

# El Paso y Anapra Servant Event Trip Recap 2017

We would like to begin by thanking you all for your time, thoughts, prayers, and financial support throughout this process. This trip would have been impossible without your compassion and willingness. With your help, twelve of us travelled to El Paso, Texas to stay at Ysleta Lutheran Mission. Sunday through Thursday, we crossed the border into Anapra, Mexico to build a house for the Valdez family and their three children. Although Ivon, the mother, worked as a teacher at the local church and Cruz, the father, also worked, they had never owned a house before and lived with other family members. Throughout the week, we also strengthened our bonds with one another in fellowship, spent time meditating on God's Word, and were given a taste of the long-forgotten sunshine.

On Friday, we kicked the week off prayerfully with the Commissioning Service. After going to Fieldhouse to eat with families and close friends, the group went back to Martin Luther Chapel to get some sleep before their early morning travels. We woke up bright and early, 3:15 am to be exact, and ate a quick breakfast, complete with raisin bread from Jillian's dad. Lee Nederveld arrived to drive us to Detroit Metro Airport. Our flight departed at 8:00 am, and we arrived in El Paso at 12:30 pm after a series of delays. One of our fearless drivers, Michael, escorted us from the airport to the mission. After discovering quickly that it was much warmer in El Paso than it was in Michigan, the group wasted no time changing into shorts before venturing out to Walmart for snacks and forgotten necessities. Feeling that the team had not been adventurous enough that day, they decided to visit Chico's Tacos, home of the swimming taco (and a phenomenal grilled cheese). Seeing as the group had not gotten much sleep, we ended the day early back at the mission.

Sunday morning we woke up for breakfast and attended a service at San Pablo Lutheran Church, during which the church had another commissioning service for the group. With picnic lunch in tow, we changed into hiking clothes to embark on our journey to Mount Cristo Rey. Our co-leader and driver, Anyssa, successfully overcame the unique challenges of the other van we had for the week to get us to the mountain. After Katrine's quick suggestion, the group decided to take their lunch up to the top of the mountain to enjoy the view while eating. Half of the group walked the trail and had a relaxing climb; the other half decided to carve their own path and ascend more directly. By the time the walkers had reached the mountain's peak, they were surprised to see the amount of trash Ben had cleaned up during his climb, which was dropped off with park managers at the top. The group assembled for an amazing picture with Cristo Rey, as well as a much-appreciated Spartan flag provided by Louise Partridge. After a hasty descent and drive back to the mission, the group went across the border with Pastor Heimer to visit the family from last year and see the site they would be working on. The group ended the day by eating their fill in ice cream from Marble Slab and sharing in bible study and fellowship.



Monday we began our day with a hearty breakfast from Rita and loaded up the van with all of our building supplies. Each morning we had the same routine: breakfast, load up the van with supplies and lunch coolers, and cross the border. When we arrived in Anapra, Matt C., Ben and Matt E. helped Alonso, our foreman, load up the wood to transport to the building site. The group began assembling the wall frames. Despite the heavy winds, we finished all four walls by the end of the day. Although the group only contained two returning members, the building process went smoothly. After a long day of working and getting blasted by sand and dirt, we returned to the mission for some much needed showers, dinner and bible study.

On Tuesday we arrived and again worked quickly throughout the day. Ben taught Addie how to use a table saw, and the roof construction began. Matt C., Ben, Sara and Jillian spent much of the day assembling the rafters and plywood for the roof, while Matt E. began cutting out the door and windows like a trained professional. The rest of the group worked on caulking and electrical. Despite the amount of knots in the wood, Tim persevered in drilling all the holes for the electrical. During lunch the group became closer with some of the neighborhood's children when Ivon cooked them all burritos. Following lunch, the drywall process began. Sophia showed her strength in lifting her weight in drywall. After a few setbacks, the rafters and plywood parts of the roof were constructed, and the drywall was put in place. We ended the day with a scenic drive home, dinner and bible study.



Wednesday consisted of the Roof Team laying down felt paper, getting most of the tar (thankfully) on the roof and not on themselves. Sara had never used tar before, but she became a master by the end of the day. Inside the house, the rest of the group began mudding the drywall, and Libby decided that several of the team members did not look “muddy enough,” so she proceeded to add mud to their attire. Addie became a “mom” to a puppy at the church, with Katrine being named the honorary “aunt.” After installing windows, the group finished their work for the day. With dinner and showers out of the way, the group was subjected to our “initiation ceremony.” The details will remain secret in case any future participants are reading. The exhaustion was beginning to set in, but the group ended the day on a good note with fellowship, bible study and cookies.



Thursday morning was spent finishing our respective projects. Jillian, Addie and Katrine began the finishing touches of caulking the home, while Michael, Matt C. and Anyssa worked on the trim for the windows and doors. When Matt C. drove the final nail into the home and Matt E. finished up the last bit of caulking, the group enjoyed a barbacoa and bottled pop lunch with the family. We then presented the keys to the family, and Ivon read a prayer of thanks she had written for the group. We said our tearful goodbyes to our new friends and took one last look at the house we had just built. We decided to visit a market on our way home. After a skillful parking job by Michael, the group explored the market, found the vanilla they had been searching for all trip, and then travelled back to the mission for dinner and bible study.

On Friday, we got up, ate breakfast, loaded up the van and headed to New Mexico in search of cool water to swim in. We travelled to Elephant Butte State Park, which contained a reservoir for swimming and a desert beach to sunbathe. We swam in the cool water, played volleyball, soaked up the sun, and had a relaxing day getting to know each other better. After our fun afternoon, we departed Elephant Butte and headed back to El Paso for dinner at a restaurant called The Italian Kitchen West. With bellies full of pizza and other good Italian food, we travelled back to the mission for our final bible study of the week, spending lots of time reflecting on how God had worked in our lives throughout the trip.



We came full circle on Saturday, our final travel day. We finished packing up our luggage, began writing our letters to one another, and left for the airport. By the grace of God, our flights were smooth (aside from one delay), and Mike Nevells was in the Martin Luther Chapel Mini-Bus with a smiling face when we arrived back in cold Detroit. As the tiredness began to hit all of us, we enjoyed a quiet bus ride back to East Lansing.

This trip has been a time of growth, a time of spiritual renewal. It has been absolutely hilarious at times and deeply humbling at others. We have built unbreakable, irreplaceable bonds with one another, seeing each other as reflections of our Lord. We came into the trip in much different places, and we leave united with one another, twelve parts of the body of Christ. We could never thank you enough for this opportunity.



In Christ,

(L to R) Michael VanBemmelen, Sophia Coke, Addie VanBemmelen, Matt Eichstaedt, Libby Lyons, Jillian Matasovsky, Matt Champion, Anyssa Schember, Sara Bollstetter, Katrine Weismantle, Tim Mowers and Ben Scheffler

**We invite you to join us for our Servant Event Presentation  
Sunday, March 26<sup>th</sup>. This will take place at  
Martin Luther Chapel in East Lansing  
in the 10:30 am and 7:00 pm services**