


Youth Trip: Dominican Republic

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“Since 2001, Christ Church Christiana Hundred has partnered with the people of Jalonga and the Episcopal Diocese of the Dominican Republic, hosting annual youth mission trips there. Through the decades, land has been cleared and developed for a community center, now used for a preschool program that the parish’s Global Missions Group supports with annual grants. In addition, adult and youth mission trips installed solar panels to provide for the electrical needs for the center, and most recently, assisted in the development of a well and water treatment facility that gives the center income from the sales of potable water. Our youth learn the meaning of service to others and broaden their experience while building lasting and fulfilling relationships with the people of the Dominican Republic and with one another. ”

— *The Rev. Ruth Beresford, rector, Christ Church Christiana Hundred, Wilmington*

Two young people who participated in this year’s mission trip reflect upon their experiences:

by McKinley Jefferson

This year’s trip to the Dominican Republic by Christ Church Christiana Hundred’s youth group was filled with lots of fun and enjoyment. We visited Jalonga, a town in the eastern Dominican Republic, to work and help renew the town’s community school and church. The day we arrived, everyone who was new to the trip was very curious about what Jalonga was going to look like. As we made our way to the hotel after eating a quick lunch at a lovely restaurant near the airport, we were soon to see the houses. They were small and pleasant. Some were bigger than others. We arrived at the hotel and were all greeted by a very nice groundskeeper who made us feel so welcomed. He also later joined us in a game of manhunt that was played on the hotel grounds.

On our first day of work we painted the outside of the church. Some of the local children joined in and helped us get the job done. Then we painted boards in bright colors to build a fence. Another group cut the boards to make them perfect sizes for the fence. Then we screwed them all to a railing to assemble the fence. Other groups were digging holes and putting together flower beds while some groups were scraping the old paint off a wall that needed a new coat of paint. We attended the local pre-kindergarten graduation ceremony at the school, as well as catered and served lunch to the parents and children who graduated or attended the service.

Usually, after work, we would go to a beach or a pool to cool off and grab some lunch. The beaches were especially fun because of the cool vendors that would walk up and down trying to sell you kites, sunglasses, inner tubes, etc. The pool that we would normally swim at had a great lunch and a super fun water slide that everyone enjoyed at least once. One hot day we drove about an hour and a half to another beach which had a restaurant right by the water. The beach offered a great view of sailboats and palm trees, which was a nice way to relax from our days of work, and the opportunity to work on our tans.

One thing I especially liked about this trip was that all the meals we ate were family style, together. It was usually one long table where everyone could talk to one another. After dinner we would play pool or just talk to one another until it was time for worship. We had little “family” groups that we would break off into and chat about different topics of the day. Each family group led worship one night so everyone could have a chance to read and pray.

One day of the week we went to a local orphanage and played volleyball and kickball with all of the kids. We also went to the town’s community baseball field where mostly everyone participated in a fun game of baseball. God was present in the happiness of the kids and everyone who pitched in on this trip.

One memorable experience I had was on the second to last night of our trip. I was playing pool with some friends and a really fun song started playing on the speaker. Everyone started singing and we all had a good time. There was nothing to complain about or worry about. Whenever the local kids would ask to help us and we agreed, their faces would light up with joy.

I found peace in seeing the hard work that my friends and I had done for the community. I also found peace in the very relaxing outdoor showers that the resort had. I learned many things from this trip, such as always trying to be a happy and positive person and that having a loving attitude will go a long way. I also made some best friends and have some great memories that I took home with me.

by Sydney Ayers

We arrived at the Punta Cana airport after a long morning of traveling. We landed in the early afternoon, gathered our luggage, and made our way out of the airport. We met a bus that took us from the airport to our designated lunch spot. After lunch we had about a two-hour bus ride to our hotel. During the bus ride I took in the scenery of the towns and the people as we passed by. Many people were outside. The homes were smaller and simpler than those in my hometown. When we finally made it to our hotel, we were all glad to have arrived and to get settled in. That night we had our first dinner together and then followed up dinner with worship. It was a fun time to start to get to know one another.

Sunday morning we had breakfast at our hotel and made our way to church. After enjoying a beautiful service with people from the community, we had a bus ride to our lunch spot that was right near the beach. We had a great beach day and got to buy and see many cool items that were being sold by the locals. After a couple hours on the beach we made our way home to shower up, eat dinner, and worship.

Monday was our first day of work. We took a 20-minute bus ride to the school and church we had attended service at on Sunday. We started painting the church but then moved over to the school to work there. We then finished our work for the day and had lunch. After lunch we enjoyed the refreshing pool and had fun on the slides. We then went back to the hotel to get showered, eat dinner, and worship. The weekdays had a similar schedule. On Tuesday we played baseball in the local village and donated some sports equipment to the community. On Wednesday we visited an orphanage and had a nice tour. We all loved seeing the babies! We also got to play a game of kickball with the girls from the orphanage.

As the last workday approached, we thought about all of the work we had been able to complete at the school. We had created a colorful fence around the school and installed fans in the church. I saw God most while I was working. Especially when the kids would come up and help us in our work. They always wanted to help, no matter how hot it was, and they were so happy. I noticed that they always looked out for one another, showing how much they cared.

On the last day we got to see the pre-schoolers graduate, thanks to the hard work and support of the local community as well as the Christ Church community. Friday night we celebrated two of our group members' birthdays, which was a lot of fun. Then before we knew it, it was Saturday. It was time to leave the village and go back home. We had an eventful trip home, with a flight delay and an unplanned extra night in Punta Cana, but we knew everyone was praying for our safe arrival home.

I left the Dominican Republic with connections that I had created with the children in the village, my group members, and a lot of gratitude. I am so grateful for the opportunity to go to the Dominican Republic and experience such amazing things. I am also grateful for the things I have and the kind people I have in my life.

McKinley Jefferson is a sophomore at Ursuline Academy in Wilmington, Delaware. She has been a competitive swimmer her whole life. She found this trip rewarding and is looking forward to more service trips.

Sydney Ayers lives in Hockessin, Delaware, with her parents, brother, and sister. She is a sophomore at the Charter School of Wilmington, where she runs cross country, and plays basketball and soccer. She is active in the Eco Alliance club at school and enjoys volunteering.