

VIM Report 2017

Back to Vieques! Transported by planes, ferries and buses was a familiar theme for many of us on our journey to do the Lord's work in the community of Esperanza. When we landed in San Juan, Puerto Rico, we were met again by Puerto Rican Methodist Bishop Hector Ortiz, who welcome us and shared a moment of prayer. Afterwards, we headed off to Fajardo to catch the ferry to the small island of Vieques for a week of service. This year, our projects included transforming a 40 foot long window wall in the common area of the church dormitory to a cinderblock wall with hurricane proof windows, roof repair on three homes, laying tile in the dorm hallways and showers, and modifying a family bathroom into a handicapped accessible bathroom. The 1967 Beatles song "*With a little Help from my Friends*" was spot on as we partnered with Centennial and Middletown United Methodist Churches in 7 days of service.

The cinderblock wall was the largest of our projects. Lead by Paul and Andrew, the team had to deconstruct the existing wall and rebuild it with cinderblocks, all while maintaining the common area for us to use for dinner, nightly devotions and group gathering area. Under careful direction, many of us learned new skills on how to lay cinderblocks. We now have a great appreciation for the work that is required to build cinderblock walls. This project took shape after days of hard work. Just about all team members worked on this project at some point throughout the week, mixing sand, mortar and cement, cutting blocks, carrying, laying and leveling blocks.

There were several homes where our teams applied roof sealer to the roofs. Pat and Dave led these teams. Applying roof sealant is not easy in the hot sun without any shade. In fact, Pat's team got an extra early start most mornings to take advantage of cooler temperatures. However, by mid-morning the heat from the sun started to rise and when teams were finished, everyone was exhausted.

On one home several miles from the church, our team worked on patching leaks in the roof. The roof was made from concrete and corrugated metal panels. Michael, Alyson and Reid spent most of the day filling cracks and removing debris for the roof. The corrugated metal panels were extremely hot to the touch and very fragile to work on. They also spent time sealing the interior of the roof from within the home.

Another home we worked on was located near Isabel Segunda on the opposite side of the island. An older lady named Bernice, who is wheelchair bound needed her bathroom modified so that it would be accessible for her. Our job was to widen the concrete doorway, remove the cast iron tub, then form the wall, lay new tile and make a new ramp to allow her wheelchair to move into the shower. Bill, who led the team, along with his wife Linda, Wanda, and Pastor Steve, worked on this project all week. Keep in mind, the bathroom area was small and the team used a concrete saw to cut away the cinderblocks to widen the door and a sledge hammer to break the bathtub in to smaller pieces, all while keeping the work area isolated from the rest of the home from dust and debris.

We also completed small painting projects and repaired cement posts for gates. All of the host families were so wonderful and so grateful to all of us. I know we made an impact on their lives.

It was noticeably hotter this year than last, and because of the heat, our workday started early and ended around 3 or 4 pm. Afterwards, we had time for a quick dip at the local beach to cool off before dinner and devotions. The afternoon devotions led by Deacon Julie allowed everyone to reflect and share on each days activities and personal thoughts. In addition, we also celebrated July birthdays (Jill, Becky, Carol and Sue).

On Sunday, Pastor Steve was the guest preacher at Iglesia Metodista de Esperanza. Pastor Steve did a great job delivering a wonderful and inspiring message for all. The church service was filled with lots of music from both Pastor Alex's choir and from our VIM team! On Sunday afternoon (our day off) – we toured local attractions such as the Bio-bay, Black Sand beach, an old lighthouse and more.

On one afternoon, members from the Middletown UMC spent an evening with Pastor Carmen at her church in Isabel II, where several of us worked last year. Alyson and team presented a donation from the Middletown Church to Pastor Carmen to continue the improvements to her Church.

On our last day we gathered at the shore and Pastor Steve and Deacon Julie lead our closing communion service. The shore and the surroundings provided a peaceful place for us to remember the night Jesus shared communion with the disciples.

Early on Thursday, we left Vieques and headed back to San Juan for a day of touring and sightseeing before our flight back on Friday afternoon. Old town San Juan is a wonderful place to visit. Lots of history, a great place for walking, good food and beautifully restored buildings and churches.

Arthur Stanley, a priest, theologian and a once Dean of Westminster Abbey said, "The true call of a Christian is not to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things in an extraordinary way". This is what we do best! We form VIM teams of ordinary people to go out into the world to do extraordinary things in the name of Jesus Christ!

On behalf of Centennial, Calvary and Middletown VIM team members, THANK YOU for your blessings and generous support! We accomplished a lot. We made new friendships and did what Jesus calls us to do! Blessings,

Ray McKinnon

Centennial VIM members:

Maryann Gearinger, Beth Stitely, Michael Lennox, Samantha Thompson

Calvary VIM members:

Becky and Ray McKinnon, Helen and Bruce Sheppard, Pat and Dave Herber, John Slovikosky, Andrew Wilde, Sue Howe, Deacon Julie Wilson, Pastor Steve and Wanda Larsen

Middletown VIM members:

Carol DeLaski, Greg Shipley, Paul McMahon, Cathy Watkins, Alyson Escobar, Jill Dutrow, Linda and Bill Brennan, Reid Glaze