

West Virginia Version of Hurricane Sandy: Blizzard

Mark Banasiak, minister at First Presbyterian Church of Clarksville, Tennessee, shared with his congregation following the team's trip to West Virginia. WVMaw shared a portion of the sermon with PDA:

...Well, we arrived and set up camp in the fellowship hall and Sunday school rooms of the First Baptist Church of Webster Springs, WV. The town is quaint.....population of 775. It has been experiencing a rough patch with the closure of two coal mines in recent years. Sunday afternoon, Mikey and I went with our site coordinator to visit our work site. That is when we met Dennis and Miss D. Their homestead was at the end of a long and windy road.....the place where the pavement stops and the dirt road begins. This is where Miss D and her 11 siblings grew up....160 acres of gorgeous West Virginia hills. The house sits on a flat piece of land at the bottom of the holler surrounded by a stream, 4 vegetable gardens and Miss D's day lilies. She had every color in the rainbow and they were in full bloom. Their house was originally a single-wide trailer but had been doubled in size in recent years with some room additions. They were excited to see us and share with us their story. You see, when Super Storm Sandy came on shore last year it slammed the East coast with wind, rain, and a powerful storm surge. Well, by the time it made it over this little holler in West Virginia, it was snowing. I am sure they thought it was gorgeous as it laid in the grass and on the trees. But as the inches turned into feet they began to worry. It didn't stop snowing until it was over 50 inches deep.....yes, I said 5 – 0 Fifty inches.



Snow deposited in West Virginia during Hurricane Sandy. Photo by Joan Stewart.

That day, Dennis heard some noise and went to look, by the time he realized what was happening there was no stopping it. The weight of the snow collapsed the roof of their house. Everything they owned was under a mess of shattered beams, roofing, and snow. Days turned into weeks and weeks into months. In April, they were able to begin to rebuild. Family and friends helped them clean up the mess, strip the walls down to the studs, and build a new roof. This is a slow process as they work to live while trying to save money to make the necessary repairs. A few weeks later a group of men from Nebraska showed up and helped to start to hang the new drywall....A couple of weeks later, we show up. Dennis later told me that when we arrived with 15 teenagers he was hopeful that some work would be accomplished but not sure how much the teens would actually be able to do. On Monday, we arrived on our worksite. Our plan was to work on hanging drywall as well as tackle a few other tasks. The first day is always slow as it takes a little while to unload the tools, assign tasks, and then instruct each one of the youth how to complete their task.

After an hour, you could see youth sanding the joints that had been completed by the men from Nebraska and also taping and mudding the joints left unfinished. They also began to measure, cut, and hang new drywall in the remaining 2 1/2 rooms. The youth worked when they needed to and rested when necessary. I loved hearing them say, "what can I do now?".....Dennis has gout and faces periods of severe pain and was unable to help. He simply sat and watched the youth work. However, he was always willing to talk to any of them who needed to sit and rest. Miss D was energetic and worked right alongside the youth. As we cleaned up to head out for the day Miss D hugged everyone's neck. As we sat in that room, a 64 year old man wept as he verbalized his appreciation for what those teenagers had actually done for them....You see.....those youth gave up a weeks worth of their summer vacation to DO, LOVE, and WALK. It just wasn't fair that the snow accumulated and collapsed Dennis and Mrs. Dee's house.....why them? We don't know why and never will. But I do know.....without a doubt, that those 15 youth DID their part, to LOVE Dennis and Miss D all while WALKING humbly with their God in midst of that holler in WV.

For the entire inspired sermon by Mark, please go to website www.wvmaw.org and click on link. Thanks Mark for sharing this with us!