

## New Orleans Mission Trip, Sept 2011.

Unlike the last trip in February, we made sure we were early for our train. Our departure date was Sept 23<sup>rd</sup>. We got on the 4:30pm Metra train to get to Union Station to board our 8pm Amtrak train to New Orleans. We checked our luggage and sat in the waiting area for the rest of the group. I first saw Rev. Roger Dart (the group leader). The call to board was soon made. We get on the train for our 19 hour ride. The train ride was a bit rough. One of our group had his wallet stolen. Thank Goodness for the portable DVD player! It came in handy. I could not sleep more than an hour at a time on the train. We had brought about 60 DVD's to choose from. Once we get to New Orleans we take a taxi to St. Pauls UCC where we will be staying in dormitory style rooms. We unpack and get all settled in. We go to dinner and when we get back, we quickly fall asleep as sleeping on the train is not that great. When we get up on Sunday morning, we go to Beecher UCC's church service (which has been held in the University ever since Katrina). The style of the service was very quite different compared to ours. It had a Baptist style to it; i.e. a lot of "Amen's" and a lot of dancing and clapping. After the service, we met a lot of the congregation. Very nice people. (It just so happens, that our worksite this time, is in fact, Beecher Church!). Everybody was very grateful for our volunteering to help rebuild their church. We got back to St. Pauls to relax a little and plan out our upcoming week's meals etc. We go out for dinner and I got a fantastic shrimp po' boy. I have to say, the food in New Orleans is oh so good! After dinner, we get back and get ready for the busy week ahead. It is now Monday morning, and we are getting ready for the project leader to come by for our orientation. We get the task sheet for our project house, which is Beecher Church. We get to our work site and quickly set up and get to work. There is still a lot to be done. There are only 3 weeks left for our CMA group to finish the project. (there are groups coming each week). There was 7 feet of water in this area, which covered all the stained glass windows completely. All drywall had to be replaced (which was mostly done already). There was a lot of painting that needed to be done, i.e. all the doors, door frames, out side there were some panels of concrete by the windows that needed to be washed with a bleach/water mixture (to kill all the algae before painting). All the gutters also needed to be washed before painting. I painted all the panels of concrete and all the gutters and downspouts (on a 12 foot ladder). I did have to conquer a LOT of height fears. I quickly got used to being up high. Although, I have to give Scott a lot of credit (again), as he got on the roof (on a 12 foot ladder), and then on a 24 foot ladder to paint the very top of the steeple (about 40 feet high up total from the ground). I also went on the roof, but just to help bring up and down the ladders. I also learned how to use a pressure washer, thanks to Roger. I have to say, when it is 95 degrees with 90% humidity, it is nice to use a pressure washer! (as you get really wet). Did I mention how HOT and HUMID it was???!!! The sun down there is WAY different than our sun here! I had sweat coming from places I didn't know I had! Sunscreen was a must! I did love working outside though. It was better than inside because there was at least a breeze sometimes. I also helped put up some framework for the ceiling tiles. I have to say, this trip, I learned a lot more skills. Before leaving New Orleans, we got the chance to have dinner at John Besh's August restaurant. It was so good, but I think Emerils was better. I also got to stop off at Cafe Du Monde and have my first Beignets! If you ever go to New Orleans, I highly suggest stopping off there and getting some Beignets too! Well worth it! I hope that we can team up with other organizations still doing work down there to help rebuild New Orleans. There is a possible group called Phoenix that we might be able to team up with. I will keep you all posted on this progress for any future trips. There has been some progress with rebuilding New Orleans, but there is still so much to be done. I want to thank everyone who has donated enabling Scott and I to attend this latest Mission Trip.