

Bahamas VIM: Day One
2/15/10

Much of the time, the eight members of the Foundry VIM Bahamas team toil in offices or classrooms where our both our output and its impact can be intangible. Similarly the backdrop of our scene is better known as a vacation paradise, but we find ourselves far from spotlight of tourism serving on the rural island of Eleuthera.

During our trip to the Caribbean this week, we are doing something with our hands that is directly benefiting a family in difficult circumstances, putting us in relationship with a different culture and deepening our spirituality.

Under the direction of Bahamas Methodist Habitat, we are refurbishing a house in the township of Governors Harbor on the island of Eleuthera while the owner is hospitalized.

Our first day concentrated on demolition rather than construction. The VIM team spent seven hours clearing out rooms, taking down ceilings and scraping paint to prepare for the first steps of remodeling on Tuesday.

Although we didn't meet the home owner, Mr. Burrows, we did make a connection with the community surrounding him. His friends and neighbors showed their appreciation for our efforts by providing a lunch of hamburgers and fish sandwiches.

The repast at a beachside park gave us a chance to share a moment of fellowship with Bahamians who had come to faith through BMH.

We ended the work day by enjoying the beauty of the earth with a refreshing swim in the crystal clear Caribbean.

In the evening, we experienced the melding of the Western and island cultures with a brief concert by a Bahamian Christian rapper who is being encouraged in his vocation by BMH.

More soon from the Bahamas Team: Mark, Julie, Susan, Rose, Chuck, Zack, Stephanie, and Mollie

Bahamas VIM: Day Two
February 16, 2010

On our second day of refurbishing work, the Bahamas VIM team learned more about the gentleman we are serving. The home belongs to Richard Burrows, who has had developmental struggles since a difficult birth and now also suffers from diabetes.

His niece, Susan Burrows, explained that Burrows' sisters had come together to help him improve his physical surroundings. They realized that the job was bigger than they could handle alone, so they turned to Bahamas Methodist Habitat for help.

The Burrows women have bought the construction and remodeling materials while BMH has supplied the volunteer hands, feet and backs.

"We could never have done this with just the family pitching in," Susan Burrows told the Foundry VIM team.

The group began the transition today from tearing out the old to building the new. Their efforts focused on putting up new ceilings in the three-room house—a project that required learning as much about measuring and cutting lumber as a do-it-yourself store professional has to know.

Painting and rewiring were other tasks that the Foundry team tackled, as the initially cluttered home began to make progress toward a future of providing greater comfort for Mr. Burrows.

The Foundry VIM team—Rose Steller, Julie Stofer, Stephanie Williams, Mollie Lemon, Chuck Kluepfel, Susan Blasdel, Mark Schoeff Jr. and Zack Moser --will file more reports this week from the Bahamas.

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Foundry VIM Bahamas: Days 3 and 4 February 17-18, 2010

On the third and fourth days of our Bahamas VIM trip, we started to remodel Mr. Burrows' home from the top down. Most of the team concentrated on reinforcing the rafters, painting plywood ceiling sections or hanging the new ceiling pieces.

For most members of the team, these activities provided an opportunity to learn new skills and use power tools for the first time in a long time, if not the first time ever. We also began to fully appreciate the detail work that goes into a construction project.

Rebuilding a ceiling requires multiple measurements, continuous cutting of lumber and painstaking alignment of the new "tiles." Rose Steller and Julie Stofer provided the leadership to keep the complex operation on track and on time.

Over the course of each day, the team members absorbed the Bahamian culture during work breaks. The two-square-block neighborhood surrounding Mr. Burrows' house included a grocery store run by his niece, a bakery and a couple other stores.

The residents of Governor's Harbor were warm and friendly, greeting visitors with smiles and pleasantries. Two Bahamians who work with Bahamas Methodist Habitat and

participated in the Foundry site—KP and Edmond—brought an irrepressible upbeat approach to each day’s tasks.

The trip’s spirituality sometimes came from our physical surroundings, such as the crystal clear waters of the Caribbean or a star-filled sky in the middle of the night, and sometimes in ways that were more formally religious.

Ash Wednesday combined nature and a worship service. Around 8:30 p.m. that chilly evening, the Foundry VIM team and a group of students from Centenary College hiked into the bowels of a cave in Hatchet Bay. Our destination was a group of rocks seemingly arranged for a moment of fellowship.

After assembling, everyone turned off their flash lights and illuminated the darkness with candles. Zack Moser of the Foundry VIM team and a leader of the Centenary group offered reflections on the meaning of Lent. The activity closed with each person making a sign of the cross on his or her neighbor’s forehead with dust from the ground of the cave.

The two groups came together again on Thursday night, sharing a meal and fellowship at a beachside restaurant. While it was bittersweet to end the service aspect of the project, the group looked forward to the planned “excursion day” on Friday, when we would get a chance to partake in an activity common to most Bahamas visitors—time on the beach.