

Dominican Republic
Mission Discovery Trip
Diocese of Georgia
February 22 – 27, 2010

Monday, February 22

2:50 p.m. Arrive in Santo Domingo – Jet Blue 1717
4:00 p.m. Arrive at Bishop Kellogg Center –San Pedro
6:30 p.m. Dinner
7:30 p.m. Orientation On Diocese

Tuesday, February 23

7:30 a.m. Breakfast
8:30 a.m. Tour of Clinic
9:15 a.m. Buen Pastor
10:30 a.m. Santa Cruz at Santa Fe
11:30 a.m. San Gabriel – Consuelo
12:15 p.m. St. Matthews - Jalonga
1:30 p.m. Lunch
3:00 p.m. San Jose in San Andres Boca Chica
5:00 p.m. Santo Domingo – Hotel Mercure

Wednesday, February 24

7:30 a.m. Breakfast
8:15 a.m. Leave Hotel
9:00 a.m. Epiphany Church and Seminary
10:45 a.m. San Andres Church and School
12:00 p.m. San Pedro, San Pablo
12:30 p.m. San Felipe
1:30 p.m. Back to Hotel for lunch shopping, etc and free time
3:00 p.m. Meeting with Bishop at Diocesan Office

Thursday, February 25

7:00 a.m. Breakfast
7:30 a.m. Leave Hotel
10:00 a.m. Arrive in Azua
11:45 a.m. Leave Azua
1:00 p.m. Lunch at Rest Stop
2:30 p.m. San Matías
4:00 p.m. San Marcos
5:30 p.m. Arrive at Hotel

Friday, February 26

(Immanuel on the Hill to Join Us)
7:00 a.m. Breakfast

7:30 a.m.	Leave Hotel
9:45 a.m.	Children's Shelter – San Francisco
10:45 a.m.	Jesus Nazareno School and Church
1:00 p.m.	Lunch at Monte Transfiguration – Jarabacoa
2:15 p.m.	Leave Camp
4:00 p.m.	Bonao
5:00 p.m.	Leave Bonao
6:40 p.m.	Arrive at Hotel

Saturday, February 27

5:45 a.m. Leave for Airport

A Diary of the Mission Discovery Trip by Jim Drazdowski (Christ Episcopal Church, Valdosta GA)

February 23, 2010

Awoke at 5:49 AST (Atlantic Standard Time). Went downstairs and plugged in the coffee; did my daily readings and can now catch up with this writing.

Tar and I left Valdosta around 3:30 in the afternoon on Sunday (Feb. 21) heading towards Orlando. We stopped at one of the rest areas on the turnpike for food and gas and arrived at our hotel, AmeriSuites, a little after 8:30 p.m. Tar checked in and I parked the car. When I arrived in the lobby, I was greeted with “there goes the neighborhood,” by Kit Brinson, one of our fellow travelers. We talked for a little while and then Tar and I went up to our room to turn in for the night.

I awoke the next morning and made the coffee in the small coffee pot in the room. It was not weak coffee like most of them are. After waking up enough to get ready, I went down the hall to the continental breakfast and had some more coffee with Tar. Kit joined us and then Fred Richter also joined us. Finally, Frank and Victoria came down. We all chatted for a while and then caught the shuttle to the airport at 8 a.m.

We arrived at the airport and went to our line. Just as our group became the next in line, the group of youngsters in the next line were all being directed to different attendants, so we waited and talked some more. As they were finishing up the youth group, the staff started calling people for Montego Bay, which of course started Frank and me singing, “Aruba, Jamaica . . .” We let all the people behind us (yes, they were all going there) get in front, so we were in the back of the line again. At last we were checked in and headed through security with no problems, although that line was long and the TSA guy I was talking to while in line said it had been that way all morning.

When we arrived at our gates, we had just a little under 2 hours before departure. We walked around looking at and in the shops and kiosks or sat around reading and talking until time to get on the plane. We arrived in Santa Domingo, exchanged currency and went through customs. Bob Snow, an American missionary working in the Dominican Republic, was waiting for us and as we were heading out, Tar asked, “Where is Jay?”

Well, Jay was not around. He was supposed to get in 30 minutes before us. After checking with the airline, they said his flight was on time. The rest of the group waited inside, but I went outside to

smoke my pipe. When I went back in to get an update, Jay was coming through the line; his plane had been delayed in Atlanta.

We loaded up the van and headed to the Bishop Kellogg Conference Center where we arrived around 5 p.m. After settling in, we met in the conference room where Bob gave us each a folder with the itinerary for the week and a packet which had the history of the Episcopal Church in the Dominican Republic. After asking questions and receiving answers, we broke for supper.

Jay wanted to go to the beach, so he, Bob, Fred, and I walked down to the sea where we walked along the sidewalk. Then we headed back to the center, where we talked a little more and then went to bed.

Breakfast should be ready in a few minutes.

February 24, 2010, 9:57 p.m.

Today was supposed to be a relaxing day, but it didn't seem like it to me. First, we went to Epiphany and the seminary, then to San Andres' church and school, then to San Pedro y San Pablo, then to San Felipe, back to the hotel, out to lunch, back to the hotel, then to a meeting with Bishop Holquin, back to the hotel, then to Epiphany for services (in Espanol), then supper, and back to the hotel.

Yesterday (February 24) was just as busy. Our first visit was across the back street from the conference center to the clinic where we heard about the different things they do there. At 9:30 we loaded the van and headed to Buen Pastor (Good Shepherd) where we met Fr. Sandino, Sister Priscilla, and Sister Gabriella. They would like to see medical teams, construction teams, and Vacation Bible School teams come to their site. One of the construction projects they need is a wall for the basketball court. Fr. Sandino feels that the teams should do more services together. Most teams do morning and evening prayer together and one service with the community. He feels that there should be more inclusion for them and the community.

We then visited their preschool where their biggest need is scholarships for teachers in training. Next, we returned to the van and went to Santa Cruz at Santa Fe. They are in the third year of high school and have graduated 50 students. They would like to start a technical school. Ramon says they have the building but they must first have the equipment before the education department would license them. They want to do nursing as one of their programs. They would also like to put in a bakery to help train the workers.

For construction, they need help restoring the second story over the parish hall and the second story over one of the other buildings to use as a center for people to stay while they are doing other projects. They also need help in the social work area such as pastoral care, home care, counseling, etc.

On our way to San Gabriel we were delayed because of bicycle races. San Gabriel is in good shape and just needs a little maintenance. We then headed for La Gran Comision (the great commission) by a road cut through a cane field, but the road was blocked because they were working on it. As it was the only road there, we were unable to visit them, but Fr. Ramon says they need a church as they are still meeting in homes, but they have purchased land to build the church. He would also like to have a medical team and Vacation Bible School teams visit.

Our next visit was to San Jose in Boca Chico after lunch. They have an assisted living place where their biggest need is money for the residents. They also have another church in a sugar cane area where they can use a Vacation Bible School. After this, we headed to the hotel and checked in. Compared to where we've stayed before, we are in plush conditions. We went out for dinner and then back to the hotel.

After visiting Epiphany this morning, we went to San Andres where their main concern is

redoing rooms above one of their buildings or dorm rooms to have a place for work teams to stay and also have a conference center as there is not a place in this part of the city. They would like to start a micro business program where they train, counsel and loan money to people to start businesses where they are in groups so they can support each other. Other projects that Milton would like to see are water purification systems and continuing to repair houses damaged by hurricanes. In this program, they meet two requirements: they must own the land and help build the house. When the house is finished, they sign a contract saying they will not sell it.

We then went to San Pablo y San Pedro (St. Paul and St. Peter) where they are in the process of building a church. This area is served by a transitional deacon, Adolpho. Their current church is in a former house. We also visited some of the businesses that were started in the micro business program. From there, it was back to the hotel for lunch.

Then in the afternoon, we met with Bishop Holquin. His vision is to have all the infrastructure of churches, schools, and vicarages in good shape and self sufficient before his time in office is done. He would like to see nutrition centers for children set up in the poorer areas such as Azua. To do this, they need to get rooms and provide food. The program includes education as well as feeding. The program is for small children. He would like to see a dormitory built near Jimani near the Haitian border for work groups crossing the border, and he would like to see a school there.

He wants to complete the churches under construction. He would like schools in Azua and in La Barkito (San Pedro y San Pablo). They have churches and/or deaneries that sponsor all the scholarships for the children, but there are schools where not all the scholarships are paid. In Boca Chico they would like cabins for housing work groups and to use as a conference center.

Currently, they have now established a policy that each church must support part of the salary and benefits of the priest. Only three churches in the Dominican Republic are not missions. They are currently averaging the establishment of two churches a year. He would like to have more clergy. Education seems to be his first priority and in order to have schools in many communities, they must first have churches. After the meeting, some walked back to the hotel and some rode in the van. After a brief time, some went to a church service at Epiphany, walked back, stopping to eat dinner at Independence Square.

February 25, 2010

Today I will try to write as we go. Our first trip is to Azua in Azua. Here they are meeting in a house. They are singing to us when we get in the house. With the exception of Fr. Alvaro and three men, the rest are women and children, mostly children because some are working or going to school. After a welcome from Fr. Alvaro, three of the older children also welcomed us and wished us to come back soon and spend many days with them.

We then walked to the new church that they are building. The congregation sang the entire time as we walked. The church has the first floor roughed in with still more work to be done. They continued to sing during the whole time we were there. We were joined by more of the community as the singing continues. We prayed for Fr. Alvaro and his ministry and then for a young girl whose mother says she is not doing well. We then prayed for others as a group that were not feeling well. Then each of our priests, Tar, Frank, Kit and Jay laid hands on and blessed each person here. Many of what looked like older teenagers brought up babies to be blessed.

And, of course, when Kit gathered a small group of children to take their picture, it quickly grew to a large group. And the same for Frank's photo. We then all gathered against the altar and Bob took a picture of us with the community with Frank's camera. We left the church and went to visit a house which was rebuilt after the hurricane. This is one of the types of projects that Milton told us

about. Reconciliation is the name of the church in Barrio La Bombita.

We are in Bonao stopped in Polla Rey (Chicken King) for lunch.

Now, back on the road, we are in San Matias. There is a school here and while we are waiting for the administrator, we are sitting in the shade enjoying the breeze. It is next to a playground with seesaws and a merry-go-round that is in front of the school. All the scholarships here are provided by the Church of the Ascension in Clearwater, Florida. The school started in 2000 and now goes through high school. They received an award for best school in the province. The politicians have made promises about the public school and so the school as had its lowest growth rate this year of only 25%. They are building another building to house the high school. Angelina is principal' helper and was in the first class here.

The church is built in the same style as most of the churches. They have a "master plan" and they use that for all their churches now, varying only in size and some details. The new building's first floor is complete and roughed in although the floors are still dirt and need to be dug out with rock put in as then "paved".

In Santana, Azua – Reverenda Ercillia Camela

We are now back in the van and on the way to San Marcos which Bob says is the largest church and school in the Diocese. Fr. Gustavo Uribe – today is day of flags in San Cristobal. They are working on updating electrical system and putting panels on each building. There is one main panel and it feeds all the subpanels. That is slowly changing. They have three preschool classes which meet in the morning. They hope to have a day long program before much longer. They feed the children in the building also, so it is self-contained.

As always, there is a basketball court. The original church building, built 50 years ago, is now the library with computers. Fr. Phillip Wheton is the man the library is named after. Fr. Rosario has two other churches and also teaches canons at the seminary. They have all the buildings they need here. Now they are working on updating things like the electrical system and a network for the computers so his main emphasis is on improving what they have.

One of his other churches has no land so it has no building. He wishes to have one built. They always need vacation Bible school, and they have from 60 – 120 kids. He would also like VBS at the other churches. Now the van heads back to the hotel.

February 26, 2010

Loaded the bus along with the group from Virginia to visit the children's shelter in San Francisco. At 9:30 we stopped at a place for a 10 minute break. At 10:24 we arrived at San Francisco. Fr. "Holy" Lilly is in charge of El Buen Samaritan (The Good Samaritan). The ages of the children are from six months to six years. We are meeting with the children from three to five years old. There seem to be around 30 of them. Fr. says there are 79 children total at the orphanage. The church is roughed in with no progress since last March.

Now we are on our way to Jesus Nazareno. We just passed a hotel that the diocese uses for housing the work teams. We have arrived at Jesus Nazareno. Right now they need a science lab. When they finished the third floor, they thought that would solve the space problem. The next year it was full. The Fr Holys real name is Hipolito Fernandez Reina. At 11:50, we are back on the road on the way to the camp.

We arrived at the camp to meet with Fr. Carlos. At all the schools we visited before, Bob has said, "such and such a church or deanery is paying all the scholarships." Here he told both groups that Tar's group pays for all the scholarships here.

Back on the bus, we headed to Bonao and Padre Vicente. We have stopped at the same place as

before to wait for Fr. Vincente to lead us. We were led to his house. He has five communities he works with in addition to Bonaio. Fr. Vincente's two oldest children gave copies of their report cards to Jim Snow whose church supports them in school.

His technical school is growing. He is getting computers and getting ready for a chef and nursing program. The academy is inactive right now, but because of the equipment, they are paying a guard. It is expected to reopen in March when the funds come in.

He is celebrating mass at a shelter in one community and houses in two others. He has interest at another community but no time and is looking for additional help such as a deacon to help. He is hoping to build three more stories at the church and has the promise of two stories being rented out. He will have those 5 communities on March 14 when Bishop Holquin is here in a "parade," as well as 33 families whose homes have been rebuilt and a family friend that the orphanage supported. They will also have a French medical team.

The orphanage is run by a Puerto Rican couple who came and when looking for land had 10,000 square meters donated for the orphanage. They are looking for teachers to come and help with the academy.

We are back on the road and heading for Santa Domingo. We will soon be back at the hotel.

February 27, 2010

When we got to the hotel lobby a little before 6 a.m. to check out, Frank informed us that he thinks he left his jacket which contained his passport in the van. So we called Bob and headed by the Kellogg Conference Center to check. And there it was in the van, but there was no way to get into it. So, we left Frank there and went on to the airport.

March 1, 2010

Everyone is safely back. Frank caught a later flight and arrived Sunday morning in Jacksonville around 12:30 a.m. where Victoria picked him up.