



October 4, 2005

Week One of the Race to Rebuild Churches Affected by Hurricane Katrina

Miracle Temple Holiness Church

This church was started by Pastor Wm. Perryman, now 88 years old. The building is located next to the railroad tracks, sitting on a weed filled dirt lot, mixed with broken concrete. This corner intersection splits into three roads - looking like a Norman Rockwell painting. Several older black men stood across the street leaning against the wall of another old building, I wonder what they thought as Chip and I walked around and around the church. As we took in the area, what would be approximately two blocks down, a large, new church stood. The contrast between these two was a surprise to me, so close yet so far apart!

Chip and I met the Grandson, Pastor Mike Chatman on the broken steps leading into this damp, dark church. The pastor was extremely thankful to see Chip, as this church has been his "Baby" of hope for many years past.

Mike works full time applying for as much overtime as he can get. He has been trying to keep the church up by working in the evenings. He did attach wood paneling to cover the wood framed walls inside the church thinking this might help insulate against the heat outside. Before Katrina hit, his last project started had been to install a his and her bathroom along with repairing the exposed electrical wiring.

As I walked into this one room church, I felt the Lord surround us. The feeling was one of wonder, of joy and of thanksgiving to be able to help.

This is what I saw:

Chipped, weathered, uneven plank wood framed building which once had been white washed, forming a rectangular box

The six windows had been sealed shut and spray painted with blue paint – I wondered if this was not only for security but to give the impression of stained glass windows.

The baptism tub was a galvanized horse trough which had been made to adapt a hose to let water in and a PVC pipe to drain out – the hose had to be brought in through the front doors, the pipe was placed out these doors after the service. This tub was hidden under an old table which had been covered with a paper picnic tablecloth.

The flooring consisted of carpet, the olive green sixty's type, which now was water logged carrying a spoiled sour smell. The wooden floor which it sat on could no longer keep from rising up in sections forming an interesting roller coaster like platform.

The old drum set was covered with installation material soaked in water that had fallen from the ceiling. The old wooden piano, missing several keys, did not survive either. (Chip asked if he played, he said he had done some but never learned to read sheet music as his grandfather once played a guitar and was able to show him some cords.)

The pulpit was made from unfinished wood, now lying among the rubble.

Pastor Mike had installed two window air conditioners, Chip wondered if these could cool this building - he informed us that he and his wife came early to turn on the ACs and then sat on the steps waiting for some relief before service. They are old and very noisy.

The lighting consisted of four ceiling fans with a light on each of them along with two recessed lights above the pulpit - he informed these lights caused him to sweat more than taking a shower.

The pews are very old and have been shellacked with several coats of water sealer. He wanted to make cushions for them but never got around to doing so with so many other projects needing his attention.

Pastor Mike had many goals for this church; his dream was to restore the building in order to make it more appealing for those who wished to worship the Lord. He said that this truly is not a prerequisite for those serving the Lord, but it does make their time doing so a whole lot more comfortable. Also, he felt that the congregation might grow if the building became more attractive. He had been working so hard, paying for all the improvements and doing them along with taking care of his family for several years. When Katrina came, he could only pray that his church would be standing, which it has done. Mike had to spend the first few weeks repairing his home after the storm. The pain, disappointment and frustration have had no hold on this man who truly knows ***there is nothing that Jesus cannot do!*** He has a dream, to see his congregation grow, to be able to preach the Lord's word to the young and old. As it is today, he has a 77 year old woman who walks to church on Sundays and will not accept a ride; this is a point of pride I think for him. The other members are of the same age group, every once in awhile he gets a grandson or daughter of the members who arrive with a child. He has no place or toys or

yard that is fenced for such children. Not to say that he would not strive to have one.

One more bit of information, as I followed Chip and Mike around the building, Chip asked if he could seal the sub-floor up for him...Mike informed us that this cannot be done as the building here must circulate the air in order to keep the moisture out...interesting, I can attest to the moisture!

Mike purchased a skill saw after the storm to help with repairs and while installing a piece of lumber up front, the saw was stolen from the back! He mentioned this as a way of life in this section of town, he was not in any way bitter, just accepting.

This is the blessing we all have been given a chance to experience.....this pastor who can only see love truly won our hearts. I know that if you all had the chance to come down to Mississippi, had the chance to meet Pastor Mike and could see the church, you would approve of the mission.

Please pray about this, Chip and I will also pray and shall be waiting for your answer.

God Bless You All,

Chip and Jean