

## NYC Wrap Up

Hello from Virginia! We made it back to Virginia late Tuesday evening. Sorry we didn't get this email out sooner, but really spent most of the day recuperating! We didn't have email access until recently as we had moved into the mission while in NYC on Thursday.

Our trip was a huge success, though in many ways we were fought by the enemy! Thank you so much for all of your prayers, they were definitely felt!

Here's a recap of what went on-

Tuesday-we arrived at the mission and immediately started prepping for Wednesday's outreach. The girls were able to serve food on the line for lunch that day. Later in the day, we left Ray at the mission prepping and Paul, Mandy, MJ and I took off to help with a soup kitchen at Thompkins Square Park, about a 15 minute ride from the mission. It was cold and raining and we were able to give the people some hot soup and also provided some loaves of bread for them to take with them. We served a little over 75 people.

Wednesday-we served lunch and dinner at the Bowery Mission-one of the oldest, biggest and most respected missions in NYC, they were established in 1876! Unfortunately we didn't count plates that day. A conservative count was that we served over 500 meals! This was a long day as we left around 7:30 and didn't get back to the Yoder's until after 9:30. We also had to deal with rain and cold weather, at least for us Floridians! Our lunch menu was Wild Alaskan Salmon a la Paul or baked chicken served with rice smothered in homemade gravy, green beans almandine and salad. Drinks were also provided. For dinner we served pizza and hamburgers dressed all the way with potatoes O'White, rice and some scrumptious desserts!

Thursday-we took Mercy One on the road; we went to Brooklyn to Maria Hernandez Park. I wasn't looking forward to pulling the 32' Mercy One trailer around the city but the Lord worked everything out beautifully and we had no problems whatsoever. We had anticipated having 150 for lunch, this doubled and we ended up serving a little over 300! Everything went like clock work. We served chicken stew over rice with drinks. The Bowery also provided a pantry of items to give to the people to take with them.

Friday-we again took the show on the road and went to Chelsea Park in Manhattan. We served some awesome beef stew over rice accompanied by a tossed salad with dressing and a fresh fruit salad. We were joined by two different groups of people, one was a local group that helps out every Friday at this park, usually they just do a soup kitchen, and the other was a group of people from Louisiana who were working with Mission New York and were on loan to us. The local group brought drinks and some awesome fresh bread and also provided a ministry table to talk to those who were getting food. Once again the Bowery also provided a pantry of items for the people to take home with them. Again we were told there'd be around 150 and we ended up serving a little over 300!

This however was not the end of our day. We had started out at 6 to get things ready. Once back at the mission, we had to prep for Saturday's grand finale! Jim, Kelly, MJ and I started preparing the next day's food. We had anticipated a staffed kitchen on our return, but came back to an empty kitchen! After an hour or so the crew was growing weary at the unending work that was in front of us. Was a mutiny in store??!! Finally we were able to get a couple of the Bowery guys to lend us a hand, but it still looked as if we'd never get the task completed without working through the night! A few minutes later 10-12 local middle school girls showed up unannounced and eager to help! Once again God had a plan; all we had to do was to be faithful in what He had called us to do while He took care to provide all that we needed! A couple of hours later, everything was complete, the kitchen was clean and at 8 PM we were walking out to get dinner.

We headed out worn out and dirty to find some of NYC's famous pizza! Since we were all wearing our Mercy Chefs shirts and hats, several people asked us what they meant and we were able to share the ministry and what God was doing with us in NYC!

Saturday-The "Grand Finale"!-we had a lot of work to do; we needed to be at Thompkins Square Park between 7 and 7:30 as we had promised to serve breakfast. Jim and Kelly were troopers and met us at 5:30 AM to start loading all of the food that we had prepared the night before into Mercy One. At 6 the Bowery Boys started showing up. It turns out that weekends and holidays are pretty much off times for most of these guys. We were told on Friday that we'd need to provide most of the help ourselves needed for the outreach on Saturday. I quickly did the math and decided that we'd be short several people. I immediately started asking many of the guys who had helped us throughout the week. Every person that we asked to help gladly accepted the call, even after I told them how early they'd be needed. One of the guys was fairly new to the program and had been asking to go on an outreach for weeks and you should've seen the smile on his face when I asked him as he eagerly said yes!

We quickly got everything loaded up and headed out. When we arrived there was already a line waiting for us! We served eggs a la Chef Paul along with fresh and hot cinnamon rolls; we decided to leave the frosting off since it would make a big mess! We served a little over 200 for breakfast.

We immediately got things cleaned up and started cooking lunch. There was already a line for lunch before we finished serving breakfast. Word had spread as to what all we were doing and everyone wanted to have some of the food that God was providing!

We were serving wild Alaskan salmon a la Paul II or chicken again, this time with potatoes au Jim, he asked how do I season this stuff, my reply was add a lot of salt, pepper and garlic to the vegetables that we had already chopped to add the night before. He asked, how do I know when I've got enough garlic, I replied that when he could strongly smell the garlic, add a little more and he was finished! He did an awesome job! We also served green beans almandine, fresh salad with homemade dressing, and Mandy made some cookies to hand out for dessert! Once again the Bowery also provided a

pantry of items for the folks to take with them. We were joined by a local pastor and some of his church for part of the day. They were able to help with breakfast and prep for lunch. There once again was a discrepancy in our plate count, but conservatively I can say we served 500 and possibly as many as 600 for lunch, the line seemed like it was never going to end!

There were a couple of other groups also serving food Saturday in the park. One group verbally attacked me while I was filming the folks in line. I questioned the guy as to his relationship with the Lord and his reply was that he was satan! This guy was big and mean and was ready to jump on me, but the Lord protected us and nothing came of his ranting!

Lunch was done and we headed back to the Bowery. We needed to take everything out of Mercy One and clean it from top to bottom. We finished around 5 PM, another long day, but it wasn't over yet for me and MJ, we still needed to take the truck and trailer out of the city to Staten Island where it would be parked for a couple of days.

We headed out following typed directions from the Bowery; somehow we missed a turn and ended up in Bushwick on a dead end street. We decided to try the GPS. This took us to the Staten Island Ferry which hasn't taken vehicles since 9-11! Frustrated with driving all over NYC for over 1 ½ hours, we decided to GPS our way back to the Bowery. It seemed as if our GPS had decided to take us down every one way street the wrong way and through barricades that only people walking could squeeze through! Finally I started recognizing areas I was familiar with and we made it back to the Bowery, 2 hours after we had left and no further on our journey!

The Bowery graciously offered to lead us in a van over and then bring us back. I suggested that Mary Jo stay at the mission as she had enough excitement for one day and there was plenty for her to do to get us ready to leave the next morning. I grabbed Nigel to ride with me and Wendell took Ezra with him and we headed out to Staten Island. We thought things would be OK from here, but found ourselves headed over a bridge that we couldn't take the trailer on so we had to quickly exit. We were following directions to another route when we came across an underpass that was too low for our trailer to travel under. Finally we were on our way again. We were on a motorway of some sorts, traveling fast and it was dark when all of the sudden I noticed that I had no trailer lights or brakes! We made it to the median where we figured out our problem and once again we were on the road. Finally we made it to our destination where Tom and his wife Jill allowed us to have some snacks and drinks. We were able to talk a little about what we had done and also about another opportunity to serve at the Bowery!

We headed back to the bowery where we pulled in after 10:30, over 5 ½ hours after we had originally headed out! But here are the God parts-if we had followed the directions that we had originally been given, we'd of lost the top of the trailer over the Brooklyn Bridge! When we had arrived in NYC, I had changed our GPS settings to walking instead of driving to help us find Paul and Mandy. I had forgotten that I had done this, so when we were trying to GPS to Staten Island we kept getting bad information, it was

trying to take us there by foot. If we had the correct settings for driving instead of walking, again, we'd of lost the top of the trailer! The only way for us to get safely to our destination was to get help from the Bowery and God frustrated all of our plans until only His was left!!

We had an awesome time serving alongside of the Bowery, what a great group of guys! The certainly have servants hearts! There was plenty of work to do and plenty of volunteers to help out! When we do trips such as this one, we go as support to the local church/mission. We understand that our time is limited in the area and that the local body is the remnant that God has ordained for His purposes in the area. While we are working away serving, there are many people who pass through our midst that our hearts go out to. It can be very frustrating as we wish to share Jesus with them. God showed me that those in line for food were not who we were ministering to as much as those who we were serving alongside! We were able to form relationships and be Godly examples in our service, in our marriages, in our friendships, etc. Those at the Bowery who we left behind, they are the ones that God will use to reach out to their neighborhoods. We certainly had many opportunities to share Jesus love with those we served alongside and pray that they were encouraged and will continue to fight the good fight for what the Lord has called them to do! Remember this mission and those involved in your prayers, they are on the front lines day by day, minute by minute!

Sunday we just hung around the city and had fun with some of our team.

Monday we headed back to Staten Island to pick up the truck and trailer to start our trek home. We were stopping to visit with Mary Jo's cousins who were camping 30 miles outside of NYC. Once again we faced problems with the trailer restrictions. We managed to get out of the city without any problems, but not too far down the road we were pulled over by some flashing red lights and a nice guy with a badge! I asked what I'd done and he informed me that we were on a parkway and weren't allowed to be there! I explained what we'd been doing and that we were following our GPS trying to get to our cousins. He asked to see our route and explained that we were lucky, though I know we were blessed by God, our exit was just before a low overpass that would take off the top of our trailer! He said he wouldn't write us a ticket and allowed us to continue to our destination!

We started down highway 9a. Our trailer is 12' 8" tall. Not too far down the road there was a sign that said low bridge, 11' 1"!! We immediately pulled over to the side of the road and prayed! Once parked we noticed an exit just before the bridge so we took off for the exit, once there we noticed that the bridge had two heights, one was 11' 1" and the left side was 13' 6"! As long as we hugged the left side of the roadway, we were OK! We went through several bridges like this and made it safely to our first destination.

On Tuesday we got up and headed out once again. We GPS'd our trip safely around all parkways, low bridges, etc. We headed down the road and once again discovered we had no trailer lights or brakes! We quickly pulled over and once and for all fixed our problem! We were making good time and the trip was progressing well when all of the

sudden the trailer started making really loud noises when we stopped or turned. We pulled over at a rest area and found that there were parts to our 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer hitch lying in the truck bed. We were just north of Richmond and Gary told us that there was an RV sales/service center not too far down the road so we cautiously drove to the center. We discovered that our hitch was falling apart and the technicians could not believe that we were still driving it! They said that they wouldn't have gone an inch the way it was and couldn't guarantee that it wouldn't fall off if we continued to Virginia Beach, where the trailer stays! Praise God, He had protected us once again, even though satan continually tried to keep us down, we have victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

We left the trailer and hitch for repair and made it safely back to Virginia Beach where we've mostly been resting, it was cold and rainy yesterday but looks like the rain has cleared and it's finally warming up. We still have to pick up the trailer and get it home, but will be spending a few days relaxing, seeing some of the sights and visiting with some of MJ's acquaintances from this area. We'll be heading home late Sunday evening and be back home early Monday morning.

Continue to pray for us and the different ministries that we are associated with, especially that we'd make it home safely! We've been asked to come back up on the 13<sup>th</sup> for a Mercy Chefs meeting of the minds and help with a local outreach.

We've also been asked by the Bowery to come back in November and help with their Thanksgiving outreach. Last year they served 2000 meals on Thanksgiving, 1500 in house and 500 in the parks. They'd like to increase their out of house serving and have asked Mercy Chefs to provide mobile kitchens and service to do so. Mercy Chefs is in the process of ordering Mercy Two and hopes to have the funds raised and production complete in time to deploy it for any late summer/fall disaster needs as well as have the ability to use 2 portable/commercial kitchens for the Bowery's Thanksgiving outreach. Please pray for this project and if you are interested in donating any funds to Mercy Chefs, you can go to their website at [www.MercyChefs.com](http://www.MercyChefs.com).

Also pray for our trip back up in a couple of weeks and for Godly Wisdom in our involvement in Mercy Chefs and the other ministry things that God has called us to.

We are in the planning stages of our trip to NYC for Thanksgiving and covet your prayers. We are going to treat this as a typical short term mission's trip. We are 6 months out, which is the typical time frame we use in planning such a trip. We are accepting applications for those wishing to join us on this trip. Space will be limited so we will be allowing God to hand pick the team that He wants on this trip. We will have all the details and team formed by the end of June and begin our fund raising and team preparations immediately. Several Mercy Chef Chefs will be joining us as well as people from our home church and possible Gary's as well. The Bowery has opened up its volunteer quarters to our group, something they have never done during this time before! The commitment will be from Saturday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> arrive in NYC through Saturday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, depart NYC. Preparations begin on Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup> and cleanup will be on Friday the 28<sup>th</sup>. All team members will be required to commit to all of the days listed

and to staying with the team at the mission during this time. If anyone wishes to sightsee or visit friends and/or relatives, arrival or departure times will need to be extended and these activities will need to be done outside of the ministry dates on your own time at your own expense and you will more than likely be required to provide your own lodging/food. We will try to spend at least part of one day as a team touring some of the city, but cannot guarantee this as it will depend on work schedules/loads, etc. As with all types of outreaches, things change at a moments notice and we need to be flexible and open to what God wants to do, not what our agendas are! I know that NYC is a great place to visit, especially this time of year, but this is a mission trip and not a vacation and needs to be treated as such, especially with all the work that needs done in the short time that we have to do it! Cost of the trip will mostly be travel expenses and some meals. We want to also raise money to help with the cost of the food, I believe God has given me a number to raise and will share this with the team, once chosen. Gary will also be contacting several other ministries who supply food for different needs, and try to get them to donate food as well. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me via email or phone. If you are interested in filling out an application, you can pick one up at the church office or go to this link, <http://calvarychapelsarasota.com/215718.ihtml>. You'll find the "ST Mission Handbook", this includes all forms and information you'll need to be part of a short term mission team. Please print this out, read it, fill out the required forms and turn them into the church ASAP as we'll be forming the team soon.

I've attached a few more pictures for your viewing pleasure and have many more if you live near me and want to see them, just ask. If you'd like a disc of our pictures, we can also provide that, just contact me and we can discuss it.

Thanks again for all your prayers, past, present and future!