

St. Joseph's Mission Trip – 2019

St. Joseph's Episcopal Church's
Mission to the Florida
Panhandle for Hurricane
Michael recovery





March 17, 2019

Commissioning and Send Off tonight!

- Dear wonderful family of St. Joe's and beyond,

On October 10th, 2018, Hurricane Michael came ashore in the Florida Panhandle at only one mile per hour under a Category 5 storm. The devastation remains for the good people there and our Mission Team is led to help as we can.

Seventeen of us were commissioned and sent on our way this night at our 5pm Celtic Healing Service. The only way our team could be living out the 'yes' to this call is because of the support of St. Joseph's and its extended community. You have supported us in our bake sales, Lucille's bad to the Bone night, raffle, cash donations, Lowe's gift cards, Italian dinner, working the stand at Roger Dean's Spring Training, and your ongoing Prayer (!) and we give great thanks for you.

We will leave in the early morning and you go with us. We will be true to the vow we took this night – to see as Jesus sees, work as Jesus works....

Thank you for the privilege of serving in your holy name, O Christ,
Rev. Wendy and the Mission Team

March 18, 2019

Always hope...



Early Easter...

We made it safe and sound to our hotel in Panama City and we are all what's called 'a good tired'. As we drove into the area we visited twelve potential work sites. This picture was captured by Carrie Guthrie at one home and is really a beautiful symbol to begin our week of giving hope. There is always hope even in the midst of such devastation. Always hope.

Tomorrow morning after our prayer circle and breakfast, we'll sort out all of the projects, make our supply lists, and then set out to purchase them and begin work. Meanwhile, Joan Therein and Joan Fox will be out ahead of us serving at Anchorage Children's Home doing art work with the youth there. Anchorage is an emergency shelter for kid's age 10-17 who have been removed from their homes for one reason or another.



This is the home of Amanda, a teacher's aide who works at the Center School. She has no choice but to continue to live here. She's on our list to help among the others. She was smiling and so grateful to be alive.

And we are grateful to be able to be here. More soon when not so tired.

2 thoughts on "Always hope..."

1.  Martygirl says:

March 18, 2019 at 12:24 Pm

Thankful to read that you've arrived safely! The photos bring tears to my eyes – I know this team will impact all you meet and all you accomplish – May God bless your mission! Onward dear friends!!

1.  Wendy Tobias says:

March 19, 2019 at 2:29 Am

big hug

Monday moments



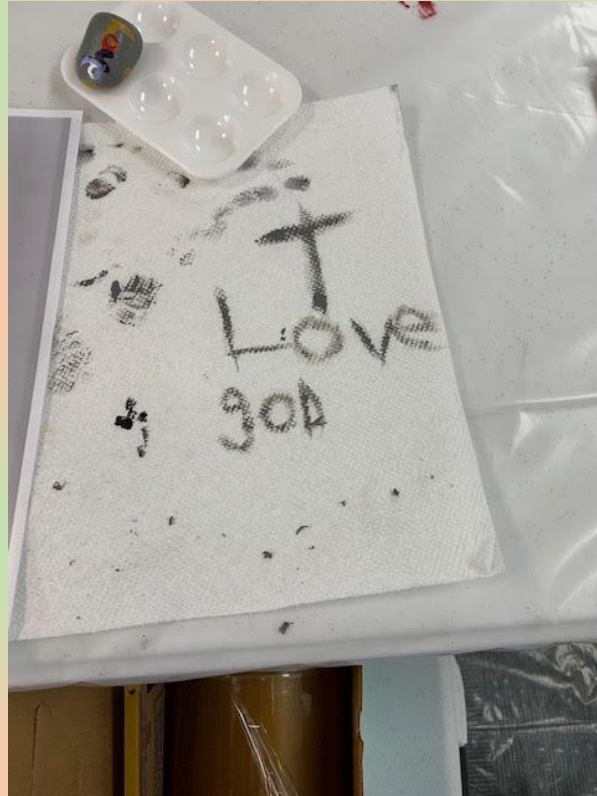
Thanks to a contact through Holy Nativity Episcopal Church & School, this is the emergency shelter for youth ages 10-17 where we are helping this week through art. Some of them actually rode out the storm in the shelter. They've been through so much in their young lives.



Helping to set up the art room.



Ready to go...



While Cody, 15, was trying to decide what to paint on his canvas, he wrote this on a paper towel. One youth named Nick balked at the idea of doing art and then with Joan T's inimitable way, he was all in and is creating beautiful art. Another child wants to play the cello and copied a picture of Yo Yo Ma playing.. Others hummed along. To cello music.

Meanwhile...

... the rest of us began our work with the teachers from St. Andrew's Elementary School, which, as you may remember, is the **public** Title One Center School for behaviorally challenged Bay County youth. Also, as a result of our connection with Holy Nativity Episcopal, we were put in touch with Jackie, the social worker at St. A's, who told us that 70% of the teachers there were left without inhabitable homes after the storm. Many are still not back home. They are on spring break this week so we are working with them to reclaim some semblance of order to their world. The devastation here remains horrific. Mind you, Hurricane Michael hit on October 10th! These teachers give of their heart and soul to these kids and are gifted in how they serve our world.

Monday was Amanda's day. She is a third grade teacher's aide who lives at the poverty level. Childlike in her spirit, she tells us she's no 'grumpy Gus' and is grateful to be alive having ridden out this monstrous storm alone in her trailer which now, really, should be condemned. She has nowhere else to go. She told us she became a Christian that day and was never so scared in her life. A single parent of two, both of

her parents and her 36 yr old husband died within the last seven years. Oh, and her pump broke so she has no running water. She never misses work.





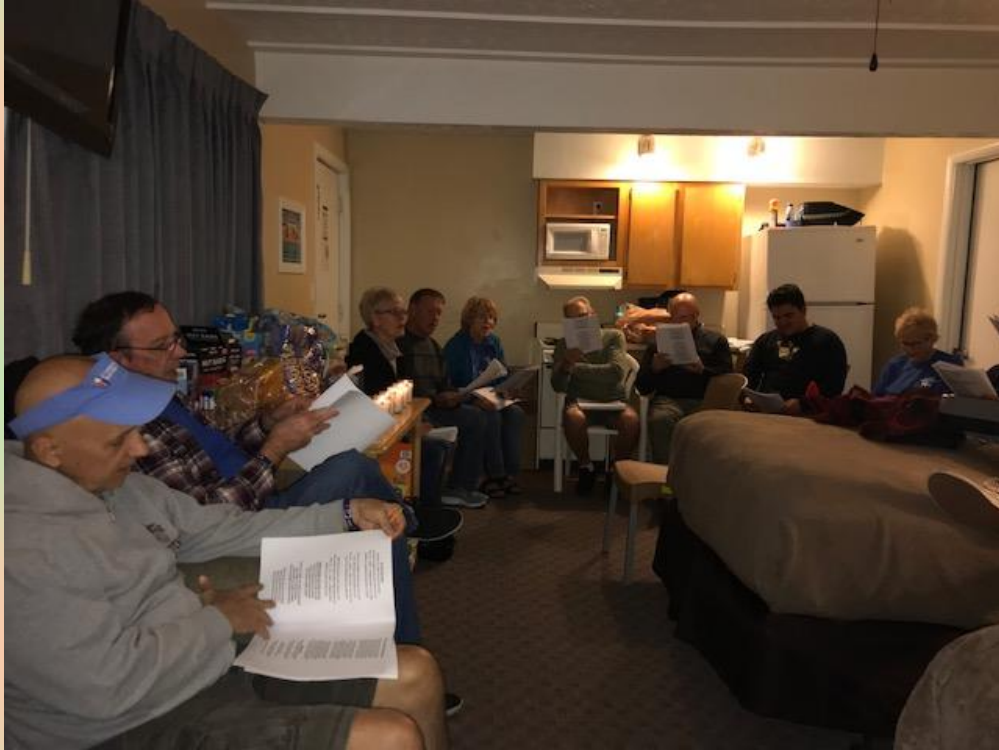


...and Joan T's artwork continues: a few marigolds to give Amanda cheer.

Back at the hotel, we continue to enjoy the culinary gifts of Ben who has been preparing hearty breakfasts and dinners for us. On our mission trips our morning and evening prayer services and grace are led by a different prayer team. We can usually meet outside in a circle with candles but it is COLD here to our little South Florida bones.. So: we are meeting in the Tiki Bar at 8am every day (they don't open until

10am, so no worries parents) And at night, because it's also Spring Break here at the hotel, we have been meeting in Rev. Wendy's room. Today's prayer team, Jerry, Steve, Wayne, & Vicki led us in movement and beautiful prayer. Our circles continue with sharing God moments from our day, organization, and lots of laughter.





Everywhere we go trees are just snapped like twigs and debris still piles high. We give thanks for a great full day of work!

March 19, 2019

Reality and renewal – Tuesday







To give you a glimpse of what we saw in the last few days, the pictures above are indicative of the devastation. 70% of the forests and trees are down. There's now a real danger in the potential for forest fires. Word has it there's a bill underway for funding to clean up the forests. We hope so. Meanwhile, the people are in such need too and insurance and aide have been so bogged down they tell us.

We began our day with a beautiful prayer time from our leaders, Josh, Anthony, and Uncle Bob (to distinguish him from our other Bob, Bob Leneve).



Tiki Bar, Peace Sign, and Prayer... gotta love it.

After our morning circle, Ben served us a great breakfast and we split up into four places:

1: First site was finishing up at Amanda's (we got her a tarp for her leaking roof and there was a bit to be secured)

2: Second site was work at Holy Nativity Church to clean up their playground and clear away roots and old plastic, & paint the swingset. Remember, they've taken in 270 students from the school campus. Wish we'd taken a before shot. This is the after shot and, believe me, it was a mess with mulch all over this area and tons of roots everywhere. Barbara, Kay, Bobbie, Vicki, and I worked hard on this. They'll come back from Spring Break to a much nicer area.



3: Uncle Bob and crew went to teacher Ina's house and began work there cleaning up and restoring a fence. We'll go back there tomorrow to help more.

4: Joan T, Joan F, and Susan went back to the shelter and had a very different day. The kids were not in a good place and yet our team persevered. They were invited for lunch and it was then they really bonded with the youth. They began to share their stories, their hopes, their troubles. A testimony to the trust established yesterday.

Went to Home Depot to pick up concrete for the fence at the shelter and they've set up tents to accommodate all of the construction needs. Still. Said roofing stuff was the hot item a few months ago and now the rush is on for dry wall and wood & concrete for fences (like we were getting). They were really tired.



Anthony getting ready to start the fence



Uncle Bob with Wayne's Mighty Shovel



Steve ready to go

Had a great evening prayer and reflection of our God moments, of which there were many. Throughout our conversation a theme ran through of how resilient these people are... how grateful they are as so very many of them rode out the storm and lived to tell.

We all turn in with grateful hearts ourselves... that we are privileged to serve in this sacred way.

March 21, 2019

Shelter work and gifts for two – a wonderful beginning of spring :)

We started our day, as always with our prayer team on this day we honor St. Cuthbert. Joan Fox gave us a beautiful history of his life and Bobbie & Carrie guided us in prayer.

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Two man auger for our fence posts
at the Shelter



Donna haulin' that concrete.



Vicki at lunch

And at Ina's we cleaned out her shed and her back yard. Ina is a teacher at St. Andrew's school and is the crisis manager. She is a saint in that she cares for these behaviorally challenged kids AND works at the Shelter as well. In addition to this she has taken several people into her home just because they needed a place to stay. Days before the storm she was preparing to move and had packed boxes and put them in her shed. And then Hurricane Michael came to visit in a horrific way. She and six others rode out the storm in her house because they didn't have the finances to leave and nowhere else to go. The house she was moving to was demolished in the storm. Most of her belongings were ruined. We helped her haul most of it to the curb from her backyard shed seen below this post.







Photos found! She was so happy.





Taking out trash so we could move the container still filled with water



Bob Leneve and the beginning of our pile



Kay haulin' trash

Ina was happy to receive the handmade clothes from our Sassy Sewers for the school. They have many needy children at their school and they will be thrilled to have such beautiful clothes.



In the afternoon, while one crew worked at the Shelter on the fencing another went to Marialice's house and finished a fence for her. Her daughter, Kimber, was watching her place for her and was so excited. She was going to buy some chairs and flowers and surprise her mom.



And before dinner, Joan T and Susan were getting ready for the art projects they and Joan F, will do at the Shelter tomorrow.



We ended our day with prayer and sharing God moments sharing and are noticing that even in the midst of such devastation, there is beauty everywhere in the people and in nature if we are mindful. Always there is beauty in God's world.



Sunset from our hotel.



At Ina's

March 22, 2019

Another gift of a day – another day to help – Thursday



The photo you see above was taken by us, obviously, and is a scene far too common here. This is greater than five (!) months post- hurricane Michael. People are still waiting for their insurance checks, or they didn't have insurance, or the insurance didn't cover the full amount, or covered a measly portion or, or, or... Lines at Lowe's and Home Depot seem to go on forever.

Our prayer team today was Barbara, Kay, and Bob Leneve and they set a beautiful tone for us in the morning.

Bob and crew set out for Ina's house to continue work on her fence and shed. We'll finish that up on Friday.

The rest of the crew worked at the Shelter (Anchorage) both inside and out. Joan and Susan worked inside with the youth. Two of the young people had run away. They found one and brought him back but another is still missing. Those with whom Joan and Susan were able to work really engaged today.



Our budding cellist copying a pic of Yo Yo Ma



From Monday...



And the rest of us worked outside on the fences and pump house shelter.



How many Episcopalians does it take...?



Wayne at work



Jerry, Carrie, and Anthony at the pump house





We're getting there



Gate maker Uncle Bob







Susan cleaning up after Uncle Bob



Our new friend, Vickie

Jerry hitching a ride back to the hotel...



After a fantastic dinner by chef Ben, we met for our prayer circle and sharing inside (still cold here!). Barbara read a beautiful poem her mother had written in 1948 called 'Why Can't We?' posing the perspective of acceptance and unity for all God's people. Thank you, Barbara. We are certainly seeing that opportunity here.



Kay listening as Barbara reads her mother's 1948 poem

March 23, 2019

#850 Strong



Our work of art

Throughout this area you'll see the above slogan as these good people rebuild. 850 is the area code here. Our creative prayer team led us in a morning prayer exercise where we each began with a piece of the above numbers or letters or hashtag. We were then asked to write a word or phrase, or several words that described our week or God moment. We then found our partners to complete each one and then spelled out the phrase. Joan T painted the canvas with this beautiful sunrise ocean scene and the team glued the pieces in place. Pretty wonderful, yes?

We finished up today at Ina's house and at the shelter with the kids and the fences outside. Another day of great work:



Ina's new fence



Her shed, ready to be re-built now.



Tie dye t-shirts drying





One youth's dragon & meteors...



Shelter fence...



Finished!



Wayne's cool bracelet



Barbara dancing...







Such is the spirit here...

Thank you, Panama City, for your resilience and for welcoming us to do God's work here. Our prayers are with you!