

"Loving God" By Chris Stumpf

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Welcome this morning to this service where we talk about mission! We are really eager to tell you about our experiences in New Orleans. My family has been fortunate over the years to have participated in many youth mission trips. For several years, some of the adults from those trips talked about organizing an adult mission trip. Well, we finally did just that. This past April, 14 adult men and women volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans. This morning we chose to divide our reflections about the trip into three segments. We appropriately chose our Mission Statement as titles for these reflections... LOVING GOD, SERVING OTHERS & GROWING TOGETHER. It truly is amazing to me how that mission statement fits with what we do here at Baker Memorial Church. I have the privilege this morning to focus on LOVING GOD!

In our planning meeting, Ronni reminded us that Loving God does not have to be something we stress about. We do not have to worry about if we are doing it properly if we just love those close to us! When we love our spouse, our kids, our family, our friends, we are Loving God. It is that simple! When I think about our New Orleans trip there was love on many levels. When we serve God's people we are showing our love for God. When we make new relationships with those in need and lend a hand in helping them, we are loving God. And yet, there was something different about this mission trip for me. On mission trips in the past we met a family. We got to know that family. We felt God's love through those we met and made strong bonds during those weeks of service.

This was different. We did not meet the family that would occupy the new home that we were taking part in building. There was a family emergency that week and the family could not be with us. As I reflected on that, I thought how we were serving God's people anonymously and I was really proud of our team! We showed how we loved God by helping folks we would never meet! By doing a job well on a home we would never live in! To me, that is the epitome of serving God, of Loving God: Taking care of God's people anonymously. I want to take a moment to name those on the team that ventured to New Orleans. Not everyone could be at both services, but if you hear your name, please stand and let us recognize you....

Ben Adams, his brother Tom Adams (could not be here today), Rick House, Jack Markwick, Jan McPeak, Val McPeak, Mandy Morgan, Molly Morgan, Doug Ruth, Kim Starr, Dan Starr, John Stumpf, and Dave Wilson. If you see any of these people, ask them about their trip.

They will all encourage you to join us next time!! We had such a wonderful, rewarding trip! Because we did not have a family to interact with, we as a team had time to just be together. Whether we were talented in construction or not, everyone found satisfaction in a job well done. Most of the men scurried up the ladders the moment we got on site...Jan and Val worked on the porch as Mandy and Molly sided that porch, John manned a saw, and caulked the entire outside of the house. Kim and I measured and cut soffits and fascia for the guys on ladders!

It was truly a team effort, a mission of love for those in New Orleans and for each other. You will delight in the pictures in Baker Hall after the service. I encourage anyone at any skill level to join us in mission in 2011.

There are many other ways at Baker Memorial that we show our Love for God: Our meals to Lazarus, Birthday Parties at IYC, Vacation Bible School, and our Refugee Resettlement Ministry to name just a few. I want to highlight the latter.

It is not a secret that the Refugee Resettlement Team just received an award for their selfless support to our K'Ren families. Jan and Dave will tell you more stories about our service in New Orleans. I wanted to tell another tale. After the New Orleans work trip, John and I did not head back home with the team. Instead, we ventured to Texas. Many of you remember our refugee family from Columbia 7 years ago...

Mauricio and Sandra Pacichana came with their 3 month twin boys, Daniel and Santiago. They lived in an apartment in St. Charles and many of us provided the same support to their family that we offer to our K'Ren families. At that time, we coined the phrase MSDS, short for Mauricio, Sandra, Daniel and Santiago. I think that idea was Ben's and it just stuck! So for ease in saying all the names I will refer to them as MSDS today!

MSDS are now living in Houston. When Sandra's sister and family immigrated, they chose Texas, so it soon followed that MSDS would move there also. It has been 4 years and my family has kept in touch, so John and I were very excited to have this opportunity to see them again. I am so pleased to tell you, that this wonderful family that spoke very little English, this family that knew very little about American ways has grown in confidence and are living a completely independent life outside of the helpful hands of those that nurtured them while they were here in St. Charles! A true American success story...or should

I say a Baker Memorial Mission success story! Mauricio is certified to drive an 18 wheeler. That no doubt comes as a surprise to those that taught Mauricio to drive! That was an adventure to say the least! Sandra is attending a Jr. College and is paying it forward as she cares for an elderly man in their complex. They are both studying to become citizens. Dani and Santi are 2 very active 7 year olds to put it mildly!!

They are fluent in Spanish and English and have the same personalities as when they were babies. The last pictures John and I took of the boys, they were swinging from tree branches in the park that could only be reached from the top of a picnic table! They keep mom and dad very busy to say the least!

I tell you this tale on this day when we talk about mission. Our nurturing of this family was a mission of love at home just as our current Refugee Resettlement is! We have mission opportunities available whether we go and serve or whether we stay right here in St. Charles.

The level of success achieved from loving MSDS and our K'ren families speaks volumes as to our Love for God. When we show love to others, we are loving God. Whether the mission is here at home or traveling to New Orleans or to Nashville as are youth are about to do, we are blessed to have the opportunity to Love God, Serve Others and Grow Together.