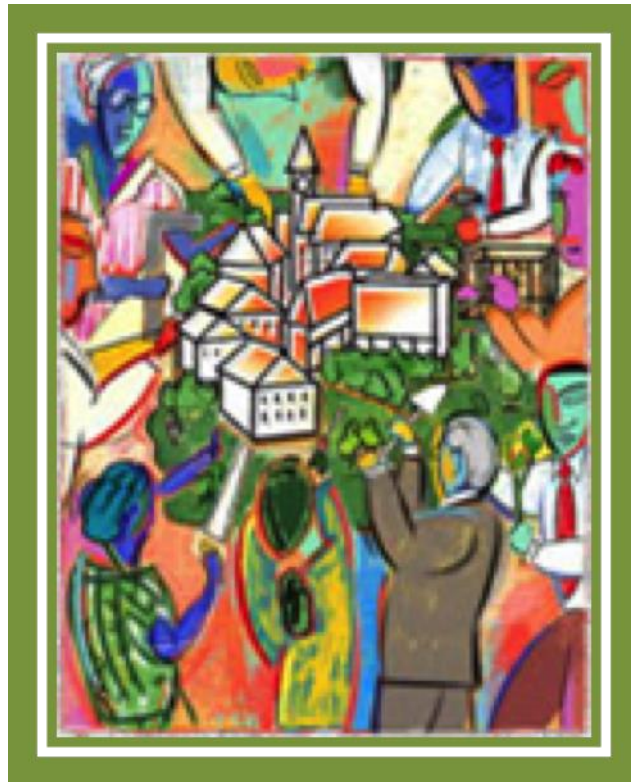




## *Rebuilding Puerto Rico Group Leaders' Guide*



Contact us at:

[uccdisaster.puertorico@gmail.com](mailto:uccdisaster.puertorico@gmail.com)

*“Un testimonio radical de acompañamiento” ¡Únete!*  
*“Witness to radical unity” Join us!*

## **THE STORM**

During the month of September 2017, Hurricanes Irma and Maria delivered devastating blows to Puerto Rico, resulting in one of the largest and most complex disaster response and recovery effort in U.S. history. Hurricane Irma skirted the northern coast of the Island from September 6-7, 2017 as a Category 5 storm, causing significant flooding, regional power and water outages, and other impacts to the Island's infrastructure. Exactly thirteen days later and before Irma's response operations concluded, Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico on September 20, making a direct strike as a strong Category 4 storm and causing widespread devastation and destruction across the entire island.

Maria tracked east-to-west across the Island leaving a path of destruction. Within a matter of hours, 100% of Puerto Rico's population, economy, critical infrastructure, social service network, healthcare system, and even the Government became casualties of the storm. As such, Maria caused massive infrastructure and property damage and loss of life. 100% of the island lost power, leaving residents with no Internet or phone service and in countless cases no access to potable water.

Within days Puerto Rico received a Federal Disaster Declaration qualifying it for Federal assistance and hundreds of relief organizations descended upon Puerto Rico to help alleviate the emergency needs across the island. Over 6 months later many parts of the island still remain without power and/or are working off an unreliable grid that has frequent outages. The total losses across the island have been estimated in the billions of dollars and though much money has been pledged to the reconstruction efforts, significant challenges remain especially within the interior mountainous regions.

## **THE INVITATION FROM LA IGLESIA EVANGELICA UNIDA DE PUERTO RICO**

**“For we are laborers together with God; ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building.”**

1 Corinthians 3:9 (KJV)

People of God, our island of Puerto Rico is fighting against the massive devastation caused by Hurricane Maria. There are parts of the island that have run out of water and electricity, where the roads are impassable, and where there are people who cannot live in their homes. Eight long and agonizing months have passed, and it will still be a long time before our island is fully restored. It is possible that parts of Puerto Rico will never be fully restored.

My sisters and brothers in Christ, our neighborhood communities are not in good condition. Fortunately, our church is one of the first to respond to raise up our communities. Even though our financial resources are scarce, we have developed a plan of charitable relief. Together with many different groups of neighbors and civic organizations, we have joined forces to help raise up our country, and to begin to put the pieces back together.

Our pastoral staff and the members of our local congregations, hand in hand with all of our neighbors are working together right now. Working together we are clearing debris from our roads. Working together with restaurants we are helping to feed people for free. Working together we are cleaning, rebuilding and repairing houses. Reaching out together the people have opened their homes and businesses to offer shelter to those who have lost their homes.

The people of Puerto Rico are strong. We are working hard together to overcome the devastation and rebuild our home, but there are so many needs.

That is why groups of volunteers coming from our sister United Church of Christ are such a blessing. Together, we can make a difference in helping to raise up our country. There are still hundreds of thousands of homes that need to be repaired. They are waiting for you.

*"Let everything that breathes sing praises to the Lord! Praise the Lord! (Psalm 150: 6)*

To praise the Lord in this time and place:

We need people to wash woodwork, scrape, sand, and paint.

We need people to come and feed the workers.

We need people who know how to repair furniture.

We need people who can empty cabinet shelves and drawers.

We need people who can use a screwdriver and hammer.

We need people who can climb a ladder.

We need people who are willing to scrub floors and stoves.

We need people who will come and say, "What can I do?"

There is a job you can do: Yes, YOU. Will you volunteer to work and be with us in Puerto Rico? We will be here to welcome you and to find just the right job for YOU.

Thank you so much for helping. We will all be blessed by your presence, cooperation, and hard work.

Paz, en el seguimiento de Jesús, (Peace in following Jesus),

***Revdo. Edward Rivera Santiago***

Pastor General

Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico

## **WELCOME**

Thank you for your participation in a disaster recovery mission trip. Your willingness to engage in this experience allows you to walk with others as they rebuild their lives, and in doing that, share the gifts, talents and resources you bring. Disaster Recovery is a particular type of mission trip. Mission trips of any kind have these primary components:

- (1) Preparation
- (2) On-Site Experience
- (3) Sharing Your Experience

Attention to each component will allow you the opportunity to play a significant part in the lives of people you are about to meet.

You will travel to a different part of the Americas and the American experience. In Puerto Rico, you will experience a different culture than you might have known previously, and be exposed to different economic and social settings than at home. Disaster recovery puts you into the midst of disruption of various intensities. These experiences move you out of your comfort zone and will prompt you to ask new questions and seek deeper faith responses. Your experience is part of God's transforming you and the community where you serve.

We hope that this resource will help you prepare for your experience and will empower you for continued commitment and involvement in disaster response and recovery when you return home. We also suggest you getting ready by reading [Puerto Rico: What Everyone Needs to Know](#) by Jorge Duany.

## **YOUR PURPOSE**

UCC Disaster Response Mission Trip Groups are participating with the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico (IEUPR) in partnership with UCC National Disaster Ministries and Volunteer Ministries in the Puerto Rican recovery effort. As a participant in this group, you are an integral part of a larger effort by the local community and by the United Church of Christ working with community-based and ecumenical partners. You will work in home repair and rebuilding, as well as helping to repair and refurbish local churches in cooperation with interfaith recovery committees in the local communities. You and the members of your volunteer group will engage in the rebuilding of communities.

In the midst of this wide-ranging work of working with and being with people and communities in the wake of disaster, work groups serve an integral and particular role. Volunteer groups help provide safe housing for people who have been dramatically affected by the disaster. Volunteers assist people as they begin to reclaim their lives and communities and to recover their identities. As outside groups, we do not determine how a community recovers. Volunteers do not go to "fix things," but to accompany people in their recovery, one group and one week at a time.

Following a disaster, those affected are often left feeling disempowered. Destruction and loss surround them. Systems of obtaining assistance often offer the affected person few choices.

Insurance is often not available. Emergency food, clothing, and shelter meet the needs of the moment, but do not empower people to meet their own needs. Someone who has been affected by disaster often feels out of control.

Disaster recovery mission groups assist people and communities to reclaim whatever part of their lives is possible. Some groups may meet the family or person in the home where they are working and listen to their stories. Other groups may not meet the homeowner in person for a variety of reasons related to that person's life-situation following the disaster. Often, the trauma of disaster makes it psychologically difficult for a person/family to participate in the physical clean up or in the repair of their home. In each of these situations, groups have the opportunity to be a presence that demonstrates God's companionship as people and communities engage in the arduous task of rebuilding their lives.

## **ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Your lodgings:** You will be staying at the Yuquiyo Camp/Conference Center owned by the Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Puerto Rico. The Camp is in Luquillo near the Yunque National Forest and a local beach; you will receive directions to the Camp, a nearby grocery and a drug store. (You may want to stock up on food at Amigo grocery in Luquillo on your way into the Camp.)

There is running water and drinking water for your personal water bottles available in the kitchen, along with coolers. You have full kitchen privileges and there are pots/pans for your group, flatware and washable plastic plates. Beds (bunk beds with good mattresses) are supplied, but no bed linens, pillows or towels. Sleeping areas will be air-conditioned with wall units and each bunkroom has a large attached bathroom facility. You should bring a lightweight sleeping bag or sheets/blanket and a pillow.

It is important to let us know your expected time of arrival so we can greet you at the Camp. You will be responsible for leaving the bunk rooms, bathrooms, kitchen and dining room clean for the next group (See addendum). Cleaning supplies will be provided. Camp rules prohibit smoking or drinking on the property. Please be advised that neither the campsite nor any of the work places will be handicap accessible.

**Cost:** Cost will include your flights (Saturdays might cost more), car rentals (Enterprise and other known names are here), food purchase, a donation of \$100 per person to cover a week of lodging costs. We have basic tools, however, if you want to, you are welcome to bring tools (battery run). If you bring donations from your church or individuals to help the Maria recovery effort, please have checks made payable to the IEUPR and write "Hurricane Maria Relief" on the memo line.

**Work:** The work is primarily repairing private homes in the Humacao area, about 45 minutes from the camp. Generally, you will be working in groups of 3 to 4. We hope you have one person in 4 knowledgeable in home repair, or able to oversee a work team. While such skills are good to have, please understand they are not necessary.

One of the forms we will ask you to complete will be a skill sheet for each volunteer. Working with your team leaders, we will match group members' skill levels with our project list at that time. The work will entail repairing cement roofs, interior ceilings and walls, installing windows and doors, as well as painting. If you are on a roof detail, you will find this to be very dirty, very hard and very

hot work. You will be removing old sealant with a pressure washer, raking and shoveling and sweeping the area further. Then, when it dries, filling holes, putting on primer and new sealant.

**Schedule:** We work 5 days a week with later afternoons, Saturday and Sunday free. If you would like to attend church, there are many IEUPR churches across the island and you are more than welcome to join these congregations. We will orient you to the work projects for the week on your first day before you go to work. Because of the heat, groups should be ready to leave for the work site by 7:00 am. Again, due to the heat, the groups are ready to leave the worksite by 1:00 or 1:30 pm. If you still want projects, you can always find late afternoon work at the camp, but this is not required! Work schedules can be adjusted with the Project Manager if needed. We suggest volunteers prepare packed lunches and take plenty of water for each day. As back-up to personal water bottles, we suggest you buy 12 packs of bottled water as well. The weather is hot and humid so an electrolyte drink such as Gatorade is helpful. Please do not drink tap water

**Forms:** We will email registration forms once you are certain you are coming. Among these, you will receive Liability Release forms, one for adults and one for parental signature for teens aged 16 and 17. We regret that we cannot allow younger teens to participate. Please have each group member complete these and email all of them to the address on the form at least three weeks before your arrival date. Each person on the work team MUST have an up-to-date Tetanus shot.

We will also send medical forms to be held by the leader of your group in case of emergency. You will need to have substantial first aid kits to take out with each work crew of 5-4 people. (see addendum) There are first aid kits at the Camp as well.

**Driving:** Puerto Rican driving habits and road patterns can be very challenging. Stay alert and watch for dips and holes in the roads. We have noticed that when turning, drivers will turn either direction from both lanes. So be alert that no one cuts you off. A GPS is imperative. We have found the phone to be the easiest – using either Google Maps or Waze.

## Addendum

Travel Information:

Car Rental: When you rent your car, make sure you have a toll pass on your car. Our pass was already on our car and it only costs you when you use it. We highly recommend using toll roads whenever possible. There are not very many ....

Places to go: Put the following locations into google maps and you will find:

- The Camp where you are staying: Campamento de Iglesia Evangelica Unida (Yuquiyú), Sabana, Luquillo 00773 (the turn off of 991 has a blue sign that says Sabana, then you pass a school on your left and a small animal shelter and then turn left up (at Km 4.2), through orange columns up a steep, bumpy road to the camp)
- Parking lot for Balneario Monserrate (beach) in Luquillo; there is another beach, Plaza Azul also in Luquillo and a smaller beach, Seven Seas in Croabas, more of a drive, but near a couple restaurants mentioned below
- And next to the Balneario Monserrat, kioskos de Luquillo
- A smaller and less populated and prettier beach is Playa Azul in Luquillo
- Amigo in Luquillo (grocery store) Walgreens, Subway and Wendys are right there too – lots of chain restaurants up and down PR 3 (Puerto Rico route 3), which is the 4 lane highway along the coast you will travel whenever you go somewhere.
- Luquillo alcalde (this will get you to the town square with a great coffee shop across the street)
- <http://www.paralanaturaleza.org/en/cabezas-de-san-juan-eng/> this is a nature reserve with great tours ending up at a light house in Fajardo.
- <http://www.pureadventurepr.com/tour/vieques-island-snorkel-beach-tour/> - sounds like a great afternoon and snorkeling and riding in a boat to white sandy beaches in Vieques. Leaves from Ceiba, about ¾ hr from the Camp, but on the way back from our worksites.
- At La Pared surfing beach in Luquillo, take a surfing lesson:  
<https://www.kayakingpuertorico.com/home/tours/surfing-lessons#>
- Pueblo y pasta, luquillo (go down 14 de Julio street from the alcalde or the coffee shop to the water; there will be a parking lot on your right and the restaurant is two or three houses down on your left – on the roof. Enter through a courtyard with cars parked in it and go up the stairs on your left.
- Other restaurants towards Fajardo:
  - Lolita's (Mexican food; leave your car keys with the attendant; tip him when you leave)
  - El Meson, Fajardo – get the menu in English online)
  - El Rincon del Faro, Croabas (a bit further but good) and La Estacion, Croabas

- Las Vistas Café, Croabas – on the roof; breakfast/brunch ; hours 8:00 to 2:00pm

### **Hospitals near Yuquiyú:**

- Sala de Urgencias / CDT
  - [279 Calle Fernandez Garcia, Luquillo](#)
  - 787-500-7755
  - Closes at 10:30pm
- Hospital HIMA San Pablo-[Fajardo](#)
  - [404 General Valero, Fajardo](#)
  - 787-655-0505
- Caribbean Medical Center
  - Ave. Osvaldo Molina #151, Fajardo
  - 787-801-0081
- CDT Rio Grande
  - 200 Calle Rio Grande, Rio Grande
  - 787-809-1020
  - Closes at 10pm

### **IEUPR Congregations in Luquillo:**

- IEUPR Juan Martin, Luquillo
  - Rvdo. Eliam Reyes
  - Bo. Juan Martin, Sector Borrás Calle Lirio, Luquillo
  - 787-342-1117
- IEUPR Luquillo Pueblo
  - Rvdo. Pedro Santana
  - Calle Soledad #8, Luquillo
  - 787-602-8449
- IEUPR Sabana, Luquillo
  - Rvdo. Hector Feliciano
  - Carr. 983 km 5.4 Bo. Sabana, Luquillo
  - 787-479-4960



### **It is suggested you bring:**

- work gloves and a pair of safety glasses.
- Suitable work boots. (The work will involve pressure washing, so rubber shoes or boots would help)
- Light, loose long sleeve shirts. (For work protection from debris and the sun)
- Hat (A brimmed hat will offer the best protection from the sun)
- Sunglasses
- Rain jacket (Optional ... rain is frequent though usually for short, intense spells)
- Sunscreen ... the serious stuff!
- Insect repellent (it is available here; Deet is best)
- Old jeans/long pants - work clothes
- Water/Sport Bottle
- Flashlight/batteries (It will dark outside the camp buildings)
- Cash
- Bath soap, Shampoo
- Toothpaste, Toothbrush, Mouthwash
- Comb, brush
- Medications and group first aid kit(s)
- Bath Towel, washcloth
- Shower shoes/flip flops
- Bedding: Pillow, Sheet, Light Blanket, or light-weight sleeping bag (dorms have a window a/c)
- Swimsuit, Water shoes, Beach towel and snorkel if you have it.
- Cell Phone/charger
- Camera
- Reading material, cards, games for evenings with NO TV and NO WIFI.

### **Be Aware:**

- **Puerto Rico is a US Territory. While travel authorities suggest it is a good idea to carry a passport, you do NOT need a Passport to travel here or to return home. Any photo ID which is valid for TSA will suffice. If you intend to travel to British Virgin Islands before or after your time here, you will need a passport.**
- **There are well stocked pharmacies on the Island. However, IF YOU REQUIRE MEDICATIONS BE CERTAIN YOU BRING AN AMPLE SUPPLY ALONG FOR YOUR TRIP!**
- **ATT has the most reliable cellular service. Verizon is functional in many areas, but various features (caller ID, Voicemail, Data service) will likely not function. This is a United States Territory and thus you should not incur charges if you have a US and Territories plan.**
- **The A/C's in the dormitory must be turned off during the day.**

- **There are some live bee hives in the Camp. They cannot be moved due to environmental restrictions. Come prepared.**

**Safety Awareness** (*The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, US NIH, 2005*)

*Before you leave* for your trip, everyone in your group should get a Tetanus Vaccination or have had a Tetanus Vaccine within the last 10 years.

Workgroups should bring a standard First Aid Kit (in water proof container) with them at the work site. We have a few kits also that can be taken out to sites. Consider including:

- (20) adhesive bandages, various sizes.
- (1) 5" x 9" sterile dressing.
- (1) conforming roller gauze bandage.
- (2) triangular bandages.
- (2) 3 x 3 sterile gauze pads.
- (2) 4 x 4 sterile gauze pads.
- (1) roll 3" cohesive bandage.
- (2) germicidal hand wipes or waterless alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- (6) antiseptic wipes.
- (2) pair large medical grade non-latex gloves.
- Adhesive tape, 2" width.
- Anti-bacterial ointment.
- Cold pack.
- Scissors (small, personal).
- Tweezers.
- CPR breathing barrier, such as a face shield.
- Non-Prescription Drugs: aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever, anti-diarrhea medication, antacid (for stomach upset), syrup of Ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center), laxative, activated charcoal (use if advised by the Poison Control Center)

Heat Stress:

- Signs of heat illnesses: confusion, profuse sweating, excessive fatigue
- Wear lightweight, light colored clothing
- Avoid alcohol, caffeinated drinks, heavy meals
- Drink a lot of bottled water. Do not drink tap water. Stay hydrated.

Sunburn: Use sun screen and lip balm  
Use protective eyewear

Piles of Debris: Don't walk on surfaces you aren't sure are stable.  
Wear safety shoes with slip resistant soles and socks/no sandals

Other protective measures:  
Use Insect Repellent with Deet or Picaridin

# WELCOME TO PUERTO RICO

**Thank you for making this trip for such important work.**

## Yuquiyu Conference Center Guidelines

### Dorm Rooms and bathrooms

- Dorm rooms are air-conditioned with window units.
- Please conserve energy whenever possible
- Please turn off air-conditioners during the day
- Please keep bedrooms and bathrooms clean
- Cleaning materials are located in each bathroom

### Kitchen and dining area

- Keep workspace, dining area, kitchen neat and clean
- Check to make sure the gas is turned off when not in use
- Keep refrigerators and freezer closed
- Keep trash and garbage bags closed when not in use
- Put all trash and garbage into designated bins
- Close doors and windows when these spaces are not in use
- Keep opened food in the refrigerator, in baggies or in a plastic bin
- Keep charcoal and lighter fluid inside

### Fire Extinguishers and First Aid Kit

- Fire extinguishers are located in the kitchen and in each dorm room
- First Aid Kits are located in the kitchen, dorm rooms and .....

### Work Site Guidelines

- Always be respectful to the homeowners and to your fellow workers
- Be careful at all times, especially when out and about
- Use the buddy or triad system.
- Refer any changes, suggestions or concerns to your leader.
- Do the best you can.
- Ask questions if you don't know what to do next or how to do something.
- Ask before you start a new project.
- Wear modest clothing — long sleeved shirts and long pants— sensible, safe shoes, boots strongly suggested.
- Use sunscreen lotion.

## **Last Day Clean-up Guidelines**

**Please leave the dorms, kitchen and dining room clean for the next group**

Clean-up supplies are found in the bathrooms, the kitchen and in the bathroom building next to the Echo Center.

### In the dorms:

Wash down the mattress covers  
Sweep all floors  
Mop all floors  
Wash out the toilets, sinks and showers  
Clean the bathroom mirrors  
Close the windows and doors  
Turn off Air conditioners

### In the kitchen and dining area:

Wash down all counter tops  
Wash down all tables in the dining hall  
Clean out the refrigerator, leaving only 'reusable" food  
Wash out the inside of the refrigerator  
Place opened edible food in the refrigerator and unopened food in the plastic food storage bin or on the work table  
Clean the stove  
Clean the grill  
Sweep and mop the floors  
Wash all used dishes  
Close the windows and doors  
Replace any furniture you may have moved

## **Ideas for Organizing the Trip** ( *From Getting Dirty for Jesus! 2005, pp, 14, and 7-8*)

### Meal Preparation and Evening Meditation:

If you do not have a meal team, have participants in three different groups who will do meal preparation and evening prayers. Each day before dinner the three groups have a task:

1. Fix dinner
2. Go grocery shopping for the next day
3. Plan evening program

### Work Teams:

Design work groups to get the work done. It's good to put friends together here. They tend to work better in teams. Be aware of the skills and energy level, etc., of the participants. There are always all kinds of jobs (some labor-intensive, some not). Assign jobs accordingly. **DO NOT** assume that only guys can do hard labor. It's not true! Much of this info can be gleaned at fund raisers. You'll see who works well together and what kind of work suits whom. (The work groups are usually different from the meal preparation groups.)

Adult groups can usually choose which work they're best suited for. If you have some unskilled adults, try to partner them with some who are good teachers. It is usually best to assign youth to work groups realizing that the groups may change as you progress throughout the week. Be sure to let everyone know that they can switch jobs the next day if they just can't get the hang of it or are really unhappy where they've been placed.

### Some Specific Tasks You Can Assign:

**Photographer:** Assign someone the task of taking slides for the slide show when you get home. They would go to each work team being sure to get every aspect of the trip. The advantage of this is that you don't have 15 or 20 cameras always snapping shots of the "locals" which can be uncomfortable for them. Be sure to make significant shots available to the whole group on your return. You may want to do a video as well.

**Secretary/Correspondent:** This person would write thank you notes (on site) to the various people you meet, churches who host you, etc. It means a lot to them to be acknowledged and often it's hard to get around to doing that when you get back home. Having someone do it right there is a neat way to support the ministry offered to you. This person could also record names and addresses of significant people you meet so the group will have them after the trip.

## **How to Work With Your Hosts:**

### **Some Helpful Hints**

Always remember that you are guests and servants. Thinking about how guests act when they visit someone's home is helpful as you enter into someone else's "home". Your attitude of servanthood is also helpful as you work together with your hosts. Try to serve "with" and not "for" your hosts. There may be some we serve who look prosperous and whose homes seem fine. Please be assured that each home is selected based on immediate need. We are present simply to meet this need.

Remember whose disaster it is. Do not expect those who have just had their lives destroyed by a disaster to be able to accommodate you immediately. They will have limitations, and governmental paperwork often works against their "speedy" recovery. Be patient. Sometimes, just your presence in those times of pain is enough.

Don't expect a "sense of completion". This can best be explained through a quote from someone charged with planning work trips for groups coming to her organization. "They want a sense of completion after their three days of work. I go home every day and never feel a sense of completion. Why do I have to orchestrate one for them? I think this is a fair question. Part of the power of the trip will be realization that there is still much to be done to right the wrongs in this world...and your work helped along the journey." We are not in Puerto Rico to achieve perfection. We are present to help people achieve some progress in their recovery effort.

Remember there is more than "Work" to be done. Work with the host to expose your group to the particular culture and people of the community. If team members simply went to the worksite and worked without experiencing the area or its people, they would leave without a real sense of the church and community and their needs. Plans should include opportunities to be involved with the locals in activities, tour places of historical or cultural significance, etc.

Expect to meet saints. One of the most rewarding benefits you'll discover is that you will meet saints of the church in these organizations. Watch for them, learn from them, experience the holy in them. Your life will be enriched from spending time with them.

Be creative with coming up with work that will help. If they haven't got enough for your group to do, look around and offer to do something more. Jobs that need little or no supervision by their staff are best.

## **When You Return Home:**

The real testimony of your experience is just beginning. At home, you can continue to reflect on the experience and make choices about how you live differently because of the experience. At home, you have the opportunity to share stories of your experience to help others remember the continuing disaster and long-term recovery. At home, you have the opportunity to engage in actions that aid disaster preparedness in your community and to become advocates for legislative actions that address the wide spread recovery still necessary Puerto Rico. At home you can be one person with knowledge and experience to educate your community about our sisters and brothers in Puerto Rico.

During disaster recovery, local issues often arise that call for immediate advocacy by local residents, often with the assistance of people from the wider church and community. The recovery may uncover injustices already at play, which now become more exposed to the wider world. Advocacy is also inherent in the process of recovery itself because population groups that are generally more neglected - the economically disadvantaged and the disabled, are often more vulnerable to disasters and have the bulk of unmet needs. Unlike people who can recover with temporary assistance, persons on the margins of society do not recover quickly, if at all, without long-term assistance geared to their special needs. The categories of concern above take on special intensity in this context.

The first step in advocacy is discerning what local communities want those from outside the region to advocate with them. In Puerto Rico, as in most places, this is difficult, because the local community is composed of many communities, many with differing priorities. But you can use your group experience as a starting point and then follow through on all the available resources to learn more about the people you have met.

Develop on-going contact with your House of Representatives and Senate legislators and their staff. Legislative staffers have great influence in helping formulate priorities and in gathering information from constituents. Communicate with them that you have personally been to Puerto Rico with disaster recovery work and are concerned that Puerto Rican issues must be part of our national legislative agenda. Indicate that you have first-hand experience in the area and would be willing to share stories with them (Legislators and their staff are always looking for stories). Even write a short summary of a particular experience related to a social justice issue and send it to your legislator.

Advocacy also includes looking at your own local community with new eyes, seeing if these concerns are present, taking action.