

**The Episcopal Diocese of Georgia
Companion Diocese Commission
Annual Report
Julia and Julius Ariail, Co-chairs
October 1, 2015**

During 2015 five mission teams from the Diocese of Georgia worked alongside Episcopal congregations in five separate locations in our Companion Diocese of the Dominican Republic. These five teams had a total of 65 missionaries, and each team was successful in accomplishing its goals. This companion relationship between our two dioceses extends back to the first mission trip in 2001, and remains a vibrant part of our diocesan ministries, both home and abroad.

The Southeastern Convocation sponsored a team of 7 missionaries who worked in the village of El Carretón from January 12-20, 2015. Their primary mission was to facilitate the drilling of a well on the grounds of the local Episcopal school to provide a source of potable water for the community. Other activities included conducting classes for the schoolchildren on the cultures of other countries and replacing the roof on a villager's house. The well was drilled, and the next step will be the installation of a solar-powered pump and filtration system. The Rev. Dee Shaffer (St. Paul's, Jesup) was the team leader, and this trip marked the fourth consecutive year that the Southeastern Convocation team has worked in this village.

St. Peter's (Savannah) sponsored a team of 16 missionaries who conducted an optical clinic in an Episcopal medical facility, Clínica Esperanza y Caridad (Hope and Charity Clinic) in the city of San Pedro de Macorís from January 31 - February 5, 2015. They examined the vision of 790 patients and dispensed 640 pairs of prescription and non-prescription glasses. The medical staff on the team included an ophthalmologist and two optometrists, and they established a relationship with a local Dominican eye clinic for follow-up treatment for those patients with conditions that could not be addressed by the team during the trip. They left behind several valuable pieces of diagnostic equipment including an examination chair shipped before the visit, 3,000 pairs of prescription glasses and readers to be dispensed by the clinic to its patients, and several large cartons of medical supplies and medicines. The clinic is now in a position to offer diagnostic examinations and some basic eye care on its own. David Sweeterman was the team leader, and this trip marked the second consecutive year that this team has worked at this location.

St. Anne's (Tifton) sponsored a team of 7 missionaries who worked in the village of Las Carreras from March 7-14, 2015. They continued the construction of a church building for the local Episcopal congregation, a project that is a multi-year partnership with teams from St. Patrick's (Albany) and Grace Church (Charleston, SC). The main goal of the construction activity was the pouring of the concrete floor for the church. This was accomplished successfully and the team was able to join with the local congregation for the first worship service on the new surface. Another activity was the pouring of a concrete floor for the house of a local villager. The Rev. Lonnie Lacy was the team leader, and this trip marked the fourth consecutive year that this team has worked at this location.

Christ Church (Valdosta) sponsored a team of 21 missionaries who worked in the village of El Pedregal from June 15-22, 2015. Their primary activities were the construction of a concrete-block house for a village family, replacing a wooden structure; the renovation of an existing house to serve as a day care center for the local Episcopal school; and the teaching of classes in sewing, knitting, crocheting, and fabric arts. The two construction activities were carried out in partnership with the youth mission team from the Diocese of Nebraska, which worked in this location during the following week. Significant gifts to the local community included five sewing machines, acolyte vestments, altar linens, sports equipment, and 70 scholarships for students at the Episcopal school plus another scholarship for a teenager who attends a special education program in the nearby city of Jarabacoa. Fred Richter (Trinity, Statesboro) was the team leader, and this trip marked the eleventh consecutive year that this team has worked in this location.

The Diocese of Georgia sponsored a youth team of 14 missionaries, representing thirteen congregations, who worked in the town of Santana Baní from June 22-30, 2015. Their primary activity was to conduct Vacation Bible School classes for the local youth, and other activities included painting sections of the local Episcopal school. One of their VBS sessions was attended by approximately 300 people. The Rev. Joshua Varner (St. Patrick's, Pooler) was the team leader, and this trip marked the second time in recent years that the Diocese has sponsored a youth team in the Dominican Republic. The previous trip was in 2013, when the team worked in the town of Mao.

In January 2015, the Rt. Rev. Scott A. Benhase appointed Julia and Julius Ariail (Christ Church, Valdosta) as co-chairs of the Companion Diocese Commission, replacing the Rev. Tar Drazdowski who had moved to the Diocese of Nebraska in November 2014. As Bishop Benhase's representatives on the board of the Dominican Development Group (DDG), a coordinating agency for the dioceses with companion relationships with the Diocese of the Dominican Republic, Julia and Julius attended the board meetings of the DDG in Santo Domingo (February 16) and plan to attend the next meeting in Lake Charles, LA (October 26). They also participated in the mission trip sponsored by Christ Church (Valdosta). Julius made three additional trips to the Dominican Republic in April for an exploration trip sponsored by the DDG; in July for the dedication of a church built by mission teams from the Companion Dioceses of Eastern Michigan, Michigan and Western Michigan and to observe the election of the Bishop Coadjutor; and in December (planned) for the dedication of a church built by mission teams from the Companion Diocese of Southwest Florida.

Our diocesan budget allocates \$12,000 annually to support the work of the Dominican Development Group, which in turn supports the development of the facilities and the programs of the Diocese of the Dominican Republic and also coordinates the work of the approximately 50 mission teams that come from the United States each year to work alongside Episcopal congregations in the Dominican Republic.

For more information on the work of the Companion Diocese Commission, check our webpage here: http://georgia.anglican.org/?page_id=19