

There are so many experiences that I could speak of from my trip to Jamaica in 2019 with the group from St. Paul's. I could tell you about the beauty of the country or the hospitality of our wonderful hosts, Daphne and Rue. I could tell you about the amazing friendship and camaraderie of the group and the pride and feeling of accomplishment THAT came from helping to provide reading glasses to people and hearing the joy in their voices when they could read clearly for the first time.

Instead, what is most vivid in my mind are Felecia (pronounced Feleesea), Mahalia, Roman and Tosha.

Because I do not have any medical expertise, my main role was to organize a craft for the children. We brought various colorful balls of yarn and about 1000 wooden coffee stirrers, and after church ON the first Sunday we were there, we taught the kids to make God's Eyes.

During the week, Felecia, who was a friendly, smart, and creative sixth grader, sought me out for more yarn (she called it wool...) pieces and sticks so that she could continue to make beautiful God's Eye creations. She went on to show the younger children how to make them and became a leader of the smaller groups. Mahalia, Roman and Tosha soon followed and we spent a lot of time together.

All during the day and after school, kids of all ages would gather and wait with their moms for their turn to see Dr. Mark, and I would make yarn bracelets and the God's Eyes and play games and sing songs with them. They would rush to me every morning and surround me with hugs and shouts of, "Mrs. Kate! Did you bring your wool?"

But these four kids were just so creative and kind. They were so funny, and their smiles made my day. One afternoon toward the end of the week, we played Red Light, Green Light and What Time is it Mr. Fox, and we ran up and down between the buildings, just laughing and laughing. Needless to say, I got tired before they did!

I couldn't wait to go back again the following year to see them again, but Covid had other ideas. I hope to go again as soon as we are able, and I hope that I will see them again and they will remember me as much as I will forever remember them.

*Kate Ess*

*(St. Paul's parishioner and vestry member)*