

Ron and Janet Fullmer
1700 Esther Way
The Dalles, OR 97058
Home: 541-769-0222
R-Cell: 720-219-9568
J-Cell: 541-980-1889

Dear friends,

Life is in warp drive. Since my last email to you, I have completed a trip to New Orleans (trip report below), where we worked on a house for a woman who has been living in Houston since Katrina, I stopped off for a few days in Denver to visit friends and make a few final touches to the house in Lakewood prior to it going on the market, we entertained many friends from Denver, Washington, Oregon and California who came to celebrate Janet's installation as Rector of St. Paul's (Feb. 21st), we closed on our new house (address above), and now we have moved in with Joshua and Angel – furniture is still in Denver, waiting on that house to sell, so we're sort of camping out for a while.. Oh yeah, I also read the Oregon Driver Manual, in preparation for a written test, and booked flights for my next LWI trip to Haiti – whew.

First, to see a few pictures from the trip, go to <http://www.stpaulstheDalles.org> and click on Latest News and Events and then the New Orleans Trip links. This report is included there, as well.

Now, about that trip to New Orleans:

One Sunday, John Adams made an announcement that he was going to be joining a group from the Diocese of Eastern Oregon to work on a house that had been devastated by Katrina. I suspect that I'm not the only one who has allowed the damage from that storm to fall off my radar – I had sort of assumed that volunteers were no longer going down there to help clean up the aftermath of Katrina – wrong! It turns out that lots of people are going down to volunteer their time and talents and there is a huge amount of work that remains to be done. Just as an example, I met a couple from a church in Michigan whose group will be there for 3 weeks, and then they will be replaced by the next group from their church.

So, after thinking about it for a few days (errr – weeks), and knowing full well that I had both the time and some skills, I contacted our team lead, Willis, to let him know that I would like to join the team – I was the 9th and final volunteer for this trip. On February 8th, John and I drove to Portland, where we spent the night in preparation for an early flight to New Orleans. The next morning, John flew on one airline and I flew on another, and we were met in New Orleans by Willis. After renting a car that could haul around 6 of us, we drove to St. George's church, out on St. Charles Blvd, where we would be staying in a dormitory like room beneath the Rectory. Our hosts were Ellen and Father

Jim, along with their 1-year old Great Dane puppy and Angie, the beagle. We had beds, showers, wireless internet, coffee fixings and a refrig – in a word, home-sweet-home.

Our team consisted of 9 volunteers – Willis, Alison, John, Jim and Penny, Jim and Penny (yep – 2-pair), Fabian and myself. We came from various parts of E. Oregon (North and South), E. Washington, and Hawaii. On our first night in New Orleans we received an orientation from Pete Nunnally, volunteer coordinator of the Office of Disaster Response for the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana (<http://odr.edola.org/>), who told us about the history of Katrina, and the work that has taken place since. Then we went to a wonderful, local restaurant, where John and I met a wonderful oyster-shucker – in all, we suspect that he shucked some 5-dozen for each of us – yum – and yes, you do chew them.

On Tuesday, we drove over to the Disaster Response warehouse, where we were oriented and introduced to our 2 supervisors, Kellie and Tommy, and 4 volunteers from Boston who would be working with us on our house. Three Oregonians, Penny, Jim and Penny, would spend their time working on finishing-work on a different house, somewhere else in the city. We drove over to our house and walked in on bare studs and ceiling joists – the plumbing, wiring and heating were in place – and a large stack of dry wall. Every day, we would unload the truck – ladders, tools, radio, etc. – and get to work. On that first day, Tommy told us a little about the owner of the house, what’s been going on with the Episcopal Katrina Relief effort, and how to hang sheet rock. A couple of team members were experienced pros with this task, a few like me had done a little of it in the past, and the rest were brand new. As in nearly all of the various mission trips that I have take in the past, I was again amazed and pleased with how the team worked together. Newbies jumped in and quickly mastered new skills, while the more experience folks taught and lent their expertise. Over all of that, both Kellie and Tommy patiently pitched in where ever they were needed and helped us with our mistakes. Oh yeah, we all enjoyed the local New Orleans music on the radio and sang along to the Oldies but Goodies station later in the day.

Our house was small – 2 bedrooms, a bath, a kitchen and a living room – no basement – it is New Orleans (below sea level) after all. It still bore the markings near the front door of when it was first examined after Katrina and that there were 0 bodies discovered in it.

By the end of the first day, probably 2/3 of the ceilings were covered – the wide open expanses, leaving closets and an out of kilter living room ceiling for the days to come. We went home, exhausted but happy, and after showering we headed for dinner.

In the days to come, we finished the ceilings and insulated the walls. Tommy and Frank (from Holland) insulated the attic and we completed some of the walls, including several closets. Oh yeah, we did manage to spend a full day getting the tub-enclosure ready for installation. The way this Episcopal Relief organization works, another team would show up the next week to continue where we left off, and in 6-8 weeks the owner would be able to leave Houston and return to her home.

All over New Orleans, people have returned to their homes, which are surrounded by either abandoned homes or homes that are waiting for restoration. We saw abandoned high-rises, FEMA trailers that were still occupied, and we saw hospitals and emergency rooms that had just been re-opened. The French Quarter was looking good, beignets and chicory flavored coffee were being served at Café du Monde, and the distinct restaurants and cuisine of New Orleans were as good and tasty as ever. On our last night, we walked over a couple blocks to see the start of 2 Marti Gras parades.

If you'd like to read an interesting article about a church we attended one evening for dinner, service and music, please visit http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_78002_ENG_HTM.htm . They have built a church in an old Walgreens building in the lower 9th ward, and minister to the bodies and souls of the people who are in real need, there.

The Episcopal Disaster Response of Louisiana welcomes anyone to come down and pitch in. They will accept any size group, starting at 1, and they have plenty for anyone with any skill level to do.

I would be remiss if I didn't put in a plug for an upcoming Living Water Trip that I will be joining in May (8th-18th). We will be grouping in Ft. Lauderdale and flying in our friendly Lynx Air twin-prop airplane to Cap Haitian, where we will meet up with Pastor Rick and his LWI Haiti team. From there, we will go somewhere to repair wells. Jim will lead the group, again. If you would like to help me out with financial support for this trip, please send your check to me, made out to Living Water International, with Ron Fullmer – Haiti in the memo. As always, your prayers and thoughts are coveted through-out the trip.

Love and Peace,
Ron and Janet
Joshua George and Angel Grace