



Washington Street MISSION

September 2017

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Dear Friends:

I'm finding it difficult to write this letter. I want to be clear and direct about a challenge we are facing at the Mission, but I also want to be careful not to exaggerate our problems or our needs. With hurricanes Harvey and Irma during the past few weeks and all the flooding and extensive damage they caused in Texas and Florida, I want to keep our issues here at the Mission in perspective.

Our hearts and prayers and support go out to the people who are suffering from the hurricane damage. We hope that all of you are looking for whatever opportunities you may find to help. Numerous organizations are involved in providing disaster relief and all of us should be supportive.

The situation at Washington Street Mission cannot be called a disaster, although our first reaction when we entered the building on the morning of Friday, August 11, was definitely sobering. It looked like at least a mini-disaster to us.

We found about an inch of water covering the floor in the learning center. The carpets in the parlor and the big room were soaked and the water had gone through the clothing hallway almost all the way to the front door. It was a very discouraging sight.

Our first impulse was to not open for our regular morning coffee hours. As we looked around we knew that it would be impossible to have guests slogging through the water in the big room to use the restrooms or the shower and laundry facilities, even though the kitchen, chapel, and coffee hall were dry.

But we had guests waiting outside the doors and it is our mission to serve them in the name of Jesus with all the grace and love he provides. We opened the doors and explained as much of the situation as we could. We allowed a limited number of guests to use the restrooms, but sent most of them to other nearby facilities. We did not open the showers or laundry area.

As the initial confusion and concern subsided, we served about fifty people with coffee and doughnuts that Friday morning. The staff and volunteers all knew that we had done the right thing by opening the doors and serving so many guests. We sensed God's strength and support.



When we arrived on Friday, August 11, we found the floor covered with water from the learning center to the clothing hallway.

One of our guests that morning was so angry that he smashed a doughnut on a picture in front of the kitchen. A volunteer graciously cleaned it off and none of us overreacted to the incident. We understand that many of the people we serve every day have emotional and anger management issues. Most of the guests were very understanding and appreciated the fact that the Mission was open at all.

We called our local ServPro office as soon as we could. They responded promptly and efficiently. Within a few hours they had powerful fans, huge dehumidifiers and even a riding wet vacuum machine working in the building. Throughout the dry-out process they provided excellent service for us.

The dry-out took more than a week and required the removal of sections of drywall in both the learning center and the parlor. But throughout the process we continued to provide coffee and doughnuts each morning. The restrooms



The learning center looks quite different as repairs begin after the water damage.



The parlor is in disarray as the waterproofing system is being installed.

were opened and shower and laundry services were resumed. We were distributing clothing again the next week.

Our insurance company also provided excellent service. They estimated the total cost of the dry-out and the repairs at about \$20,000 and covered all of it except our \$5000 deductible.

We are still unsure of the exact cause of the flooding. Although we had heavy rains the night before, we had been concerned about water in the learning center for some time. We had noticed seepage there as the summer children's program was winding down and had started gathering estimates for installing a waterproofing system.

When the dry-out was completed, we immediately moved forward with the waterproofing project with Illini Waterproofing. The cost was a little less than \$7000 and the work was completed in about a week. It includes a drain along the outside walls in the learning center and the parlor and a sump pump. We hope it will address all of the water issues in the building.

We still need to repair drywall, replace carpet, paint and move furnishings back into the affected areas. But we are confident that the work can be done without disrupting any of the on-going ministries of the Mission. We estimate that the final cost to the Mission will be about \$10,000.

Every challenge and crisis is also an opportunity. As God continues to bless our ministry here, he will also guide us into ways of serving people with love and grace.

We appreciate your continuing prayers for us and your generous support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kenneth E. Mitchell
Executive Director