

**ASP
Chavies, Kentucky
November 8-11, 2007**

It is always a blessing to give to those who cannot repay the favor. The moment that I saw the photos from the ASP 2006 trip projected in our new sanctuary during Sunday service last year, I felt a desire to be a part of this outreach. When the invitation rolled around for this year, my wife Karen encouraged me to go, knowing how much I wanted to participate.

Among the unexpected blessings were the great fellowship with so many Christian men and women of a common mind. I was able to get to know many of our SUMC members on a more personal basis during the drive up, the wholesome and tasty meals in the cafeteria, on the job site and in the fellowship areas at the ASP headquarters. We swapped stories, laughed together, sang while some played guitar, prayed together, enjoyed several excellent discipleship messages, enjoyed a simple game of skill involving a string and a metal ring on the front porch and ended our stay with Eric and Lori serving Communion on the back porch, Sunday morning after he delivered an anointed teaching on serving.

The ASP staff were all so hospitable and helpful, making sure that we were all well accommodated during our stay. They even have a souvenir shop where we purchased ASP shirts, hats and sweatshirts.

My most cherished blessing was in Floyd, the homeowner at the residence where Jonathan, Bill, John and I were assigned. Our task was to replace a shower enclosure, repair leaky drain pipes, insulate the floor and install a plastic sheet vapor barrier in the crawl space. The condensing moisture from the leaky drain had caused the existing insulation to hang uselessly like wet dish rags from the flooring and was ruining the subfloor. Floyd was out in the yard and chatting with us most of the time. His wife and daughter who also resided there and were so grateful to us for our efforts and continually offered us bottled water, a luxury item to them that they had waiting for us.

I later learned from our conversation that he had suffered from diverticulitis and nearly died on the operating table and was disabled with poor circulation in his legs. I asked him why he was on his feet so much of the time that we were working on his home. He told me that he was watching over our tools, as there were some neighbors that were known to take things without asking. He also shared that he had 12 siblings and had survived 3 of them. He also shared that only a few were saved and he had a burden on his heart for all of their salvation.

The people there live a hard and simple life in many ways. A ton of coal costs about \$50.00 and three tons of coal heats a home for the entire winter. The smell of coal burning is somewhat like burning airplane glue and is instantly recognizable. The communities of Hazard and Chavies now have a Wal-Mart and a Lowes and to these people, a job at either is a very desirable position, providing both an income, health insurance and other benefits. It is not uncommon to see elderly people working at Burger King or McDonalds, whereas in our community only young people work. Coal mine conveyors and elevators are seen periodically on the side of hills and crossing roads. Much of the local economy is dependent upon these mines, but many other people are unemployed, simply because they outnumber the available jobs.

One person asked me, "Why don't these people just leave?" As I thought about it, I could

not imagine any of these people just relocating to the Atlanta area. They simply could not survive where a simple 2 bedroom apartment's rent averages over a thousand dollars a month and utilities can crest over 350 dollars each month.

Another sign of living cheaply was the common sight of beagles in well constructed dog pens. These animals are not pets and regarded as a means to provide. They are working dogs trained to hunt rabbits.

Upon returning from our last day there, I felt a deep sense of accomplishment that our team had helped to make Floyd's home warmer and dryer. Sharing the love of Christ in such a practical way to those who are in need pays big dividends in so many ways.

In Christ's Service,

Chris