



Good idea: Practicing resurrection!

Deanery donations restore Puerto Rico daycare center

Sometimes attempting one good deed leads to another. That's what happened this spring, when the Rev. Deacon Christine Cassels

was working to help families from Puerto Rico who had relocated to Providence and when [St. Thomas, Alton](#), was trying to help St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Carolina, Puerto Rico.

Those good efforts converged and led to a broader "Practicing Resurrection" initiative in the Narragansett Deanery (and some additional churches in our diocese) that is helping to rebuild [Abrazo Maternal Daycare in Bayamon, Puerto Rico](#). The daycare center, whose name means "A Mother's Hug," serves children ages 8 months through 5 years old. It was severely damaged by Hurricane Maria in September 2017.

Cassels found out about the needs of the daycare center from a volunteer at [Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island](#), Maria Rivera, who is a city council member in Central Falls. After Rivera asked for help with the daycare center, Cassels and the Rev. Bettine Besler, the priest at St. Thomas, co-led a six-week donation drive.

In mid-June, the deanery shipped 11 boxes of goods to the daycare center, including first aid kits, diapers, baby wipes, floor puzzles, dolls, trucks and even a riding dinosaur. Cash donations of \$1,625 helped pay for shipping, postage and a \$700 Amazon order. Additional items the daycare center requested were purchased, such as interior washable rugs and a world globe.

And at a recent meeting, the [Diocesan Council](#) approved a grant of \$3,500 to help the center construct a new roof for its building.

"Diocesan Council was delighted to be asked to support this program because it has strong support by a number of congregations in the diocese, and people spoke to the urgent need," said the Rt. Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely, bishop of Rhode Island. "I know

there is much still to do in recovering from the last year's storms in Puerto Rico. I hope others in the diocese will join me in supportive prayers for the people responding to the needs just as we have joined to support their work financially."

Ten churches in the Narragansett Deanery supported the project as well as Holy Cross, Middletown; Emmanuel, Newport and Holy Trinity, Tiverton.

"Together we are so strong, and know that we can do amazing things with God's help," said Cassels. "We truly 'practiced resurrection' with this project!"

And now a related initiative has been launched by St. Thomas to help its counterpart, St. Thomas, Carolina, in the [Diocese of Puerto Rico](#) (part of Province IX of the Episcopal Church). That church also suffered damage from Hurricane Maria and was the last building in its community to have electricity restored. Three of the church's windows were destroyed, causing water to come into the sanctuary when it rains; seven other windows are in poor condition and might not survive another storm.

"We've learned that the members of her congregation cannot afford to repair the window — they are struggling just to keep their own families supplied with basic needs," Besler said. "So our parishioners are now working to raise funds to help. It would take \$1,830 for three windows and \$6,100 to replace all 10."

Other Rhode Island Episcopalians who want to help the Abrazo Daycare Center should contact Maritza Lebron at abrazomaternal@yahoo.com or send items to Abrazo Maternal, 4 Brias Del Campo, 787 st, Cidra, Puerto Rico 00739. To help St. Thomas, Carolina, contact St. Thomas Church here in Rhode Island at P.O. 33, Wood River Junction, RI 02894.

Story by Dave Seifert