

Recuperando La Esperanza (Recovering Hope) in Puerto Rico

The day began with three of us leaving from Shenkel UCC in Pottstown. We were then joined by the Rev. Steve Englehardt from Penn Northeast Conference at the Philadelphia airport. A big decision had to be made at the airport in San Juan about which car to rent (Woo Hoo – purple jeep), then meeting the seven UCC folks from Illinois when we arrived at our lodging in Humacao. (Our 2nd greeter was a 3-foot long iguana.) What a remarkable day of arrival. The adventure began.

None of us were young and most of us were not highly skilled in construction (understatement) so we began with some trepidation. The work we were to spend the week doing was fixing roofs – flat roofs. No danger once we climbed the ladder safely and arrived ON the roof, but the journey up was difficult for some. We also cleaned some yards, moved office files, and got to know folks who had stories to tell about the hurricane.

Despite our limited Spanish, we discovered that with hearts full and willingness to work, we can accomplish a great deal. Six homes now have repaired and sealed roofs. (Now the residents can begin the indoor work.) We learned how to laugh more than complain and how to deal:

- with the heat,
- with each other when we didn't agree on politics or where to have supper
- with challenging plumbing
- with being in a place with missing road signs, traffic lights that didn't work, and no way to ask.

And we learned Paul actually knew what he was talking about when he insisted that no matter what divides and differentiates us, in Christ we can be One. In Christ there is neither male nor female, straight or gay, Democrat or Republican, skilled or “go-fer”, rich or poor. When loving others is more important than looking good/ being in control/exercising any kind of privilege, we are Hermanos e Hermanas in Christo. (Brothers and sisters in Christ). That is enough and it is everything.

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