

Conversation with Floyd Pearson:

1. What got you started/interested as a Week of Compassion long-term volunteer?  
I felt the call to serve others after I retired.
  2. Why have you stayed with it? What is most important to you about this work?  
I enjoy the people. I have been blessed by those I have met.
  3. What should others know about the work of a long-term volunteer and how your work fits into the big picture?  
It is a big commitment. It's hard to learn that you can't fix everything for everyone. Sometimes it's really difficult to leave those you have helped and go home. You get attached.
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Conversation with Charlie Redman:

1. What got you started/interested as a Week of Compassion long-term volunteer?  
In 2005, my wife and I were living in south central Tennessee when Hurricane Katrina hit the gulf coast. We were attending a small Disciples congregation in Waynesboro, TN. We were concerned about the Disciples congregation in Moss Point, MS because our daughter had visited there just weeks before the storm hit and was moved by the welcoming and love that she had received there.  
We were the youngsters in Waynesboro congregation (about 50 yrs old) and they were wanting to help so they gave us funding, the pastor loaned us his pickup truck, and we were sent to Moss Point to see what we could do to help the hurricane victims. Our older daughter went with us and we learned that Moss Point was becoming a center of helping the community and hosting volunteers, but they were not set up well to receive them. We helped get Moss Point set up to be able to receive volunteers better.  
The response we got from Moss Point and from Carl Zerwick [then of Disciples Volunteering] was overwhelming! Carl later called on us to go to Port Arthur, TX to help after Hurricane Rita.
2. Why have you stayed with it? What is most important to you about this work?  
It's interesting hearing people's survival stories. It's comforting knowing that I am helping them through a very difficult time in life. I meet some very interesting other volunteers in the process and we have fun, whether it's working together or playing games or sharing stories in the evenings.
3. What should others know about the work of a long-term volunteer and how your work fits into the big picture?  
Any of us could find ourselves in a similar bad housing situation as these storm victims have. My hopes are that someone would be there to help me if that ever happens.

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Conversation with John Richardson:

1. What got you started/interested as a Week of Compassion long-term volunteer?

A seed was planted a long time ago, in Bay City, Texas, while I was serving my first congregation after seminary. A hurricane was in the northern Gulf of Mexico and predicted to make landfall near Matagorda Bay. Bay City was 20 miles inland. I volunteered through our local fire department to help secure houses to prevent damage. I was asked to go to an elderly man's house to cut limbs out of a tree close to his house in the backyard.

All I had was a hand saw - it was going to take a while. The next-door neighbor came to the back fence and offered to loan me his chain saw, which made the job much easier and faster. As I was about to leave, the man I'd helped asked me what I was talking to his neighbor about. I told him how kind the neighbor had been to lend me his chainsaw to cut the limbs. The man said: "Huh. I'm surprised. We had a disagreement several years ago and haven't spoken since." I said to him, "Well now would be a good time to speak to your neighbor again. He was a big help to me, because he wanted to help you get prepared for the hurricane. Why don't you go over and thank him right now?" And he did.

I thought: *Wow, helping people prepare for a storm, or recover after a storm, can also facilitate reconciliation in broken relationships. That is a ministry I want to do.*

2. Why have you stayed with it? What is most important to you about this work?

Lula Brown, a pastor from Williamston, NC. Lula was a widow. She cared for her adult daughter who had chronic health issues. Lula was the pastor of a Disciples congregation. When there was a disaster Lula knew people needed a place to sleep. She collected money to purchase and deliver mattresses and box springs to individuals who had lost their house in a storm or flood, along with sheets and pillows. She insisted on new items.

Following Hurricane Katrina, Lula gathered enough beds to fill three 18-wheel rigs and found volunteers to drive them to the gulf coast. I wanted to continue helping people following disasters, like the late Pastor Lula Brown.

3. What should others know about the work of a long-term volunteer and how your work fits into the big picture?

There is always a lot of concern and energy in responding immediately after a disaster. But there are needs that continue for months and years. Multiple tornadoes struck Dayton, OH two years ago. Houses are still being repaired and new ones built to address the need for housing for low-income families to be first time homeowners. The program is a partnership between Butler County, the Disciples of Christ, the United Church of Christ, and Church of the Brethren. United Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a wonderful host congregation where volunteers stay.

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