


*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.* (1 Peter 4:10)

A group from First Presbyterian felt called to western North Carolina this past September to help North Carolina neighbors rebuild their homes from the catastrophic damage of Hurricane Helene. We lived in community and worked alongside a group from Westminster Presbyterian Church to replace the walls and floors in two different homes, and make a small but lasting contribution to the enormous job of getting all of our neighbors back in their homes. Yet, the rebuild is only part of the story. We talked with the homeowners and other local people about their challenges to make life and work normal again. Many of us arrived as strangers to others in the group but left as friends. And, many of us were able to refocus on what is truly important in life.

The best way to understand this mission trip is through a sample of written reflections from your First Presbyterian siblings:

How vital it is that we share our lives with each other and how we are reminded that we are not alone in this world. - Kathy Coleville -

With the good spirits of the other folks volunteering to help some family overcome the horrific memories/nightmares of the flood, mudding was a gift shared with me, with others, from God. [mudding: applying drywall paste to cover holes and seems] – Karolyn Mangeot –

Although the devastation is still present, the resiliency, selflessness, and hope of the folks here has been an inspiration. I have had immense joy in working together with strangers that are now friends, across generations, life experiences, churches and skill levels. I have experienced the gift of Christian community this week and I am very grateful. - Kristin Meade -

Despite not knowing anyone in the group, I felt welcomed and included. - John Keller -

I didn't know what I would be called upon to do, and I didn't know if I would be able to do anything "useful"... I realized what seemed to be a very small contribution of my own, added to the similar contributions of our group, actually led to meaningful progress. – David Sappenfield –

Imagine that place of physical and emotional security – your home – flooded with six feet of water and left coated with smelly muck. - Andy Henry -

Cinquain poem by Debbie Hamlin-Aggrey:

Storm ends
Lives upended
People help from near, far
Sorrow, loss, renewal, relief, joy
God's love

Cinquain poem by Carolyn Ragans:

Flooding
Broken places
Gather caring people
Sharing, time, skills, resources
Healing