

Zane Vickery –

Hello, my name is Zane Vickery, and I would like to point out some visitors we have in the back. They drove here all the way from Rock Hill. We have Mr. Terry and Ms. Kathy, who were site leaders at the camp, and we have Matt Culbert, Charlie Snipes, and Charlie's sister.

This was my first year at Salkehatchie, and I knew it was a work camp in our mission here for the church. This was not my first trip. I went on two Mississippi trips. Down in Mississippi, you're just dealing with effects from the storm. You don't really get to see poverty. This is a whole different experience. You get there, and you just realize that we just take so many things for granted in our lives. We have certain things that these people beg for. I know from one experience from one site that they bought cushions and pillows for one lady. The lady almost broke down because she did not have one pillow in her house. I saw many children had only a car or two to play with their whole lives as a child. I had the opportunity to work for Mr. Fred Bank's house. That was site #1. Mr. Banks is in his early 80's, and he is a World War II veteran, and in Vietnam. Mr. Bank's house was falling into disrepair, and we did many things to his house. His shingles, he had leaks in his roof. One room had the roof that caved in, and we repaired that roof. Instead of a little piece of sheetrock, we reroofed his whole, entire house. We took out all his windows, and replaced every single one. His house was a wreck. He's a pack rat. We had to move a lot of stuff around. His wife had passed away pretty recently. She used to put sulfur along the walls to keep the snakes out. That was fun vacuuming.

Salkehatchie was astounding. I loved it. It strains you. It is good. I can't really get up here without talking about my medical experience. During Salkehatchie, at the room center that week, I passed a kidney stone. At least the doctor said I did. That was pretty painful, and I was up all night, and I was feeling sorry for myself. You get very self-conscious with those. I was just feeling sorry for myself, and I was like, you know, you're down here to feel sorry for yourself. You need to go to work. I got up that next morning with two hours sleep, and I went to work. Salkehatchie is the best experience I've ever had, and I will definitely be going back next year.

Ryan Moore –

Good morning! I really wish Zane could have told you what actually happened to him, but it was a little too colorful for church. This was my third Salkehatchie, and my second in Bamberg. I was working on site #4, which was a house for Ms. Cann. The main problem was the floor, and so Monday we tore it up. I don't know if you know how the houses are built. She had a drop sill, which holds up the whole wall, and the whole sill was rotten. I have no idea how the house was standing up. It was pretty much a miracle. The sill went all the way down the house. We were going to replace the whole thing, but we had only a week so I feel bad that we couldn't finish it, but we did our best. We worked until Saturday. We brought it right down to the wire, and kept it interesting. One moment on Friday that I really want to skip to was, it was a life changing experience to say the least. It was Friday morning, and we had just gotten her floor back in Thursday

afternoon, and I was, Phillip, a guy from Columbia and me, were putting up molding in her kitchen. I remember looking down on the floor, and seeing like six or seven bent nails, and I had only put one in the molding. I was so frustrated because nailing nails is not that hard for me, but this morning I just couldn't do it. I looked at Phillip, and handed him a handful of nails and a hammer, and said I can't do it. He just looked at me, and he goes why not? I had no idea. I couldn't nail the nails in. I'm sure he didn't mean it like this, but it carried over all day, and I kept asking, why not? It came down to wall week it had been my motives. I had said that I was working for God, but I acted on Ryan's timetable, and Ryan was doing the floor, and Ryan was putting up the molding, and God wasn't really in it. When we were having devotion that week, it came back to me, and it was the reading from Ezekiel, and the verse they used said that God told Ezekiel to eat his word until it tasted like honey, and the part of the struggle was until it tasted like honey, which means it's not going to taste like honey at first. When I came back to Greenwood, I tried to start reading the Bible a lot more and spending a lot more time with God. It started to happen. It's starting to taste like honey. It's still bittersweet, but we're working on it. A friend asked me a few days ago how I can be grounded in my faith as much as some other guy, and the way to do it is let your faith ground in you. Eat the words until they taste like honey, and then your faith will be in you, and it will be in your actions. Faith isn't a disembodied, mystical thing. It's your actions. You show your faith by what you do. I learned that at Salkehatchie.

Emily Wiedemann –

Good morning. This past week at Salkehatchie was both an emotionally and physically tiring experience. As always, we leave the church bright and early in the morning with all our hearts eager to worship and work hard for our God's glory. We all looked forward to the familiar faces of friends from past years, and we also anticipate the new friends God would send to place in our path. When we first arrived at Salkehatchie, I instantly felt at home again as I was wrapped in the church's loving arms and surrounded by familiar faces that reminded me exactly why I love Salkehatchie so much. Young-hearted adults and youth, just as myself. They had taken a week out of their summer vacation to be the Lord's hands and feet by getting down and dirty – all for him. If you know me, or half of the other girls who attended Salkehatchie, we don't get down and dirty for just anyone. Once you meet the family you're working for and get to experience how they live each day and how strong and steady their Christian faith is, despite all the hardships they endure, it automatically changes your life and outlook on it. It's a blessing to see their faces light up and their smiles brighten as we do the smallest repairs to their homes. It's not just homes we rebuild, it's hope. I was blessed to be put on one of the smallest sites at the camp. We had only six youth and two adult leaders. The house we worked on was placed in the middle of a cornfield in a small town outside of Bamberg called Ola. Since we had such a small group, all of us became very close from the moment we said hello. We all had a sense of humor, which carried the continuous laughter throughout the site. It was amazing to watch each of us grow and work together throughout the week, whether it was teaching each other how to swing the hammer just right so that it would take only five or ten swings instead of 70 to just do one nail, or if it was lending a shoulder to cry on when the Lord's presence overwhelmed each of us. I

grew tremendously watching our Heavenly Father's Spirit in the youth this past week and in myself as well. Salkehatchie is often seen as just a construction and repair of homes, but it's not. Salkehatchie is the tearing down of old walls in our hearts and souls and remodeling them. I will never forget the joy I saw on the face of our homeowner's grandson on the last day when we brought him two presents – a Slip'N Slide and a basketball goal, which he called his pool. Immediately, he ripped off his shirt and ran forward 100 feet. Off he went through the slick runway of plastic and water. Then he began pulling at each of our arms, wanting us to experience his joy that his new toy had delivered. Little did he know we already had. God couldn't have given my site or myself a better present than that young boy's smile. That night we all gathered in the sanctuary for communion service and our last night together in Bamberg. This night would prove to be the most powerful and meaningful night of the week. Webb Valangia, the pastor there at Trinity Methodist, taught our final lesson. He spoke of the days in which Jesus fasted in the desert and was challenged by Satan to end His fasting. He stated a verse from Matthew, chapter 4. It says, "But man does not live off bread alone, but by the words that leave God's mouth." After his devotion, we had a communion service. He tied in another part of service that would bless each and every one of us in the sanctuary. There is a tall cross standing beyond the altar. Everyone received a small piece of red paper, and we were instructed to write something we were thankful for as well as a sin we wished to be forgiven for on the piece of paper. After doing this, each site, one at a time, went and took communion and nailed each member's piece of paper to the cross as they knelt at the foot of it. Music played in the background as the lights were turned down, but one light was left over the cross. As we watched the pieces of paper increase on the cross, we realized they symbolized the blood of Jesus. We were all overwhelmed with a sense of forgiveness. We each realized what had been done for us. Tears fell from nearly every face and prayers could be heard and felt. God was truly there in our midst. You felt peace, fulfillment, love, and many emotions that can't be put into words, but most of all; you felt God's presence. As the service ended, and tears dried up and as noses were blown, we were all closer in the end. We all left the sanctuary with smiles that were full of love and hope. Although Salkehatchie comes with getting up before the sun rises and sweating more than ever before, it changes your perspective on life and your love for the Lord and all of His people. You are left with memories you will never forget and a yearning for more. You leave filled with the Lord and ready to reenter the real world even though you really don't want to. Because of the experience of Salkehatchie, each of us has an inner strength, which has prepared us for what each day will hold. I leave you now with Isaiah 40:29-31. These simple verses kept me going throughout the week. "He gives strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not grow faint."

Mike Wiedemann –

Sometimes people ask me just what kind of mission trip is Salkehatchie. Usually I tell them that it's one week in the summer when we go and fix houses of less fortunate people. That's really a very poor definition, which is why I'm glad I have this

opportunity to explain what Salkehatchie really is and hopefully, one day some of y'all can participate as well.

What Salkehatchie really is to me is improving lives, and not just those of the homeowners, but every single person involved. For the homeowners, Salkehatchie may be relief from poverty, but to the worker like me, Salkehatchie is connections you make with people and the recognition of your own blessings.

I want to tell you about one of the sweetest people I've ever met, Miss Rose. Miss Rose is a woman in her late 50's who's fallen on some hard times. They're actually living in a one-room house that had once been a tool shed. Despite her misfortunes, Miss Rose had a cheerful disposition, and could not stop talking about how blessed she felt she was for the work we were doing to add onto her house. She always tried her best to help us in any way that she could whether it be sweeping or handing us tools. Once she even went out and bought us Gatorade even though she has a very tight budget. She would always get up at the crack of dawn to participate in our daily devotions, and she could quote Scripture for almost any conversation you had with her. For those reasons, I hold her on the highest pedestal, to have so little, and to be faced with such hard times, and still not lose faith and hope, and even considered herself blessed. That makes you take a step back and reexamine what's really important. That week, as we worked on Miss Rose's house, I felt the Holy Spirit in Miss Rose was really working on me. For that reason, I plan to return again next summer to Salkehatchie, and I hope a few of you would join me.