

Mission Moments

The modern media transports images of disasters such as Hurricane Katrina into our living rooms. For some, like pastor Tim Devine, the coverage is detached and contributes to our collective sense of disconnectedness. Devine visited New Orleans, now five years post Katrina, to help with the continuing rebuild efforts and was distressed “to hear someone’s story face-to-face or even to see the damaged houses and infrastructure years later,” he said. “Our fast-paced media images hold the potential to keep us from feeling real pain or even empathy.” But the pastor of St. Paul’s UCC in Seattle also experienced the dedication that came from “members of Little Farm UCC who supply a potluck dinner Monday evenings, members of another work team, homeowners across the street, the sisters whose home was dedicated, and other work camp volunteers from Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and Helena who became a community of aching knees, open hearts, sincerity and laughter.”

Sadly, there is still much work to be done in New Orleans and in more recent disaster-struck areas like Nashville. Another Pacific Northwest Conference pastor, Bobbi Virta of Ferndale UCC, was on her fourth trip to the Gulf Coast at the same time Devine was there. Virta sees hope and progress in New Orleans and experienced the gratitude of the people they minister to. “To experience their hospitality and gratitude humbles and impassions me to live a life of hospitality and gratitude,” she said. Although Virta’s work has been concentrated in New Orleans, she and other volunteers from the Conference now specialize in long-term recovery and may expand their ministry to other areas. To other potential participants, Virta says, “You will be changed. I can’t say how, but I can guarantee you will be changed.”

God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

