

Ramona Sentinel • 611 Main Street • Ramona • CA • 92065 • Phone: 760-789-1350

Ramonan starts mission to rebuild Mississippi churches

Chuck Preble 15.SEP.05

When people lose everything, all they have is their faith," said Chip Rumis.

The Ramona resident recently returned from Mississippi where he witnessed firsthand the devastation from Hurricane Katrina that slammed into Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi on Aug. 28 causing billions of dollars in damage and a rising death count.

"I felt such frustration watching the television reports and not being able to do anything," Rumis said.

He called his friend and fellow churchgoer, Karl Higgins, who had recently returned from Indonesia helping victims of last December's tsunami.

"If you want to help, you've got to get in the game," Higgins said.

Rumis did more than that.

On Friday, Sept. 2, Rumis and Higgins flew into Jackson, Miss.

"I had a spiritual calling to go there," said Rumis, who recently sold his Poway company, Tiscor Software, and was one of the founders of Ramona National Bank. "I had no responsibilities here and had the wherewithal to be able to provide aid." The two men went to Mississippi with a few bottles of water, some Power Bars and beef jerky.



The roof of the Trinity Church in Hattiesburg, Miss., lies in pieces on the altar making the interior of the church appear as the exterior. The white cross above the altar was not damaged.

“We figured we could live off those items for a few days while we provided what aid we could,” said Rumis.

At each church Rumis and Higgins stopped to assess the damage and tell the preacher about their mission of rebuilding.

“The people, police, and firemen were worn out and there was absolutely no commerce in the region,” said Rumis. “We knew that, if the churches could get back in order, they could help their congregations get in order.”

Many of the churches had supplies available for the population but no means of getting those items distributed.

“There was no gas or electricity to run the pumps, all the stores were bare of produce and stock, and the entire town was simply shut down,” Rumis said.

Over a period of 22 hours, Rumis and Higgins drove 770 miles viewing scenes of total destruction, misery, and confusion. Many of the churches they visited were still standing but roofless and structurally unsound. Pews had been hurled about like matchsticks, and buildings, with black holes that once contained stained-glass windows, tilted in the muggy weather.

“We returned to Ramona on Sunday, Sept. 4, and I started to make calls,” Rumis said.

Higgins is heading back to Indonesia to help in the construction of schools.

“Jean and I plan to load up our motorhome with supplies, fill a trailer with additional supplies, and head back to Mississippi in the next ten days,” said Rumis. “We don’t expect to be back for at least five months.”

In the meantime, Rumis has begun setting up a website for the project and making dozens of phone calls.

“I know that people can make a difference in the lives of others,” he said. “I can’t just sit back and watch what is going on. I have the time, and the means to help. It’s time to do something.”

Those interested in helping are asked to call 1-866-932-3078 or visit the Web at www.adopt-a-church.com.

