

Hello all,

I want to begin by thanking each and every one of you for your generous donations. We could not have gotten to the Dominican without them. Thank you all also for keeping us in your thoughts and prayers, they really strengthened us and allowed us to carry out God's plan. This was an amazing trip and experience. I feel so blessed to have been able to go. I feel as though I was blessed just as much as the people we were sent to help.

When we arrived in the Dominican, the team was split up into two groups because we were to serve two different churches. We had a meeting with our Praying Pelican guides and our smaller groups in order to discuss our plans for the next couple of days.

My group was assigned to help out Pastor Gary Byrd's Church, Iglesia Bautista Vida Abundante. The first morning, Sunday, we traveled to the church in order to attend the service and get to know some of its members. There were only about 10 adults and 7 children there. These people had so much joy and love in their hearts. They welcomed us with open arms and embraced us, never having met us before. That morning we worshiped and praised the Lord together, as one voice. It is an absolutely amazing and encouraging experience to be singing and worshiping to the Lord in one language and having someone beside you in a completely different language singing and worshiping the Lord with the same words. God is so great, so big that He hears us praising Him as one.

Pastor Gary introduced himself and told us a little about how he and his family came to be at Iglesia Bautista Vida Abundante. He is an American missionary who has been living in the Dominican for a couple of years now. This is the second church that he and his family were called to be at. He talked about how encouraging it was for him and the church to have other believers come here.

The next morning my team and I traveled to a school with Pastor Gary, his wife, son, and daughters in order to host a VBS for the children in the community. Here at the VBS my dad and I helped share Bible stories with the children. The first day we read and acted out, with a few other team members, David and Goliath. With the help of our Praying Pelicans translator, Juliet, we spoke to the children about how the giant in their life was sin, pecado, but with Jesus we can overcome that sin, and the giant will fall. We played games with the children like duck duck goose, "pato, pato, ganso" and made crafts with them.

That afternoon we traveled back to the church in order to begin on our construction project for the week. We were working on a second story room on top of the church to be used as a new classroom. It was hard work, but seemed like nothing as we were joking around with the Dominican construction guys and having fun. They made fun of our choppy Spanish and crazy hand gestures, and we taught them some American traditions and games. By the end of the trip, it was amazing to see how much construction we had accomplished. Throughout the week we were reading a devotion in Nehemiah. In the same way that the wall was built up quickly and efficiently by each family working on a small section in the book of Nehemiah, our classroom was built. If everyone does something, seemingly small, it adds up and God can use those things to do something huge. We worked on the construction at the church everyday after VBS.

The second VBS morning we read the children the story of Zacchaeus. We sung them the well known American song about Zacchaeus, the wee little man, and Juliet helped us sing it in Spanish. We also sung a Spanish song roughly translated as, "I have a friend who loves me, his name is Jesus." We taught the children how Jesus is a friend to all. The children were connecting with us and becoming friends with us as well. We played more games, did more crafts, and heard more laughs.

The third day we read the children the story of the Prodigal son, and Pastor Gary's son, Cody, who is in his twenties, came and further discussed with the children the topic of salvation. At the end of this morning about 15 children wanted to know more about Jesus and are talking further with the people from the church about salvation.

It was a very hard goodbye to the children that morning as well as to the construction workers and members of the church that afternoon. We met at the church for a Wednesday night service and Zakk, one of our youth pastors gave the sermon, with the help of Juliet.

On the last full day in the DR we were led around by some of the locals, and explored three different waterfalls. The hikes to the waterfalls and the waterfalls themselves were so awesome. God has created such an amazing, beautiful world for us.

Overall this trip was a life changing experience and I could not have made it here without y'all. Thank y'all so much for your kindness and prayers. Attached are some photos of the trip, please enjoy! :)

Piper Meeker





