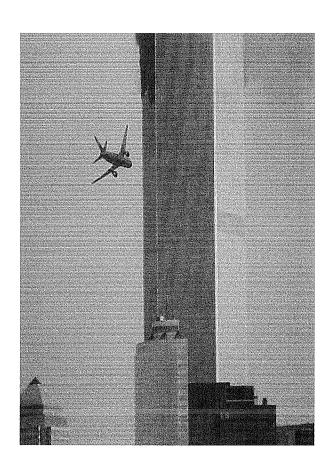
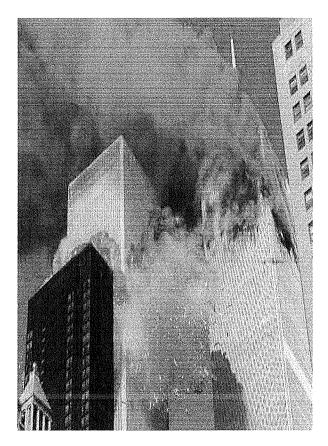
WKW & 9/11/01





THE WELS KINGDOM WORKERS RELIEF EFFORTS AFTER SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2001

Mark Luetzow Senior Church History Prof. John Brenner April 16, 2003 At 8:45 a.m. on September 11th, hijacked American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Twenty-one minutes later, United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. By 10:29 a.m., both of the towers had collapsed. The lives of all Americans would never be the same. President Bush addressed the nation from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana on that Tuesday morning and opened his speech with words that will ring in the ears of Americans for years to come, "Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and freedom will be defended." On September 11th, 2001, America was attacked on her own soil, a feat that had not been accomplished since that "day of infamy" spoken of by President Franklin D. Roosevelt after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941.

September 11th, 2001 will remain one of those days in American history that you will always remember where you were when you heard the news. The day that the terrorists used two airlines as missiles and crashed them into the World Trade Towers was a day that I was teaching catechism to my 5th and 6th grade students in Maitland, Florida. I had returned to the office to hear from the secretary that an airliner had crashed into the first tower. As Pastor Zahn and I crossed the lawn to his parsonage, we turned on the television just in time to see the second plane fly into the second tower. Images such as the ones pictured above will forever be ingrained in the memories of all Americans. We will all remember where we were when we heard the horrific news about the day that has come to be known as 9/11.

In the aftermath of those terrorist bombings, America's pride and nationality shone brightly. In the heroic efforts of the firefighters, the policemen, the service men, the countless number of volunteers who risked their lives and worked tirelessly to retrieve human lives from the rubble that once was the beacon of American business, the American spirit shone brightly.

¹ President George W. Bush's speech at Barksdale Air Force Base, LA on Tuesday morning, 9/11/01.

"In these acts, and in many others, Americans showed a deep commitment to one another, and in abiding love for our country. Today we feel what Franklin Roosevelt called the warm courage of national unity. This is a unity of every faith, and every background."²

Our synod's light shone brightly in the aftermath of 9/11. The WELS was just one of the many religious organizations that extended a helping arm to the city of New York in this time of tragedy. This was our opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ to people who so desperately needed to know that love. Collectively as a synod, over \$700,000 was donated to the relief efforts in New York. Of that \$700,000, \$405,000 was given to the WELS Kingdom Workers specifically to determine the best way to assist the people of New York. This paper will record the efforts of the WELS Kingdom Workers organization in assisting the people of New York. But most importantly, we will see the love of Christ in action in lay people, calledworkers and individuals throughout the synod as they use their God-given gifts to reach out with the love of our gracious and merciful God. As in all things, to him is the glory.

THE FIRST TRIP

On September 24, 2001, the WELS Kingdom Workers made their first official trip to New York City. In attendance on this trip were Pastor Richard Warnecke, Faith in Action Administrator for WELS Kingdom Workers, and Mark Vance, a retired naval officer who had previously been stationed in New York City. These two men traveled to New York gity in order that they might surmise the situation shortly after the attacks. They would then be able to get a better grasp on what types of ministry opportunities were available and feasible to do with the help of the missions in the area.

² President George W. Bush, "Remarks at the Prayer service on the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance". The National Cathedral, Washington D.C. September 14, 2001.

The trip lasted for four days. While they were there they tried to make contact with government officials, but did not gain much ground. They were commonly told that our "money was not needed." They also made contact with the Red Cross which proved to be helpful. The Red Cross was able to inform them of the great need for grief counseling services at Pier 94.⁴ This looked like an opportunity that would allow us to counsel without compromising our doctrinal position.

A few religious organizations were also helpful. The Jews for Jesus organization was particularly helpful in understanding the New Yorker mentality. In the post 9-11 state of mind, New Yorkers were seeking religious answers and desired Christian counseling. An inner city pastor named Rev. Ricky Del Rio was coordinating the efforts of the non-Jewish or Roman Catholic churches. He had direct access to ground zero and took Pastor Warnecke and Mr. Vance to the site so that they could experience first hand the tragedy that had occurred.

I had the opportunity to meet people involved in the clean-up, rescue operation. I talked with police officers and firemen. I heard their stories of heroism, terror, panic, sorrow, and death. I smelled 'death' at ground zero and it was not good. I saw the ash covering so much, buildings empty because people will not return, car ramps filled with cars whose owners are now dead. The sites in glamorous New York are not so glamorous today. But the site of Christ is. Knowing his power, his presence, his knowledge, and his mercy gives us comfort and hope. That beautiful picture from Scripture is ours forever.⁵

On September 26th, Mr. Vance and Pastor Warnecke met with representatives from all of our New York area churches and missions. This organization met under the heading of the New York Spiritual Relief Team (also referred to as the Tri-State Area Committee on Relief). Those in attendance at this first meeting held at the Sheraton on 53rd St. and 7th Ave., Manhattan, NY, were Steven Bartsch, John McKenna, Leslee Voss, Pastor Jerry Enderle, Mark Vance, Pastor

³ Pastor Richard Warnecke, "New York Report, Oct. 15, 2001"

⁴ Pier 94 is the location of the FEMA and Red Cross headquarters for the disaster relief. This is the location where victim's families could get job information, counseling opportunities, and help in any aspect that they needed.
⁵ Warnecke, "New York Report" Oct. 15, 2001. p.3.

Richard Warnecke, and Pastor Steven Gabb. Rev. Steven Gabb was designated to coordinate the effort of the local churches. Previous to this meeting, Pastor Philip Schupmann, Administrator of the WELS Committee on Relief (COR), contacted Pastor Gabb with the committee's desire to give financial aid to New York City. The COR wired \$10,000 to Sure Foundation Lutheran Church (SFLC). Pastor Gabb and Jon Meier (treasurer) opened a separate bank account for the "World Trade Center Relief Fund."

This Tri-State Committee on Relief developed a four-point ministry plan at this meeting.

This plan included the following:

- Member Involvement No members were directly affected by the WTC attack.
 They will be the eyes and ears for financial support offered and also psychological and spiritual support.
- Corporate Involvement Some of these same members had New York corporate contacts to people who need the same assistance.
- 3) **Borough Support** Directly involve members in this kind of support in their borough. Reach out to them by developing and implementing unique outreach strategies (ie. Candlelight vigils, counseling services).
- 4) **Manhattan Support** Directly involve local members and volunteer assistance in the Manhattan area. Bring in WELS trauma/grief counselors who will train volunteers in outreach strategies. Pre- and post- screening will be implemented.⁶

The decision was reached to focus the efforts of the WTC Relief Funds towards individuals and not large charities or organizations. Christian counseling would also be a major focus as there was a void in this area. Most of the ideas that were collected on this trip were long term projects that would need time to materialize. "When I went to New York, I had few

contacts. I prayed that God would open some doors. Many were opened. Ministry opportunities were realized. Plans are being developed. God must bless them. Pray that he would, all to his glory."7

INTERIM

Pastor Warnecke met with Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services (WLCFS) counselors Dr. John Johnson, Dr. John Juern, Rick Loewen, Sue Bilitz, and Judy Otto. Rick Loewen proposed a list of support possibilities which emphasized volunteer assistance and training of lay people, called workers and counselors. Through these criteria, Pastor Warnecke was able to identify counselors and trained professionals who would assist in the grief counseling on subsequent trips to New York. The short-term goal was to return to New York on November 13-17 with a small group of volunteers and counselors to begin this process, to implement care strategies, and continue to make more contacts especially in the area of local government.

THE SECOND TRIP

The second trip was scheduled for November 13-17, 2001. Those present on this trip included a mixture of lay people and WELS called workers. Leading the trip once again was Pastor Richard Warnecke and Mark Vance. Accompanying them were Tara Brennan, a registered nurse; Vicki Milbrath, a counselor and psychotherapist who had experience in critical incidence stress management; Nicole Moline, a WELS Web reporter and Forward in Christ corespondent; Judy Otto, psychotherapist for Christian Family Counseling; Professor John

<sup>Warnecke, "New York Report, Oct. 15, 2001." p. 1,2.
Warnecke, "New York Report, Oct. 15, 2001." p. 2.</sup>

A few of the team members served at the morgue at ground zero. After they had arrived, a body part and what they determined to be a tooth, was brought in. "The ceremony process was explained. The firefighters, police officers and workers had a ceremony when a body or a part was found. The chaplain says a prayer and the officers salute. They are very quiet but extremely grateful and respectful. They need this for closure. It is important to them and the word of hope and of God are needed." A need for quite reflection and contemplation was evident in the attitude and demeanor of all the men and women who worked in the clean-up efforts.

After the team had concluded their counseling sessions for the day, they would gather together for debriefing sessions led by Judy Otto. This is an important step in grief/trauma counseling. The volunteers needed to talk about the things they had heard and experienced. This allowed them to clear their minds so they could clearly see the purpose for which they were there. Another important step in this process was the nightly entertainment that the team afforded. Distancing themselves from the trauma of ground zero, some enjoyed Broadway musicals and other typical New York excitement.

Even though the team may not have added numbers to the memberships of any congregations in the Tri-State area or added names to their prospect lists, this was not the purpose of the trip. Many of these volunteers entered New York City with a great fear of inadequacy. They were not sure of their capabilities to share the comfort that only the Gospel can bring with complete strangers. Being placed on foreign turf as intimidating as New York City heightened this fear. "Yet, this trip was designed to be an opportunity to counsel families of victims and others who need help after the tragedy that rocked this city and the entire United States. I knew this full well when I signed up for the trip, but I never felt very good about it—

⁹ Brennan, Tara. "Untitled". p. 2

Schuetze, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor of pastoral counseling; and Pamela Wilke, a lay volunteer.

The purpose of this second trip, according to Pastor Warnecke, was threefold:

First, we wanted to find ways to help – whether it be working with trauma/grief counseling through the Red Cross or in some other way. Then, we wanted to find out how our congregations around New York, specifically Sure Foundation, could apply tools like counseling and listening as part of their ministry. Finally, our church body often uses money and prays to help those in need. Here we were also able to show acts of charity. We can – and should – do more with that. After all, if we say we're loving but our actions don't support that, we're missing something.⁸

The first day of this trip the group was able to meet with an organization called Samaritan's Purse. This is an organization was established by the Billy Graham Prayer Center in New York City to meet the spiritual needs of those affected by the recent terrorist attacks. A representative from the organization talked to the team about all of the wonderful opportunities that were presenting themselves at that time. While the team did not do any cooperative work with the Samaritan's Purse Organization, they gained valuable techniques for witnessing to troubled souls.

In the next days the team met with the Red Cross in Brooklyn to undergo a two-hour training session. Completion of this session certified the team as spiritual grief counselors. Certain Red Cross regulations prohibited the "chaplains" from distributing religious materials while working under the heading of the Red Cross. However, the team was granted access to ground zero and the Family Assistance Center at Pier 94, which would prove to provide the most opportunities for counseling assistance. This is where they spent the majority of their time. At Pier 94, they were able to provide counseling services more in the form of listening than in verbal counseling.

⁸ Moline, Nicole R., "Attack on America". p.1

even after my two-hour training session at the Red Cross yesterday." Nicole Moline reflects on her attempts to assist these hurting souls, "I pray that my Christian compassion will shine through and that I have an opportunity to offer someone the comfort of the Gospel. More than anything, the Red Cross emphasizes that people need someone to listen to them. I am glad that I am able to put my faith into action by simply doing that listening. It may not be too profound or complex, but I pray that it is effective." Simply by lending an ear to a hurting individuals, many doors were opened for the message of the Gospel.

They set out to provide Christian counseling to souls who were searching for a loving God. This goal was accomplished. By the grace of God, all team members were able to see how they had made a difference in the lives of people through their Christian concern. Nicole Moline reflects on her service in New York City:

Walking up to someone who was confused and asking, "Can I help you?" felt right. The looks of relief on people's faces were amazing. They were so surprised that someone cared enough to ask that simple question. As I helped these people, I would ask how they were doing, which sometimes led into a longer discussion. Rarely did I talk to someone for more than five or 10 minutes. Yet, when I left them I felt I had made a difference. It was so easy and it was, to my surprise, a sort of counseling. I did not get into heavy issues or deal with extremely emotional issues, but I listened and asked caring questions.

The cool thing is that you could do this, too. Any Christian could. God gave me the strength to take this little step, and tomorrow I may be ready to take a bigger one and deal with some emotionally charged issues. Then again, maybe that is not in God's plan. Either way, I'm okay with that, because I faced fear today and helped some people in the process by simply letting my Christian compassion shine through. Mission Accomplished. Thank you, Lord. 12

Another important discovery was mentioned by Pastor Warnecke while on this 2nd trip.

"The Red Cross gave us direction. They reminded us that we weren't there just to talk about

Jesus, but to listen. Perhaps in the future we can have a volunteer relief team from WELS that

¹⁰ Moline, Nicole R. "Live from New York: Missionary Journal". www.wels.net/sab/bhm/ny-14.html

Moline, "Live from New York: Missionary Journal". www.wels.net/sab/bhm/ny-13.html.

¹² Moline, "Live from New York: Missionary Journal". www.wels.net/sab/bhm/ny-14.html.

can mobilize itself for future disasters."¹³ We will see that one of the long term projects that is developed from this trip is the establishment of a WELS Disaster Assistance Team which will be ready to move into an area and assist in much the same way that these volunteers did.

THE THIRD TRIP

The third trip to New York City was from December 17-23, 2001. Those present on this trip included all eight of the volunteers from the previous November 13-17th trip. Once again Pastor Warnecke served as the coordinator for the volunteer activities in the New York Attack on America program and Mark Vance was the logistics coordinator, as on the previous journeys. New volunteers included: Ruth Balza, a teacher; Gary Miller, a pharmacist; Patricia Schlossner, a registered nurse in the Cardiac Center; Pastor James Olsen, a retired ELS pastor, and his wife Mary Olsen; Joan Schuetze, an obstetrics nurse; and Lois Kluender, a retired counselor.

The purpose of this trip was different from the previous ones in that the volunteers made a concerted effort to connect the grieving souls to the Sure Foundation mission located in Woodside, Queens. The group of fifteen WELS Kingdom Worker volunteers stationed themselves at strategic locations throughout the city during rush hour traffic and distributed a total of 12,500 Christmas postcards (cf. Table 1.1). The title on the reverse side of the postcards read "Christmas Overcomes the Crisis", an appropriate message for the city that has felt the crisis firsthand. The postcards invited readers to the Marriott Marquis for three days (December 20-22, 2001) of free trauma/grief counseling staffed by WELS pastors and Kingdom Worker volunteers. Included on these cards was an invitation to Sure Foundation's Christmas for Kids event and the Christmas Eve worship service.

¹³ Moline, "Attack on America", p. 2

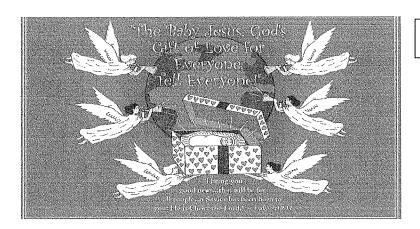


Table 1.1 (Front)

The outreach effort through counseling services did not have the desired effect. The first day of free counseling at the Marriott Marquis did not attract a single soul. The following two days of counseling did attract some hurting people, but the total was minimal. "The counseling opportunities during the three day session at the Marriott Hotel were not overwhelming but they were there. I did not expect large numbers of people but was encouraged and thankful for the people who were there."

Some of the volunteers speculated that the atmosphere of the Marriott Marquis was simply too prestigious for the common New Yorker. Another problem that they ran into was the fact that they were moved from the fourth floor to the ninth floor. Notes were posted, but mention was made by some that they still had a difficult time finding the correct location. For a grief stricken person to make the first step toward help is hard enough. Having to wander to find the correct location certainly did not help the process. However, the volunteers refused to allow themselves to become discouraged. Trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, their action will not go without effect as Nicole Moline states, "Ten thousand New Yorkers were handed postcards that contained God's Word. I don't believe that we can imagine what the Holy Spirit might be working in any one of those people's hearts."

¹⁴ Schuetze, Prof. John. "NYC Trips – An Evaluation" January 5th, 2002.

¹⁵ Moline, Nicole "Live from New York: Missionary Journal" www.wels.net/sab/bhm/ny-18.html.

Standing in contraposition to the seeming "failure" at the counseling center, the

Christmas Eve service was a moderate success. The Sure Foundation staff acted out a drama
telling the Christmas story. "Sure Foundation Lutheran is small group, but their exceptional
talent and creativity was poured into that service. I came away with nothing but admiration for
this congregation, its young pastors and their wives, and the work they are called to do in a city
of 8 million." The attendance was respectable as a total of 51 people shared the gift of a Savior
to the world. Pastor Gabb reflects on this success, "Since many of our members were out of the
city visiting family, a majority of the 51 were visitors! The guests that came were a result of the
flyers that the Kingdom Workers handed out the week before!" God certainly had opened doors
into the hearts of these people which were then filled with the message of Christmas, a Savior
who came to defeat the true crisis of sin.

While some of the volunteers spent their time at the Marriott in the counseling center, others offered their services at Pier 94. Again, the volunteers offered an encouraging word and an open ear to the people who were grieving the loss of a loved one. Many times, this was all that they were allowed to do. Other times, they shared the reason for their hope, the assurance that Christ is Lord over all. Some made their way to the fire departments and offered their hearts and ears to the heroes of this crisis. We allow Pat Schlosser relate an experience that typified our need to serve our God in New York City.

Wednesday was an emotionally draining day. I was a part of a group that headed to a fire station to talk to the firefighters and offer counseling. I approached a young fireman named Anthony, and we thanked him. I thanked him for all he'd done on 9-11. His response surprised me. "We were only doing our jobs," he said. "The real heroes were those of you who donated blood and money and, most of all kept us in your prayers. The prayers were what kept us going." 17

¹⁷ Schlosser, Pat. "Mission Connection" Spring 2002. Pg. 1.

¹⁶ Kluender, Lois. "WELS Kingdom Workers Offer Service in NYC" January 18, 2002.

Throughout it all, the love of Christ was reflected in these volunteers as they assisted the people of New York in whatever way they knew how.

Throughout the material concerning the December 17-23rd trip to New York, repeated mention is made for the need to establish within our synod a relief team that is "on-call" for situations such as 9/11. This seems to be something that the team discussed repeatedly in their debriefing sessions. Pastor Jim Olsen recognizes the need for such a team, "A good beginning may have occurred in developing a "stand-by" team of counselors ready to help in time of future crises." We see the beginnings of the long-term planning in which the Disaster Assistance Team of the WELS will be established.

THE FOURTH TRIP

The fourth trip to New York City was scheduled for September 8 –11 of 2002. The volunteers for this trip were more numerous than the past trips. Those present on the trip were: Patricia Backhaus, Tara Brennan, Valerie Floeter, Lois Kluender, Sara Krueter, Sarah Kutz, Nicole Moline, Jim Olson, Patricia Schlosser, Andrea Schroeder, Mark Vance, Pastor Warnecke, Pamila Wilke. Also included on this trip was a vocal group from WLC who call themselves "Revelation". Members from WLC included the following: Aleah Bakken, Jeremy Bakken, Anna Bauer, Andy Braun, Jacob Fink, Adam Friemark, Brian Jansen, Amy Knoelke, Mark Mattek, Levil Nagel, and Katie Wilde. Tracey Lemke and Rachel Aderman were also there to perform in their group called "Deo".

This trip had as its specific goal to evangelize and promote the Tri-State WELS churches and specifically, the September 11th anniversary services. They promoted services for six churches: Our Savior in East Brunswick, New Jersey, Catholic Apostolic in Fort Lee, New Jersey; Immanuel in Long Valley, New Jersey; Christ Redeemer in Trumbull, Connecticut;

Grace of God in Dix Hills, New York; and Sure Foundation in Woodside, New York. The theme for this evangelism effort was "Operation: He Is Here."

These 27 volunteers and 15 members from local churches united their voices in praise in strategic areas throughout the city (i.e. Battery Park, Central Park, Ground Zero, and various subway terminals). As small groups of the choir sang, other volunteers distributed around 5,000 copies of God Our Refuge 18 and about 10,000 flyers promoting the anniversary services at the six Tri-State WELS churches. The God Our Refuge books were received with great enthusiasm and appreciation. "Most groups could not hand out the books fast enough to keep up with the amount of people who wanted them. Perhaps the most gratifying was when, on our second day of handing the books out, one person asked, 'Oh, is that the book that everyone is reading on the subway?" Masses of New Yorkers would gather around the volunteers who were singing praises to God, and they actually encouraged them to keep singing. The climax of the vocal offerings came as the volunteers carried a banner created by the members of Apostles, San Jose, California, on the sidewalk in front of St. Paul's Cathedral, the church that became the headquarters for the 9-11 relief workers.

In reality, only a couple hundred people probably heard us singing that day, but the power behind whom we were singing about seemed to carry a long way. And, although the number of visitors who attended the 9-11 WELS worship services in the New York area was few, I know that our time in New York City was well spent. 5,000 people have God's Word in their hands, and a couple hundred people heard us singing about God's grace and power. In a place the size of New York City, we barely made a whisper among the noise that is created there each day. Yet, it is a powerful whisper because it has God's power behind it.²⁰

NATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE TEAM

¹⁹ Moline, Nicole, "A Powerful Whisper." p. 1

¹⁸ God our Refuge was originally written in 1951 to lend spiritual support to men and women who serve in the Armed Forces. It contains Bible readings, devotions, hymns, and prayers.

One of the needs that made itself evident in the wake of September11th was our synod's inability to act quickly with humanitarian and spiritual aid in a time of national disaster. The Kingdom Worker volunteers who participated in the trips regularly discussed the possibility of such a committee being formed. Mark Vance spearheaded the efforts and put together a proposal. "This would be a joint venture between the WELS Committee on Relief (COR) and the WELS Kingdom Workers. The COR would be responsible for synod budget and financial control and WKW would be responsible for manpower and operational control." ²¹

The group came together on April 25, 2002, to determine the feasibility of such an organization. A proposed mission statement for the organization reads as follows: "Reflecting Christ's love, the WELS Kingdom Worker Disaster Response Team provides support through assessment, organization, spiritual and humanitarian assistance."

- The national director and COR would be in contact as soon as possible after being made aware of a disaster. They would share all available info gathered from local congregations and/or community and jointly determine if mobilization is necessary.
- 2) The national director would activate a disaster assessment team.
- 3) A disaster assessment team would be sent to a local congregation or area to assess needs.
- 4) After initial assessment, regional and additional volunteers would be called in as necessary.
- 5) Follow up assessments and after care will be coordinated through the national director, the COR and the local mission/congregation.

The intent of this organization is to allow the WELS to enter into a disaster area and quickly assess how we, as a synod, can offer spiritual and humanitarian aid to people who are in a great need. We pray that another event like 9/11 will never happen, but if it does or something similar,

²⁰ Moline, Nicole. "A Powerful Whisper." P. 1.

²¹ Vance, Mark. "Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod National Disaster Response Network".

we want to be ready to reach out with a helping hand. This is our opportunity to shine as stars in this darkened world.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

If you are looking for tangible results, membership increases, and transfers to our local WELS churches in the Tri-State area after our assistance in New York city following the tragedy of 9/11, you will be sorely disappointed. In talking with Pastor Gabb at Christmas in 2002, he mentioned that there really was only one prospect that the Sure Foundation mission was still ministering to as a direct result of the relief efforts. In terms of numbers, the effort of the WELS Kingdom Workers was a failure. But as Christians who trust in the power of the Gospel, as Paul says in Romans 1:16, we know that the Word of God is powerful. Our synod reached out to help a hurting New York City with the powerful Word of God and comforted them with the sweet Gospel message. It was a ministry of actions more than words. Through the love of the Kingdom Worker volunteers, Christ was represented in a way that would bring him glory. For this we give thanks to our God. The seed has been planted, and God will make it grow.

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