

Gentlemen,

Our resident missionary scribe and fellow choir member, Deacon Vernon Hammett, has once again answered the Lord's call to service, cheerfully delivered and now shares with all of us his testimony of the miracles, grace and mercies he and other members from Alfred Street witnessed during their mission to Flint. This first installment covers days 1 and 2; days 3 - 5 will follow in a separate e-mail. And since it is often said that "a picture is worth a thousand words", he has also included photos from the visit. You may want to note that 3 of the six male participants (Vernon, Andre Lipford and Larry Footman) are members of the Male Chorus and 2 of the remaining three usually sing with us during Men's Day activities. So, we were well represented.

Be blessed,
David

Most of you have heard about the problems the people in Flint Michigan are facing with their water. It is a real travesty. I had the honor of being part of a mission team sent to Flint by my church. Our goal was simple: to go and serve the people there. It was truly a blessing...you can feel the very presence of God in the people we came in contact with. The experience was eye-opening and I am sharing with you what God allowed me to witness the few days I was there.

Monday February 22, 2016

Seven members of the Alfred Street Baptist church are headed to Flint, Michigan today to help with the water crisis there. However, I realize this is more than just helping with the water crisis. It is my prayer that God will show himself strong and use us in a mighty way to bring hope and to show the love of our Savior. Our team is made up of six guys ranging in age from the late 20s to late 60s, and one female who just happens to be our church's mission director. One of the guys went to Haiti with me last year but I have not had the pleasure of serving with the others. Our team quickly gels and I realize it is going to be a hoot of a time with this group. True to form, we are laughing and joking with each other the entire time.

The weather forecast for Flint says temps will be in the mid 30s most of the week with a chance of precipitation on Wednesday. We fly into Detroit, rent a van and drive to Flint. We are staying on the outskirts of the city in an area called Grand Blanche. It is not on the same water

distribution which has contaminated the city water. As a matter of fact we notice some restaurants and establishments actually post signs saying their water is safe for consumption.

Tuesday February 23, 2016

We will be joining up with the First Trinity Missionary Baptist Church to help with their water distribution. First Trinity is a small church with roughly 200 members. They are an older congregation whose median age is 50. After morning devotions and breakfast we make the 10 minute ride to the church. We are warmly greeted by everyone we meet. Deacon Bill Quarles is in charge of the bottled water distribution project and takes us into a room to give us some background information and our instructions. They have been handing out water for about a year now. The church set up a bottled water distribution system shortly after the crisis came to light. They allow people to come to the church on Tuesdays and Fridays to pickup water. People are allowed as much as they need but are encouraged to only take 2-3 cases of 16-ounce bottles and 2-3 gallon containers of water per family. By contrast, the City of Flint only provides one case of 16-ounce water per family IF you can show proof you are a resident. This means undocumented individuals or those without ID are turned away. Also it doesn't matter whether you have one or 10 people in your family, you are allowed one case.

Our first task is to move about 300 cases of bottled water from inside the church to the outside. Men from the church use a fork lift to bring several palettes of gallon water from a nearby garage and additional palettes of 16-ounce bottles. People begin arriving around 10am. They drive up to the church and we load the cases into their cars. Everyone we meet is pleasant and very appreciative of both the water and the (loading) service. It's a joy for us to help in this way. We talk among ourselves about how we take things like water for granted. We break for lunch around noon and enjoy fried fish and chicken prepared in the church's kitchen. We get back to work and continue handing out water until around 3pm. There are a few palettes of water outside the church when we leave. This is purposeful...it allows people to come by throughout the evening to pickup water.

After we left First Trinity we stopped by Walmart to pickup some groceries for the family of one of our members who live in Flint. It was icing on the cake to walk in their home with bags of food for them and they were very appreciative.

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Visit FTMBCFlint.org to donate funds to purchase water for the people of Flint.

FIRST TRINITY MBC 1226 BEACH ST. FLINT, MI 48502
810.234.2653 REV. EZRA L. TILLMAN JR., PASTOR







Here is the second installment for days 3 - 5.

The Flint water contamination began a couple of years ago when the city decided to change its water supply from the Detroit Water Authority to utilizing the Flint River to save money. The new "delivery system" cause lead to leech from pipes contaminating the entire water delivery system. Lead is poisonous and there is no cure for lead poisoning. You can't effectively "filter out" the lead once it is present. According to our host, Deacon Quarles, the only recourse is to tear out the existing system and replace it. The entire water delivery system. This means each and every pipe underground beginning at the water plant up to and including all pipes in every home and structure in the city. Deacon Quarles emphasized that there is no quick solution, and they are talking about having to use bottled water for several years. To put that into perspective, residents must use bottled water to bathe, brush their teeth, cook their food and for consumption. They must use bottled water to wash their clothes as well as their dishes. The city has noticed that the contaminated water has even damaged the hoses on their fire trucks. And, to that end, if a structure catches on fire and city water is used to extinguish the fire, the entire structure is now contaminated and not

fit for occupancy. Residents can't even wash their cars with city water. At this point most residents only use city water for flushing toilets.

I forgot to mention on Tuesday a couple of organizations dropped off water. I think it was a total of about 500 cases. We helped off load and place this water in storage. Deliveries like this are a common occurrence and a welcomed blessing to First Trinity. They store water in the church, in a garage on the church property and in a building across the street from the church they call the annex. They have also partnered with other churches and charitable organizations around the city to store water. Deacon Quarles mentioned that they were expecting two tractor trailers this weekend.

Wednesday February 24, 2016

We always start our day with devotions. We invoke the name of God in a powerful way before we begin our mission assignments. It is snowing as we leave our hotel and the forecast is for up to 14 inches by midday Thursday. On Wednesdays and Thursdays the church makes deliveries to people who are unable to come to pickup water. When we arrive at First Trinity we notice there is no water on the palettes outside of the church. The day before we left several palettes of water out and there is none left. Praise God!

There is concerned about the weather so Deacon Quarles tells us it will be a short day but there are two organizations in desperate need of water. One of these places was a senior citizen's home with seven patients and staff. When we arrived and began offloading the 10 cases of 16-ounce and 3 cases of gallon water we noticed there was only a couple of cases left. Given that they need water for everything it's obvious they would not have been able to go another day without being re-supplied. As we finished stacking the water you could hear the director of the facility thanking us and praising God. The final delivery for the day was to the YMCA. An organization was dropping off water around the same time so we took it directly to the Y. After our deliveries Deacon Quarles released us for the day. He said many of the organizations in the city were shutting down early because of the snow so there would be no more deliveries today. It's just as well because it's snowing like crazy.

Thursday February 25, 2016

Larry Footman and I led devotions this morning on the topic "Our Purpose". It is still snowing as we finish our breakfast. We head over to First Trinity around 11am. The city is shutdown because of the snow so a few of the organizations we were going to make deliveries to are not open today. Deacon Quarles apologizes for the weather (too funny). We remind him that

God does all things well and this must be part of his plan. He also notes that yesterday was the first time in a very long time that he has been able to get home before 10pm...his days average 12-14 hours...we thank God for the rest he was able to have. We load up our van and head out in the snow to deliver water to two households. Enroute to the first home we stop to help a young lady whose car was stuck in the snow. We were instructed to stack the water on the porch at our first stop however we must make a path through the snow to get there. When we got to the second location we got the shovel out and cleared a pathway to the front door. We were greeted by an elderly lady who was legally blind. She was very happy to see us and, when she found out we were from the DMV, thanked us for our sacrifice and service. She shared with our team, "you don't know what I have go through just to brush my teeth or bathe".

After our deliveries we went on a tour of Flint. We were shown several places where they store/stage water. We even drove by a city-run bottled water distribution site. We saw the Flint Water Plant and went to the downtown section of the city. Despite the crisis there appears to be a revitalization in the downtown area. There is concern that after the crisis is over many of the current residents will not be able to afford to return to their homes. We returned to First Trinity and said our goodbyes. It was a joy to meet Deacon Quarles and the other saints there. They are truly wonder messengers and anointed vessels of God.

Funny story: When we returned to our hotel I spoke to three gentlemen who were in the lobby. As we headed to the elevator they shared they were from New York and came up to help with the crisis. As a matter of fact they were expecting two tractor trailers of water on Saturday. When I told with them our team was from Alfred Street and one of them said "my daughter goes to your church". Pastor Wesley often says you can't go anywhere without running into Alfred Street people. Lol.

Friday February 26, 2016

None of us want to head home today but we realize we have completed what we were called to do. There's joy in knowing other teams from Alfred Street will be arriving on successive Mondays for the next 5 weeks. As a matter of fact we had a conference call on Thursday with the team coming up next week where we briefly shared our experiences. Deacon Quarles said at the start of our mission that this crisis will not be over for a long time. He thinks First Trinity will be providing bottled water for several years. He encouraged us to let people know...to encourage them to do things to help out. They need people to come up to help them. And they desperately need donations. They need bottled water, 8-ounce, 16-ounce, gallons and larger sizes. They need spring water, distilled water and infant water (never heard of infant

water before this trip). They need baby wipes, hand wipes and hand sanitizers. Above all they need your prayers and petitions to God. If you are interested in making a personal donation let me know and I can forward that information to you. I strongly encourage you to get involved in some way. Blessings...Vernon







