

Hello! I am Kordell Brandenburg, a student worker in the Office of Spiritual Life at Carroll University. I also served as student trip coordinator for our recent mission trip, led by University Chaplain and Director of Spiritual Life Elizabeth McCord. Over spring break, the chaplain and six Carroll students, including myself, traveled to the Tampa Bay area in Florida for about six days, where we did service projects related to hurricane relief. Our trip was funded through the partnership between the Presbytery of Milwaukee and Carroll University, so on behalf of our mission team, thank you for your support.

The first day was mainly getting to our destination, Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center. Cedarkirk is located in Lithia, Florida, about an hour east of Tampa, and is a Presbyterian camp that has been around since the 1970's. We spent most of our time in Florida helping to restore the camp's labyrinth. A labyrinth is a prayer tool that has been used throughout much of Christian history. People can walk along its path while meditating or contemplating, and listen for God's voice or guidance. This particular labyrinth is modeled after the Chartres labyrinth in France. It is quite large, having eleven circuits. Working on this project involved a lot of manual labor, including weeding, digging, measuring, and laying the brick path. We worked on it for three full days, and were able to finish more than half of the labyrinth. This was an accomplishment for us considering the amount of work and the complexity of the project.

On Friday, we went to back to the greater Tampa Bay area to partner with the Disaster Recovery Program of the United Methodist Church—Florida Synod. We were placed at a home in Saint Petersburg that had been damaged during the 2016 hurricane season and was still not fully repaired. We helped restore the back bedroom and the portion of the kitchen that had been damaged when a storm tore the roof off of the house. Our main task was to sand down the drywall and prime the walls and ceilings. One of our team members was also asked to help with corner beading the windows. We completed our tasks in a full day of work, making the space ready for the next volunteer group to come in and paint.

Saturday was our last day in Florida and was our designated day of Sabbath. We spent it relaxing on the beach and reflecting on how God had shown up over the past week in Florida. One of my fellow students commented that "working hard all week made me really have a deeper appreciation for the Sabbath as relaxation and reflection time." We spent our last night together watching the sunset on the beach and sharing what the trip had meant to each of us. "Although we all went to Florida as somewhat strangers," as one student said, "it really seemed like we all had one thing in mind: this was for God." Serving brought us closer together and closer to God, and we enjoyed every minute of it.

Once again, we thank the Presbytery of Milwaukee and all those who helped support our trip through prayers and the grant that made it possible. We hope to continue doing these spring break trips, and look forward to furthering our relationship with the Presbytery as we expand our mission both on and off campus.

Before:



After:



Setting the Bricks:



Group shot:



Selfie:

