



## Reflections Hurricane Harvey Mission Team May 2018

On Saturday evening, May 19, 2018 a 17-member Mission Team from First Baptist Kittanning and First Baptist Ford City (one member from Montgomeryville Baptist and one member from Ford City Catholic Church were part of Ford City's group) returned from our journey to Houston, Texas where we spent our week helping those whose homes were devastated by last August's flooding.

I cannot express to all involved how much your support meant in providing everything we needed to accomplish the Lord's will in every minute detail of this glorifying endeavour. From travel (air and land), accommodations, meals, entertainment (NASA, and Galveston Beach), and especially the work to be done, everything worked together for the good (even the circumstances and situations that didn't seem so good at particular times). From conception to completion our mission was tremendously blessed.

We arrived at our host Church late Sunday afternoon. We slept in airconditioned cargo boxes like those you see on the back of tractor trailers and aboard cargo ships. They were set up like bunkhouses. There was some whining from some when we first arrived and jokes made later, but by the end of the week they had become very homey and added to the blessing of fellowship among team members. The Church that hosted our stay is Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. It is a very large and a very beautiful church with a detached Youth Center that has a full-size gymnasium, classrooms, and multipurpose rooms which are used throughout the day and most evenings. In the Youth Center is located a lounge called "The Chat Room" where we had our breakfast, prepared our bagged lunches, held our devotions (when not held outside in the cool of the evening), and where we could play pool, air hockey, cards, read, just lounge around on the sofas and bean bag chairs or sit around the dinette tables snacking and chatting. The Youth Center also housed our restrooms and showers. For three of our evening dinners, Small Groups from Gloria Dei's membership provided the food and added to the fellowship of these delicious meals. These Texans are some of the friendliest and most interesting Brothers and Sister in Christ you could ever hope to meet.

Our work day began by arriving at the homes to be worked on by 8:00 AM and we worked until 4:00 PM or so. It was about a 20-minute drive to a community called Dickinson, Texas (about 10 miles from where the school shooting in Santa Fe, Texas took place the Friday we were there). Dickinson was the hardest hit area of Houston by the flooding, receiving up to 60 inches of rain in a short period of time. Our job was to help restore homes that had already been "mudded out" by the teams of volunteers and homeowners (if able) in the months just following the flood.

We were broken up into two crews. One crew that included Pastor Mark and nine ladies, spent our entire week at the same property. Come Thursday, Robert Johns from the other crew joined with this group. Robin Lemmon from FB Kittanning became our unofficial, official job foreperson. Robin's giftedness was just what was needed, especially considering where

the house was in its process of completion when we arrived. There was much painting, some wall and ceiling repair, drywall sanding, minor electrical work, and extensive cleaning to be done. Robin even went on Youtube and learned to lay ceramic floor tile, including using the tile cutting saw, in an area that had not been completed. Though the house had new drywall, when installing the baseboard, we found that the flood waters had moved and warped walls to the point where nothing was flat. I was amazed how good the trim looked after caulked and painted. Everyone worked very hard. I seldom saw anyone taking a break except at lunch time. I am just so proud of our team members. The young ladies of our team seemed to become more and more enthused and determined as each day passed and the more mature ladies (How else should I put it?) where astounding in the amount of work they accomplished each day. They were tireless.

The house is owned by a man and his wife who came to the U.S. from Iran. He, back in the 1970s and she just a few years ago. He is retired and on Social Security. He is now an ordained Baptist Pastor who serves a church, but not as the Senior Pastor. There is a building next to the house that someone told me may become a church. This gentleman and his wife have been living in a camper next to their home since the flood. When he was first introduced to me, after the "Nice to meet yous." he began praying. In his prayer, he thanked the Lord for the flood and then recited a verse from Job, verse 15 of chapter 13, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him. "

I used the story of Job in one of my morning devotions, to help us realize that: though folks are faithful and blessed by God, devastation may come to them, and we are the called and blessed to be part of God's working in restoring what He had allowed to be taken away. This home was about 65% complete when we arrived and I believe well over 90% when we left. I received an email from the Director of the organization (Fuller Center) we were working with on Tuesday of the following week and he informed me that, thanks to our efforts, plans are to have the Home Dedication Service by the end of that week.

I wish I could say more about the other crew's work, but what I do know is: they worked on three different homes during the week. Terry Johns from FB Ford City, I believe was their unofficial, official job foreperson. One home that they helped finish up the first day on the job, we were blessed to attend its Dedication Service. It belonged to a Korean War veteran and his wife. They worked on a home belonging to a World War Two veteran also. The house was stripped to bare studs and they did some foundation work, clean up, and numerous other jobs. The third house was nearer completion and they did rewiring of switches and outlets and installation of ceiling fans. The temperature each day was in the mid to upper 90's but our AC was working from Tuesday afternoon on. Folks from both crews learned many new skills during the week.

We cannot thank enough our ABCOPAD Family for the support and direction given us throughout the process. Since the call to go in the Fall of 2017 to our celebration in Worship following our return, Rev. Mark Mahserjian-Smith, Denise Veselicky, and Rev. Tim Schwartz, working with the wonderful personnel of Fuller Center for Housing, made our Mission Trip one of the most organized, pleasurable, Christ glorifying experiences that a Church or group could ever prayerfully hope for.

Respectfully,  
Rev. Mark Brady, Pastor  
First Baptist Church of Kittanning

