

Dear Don,

On Thursday September 29, 2011 Neil Daley and I from Warners UMC, Bob Mueller and Tom Lathrop from Marcellus UMC joined Sylvia and Marvin Reimer of Watertown UMC in a mission trip to help clean out Owego United Methodist Church. This had a special meaning to me, as this was my church as a boy. I not only went to church there, but Sunday school, Cub and Boy Scouts and was confirmed there. It was tough to see 8 feet of water had rendered the Sunday school classrooms useless as well as the basement. Since I was a member they purchased the house next door connecting it with a glassed hallway from the church. This house too had a great meaning to me as I took piano lessons there from a Miss Croak (true name). I hated them and never did well but the house was immaculate with parquet floors. All of which had to be ripped up.

We got there early so I took a tour of the town that I knew from riding my bicycle all over the town as a boy. It looked like the Gulf and Katrina all over again! Just about every street had piles of garbage piled 6 feet high in front of the houses. Most had no power due to the damage. As we went to the area that used to be the fairgrounds there were piles the size of a two-story house of just sofas and chairs, another of just mattresses. There were huge areas of junk as well as hardwood floors.

The house I lived in as a boy 136 Mc Master Street which is the corner of Fox and McMaster was spared due to it being on a knoll probably 6 feet higher than most. However, most of the rest of the block was an absolute mess with every house being hit. As we moved to Talcott Street, my grade school was now the district offices and they were hit as was that entire end of the town. The new grade school that was down near the brook took a direct hit and had hazmat teams working on that as it will be a long time before it can be opened. I don't see how the high school, which is just above the grade school was spared, but it looked as only the gym equipment was damaged.

At the other end of town right along the Susquehanna River the shopping center was closed as were all of the motels and Mc Donald's as the ground floors were devastated.

They said the damage to the Owego UMC was set at around one million dollars. They also said it would take Owego 4 years at least to rebuild. Remember now you have Tioga Center, Apalachin, Johnson City, Endicott and Binghamton all hit in this area so this will be a huge rebuilding process when you think of the size of these storms and the amount of territory and other towns it destroyed.

I will be going back down to do what I can probably joining Sylvia Reimer on Thursdays if anyone is interested in going please call me at 315-744-4254

Sincerely,

Tom House