

ALTO



REFORMED CHURCH

ARTICLES

Jamaica: Was it worth the cost?

By Kevin Van Wyk

On June 18th, 25 of us returned from Jamaica after a week of cross-cultural experience. I've had numerous people stop me to ask how the trip was. I've given a variety of responses according to what memory happened to be in my brain.

But, each time I felt I was really answering a different question... **“Was it worth the cost?”** I am quite frugal. I don't like spending money on vacations, clothes, or food. So spending hundreds of dollars for one week in Jamaica is hard for me to justify. I can't help but think they would be better served with a check and prayer.

So, let me share some reasons to go, and then I'll share some reasons I never want to go again. Keep reading and you'll get some thoughts from Jessa and Doug on the trip, too.



Reasons to Go...

1. For me this was a matter of obedience. Mat. 28:19 assumes we will go and make disciples. Many years ago I was convicted by Bill Bright's message which challenged believers to have a divine call to stay. The default should be for us to go. With that reminder and a nudge from Jessa and Zack, I figured I should

pray about going. God's voice was clear; "Go." I asked multiple times for a different answer, but got the same response. So, for me this was a matter of obedience and the question of value to the Caribbean Christian Center for the Deaf (CCCD), myself, or others with me was not the issue.

2. We did bless CCCD. We made huge improvements to the Knockpatrick campus, befriended deaf students, and encouraged the staff and missionaries. With 25 of us we got a lot of projects done that would have taken weeks for others to do. We power washed and painted 3/4



of the missionary dorm, painted the cement support walls along the driveway, painted a welcome sign on the wall, made repairs to cement walls in pig pens, cleaned and organized a storage shed, and built new backboards for basketball.

Maybe even more significantly, we befriended the students. Some were far better at communicating than others, but the friendly competition with older kids and fun activities with littler ones was love in action. I also believe the conversation with Eva, the missionary host, and the two college interns was helpful. They were weary, yet our discussions and support for them made a difference.

3. We learned something... well, a lot of things. We learned about signing, poverty, self-sustaining efforts in missions, God's working in the hearts of deaf students, patience, strange foods, international travel, that lizards do bite, and much more. There are stories and lessons in each of these. For me, two stand out. First, was the creation of Deaf Can Coffee as a coffee shop staffed by deaf students who are trained and now sought after by other coffee shops. This was inspiring to see and taste. Second, was the development of patience in me. I like my task list and being able to check things off. The message we heard from Eva was to enjoy the relationships. Church will start late, meals will start late (lunch was often after 2pm), so enjoy time with people.



Hopefully, this gives some helpful answers as to why we should continue to

send groups on short-term mission trips. **Now, let me share the underbelly of missions that makes me want to stay home.**

1. I hate the stress of flying. There were confusing signs and chaotic crowds from the start, long winding lines, TSA questioning our Bibles in suitcases, an angry Jamaican customs officer who hated everything I did, and a complete search of everything in my suitcase just before getting on the plane. Seriously, they removed everything from my luggage, which was meticulously packed to fit, only to say, "Hurry up, you're going to miss your flight." They helped throw everything in and smashed it shut. I was a bit annoyed. I suppose I learned some patience and kindness in all that.

2. Lizards, cockroaches, wasps, and ants... I comforted myself, thinking the lizards are at least eating the spiders and mosquitoes! You should ask Doug about the wasps, Isaac about the biting lizard, and Jack about the ants. I am more grateful now for a clean, pest-free home.



3. One more to share for now... food. Now in all fairness, it was excellent. Several times I thought I could be paying \$30 for this meal. (That is US dollars, not Jamaican.) I never went hungry and they always had peanut butter and jelly. (Guavah jam, actually, and it was really good!) The only reason this made my list was because of the surprise Orange Scotch Bonnet Pepper (known as the Jamaican Hot Pepper) which I ate. That baby was 40 times hotter than a jalapeño and similar to a Habanero according to the Scoville Heat Units measurements. No one else seemed to get one, so it must have been a special treat God decided to bless me with. I learned to rejoice in suffering.

So, was it worth going?

Absolutely. It was not a vacation or something I would choose of my own desire, but it was good. I learned a ton and can support and pray for CCCD with far greater understanding and compassion. I hope you consider going.

Also, a big thank you goes to all who supported us in prayer and financially! Your gifts made a difference in the world and in the heart of many!

A Prayer: Lord, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
O'er mountain, or plain, or sea;
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,
I'll be what you want me to be.
It may not be on the mountain's height, Or over the stormy sea;
It may not be at the battle's front
My Lord will have need of me;
But if by a still, small voice He calls
To paths I do not know,
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in Thine,
I'll go where You want me to go." By Mary Brown

Reflections from Jamaica

By Doug Shotsky

Many have asked, "How was your Jamaica trip?", and I have found it difficult to put into words in order to explain all that happened, all that God did, and is doing. But, I wanted to take this opportunity to share some of my post-trip reflections because there's so much to say.

First, I'm reminded of how BIG God is. The same amazing God that is leading and guiding us here, is working in the hearts, minds, and spirits of the people of Jamaica to redeem them from eternal damnation, and to provide for all of their needs here on earth. Nearly 65 years ago, God placed on the hearts of an American/Canadian couple who were deaf, to go begin a work in Jamaica. Many years later, team after team, and missionary after missionary, have come to serve and work little by little to develop a ministry that now provides education, job training, and most importantly discipleship to the deaf people of Jamaica. Without the existence of CCCD there literally would be thousands of people in Jamaica without an opportunity for education and an opportunity to "hear" the Gospel and live for Jesus.

Secondly, the molding that was done on the hearts of those who went and served could not have happened by watching a video about these things. It is a life-changing experience to go into such an impoverished culture and realize just how cushy we really do have it in America. I am certainly thankful for all we have here, but we no doubt take it for granted. In my own life, and in the lives of the teens from our group, a new perspective on life was molded into our hearts by the Potter.

Finally, (only for the sake of the article) there are so many unsung heroes in this world that sit in the background day after day, but are doing the great work of the Lord without much recognition. There was an older woman who was the cook of the school that had been there for over 30 years. There was a 48 year old man working on the farm who began school at CCCD at age 11, graduated, and has been there since. There were several couples who were deaf that had graduated from the school, gotten married, and continued working with the next generation of children. There are men and women who live on site with the kids week after week, year after year, in order to chaperone and provide the love and care they need; many of these men and women do not see their families for weeks at a time.

Thank you to all who prayed, gave, supported and loved us as we were able to serve and be changed more and more into the image of Christ. We continue to do this now as we have returned because God wants us to do all we do, wherever we are, for His glory!

Jamaica Update

By Jessa Ter Beest

“If the Deaf were considered their own people group, they would make up the largest unreached people group in the world.” This is a quote I have heard numerous times while working with Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf that grabs at my heart every time. While in Jamaica I have heard story after story of deaf students who are ignored, abused, or thought of as less-than human while they live at home just because they can’t hear and families refuse to learn sign language. So many of the students expressed how sad they were to head home for the summer because CCCD is where they feel belonging, where they have people willing to communicate with them in their own language and give them hope in Jesus for a beautiful future full of life and

purpose. As soon as we arrived at the school we understood our reason for being there. Yes, the work projects were helpful and important, but showing Jesus' love to the students and staff even with our limited sign language was the greater purpose. The CCCD students thrived in teaching our team sign language and giggling at our attempts to use it, but it could be seen on their faces just how much they appreciated people wanting to communicate with them in their language.



One of the coolest things to happen during the week was the relationship created between a handful of our boys and the deaf pig farmer, Shandall. Without being asked or coaxed, a few of our boys would wake up at 5:30am and head down to the farm (attached to the school - cows, pigs, chickens, coffee, yams, etc) to feed the pigs and power wash the pens. They worked alongside Shandall while simultaneously working on their sign language or attempting to communicate by pointing or demonstrating when they couldn't figure out the signs. By the end of the week the boys were having our team sign an Alto Reformed t-shirt to give him and Shandall stood up in front of our group to thank the boys for all of their help - something that the missionary Eve A tells us he has never done before. He was not only thankful for their help on the farm, but for the genuine smiles and stories shared and for the boys spending time encouraging him.

Through this trip we were pushed to live out our purpose of living for God's glory no matter where we are. Our purpose to encourage those around us and those who are different from us doesn't change because we left Jamaica. Our eyes have been opened to the world of sign language and deaf culture, but also to the unreached people here around us. How can we better meet people where they are - whether that's through their own language or culture? Jamaica forced us out of our comfort zones, but will we be willing to force ourselves out of them right here in America? Let's pray for God to start stretching us no matter where we are - even if that prayer is a little scary.

Thank you so much to everyone who prayed for us and helped us fund the trip. We are eternally grateful because this trip was truly life-changing and eye-opening for everyone that went.

Standing on God's Promises and Following His Plans

By Adrea Daane

That was the theme for our week of VBS this year where we took a trip through the book of Genesis, focusing on the stories of Creation, Noah, Abram, Jacob, and Joseph. Each story gave us an amazing example of God's promises found in the Bible and the plans He has for each person he's created...and that means us too! The words of Psalms 33:4 "For the word of the Lord holds true, and we can trust everything He does" rang out throughout the church everyday, helping us focus on how God gave us the Bible as his truth and we can trust in the plans He has for us.



We had 135 different kids come through our doors and 60 volunteers who made it all possible. God was working in each one who attended. Our student helpers were amazing, making connections with their kids that built throughout the week. So many of the "littles" were looking up to their "bigs" all week, they were making an impact even if they didn't know it. Our adult volunteers kept our stations running smoothly and were always willing to step in or have a conversation with the kids.



We collected just over \$1000 this week to help with the costs of providing bagged lunches at the Community Table. Our week is August 15-19. During the week we provide a bagged lunch to the kids of the community. It's a great opportunity for the kids and youth of the ARC to serve.

A big thank you to all those who made the week possible!!

MESSAGES

Thanks to all those who remembered me with cards, visits, and prayers while I

was in the hospital and at home.

-Marilyn Westerveld

EVENTS

Mark your calendar...

Alto Reformed Church
July 2022

July 17 **Summer JAM**
All 3 year olds - incoming 5th graders are invited to join us for Summer JAM (Jesus and Me) during the service. Kids will be invited to the basement before the sermon starts for games, activities or crafts focused around a Bible lesson just for kids (split into PreK & elementary groups).

July 17 **Summer Celebration**
Join us at 5-7pm at McCune Park. Invite your friends and join us for food, fellowship, bounce houses, kickball, and a homerun derby! If you would be willing to bring a pan of bars, please sign-up at the Information Center.

July 22 **Youth to Dells Waterpark**
The Middle and High Schoolers are invited to join us for a day of fun in the Dells.

July 24 **Men's Golf Outing**
Join us for a fun afternoon of golf on Sunday, July 24th at 3:30pm at The Rock Golf Club in Waupun. 9 holes of golf (including cart) + meal = \$40. Sign-up individually or as a group at the information desk or by contacting Joel by July 17th. If you'd rather not golf, but still want to join in you're invited to join us for the meal, just talk to Joel Bruins.

For detailed information:
Call 920.346.5505 or email office@altoreformedchurch.org

NEWS

Informational Meeting – On Sunday, July 10th there will be a meeting at the end of the service to provide information and answer questions on the proposed sanctuary ceiling and HVAC projects. There will then be a congregational meeting held on Sunday, July 31st at 10:45am to vote on this project. Project information will be provided via email and church mailboxes on July 10th.