

March 28, 2010

Hello everyone,

Thank you for your donations of time and prayer and for supporting me financially for the Puerto Rico Mission (March 11 to 22). Besides me, there were 5 teens from Whitby, 4 teens from Smiths Falls, and 5 adults including Pastor V, GS (trip organizer), and CM (from our church).

We actually returned home a day late because of a missed flight connection, but God took care of our luggage and us. I am almost caught up on the schoolwork that I missed.

Here is a report on what the team did. We served mostly at the Evangelical School of the Deaf in Luquillo, which is an hour's drive from San Juan. We stayed in the residences there.

Each school morning, we woke up and ate breakfast. After breakfast, we sometimes joined the students outside as they did their pledge of allegiance to the American flag and Puerto Rican flag. (Puerto Rico is a territory in free association with the U. S.) Then we joined the students at chapel. They did a few worship songs in sign language. After that, two or three people from our group gave their testimony. They closed the chapel time with a prayer, and the students started their school day.

We teens were then put to work. We painted the roofs and the inside of the chapel. We weeded the gardens and trimmed the bushes. We cut the lawn. A few of the teens pruned the banana trees but were shocked to find that they had fallen over during the night. Oops! One day we watched in wonder as the coconut tree-trimming expert shinnied up the tree, trimmed the leaves, and cut off the coconuts.

We worked on these chores in the morning then ate lunch with the kids. In the afternoon, we spent time with them in the classroom and outside. One time we took them to a beach. I spent some one-on-one time with a teen girl named Selena who followed me around everywhere and seemed most comfortable with me. It was amazing how much we could communicate even though she did not speak English, and I did not know much Spanish or sign language.

CM did a great job feeding us. We were also enjoyed the hospitality of some Puerto Rico church members who served us wonderful beans and rice meals.

On some of our afternoons off, the team toured the city of San Juan or went to a beach. One day we went to shop in a tourist area. We visited the Fort of El Morro. We took a ferry to an island and spent the day there at the beach. Another highlight was a hike in the rain forest. Pastor V. had the privilege of baptizing two of our teens in a rain forest pool at the bottom of a waterfall.

In the evenings we had some time to be alone and do devotions. Then we got together to pray and talk about how the day went. Then we talked about the day to come.

On Sundays we attended one or two churches. There were morning and evening services – rather long, lively, and intense. The second Friday that we were there, we went to a youth service. A few of the teens there gave a really cool presentation of a modern Puerto Rico song though we had no idea what they were saying. There were some other cool presentations, too.

I found it so amazing to think that all over the world, people were also praising God, too. Seeing the teens there, showing so much passion and fire for Christ just like I've seen here makes me feel more like all Christians are connected as part of God's family. It doesn't matter where you are; Jesus will always be the same. At one of the church services, they sang a bunch of songs that we knew, but in Spanish. It was so cool. Then some of them started to sing the chorus in English just for us. We even had a chance to share a sign language song at the school and at the youth service.

This trip has been an amazing experience for me. Connecting with the Puerto Rico students by speaking sign language and exchanging written notes was very special. I also got to meet people that spoke a different language but believed in the same incredible God I did. In our mission trip group, we teens found acceptance and were able to have meaningful conversations with one another. For many of us, the trip was an eye-opening experience. I came away with a bigger picture of how God is at work in our world. I also realized that I should spend less time worrying about what other people think of me, and focus more on what God thinks of me. I'm not perfect, but God can use me if I am willing. As we teens got to know each other better, we were also drawn closer to God.

Thank you once again. May God bless you for blessing me with this wonderful opportunity.

Yours in Christ,