it really hard. So we prayed with him and he thanked us many times and said if he were feeling better he would have bough ten Crawdads for us to eat. I feel and I think Gordon with me, that for us he was the most inspirational person for us.

At first when we had heard about the mission's trip, we believed it was because we had wanted to go and help rebuild the lives of people who were affected by Hurricane Katrina. In fact, God had really chosen each and every one of us to go, for his own purpose. It was not because we wanted to go but because God called each of us to be servants and missionaries for his will.



The training taught us that the trip would challenge our comfort zone, exercise organized flexibility, and test our strength and stamina physically and emotionally. We had also learned from the training that it would take us a few days to

adapt to their culture and customs. We would be fully prepared and able for anything to happen. The trip was to fulfill God's wishes.

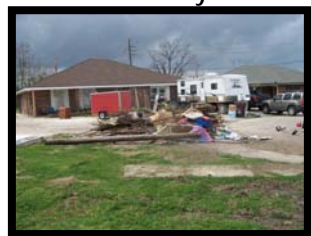
Therefore we did not choose to go on this trip, but god called us for his own purpose, to aid and change the lives of many people devastated by the after effects of Hurricane Katrina.

### The People - God is a God of Love and Hope

#### Brother and Sister- John Nesbitt

While we were cleaning one of the yards, I had noticed that the next door neighbors had come home. As I saw Gord walking over towards them, I had remembered what Pastor Ed had said, "Take time to talk with the people and hear their story." When I got there, the brother and sister were so, so, so thankful for what we were doing, even though we weren't working on their house. Right away they were offering us drinks and food. They had told us that the lady who had lived in the house we were working on was in a nursing home and would not be coming back to her house. We ended up bringing back to camp a big box of cupcakes and a case of rootbeer.

#### Stacie & Anthony - Caitlin Pritchard



The people who lived in this home are Stacey and Anthony. Their house has been rebuilt following the hurricane and they have just started to live in it again. They had a big yard that needed to be cleaned up and mowed. Our team was given the job of yard clean up. We were removing garbage and digging up stuffed animals left in the ground and taking a fireplace out from the backyard. We removed a fence in the back and then mowed the lawn. We were given the opportunity to talk to Stacey, she had just had a baby and found that the work was very hard to do. Anthony, her husband is a police officer in New Orleans and he stayed in New Orleans through the hurricane. They were very appreciative of what we did. While working at their home we got to share God's love with someone, Jenn will now explain this experience.

#### and lady who joined our devotion – Jen Kahlmeier



On one of our first days in New Orleans, when we were starting devotions, a woman from across the street came and thanked us for working in her neighborhood. After she said her thank-yours, we welcomed her to join us for the devotion. She automatically said yes and sat with us on the ground. We read a passage with her and prayed, afterward she talked to us about a meeting that she had to go to later on and how she

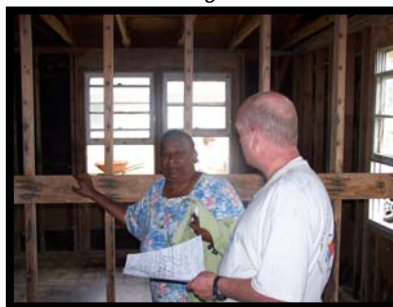
wasn't looking forward to it. The time she spent doing devotion with us, helped her to get through her meeting. Before we left to go to another job we mowed her lawn just as our personal thank-you to her.

#### Audrey – Gord Collins

I want to read some excerpts of the e-mail I sent to my wife, Susan, titled Wednesday's Highlights ...

*Today's word was "FRUSTRATION". It was a day full of it. After what we had accomplished the last two days, we were given a bundle of papers with eight jobs to do today. They were all going to be yard work. We were prepared. Then we woke up this morning to rain. It rained on and off all day. We could not do the orders we were given. They had to re-assign us to do something else. We then spent an hour this morning training to "gut" houses. This is where you go in and literally bring everything out, including furniture, carpets, cupboards, wallboards, etc. We were excited but with caution. We were told how to wear protective gear, including respirators, to protect our health ...*

*... we went to the first house to gut only to find out it was already gutted. We left three people (from another team) there to spray for mold. The rest of us went on to the next house to gut. It too was already gutted ...*



*... Everyone was frustrated. Things did not turn out as we had expected or hoped. It was a humbling experience. It taught us the we need to be prepared to do whatever God has planned for us to do, not necessarily what we want to do ..*

But, in the middle of that frustration were people like Audrey. She was the owner of the first home we went to. Although we did not stay to work at her home, we did stay long enough to hear her story. She left New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina hit but was the only one in her family who wanted to return. When she came home, she was alone and discovered that she had lost everything. In her own words, "I didn't even have a spoon." She was so thankful that we were there to help. Before we left the other team there and moved on to the next house, Pastor took time to pray for

way.

large group without any real direction when we were dropped off at a site, but we all dove in immediately like we had work orders. Granted, we were sometimes going in circles, but we got the job done. There was no grumbling about the mission chosen for the day, (ok, I'll admit –when we were waiting for instruction the day after I was already on a gutting team...I truly wished that I wouldn't have to go two days in a row. But, you guessed it. I was chosen to suit up again ... but quickly turned it into "This is where God wants me to be today), everybody pulled their own weight and we worked as one. In fact, we ate as one, and drove as one and we shared as one.

Even though the people of New Orleans have endured and continue to endure such tragedy – there is still hope in their eyes. It is hard to understand why this would be allowed to happen to them. All we know is that God is in control and the lessons learned by each resident and volunteer must outweigh the destruction. We have a God of LOVE and He pours it on us every day!

At this time, I would like to thank the behinds people who helped in putting this mission together. First of all...

**Pastor Roland Syens** for preparing the team so well with the right attitude to work for the Lord. To understand the we were personally chosen by God to be a part of this team and knew that no matter how trivial some jobs may have appeared, it was what God wanted us to do.

**Steve Keczem & Madeline Honderich** (who was our travel agent) – they worked side by side in arranging our flight tickets and keeping Pastor Roland informed of changes that came up. Madeline gave us the 'heads up' that the Charlotte flight had been cancelled and made alternate arrangements and hotel reservations for part of the group. She also booked the 4 vehicles that we drove home from Cleveland through Hertz Rent a Car.

**Melanie Bridgemohan** –who contributed by notarizing all of the application forms free of charge.

**CAN-DO-MISSIONS** – this is the group that insured us to have minors on our team so that we could attend Camp Restore. We were the first Canadian, in fact, first International team to go through CAN-DO-MISSIONS. They also provide the two vans that we used all week.

**Camp Restore** – A special thanks to Pastor Ed Brasier as the administrator and pastor of Camp Restore.



**And last but not least, YOU**, the members of Holy Cross for generously allowing this team of 14 to be part of this amazing, Service Mission Event

# Remembering New Orleans

March 10 - 17, 2007

