

Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren Disaster Relief Mission

February, 2008 - Pearl River, Louisiana

15 volunteers from our congregation traveled to Pearl River, LA for a hurricane work camp. The common theme this year seemed to be 'humor.' We certainly spent a lot of our time laughing. We even had a contest going as to who was going to have the quote of the week.

I began to wonder, why everyone was so jovial? It really wasn't such a hilarious place. The work wasn't really fun. The circumstances the homeowners were in aren't funny. The overall outlook for the Gulf Coast is far from 'recovered.' So how could we laugh and giggle our way through the week?

What is the other choice? Are we to say the situation is totally bleak? Is there never going to be recovery, normalcy or humor in this place again? I don't think so. I think with every hour spent by a volunteer, we bring back the normalcy. We bring back recovery and even the humor.

So, when Bill goes along with the camp leaders to buy some extra fish to round out our fish fry and says "\$5.99/lb, that's nothing, the other bag of fish (caught on a charter boat) cost \$500." . . . we all laugh.

Or when Ray is warned that the police monitor the speed zones closely, he replies, "George just told me to expense everything, I'm not worried." . . . we all laugh.

Or when Dave is pondering a piece of 2 X 4 with a nail in it (which is a puzzle), asks "what is this?" and Don answers "it is a piece of wood with a nail in it, you idiot!" . . . we all laugh.

That laughter is the heart of these service trips.

It is the heart that beats within each volunteer.

It is the heart we want to pass on to each homeowner to help them in recovery.

It is the heart that makes us able to get through a stressful week.

It is the heart that makes us want to return for another try.

And it is the heart we never want to lose.

~ Lucy Maghan