PARTNERS IN MISSION

Invigorated, inspired and exhausted, nineteen missioners from Saint Stephen’s, Coconut Grove and Saint Christopher’s, Key Biscayne in the Diocese of Southeast Florida returned on Saturday, June 22 from a weeklong mission trip to the Dominican Republic. It was our fourth biennial trip to serve at Iglesia Divina Providence, a small parish in San Antonio de Guerra, a rural town about 30 k outside of Santo Domingo. Upon our arrival there on Saturday, June 15, familiar faces, warm smiles, and eager hugs awaited us. It was good to be there – for those of us who were returning and for those of us who were first time missioners.

For five weekday mornings we began our days with prayer and then traveled by bus the forty-five minute journey to offer a Vacation Bible School program, in Spanish, of course, for between eighty-five and 100 Dominican youngsters, preschoolers to teenagers. Everyone enjoyed the songs, parables, games and crafts. Half a dozen of Iglesia Divina Providencia’s adults served as lead teachers, partnering with our missioners who provided enrichment activities, snacks, and sports to children who otherwise have no structured activities during the summer months. The curriculum was provided written by by the Diocese of the Dominican Republic and written by The Cathedral Church of Saint Peter, St. Petersburg, Florida -- another partnership.

After a rest and lunch our missioners took on the task of clearing a vacant lot owned by Divina Providencia. Father Felix Encarnación, priest at Divina Providencia, plans to use the lot for a tree and plant nursery. Equally important with our physical labor, it seems, were the colorful artistic signs our ten teenagers created and nailed up at the lot, requesting villagers not to litter the vacant lot. Care for Your Environment and Protect the Earth, the hand-painted signs requested. It was inspiring to witness these passionate kids so totally committed and engaged to protect our God-given earth.

After long, sweaty days at the mission site our bus transported us back to our hotel in the Colonial District of Santo Domingo to relax with a shower and then to enjoy a tasty Dominican dinner. One special treat is the opportunity for missioners to share the main square, listen to music, and wander through the streets mainly with locals – the few tourists like us mingle easily with the much larger number of Dominicans enjoying the Colonial District.
The Diocese of the Dominican Republic is a caring and particular host. We are especially grateful to Patricia Martis whose competency smoothed out potential wrinkles.

Thanks be to God for a good job, well done, for the right reason.

The Rev. Dr. Jo-Ann R. Murphy  
St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church  
Coconut Grove, Florida

Jeffrey Paul Brosco, M.D.  
St. Christopher’s-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church  
Key Biscayne, Florida