

# FAITH IN ACTION

“But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness ...” — Matthew 6:33 (NRSV)

Service Adventure unit in Jackson, Mississippi. Back row: Debbie and Rick Lee. Front row: Jocelyn Baker and Malachi Lind. Photo by Warren Yoder.

## Letting go, pressing forward

By Laurie Oswald Robinson

**W**hen Debbie and Rick Lee were invited to uproot their lives in Homestead, Florida, to lead Mennonite Mission Network’s Service Adventure unit in Jackson, Mississippi, Debbie Lee said that she initially resisted the idea.

Debbie Lee, who is artistically gifted, felt deeply bonded to what she described as her “mid-life dream home” in Homestead. After frequently moving to engage a variety of ministries, she and Rick Lee, who was pastor of Homestead Mennonite Church for 10 years, had taken root in the Homestead community.

“My house was my castle, and I really liked my castle,” she said during a recent interview. “I worship God by making things beautiful wherever I live. But, at 58, I wanted to be done moving.”

God had other plans.

Prayerfully, last August, the Lees became leaders of the Jackson Service Adventure unit — a year-long service program for young adults, aged 18-20. Following God’s call meant letting go of the beautiful spaces filled with family mementos and artwork, which she created and collected in Florida.

Rick Lee, too, grappled with leaving behind a meaningful pastoral ministry. Their new roles as unit leaders, however, are a good fit. Rick Lee is using his gifts for young adult discipleship and administration with two participants, Jocelyn Baker and Malachi Lind.

Debbie Lee is expressing her love for God and people, as she creates artwork and offers friendship and service to neighbors, including regularly walking with a friend from the neighborhood and helping a neighbor finish burden-

light to the neighborhood, ministering through participant placements, and pursuing growth within the unit household and Open Door Mennonite Church — the unit’s sponsoring congregation. Most weekday evenings include: teaching, Bible reading, worship and prayer, playing, cooking and eating together, and socializing with other church families.

“Vocationally, I worked with college students and found it to be a fruitful fit,” Rick Lee said. “Young people are interested in growing, and I like being part of helping to shape that trajectory.”

Debbie and Rick Lee hope to serve for six to eight years, they said. As longtime disciples, this move has reinforced that they experience joy when they prioritize kingdom values.

“Many of us can be tempted to seek security through money in the bank and in jobs, but God invites us to hold those loosely,” Rick Lee said. “God is trustworthy. Trusting God for our security and our significance frees us up for ministry and service and blesses us with seeing God proving His trustworthiness.”

Debbie Lee said she is grateful that she trusted God. “At the end of the day, it was a matter of choosing kingdom values over material things,” she said. “I knew from past experiences that the joy of walking with God would be so much greater than any good thing I left behind in Homestead.” ■



(Starting bottom-right) Debbie Lee, co-unit leader for the Service Adventure unit in Jackson, Mississippi, enjoys a meal with (moving clockwise) her daughter, Emma, and participants Malachi Lind and Jocelyn Baker.

Photo by Rick Lee

some yard work.

“Mennonite Mission Network has developed a thorough, balanced and well-structured service-learning program,” Rick Lee said of Service Adventure. The unit forms layers of Christian community: being salt and

# 6 ways to bless the Service Adventure program

1. **Pray** for the units — the participants, leaders, churches, neighborhoods and service placements.
2. **Make** a contribution to Mennonite Mission Network to support our programs, like Service Adventure.
3. **Encourage** a young person to explore how he or she may be a good fit for Service Adventure.
4. **Invite** a Mission Network representative to speak at your church about Service Adventure opportunities.
5. **Send** care packages to the Service Adventure units.
6. **Volunteer** to become a Service Adventure unit leader.

For information about mailing addresses or other aspects of the program, contact Susan Nisly at [SusanN@mennonitemission.net](mailto:SusanN@mennonitemission.net).

**I** admire Debbie and Rick Lee for leaving their comfort zones to answer God's call. Service Adventure is blessed to have others like them, from many ages and backgrounds, who are also living in community with young adults. Unit leaders focus on mentoring the participants in their service placements, spiritual discipleship and relational maturity. Are you sensing a call to move out of your comfort zone to answer God's greater call? No matter whether you are 25, 35, or forever young, I am happy to share more about Service Adventure with you, as you discern if God is leading you there."



**Susan Nisly**  
Director of Service Adventure

Cut out or fold over, post and use this verse for contemplation and prayer over the next month.

treasure  
heart

— Matthew 6:21 (NRSV)

Be the Gospel.



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