

We're back from our adventures in NYC. It was quite a week and we all came back exhausted, but it was well worth all we went through.

The trip started out a little rough as we had many issues getting the cooking trailers set, loaded and on their way, but we managed to get going and landed at the Bowery at 3 AM on Saturday morning, just a few short hours before we had to load up and head out to do our first outreach.

There was some miscommunication as to what we were doing at the outreach so we had to scramble to put something together to feed the people lunch and they always do a soup for breakfast along with a food pantry. There was a great turnout and the people at Thompkins Square Park really enjoyed the extra stew that we made them for lunch.

Sunday most of the group got going on preparing food for Thanksgiving. We had a group from Wisconsin from Feed My Sheep Ministry that is associated with Mercy Chefs and a couple of Mercy Chefs to work with those of us from Sarasota. Most of the group was new, but there were a few of us who returned from last year. The kitchen staff at the Bowery had gone through some changes this past year, but because of our commitment to the Bowery and our ongoing relationship with them throughout the year, we quickly became part of the Bowery's Thanksgiving System!

Mercy 2 still had not been finished or tested yet so Gary and I set out on Sunday to find the necessary parts and get it up and going. It took a lot of running around and most of the day, but we did it!

Monday we were all at the Bowery all day long and continued to prep all we could. The Bowery had asked us to not cook the regular meals during the week as they wanted us to focus on the Thanksgiving prep work. The group from Wisconsin had a commitment back home and had to leave out on Monday. We began working at least 10 hours a day in two shifts. One would come in at 6 and work till 11 and then take 3 hours off and come back and work from 2 until 7. The other team would come in at 10 and work until 3, take 3 hours off and then work from 6 until 11.

Tuesday we had an outreach at Helping Hands Christian Community Center in Brooklyn. The Bowery and HHC had wanted to begin a serving relationship for a little while and they asked us if we could be part of getting that relationship moving forward. It was the first run for Mercy 2 which

worked well. All we had to do was heat the food that was prepared at the Bowery and a couple of us helped to serve. Most of the team stayed behind continuing the prep work and working our 10 hour shifts. By the time we were ready to close down the kitchen it was decided that we would continue working and several of our team continued to work until about 2 AM.

Wednesday was our final day to prep and we still had a long way to go. A lot of our team worked until 2-3 AM making sure everything was ready to go and clean. Trevor and Randolph, both students at the Bowery who work in the kitchen, were still cleaning when we went to bed a little after 3.

We were back up at 5 to start our day and load things up for the 4 outreaches. We got things rolling and took off down the road. We left a couple behind at the Bowery to help out there.

The four outreaches went very well as we changed things up and did all of them at once. It was a little rough getting things moving at first and we were running a little late, but in the end everything was awesome.

After we returned to the Bowery, the Sarasota crew immediately jumped in to help finish up the day there. They had already added 2 extra meal servings during the day and Tom just announced they were doing another extra meal before the final 7 PM seating. We got all the food heated and the set up for both of the servings and our day was complete. We took some of the kitchen staff out to eat with us that night, our first night out since we started the Thanksgiving prep.

There were many comments made about how Thanksgiving went at the Bowery and all of them were good. It seemed that Trevor, one of the Bowery students, and Sean and Natalia, part of our Sarasota team rocked and made history! It was truly an awesome day.

We still had one more day to go and got up early to load up and head to Chelsea park in Manhattan. Typically they see about 100 people there, but at last years outreach we served a lot more. We geared up, loaded up and took off. We had a great time feeding many people who couldn't thank us enough for the Thanksgiving meal.

That evening, we invited some of the Bowery kitchen staff to join us for coal-oven pizza, a NY favorite. It was a great time of fellowship and the pizza was good too!

The exact numbers that we served aren't really important, but we certainly prepped and served a lot of turkey, somewhere in the neighborhood of 400-450 turkeys! God provided, we were faithful and many were touched by Jesus last week.

Our ministry is not cooking food or ministering to those who we are feeding, but instead we've been called to serve and serve alongside the Bowery. We managed to be able to share with many people who have been left behind to continue the work that the Lord has called them to do in NYC. We had devotions twice a day and many times were joined by the Bowery folks and they even asked me to speak at Chapel on Wednesday morning, though I had no time to prepare and don't remember most of what I said, I know God spoke to many last week while we were there.

Our team worked hard and long hours. I wasn't able to cook much this year but the team listened well and pushed on. We worked through many obstacles and have learned a lot that we will use to help us even more next year.

Everyone made it home safe and sound, though some of our team is a little under the weather. Mary Jo and I had trailer hitch problems with Mercy 1 on the way home, but managed to catch it before too much damage was done. We were back on the road in a few hours thanks to a truck repair shop down the road, though we were soaked, grease-covered and tired!

Continue to pray for the Bowery and those who are working through many issues in their lives as well as for those who continue to minister to those in the many programs.

We pray that God would continue to allow us to serve at the Bowery and we would like to do so more often. As many of you know the Bowery also sent a team of 8 to help us muck out homes in Atlanta after the floods this fall. We hope to continue to grow this relationship as the Lord leads and covet your prayers to follow that lead.

Please see our website for pictures that were taken while we were there.