

This past week was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hurricane Katrina coming onto the shores of the Gulf Coast. We may have seen some of the news accounts of reporters going back to New Orleans and inviting us back into some of those harrowing stories of death and survival. We may be marveling at the amazing recovery that New Orleans is living out.

But for those of us who were in Allison Creek 10 years ago it was not New Orleans or Louisiana that we were called to go to. I can't remember why we ended up going to Pass Christian, Mississippi. I think it was hearing reports that Mississippi was in need and we contacted the presbytery there. Then an initial group from this church organized and off they went to the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

There was a sense in the church at that time that we were called to go. That God wanted us to go. In fact, I am pretty sure that the voice of God came through the voice of one Kathy Kitts. A voice that told the rest of us that we needed to go. And as I look back to the weeks following Hurricane Katrina I am amazed at the number of people that responded out of this church. People that gave up their vacations and people that invested their money. We here at Allison Creek ended up coordinating 4 trips to the Gulf Coast.

Trip #1 was a trip to muck out houses. We took tents and slept behind the little Presbyterian Church in Pass Christian. I remember how thrilled we were when Kathy Kitts discovered that the Red Cross had tractor trailers down the road with hot showers in them. Those showers were the best showers I think I ever had.

Pass Christian, Mississippi was a small community along the gulf coast. When we arrived it was hard to fathom the devastation that we encountered. And the stories. If I remember correctly one family had a hot tub in their yard that had come from a house 3 miles away. In fact, I think it was from a relative's house but I could be wrong on that.

On that first trip we were assigned to enter into a house and just clean out everything that was in it. I remember being in one house and working on the second floor and finding dead fish. On the second floor. That first trip meant a lot of removal of junk. We had to remove refrigerators that were simply ducted taped shut and hauled out to the street because the contents had all spoiled. Kathy Kitts joked that if you wanted to get rid of someone those refrigerators were a good way of doing it.

The big mission trip for this church to Mississippi occurred a couple of months later over the Christmas holidays. "Hope from the Carolinas" we called it. We had over 50 people attend that mission trip. But what was truly spectacular about that trip was that the 50 plus people included people from this church and people from outside of this church. We had people that heard that we were organizing this trip and so they kept contacting the church asking if they could be a part.

I remember Mark Sleeper painting on the back of his trailer "Mississippi or bust." You can still see those words on the back of that trailer. On a gas stop on the way someone saw that trailer and asked if we were going to help with Katrina relief. That complete stranger then handed Mark at least \$100 in cash. We never had to pay for gas because we had lots of gas cards that had been donated to us. The more we did for others the more resources that were provided from out of nowhere. Well, maybe these random donations did come from somewhere.

On that Christmas trip with 50 plus people we were assigned to repair roofs. And there was no age limit given to us of who could be on a roof. So our oldest child Rebecca was 12 at the time. I was working on one side of the roof of a house and Rebecca was working on the ground cleaning up debris. The next time I checked on her Lindsay Gladden Capestran had invited her up on the roof to pull some nails. I was a little nervous about that but I trusted Lindsay. So I go back to my side of the roof. A few minutes later someone says to me, "do you know that your 12 year old daughter has a nail gun?" Sure enough, I go back over the crest of the roof and find my 12 year old child shooting a nail gun into roof shingles.

Are there any other stories that folks want to share?

Folks in this church caught a vision 10 years ago of being a place where the folks inside the church and folks in the community could come together and do ministry together. Sounds very similar to what is happening all over again. Folks in this church have caught a vision where folks inside the church and folks in the community come together to build a walking track, a prayer chapel, walking trails, and prayer stations.

So how do we best discover for our lives what God is calling us to do? How do we catch a vision of what God wants us to do in our own lives, in our families, and in our churches? I think this scripture we are about to read can help us.

Over the past few weeks we at Allison Creek have been learning about the early kings of Israel. We have spent several weeks reading stories about David. David has now died in the stories before us and we have now moved along to his son Solomon who has assumed the kingship of a united Israel after David.

In this scripture which we are about to read, Solomon has assumed power and he has a dream. A dream in which he is able to ask God for anything that he could want from God. Let's read about what he asks God for.

### **Read I Kings 3:3-14**

Solomon simply asks for wisdom. He simply asks for God to give him wisdom and courage to make good and smart and faithful decisions. That is our invitation as well.

We don't have to have answers and clarity concerning what comes next in our lives. For many of us our future is very cloudy. This cloudiness may be because of a job or lack of a job situation. This cloudiness about the future may be because of some medical issue we are having to confront. This cloudiness in front of us may be related to something within our family.

As we look to our future, we don't have to have a clear road map. We don't have to have a perfect plan. What we need to have is a desire to ask for God to provide us wisdom to show us the way. What we need to have is a trust that God will reveal what we need to have revealed in God's time. What we need to have is belief that God is in control and that we are not.

Today we are sharing in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Communion is a reminder that God sustains us and equips us. Communion is an invitation to give up control and allow for God to be in charge.

May we be guided by the prayer life of Solomon. When he faced his biggest challenge he asked God for wisdom and discernment.

As we face challenges in our life we are invited to pray for wisdom and discernment at well.

If we pray for wisdom we will find all that we need from God. AMEN.

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-Given: August 30, 2015 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)