For Immediate Release

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HURRICANE SEASON BEGINS, BUT VOLUNTEERS KEEP COMING

Rochester, NY (June 1, 2006) – Twelve weary members of Third Presbyterian Church returned from Louisiana Friday, May 26 after having spent seven days on post-Katrina rebuilding. They met other volunteers all along their trip to and from New Orleans. And soon as they moved out of their temporary quarters in The Jean LaFitte Civic Center, they were replaced by a group of Jewish students coming from California to work on damaged homes. The flow of volunteers seemed persistent.

The Rochester group ranged from a college freshman to retirees. Others had taken time off from work and some were going for a second time. This church has sent two groups this year and plans to send another this fall. And there are no signs of stopping. Similar trips are planned for next year. All expenses have been covered by donations from the community, church members and the volunteers themselves. In addition, tools, equipment, bedding, linens, pillows and living supplies have been contributed to the ongoing rebuilding effort – to be used by volunteers that follow.

This group installed drywall in a new home for a three-generation family now living in a moldy trailer and overflowing into two FEMA trailers. The group purchased breakfast and lunch supplies at the local Piggly Wiggly and drove rented vans to the bayou job site. Dinner was usually eaten out. Throughout long hot days beginning at 8:30am and ending at 6:00pm, the mother of the family supplied the group with coolers of ice, water, soft drinks and snacks. One day the grandfather, who could barely walk, made fresh shrimp jambalaya for lunch - served under trees shading the family trailer. Over and over again, each volunteer was quietly thanked for coming by everyone they met in this rural Cajun community south of New Orleans called Jean LaFitte.

What did the group learn about the current situation in the area hit by the hurricanes last year as the new hurricane season begins? After eight months, the areas hit by Katrina and Rita are still devastated. People are still living in FEMA trailers. The Ninth Ward of New Orleans is absent of sound and life. While the tourist areas of New Orleans are intact, they are in desperate need of business. Despite of all this, the rebuilding continues and the volunteers keep coming.

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