

Dear Northminster congregation, as of April 7th, the NPCASP 2020 Mission Trip was cancelled.

Here is the official word from ASP: ***At this time, based on recommendations from national health officials, ASP has made the difficult decision to suspend our summer volunteer hosting until August 1, 2020.***

This is likely not a surprise as many of you had realized how risky it would be to send thousands of volunteers into remote communities with so many at-risk homeowners and strained local health care services. This will be the first summer in over 50 years that ASP will not be sending work crews, like ours, to make homes, warmer, safer and drier. Here are some thoughts that Dr. Walter Crouch sent to the trip coordinators: " *My heart is heavy as I think about the many families who are expecting our help, the summer staff who are anxious to serve, the communities that would benefit from our presence, our full-time staff who are called to be a part of this incredible ministry, and the volunteers whose very lives would be changed. And I worry about you, our faithful Trip Coordinators and partners in ministry. I know some of you may be feeling your own sense of loss and grief.*"

I am sure I speak for all who have been working so hard on this years trip, and trips in the past, that yes, we are all feeling our own sense of loss and grief. What we have built together, for over 15 years, has become much more than a mission trip. We have served so many beautiful people in some desperately needy communities. And, in doing so, we ourselves have grown into an organization that has drawn so many caring and loving individuals together to do so much good. It is so sad to think that we will have to take this summer off...

But, we are not done working together, we will regroup for next year. And, ASP has committed to doing what they can to serve those needing help in Appalachia, even during this pandemic. Understandably, they have concerns about the level of support they can give this summer and in the future. If you are interested in reading more about what ASP's plans and funding needs are, here is a link: <https://www.asphome.org/blog/2020/03/12/asp-coronavirus-covid-19-update/>

All of our volunteers were given a choice of what they would like to do with the fees they paid to register for the trip. For our part, the leadership committee will be donating to ASP a large portion of the funds that will not be refunded to our volunteers.

Again, it is sad to think that NPC will not be sending volunteers to Kentucky this summer. But all of our hard work and planning up to this point has not gone to waste. I wish you all could be with me up front as I look out into a full sanctuary of very happy volunteers getting ready to do some team-building. And the response we got after asking our community to consider joining in as we needed a couple of more adults was heart-warming. **Thank you all for stepping froward in so many ways to help so many people.**

I think we should all plan to have a backyard/park party at Al's house once we can socially gather again. So, stay tuned...

Al Williams

ps. If you have any questions about Northminster's ASP program, please feel free to reach out to Al: [awilliams351@comcast.net](mailto:awilliams351@comcast.net)