

Hinton Rural Life Center
Celebrating 60: Embracing Our Roots & Sharing the Fruits

Reflections . . .

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“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” -- John 13:34-35, NIV

I’m Rev. Ed Archer, pastor of Calhoun First UMC in Calhoun, Georgia, part of the North Georgia Conference, but I also have the privilege to serve again this year as a Hinton Ambassador. It’s a pleasure to share with you as part of Hinton’s 60th Anniversary with the theme of “Embracing our Roots and Sharing the Fruits.”

I have to admit I wasn’t sure what to expect as I began the trek to Hinton Rural Life Center for the first time. As a candidate for ordination, one of our requirements was a mission experience in our second year, and one of our group members recommended Hinton, since they had brought youth groups to Hinton in the past as part of the mission outreach program.

And, I have to say, that my time at Hinton that week was incredible! My team had two tasks, the first being the completion of a deck and installation of a screen door at a local family’s home. It was mostly basic construction and, in spite of rain over the three days we had to complete the work, that deck was sturdy and met the family’s needs. But the bigger impact was personal, as is usually the case with mission work and sharing God’s love with others. The work on the deck and door made it easier for one of the family members, who had been confined to a hospital bed and wheelchair, to get in and out of their home. I remember gathering outside their bedroom window so that the entire team could visit and get to know them better. I have to believe that family was blessed that week due to Hinton’s involvement in their lives and, most importantly, the sharing of the fruit of God’s love and hope with them.

The second task was just good, hard work as we split and stacked wood for Hinton’s firewood ministry. Jason at Hinton Center set up the log splitter and some logs so that we could help him prepare for the upcoming winter firewood deliveries. We got to work, and while it appeared he thought we might get a cord or so of firewood split and stacked, five cords were stacked and ready for delivery when he returned. We didn’t know which of Hinton’s outreach recipients would receive that firewood, but hopefully Jason would now have more time to develop relationships with them, instead of doing the work of splitting and stacking himself. After all, isn’t relationship building at the heart of Hinton’s mission, one of the roots we embrace and celebrate as we share God’s love with others?

I’ve now had the privilege of continuing the legacy of that trip by bringing youth groups to Hinton for the summer mission outreach program and seeing the impact on the lives of leaders and youth alike. I’ve seen some of them consider how God might be calling them to a deeper level of ministry, to a greater commitment in service, even thinking of going back as a counselor one day and sharing what they’ve learned with others. Their memories center on the deeper relationships that were formed with the

homeowners they've helped and with other group members but, most importantly, with God during their time at Hinton.

Through the mission work, care for others, fellowship, worship, and times of reflection, Hinton Rural Life Center has offered for 60 years, and continues to offer, a great opportunity for a deepening relationship with God through Jesus Christ as his follower and wanting to share the love found in him with others. Jesus says in John 13:34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." That's what I think the history and legacy of "Embracing our Roots and Sharing the Fruits" is all about. May God bless the ongoing ministry of Hinton in the days to come!



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