



Sometime the early part of March the Moritz family was able to move back into the home of their daughter Alisa Brady and granddaughter Sarah in Metairie. Since the beginning of the year this family of four had been sleeping on mattresses on the floor. Three weeks ago they received a donation of two full size and one queen box spring and mattresses from St. Paul's congregation in Matteson IL.

This past Wednesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, the furniture that had been donated to the family was able to be delivered. The Moritz's pastor, the Rev. Brad Drew coordinated the pick up and delivery of the furniture with the help of several volunteers from the Atonement Base Camp.

Before the furniture arrived all they had in the house was four twin size bunk bed mattresses on the floor, a card table and four chairs. Their clothing was stored in suitcases and boxes on the floor. The living room and other rooms in the house were empty.

Now their once empty living room has a brightly colored sleeper sofa, a matching wood and glass coffee table, a sofa table two end tables and matching wood and glass lamps. To complement the sofa there is also a blue/green velvet lazy boy recliner.



In the formal dining room is a Queen Ann Cherry wood dinning room table and six chairs with Hunter green cushions and a lighted matching glass and cherry wood China Cabinet. In a dish box there is an eight piece set of china and silverware to fill the china cabinet along with some new glassware.



Pastor Moritz and Gloria now have a complete bed room set with dressers,bed and night stands. Alisa and Sarah also have bed room furniture to fill their rooms. All of the beds have new linens and home made quilts and blankets. For Sarah having a bed that was now off the floor proved especially helpful since the week before Sarah had another surgery on her leg.

Having a regular bed makes it much easier to change her dressings and to help her with her therapy on her leg.



An LCC staff person talked via telephone with Alisa on Friday of last week. Choked by tears of joy and gratitude Alisa expressed her thanks to the many people who shared their valued possessions to help furnish a home for her family. Each family member received a handmade blanket/quilt from Zion Ottawa, IL, Redeemer, Peru, IL or St. John, LaGrange, IL

The family was especially thankful to Sonny Mac who was able to fix the wash machine, the dish washer and the bath tub drain all of which were not working since they moved back into the house. Alisa spent the afternoon doing laundry in her own home for the first time since November.

LCC would like to thank all the donors who helped to make a difference in the life of this retired pastor and his family.

## FORGOTTEN BUT NOT GONE: KATRINA EXPERIENCES OF THREE LCMS CHURCH WORKER FAMILIES

Pastor John E. Helmke

January 31, 2006

With the exception of an occasional brief mention on the evening news the victims of Hurricane Katrina have been all but forgotten by the media five months later. One only wonders how forgotten the thousands who lost their possessions and homes must feel. On Thursday January 26, Nancy and I met with church secretary Marilyn Hoffman, preschool teacher and administrator Virginia Crawford and her husband and retired pastor Victor Moritz and his family at Mount Olive Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Metairie, Louisiana, a suburb of New Orleans.

Their three stories are stories of frustration for, five months later, who could avoid some feeling of being forgotten not only by the media but, in their darkest moments, by fellow Christians as well?

Still their stories are anything but stories of despair for they share hearts thankful for help received and the faith that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will never forget his children. That shared faith restores a twinkle of joy to their eyes as they relate their feelings of loss and frustration never forgetting what they have lost but remembering the important gifts they still enjoy, their faith, their life and their health.

We first spoke by telephone with Marilyn Hoffmann to get directions to the church. Facing the perennial church secretary's deadline and feeling she did not have much of a story to tell herself, she appeared hesitant to share her story. Though she told us her home was not seriously damaged and her family was unharmed her story turned out to be quite dramatic as she related how trees fell on their house making it impossible for them to get out until help arrived with chain saws to cut them out. Marilyn concluded by telling us the person we needed to speak with was their preschool teacher who with her husband, was "camping out" in the second floor of their home while waiting for skilled workers to arrive to repair their severely damaged first floor.

"Miss Ginger" as she is affectionately called by everyone including her students spoke eloquently of their frustration waiting and seeing little or no progress for five long months. Skilled labor is their most pressing need. Many claim to be skilled and demand exorbitant prices for work that is anything but skilled. Lack of respect for personal possessions caused damage to precious items that

ironically were not damaged in the flood. Finally they just gave up trying to hire those needing work and claiming to be skilled.

Jerry, her husband, started his own successful sign business fifteen years ago when most men would be planning their immanent retirement. Today at 73 he has lost his business office to the flood and his employees have left to cash in on more lucrative opportunities as reconstruction workers. Recovery has been agonizingly slow with phone service restored only that same afternoon.

From the outside their home appears to have suffered little or no damage. Inside, however, the damage from mold is severe. In that warm humid climate mold grows rapidly and without control. The only way to stop it is to remove the material it is growing on in their case extensive dry wall. At one point I had to ask what room we were in. Nothing was left to identify it as their living room. Only the dishwasher remains in what was five months ago their kitchen. Most distressing to Miss Ginny is the damage to her beloved piano which she prays may still be repaired.

The combined base for their personal and business operations, their make shift kitchen and dining room is a twelve by twelve third bedroom previously used as a library. Their guest bedroom and hallway provide much needed but inadequate storage. It was only in recent days that a Pod was delivered to provide secure dry storage. One must wonder how things were before that Pod arrived!



As a retired pastor myself I looked forward to meeting another retired pastor, Pastor Victor Moritz and his family. When opportunity knocks, that pastor knows better than to hesitate. Since they were called away unexpectedly that morning they were the last to be interviewed. Their two family homes were lost in the flooding, their own, and that of their daughter, Alisa Brady, and their eleven year old grand daughter, Sarah.

We met the four of them in what is serving as their dining room, the hallway inside the door of the school gymnasium immediately outside the church Kitchen. After living together for several months in a trailer parked at “Tent City”, an emergency community set up by volunteers of Lutheran Church Charities,

Gloria's (Pastor Moritz' wife) health began to fail. "It wasn't the crowding but those late night walks out of doors to the common washroom that got me" she explained. The members of Mt Olive came to their rescue offering their nursery with air mattresses and an indoor washroom for their extended temporary housing.

Pastor Moritz is a graduate of the class of 1952 of Concordia Seminary in Springfield. As a World War Two veteran himself he announced with understandable pride that his was the largest class in the history of the school due to the influx of veterans.

Pastor Moritz served Mt Zion of New Orleans for over forty years until his retirement in the early 1990s. "The women take it the hardest" he comments. Gloria reflects the sorrow of "seeing one's life on the curb" all their worldly possessions discarded especially irreplaceable family heirlooms. Alisa worries, as only a mother can do, about the emotional effects this all may be having on her beautiful daughter Sarah. "I haven't had a good night's sleep since it happened" she comments. "Is it the air mattresses?" Nancy asks. "No" she responds it is the frustration of waiting, the need to do things that should be fun under pressure and with little or no choice like picking out appliances, the inability to plan one's own life, to have any idea of what the future might hold."

When asked what they need and appreciate most surprisingly they all agreed it was the care of fellow Christians, the human touch a sympathetic hug. Of course we parted with hugs all around.

We had little interest in visiting the material destruction that day. But as we drove East on Interstate Ten we passed the now

infamous Super Dome and drove past miles of destroyed vacant homes stretching from New Orleans, through Mississippi, all the way to Mobile Alabama. Perhaps it was best that way. No media report could equal the experience of driving past all those miles of devastated homes. Some communities, like Waveland, no longer are there. Others, it was said, would take eight or ten years to recover.

Appeals for volunteers and their stories are updated regularly on this website. Your pastor and some congregation leaders may be aware of cooperative appeals that appear regularly in the pastoral letters of our district President, Pastor William Ameiss. Please note these appeals with care. Pray for all who feel forgotten in the wake of hurricane Katrina especially our beloved church workers. Pray about volunteering time and talents yourself.

The victims of Katrina may be forgotten but they are not gone.