

New Orleans Mission Trip Summary:
December 27, 2008 – January 3, 2009

I came away from my trip to New Orleans in awe of what they are doing, and what is not being done. God has truly planted Carpenter House in the hands of loving and devoted people. You get a sense of organized chaos, and yet, the organization runs in many directions simultaneously. The people involved are knowledgeable of what you can and can't do to help people without infringing on their pride and privacy. The volunteers who work there are locals who love the Lord and want to make a difference. They, too, have been helped by Carpenter House.

I was amazed at the number of people who come in each day the center is open. Normal operating hours are 10:30 am to 3:30 pm. It is not unusual for people to still be looking for clothes until 4:00 or after. The men's section is almost always empty. The shoes carry out almost as fast as they are put out. The men's clothes are taken almost as fast as they can be unpacked and located. During our time there, I would estimate that we sorted through 200-250 bags/boxes of clothes, and maybe 1/10th of them were men's. There is a definite need here for men's garments and shoes.

I was impressed with the number of people who were coming in for the first time. I don't think that all of the mission houses are as open and friendly as this one, because the visitors seemed surprised by how things were run. They were surprised they didn't have to sign their names to come in, and they were surprised they could come back every day the shop was open. Some asked a lot of questions and seemed surprised at how long Carpenter House has been open and how much information they have to share.

The food ministry is almost beyond words. The locals are so appreciated to our Lord and those who are preparing and serving the food. I saw many take their plates away and pray before eating. This did my heart good, I was afraid there wouldn't be a very large faith base. I know that I will never take my faith for granted, and I hope I am always as faithful as these people are. There are the occasional exceptions, but they are an appreciative group of people. I don't have enough words to describe the faces of the homeless we fed. One man in particular didn't seem to think he deserved a plate of food, but was extremely grateful when it was brought to him. I will always think of them before I eat.

I feel driven to put the word out to others I know about the work Charles and Judy are doing at Carpenter House. I do hope that I have the opportunity to go there again, but if I don't I will still continue working to do things to help them from this end. As my first, but not last mission trip, I came away with a sense of awareness and accomplishment. I felt the Lord directing me as I prayed with or for people. I know now that I have the strength and talents to offer on a trip of this sort.

There are a lot of things I still can't find the words for, but I continue to read and update my journal. If there is any part of this summary that can be used to help others understand the needs of Carpenter House and the people of New Orleans, please feel free to share all or part of this writing. If there are things I forgot to include that you think will be helpful, let me know.

Your Sister in Christ,
Peggy Couch