

New Orleans clergyman visits to thank Barrington for help

February 1, 2007

BY DANIEL WARREN | CONTRIBUTOR

Well over a year after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, members of the Presbyterian Church of Barrington know the work has only begun.

A group of 21 church members, local residents and concerned citizens from other parts of the country traveled to New Orleans last October, spending the week rebuilding ravaged houses and saw witnessing the storm's aftermath.



Pastor Cliff Nunn of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans Saturday talks about recovery efforts during a trip to meet with members of the Presbyterian Church of Barrington.

(Allen Kaleta/ for Pioneer Press)

The group stayed with Pastor Cliff Nunn of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans. Since early last year, Nunn has offered his church as living quarters for more than 70 groups of volunteers. Nunn coordinates relief efforts for New Orleans residents whose homes were affected by the storm, and served as a resource and guide for the Barrington-based group.

Nunn was in Barrington to attend an informal gathering on Saturday at the Barrington church, then gave two sermons on Sunday. He showed his appreciation for the group's October trip, and stressed that efforts like these are the only way to truly comprehend the situation.

"There is no way that you can explain what happened, on television, or by radio, or by newspaper," Nunn said. "The only way to understand the immensity of the destruction is to come personally to New Orleans.

"Things are not back to normal in New Orleans," he added. "There is going to be work that will need to be done for at least four or five years. There is no quick fix to this problem."

Barrington resident Carol Nelson, 84-years-old, was among those who made the trip. The opportunity to lend a hand and see the Katrina's effects compelled her to travel to New Orleans.

"To actually be there and see the devastation, was almost more than you can imagine," Nelson said. "These people will always be in a state of recovery from it."

"It's a long, slow process, but they do make headway," she added. "It's a wonderful feeling for them and for us to know that we've helped."

The church is planning two more week-long trips in 2007. The first is April 14 through April 21. The second is from Oct. 13 through Oct. 20

Church elder Denny McGurer, who spearheaded last year's trip and is in charge of planning for this year's trips, said that the group had to recover from its initial shock upon arriving in New Orleans before it could begin working.

"People stepped up and wiped aside their tears and the mud off their shoes (and) said, 'When do we get to work?'" McGurer said. "We never stopped from that point."

Beyond what the group is able to accomplish through last year's trip and the two scheduled for 2007, McGurer hopes they will be part of the chain of events that draws more volunteers to aid the afflicted areas.

"The most rewarding thing of all is that people hear the story and then they go and tell the story themselves," McGurer said.

The church welcomes volunteers, whether or not they are church members, to accompany the. According to Nunn, it is also important that concerned citizens provide financial support since tools and building materials are scarce.

For more information, call the Presbyterian Church of Barrington at (847) 381-0975 or visit the church's web site at www.pcbarrington.org. Those interested in the April or October trips can also contact Denny McGurer at(phone number removed)