

Two DC Lutheran Churches Make Mission Trip to Marysville and Henryville Indiana April 22-28



At about 3:00pm on Friday March 2nd an EF-4 tornado swept through the small towns of Marysville and Henryville Indiana and virtually destroyed them both. Each town is located approximately 22 miles north of Louisville KY. Henryville has a population of 2,000 and Marysville about ten miles east of Henryville has a population of 1,900.

Steve Kloepfer lives in Chelsea, just east of Henryville. Friday, he watched on television as the storms drew near.

"I saw it from the radar it was getting close, so I walked down the driveway and saw it coming through the woods," Kloepfer told CNN affiliate WHAS. He got in his truck and drove south about a mile to "let it blow through." He returned to a new, grim reality. The tornado destroyed his house and the home shared by his aunt and uncle, Terry and Carol Jackson. They were missing along with their 4-year-old grandchild. Later, their bodies were discovered in a field, covered in debris. They were among the 14 who died in Indiana.

Henryville is best known as the birthplace of Colonel Harland Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame. Many in this town know each other through the high school and elementary school, housed on one campus. Friday afternoon, not all the students were able to leave because their parents were not at home. Elementary School Principal Glenn Riggs huddled with 40 students in the offices. And prayed. A News crew on the scene confirmed that Henryville Junior-Senior High School was destroyed. There were reports of people trapped inside the school complex.



Across the street, a yellow school bus that only hours ago had taken children home lay off its chassis, slammed into a building as though it were a toy tossed by a child. Considering the damage, people at the school should have been hurt, Riggs figured. "It's a blessing. We praise God," he said.



Aerial images of Henryville Saturday were devastating: the guts spilled out from buildings, debris littering open fields and trees felled like dominoes.

Meteorologist John Belski said this appeared to be a multiple EF-4 vortex tornado, meaning there are tornadoes inside a larger tornado.

On April 22-28 a group of thirteen people from St Paul's and First Trinity Lutheran Churches in Washington DC will travel to Henryville to help with the cleanup and rebuilding. First Trinity's Pastor Tom Knoll said, "We have some experience in this work and we will do whatever they need us to do." For a number of years several groups from these two DC Lutheran churches have traveled to the Gulf Coast to help with rebuilding from the destruction caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005.

Pastor Tom Omholt, of St Paul's stated, "I continue to be moved and inspired by the news that comes to us from Marysville and Henryville, Indiana, damaged so severely by the tornado that struck on March 2. The stories, the photos, the suffering and the self-sacrifice continue to touch our hearts. Now we have an opportunity to help, to bring Christ's compassion to our hurting brothers and sisters in that area might be the most important and meaningful thing we do for a long time to come."

If you cannot come with us you can help with a contribution to the rebuilding that the team will be doing. Checks can be written to St Paul's Lutheran or First Trinity Lutheran or donations can be made through their web sites at www.stpaulslutherandc.com or www.firsttrinitydc.org. Mark your gift for "tornado relief".

