Seven Days in Dominican Republic
A Short-Term Missions Trip
With All Nations Church & Transformation House
Day 1—Introduction to Transformation House

We arrived late the night before. Our Tuesday flight came in about 8:30pm, we checked in to the hotel about 9:30, and we met with Martin Rosene and his adopted son, Max. We chatted about the week, about what to expect, and about our options for outreach and work projects. Then we called it a night. It had been a long day of travelling and switching gears.

Wednesday was our first day with “boots on the ground.” Martin picked us up with an open-air truck, we piled onto the benches in the back and settled in for the half-hour drive to Transformation House. Driving in Dominican is shocking to polite North-American standards! Speeds, passing restrictions and most of our rules literally fly out the window on the roads of Dominican!

We pulled up to the rented villa that serves as Transformation House. Martin gets a super-discounted rate for this place that many children call home, some call hospital, some call work, and some call ministry post. It’s a beautiful refuge for little ones, sick ones, and moms to sick ones.
Bags and bags of donated medicines were piled on a big table and the sorting began. Smiles from Martin, the doctor and the nurses as we handed them equipment, prescriptions, and supplies to make diagnoses and treatment much easier for this sanctuary in the Dominican.

Children at Transformation House played with members of our team in the sandbox, on the veranda, and in the hospital.

Some of the women from Sudbury jumped right in with holding babies to relieve tired moms, feeding children to relieve busy nurses, and rocking tired children to relieve the sanity of the staff!
Other members of the team planned work projects or sorted medicines. Camaraderie began instantly.

After a long, hot, wonderful day at Transformation House, we returned to the hotel for a late dinner and some rest.
Day 2—Love Comes in Many Shapes and Sizes

After our daily breakfast and devotions with Pastor Josh we climbed back into the open-air truck and headed to Transformation House. There were so many new sights to see on the drive out of town.

Transformation House offered our team many different options for caring for little ones who rely on its resources. Whether it was pouring energy into playing, rocking or building, the ANC team put all they had into each task before them.
One of the first things we were taught about the children at Transformation House was their health status. If the children wore a green anklet they were clear for HIV & Hepatitis. If the children wore a red anklet they tested positive for HIV or Hepatitis. If a child with a red anklet needed medical attention, we were to grab a nurse. Other than that, we could love them and play with them all we wanted! And we did!

Some of the building projects we worked on were:
- Safety gate for the veranda so no more escapees!
- Bus shelter for patients waiting to enter the clinic.
- Reception/pharmacy desk for the clinic.
- 24 bunk beds made safe for nurses and children.

The safety gate was almost finished today. Steve and Luc worked hard on this project and painted the large gate white when the building was done.

After a long day in the heat, we headed back to the hotel for a quick swim, a late dinner and some rest.
Day 3—Feeding Program & Mobile Clinic at Ascension

On Friday we travelled to Ascension.

On Friday our eyes were opened in so many ways. The face of poverty, oppression and desperation was seen on the young and the old. We also saw much hope and love for a people who must usually feel so forgotten and alone.

The truck that had been our ride for two days was gone and rented vehicles took their place. Most of us were glad for the change, though the truck was fun for the time we had it!

Our caravan drove through back streets and unfamiliar territory to a small shanty town near Ascension. Martin and the doctor were with us and they led us through the dirt streets.

Crowds gathered as we pulled up. People were treated for illness right out of the back of the vehicle. A major goal is to equip a mobile medical clinic that can be brought into these small towns.

Children grabbed our hands as soon as our feet touched the ground outside the vehicles. They smiled at us, pulled us through the streets, and asked us to come see their homes.
One young girl sang to Amy— an English chorus she learned in school. The lucky ones attend school. The ones with parents who register them and care enough to make sure they go every day. The ones who receive sponsorship from people like Martin.

They taught me that hospitality is not a spotless house or the finest décor, but rather the attitude with which we welcome others into our homes. They taught me to welcome in strangers as well as friends and family, and treat everyone with love and respect.

*(Hebrews 13:2 & Matthew 25:35)*
We show them pictures of our own children back home—they seem a million miles away right now. I thank God for their health and safety and wonder how these children can experience that as well?
I have no answers on this street in the middle of the Dominican.

We look across the road and notice the vast fields of sugar cane—some overrun with garbage and horses.

Why all the sugar cane? Companies came to plant, hired many workers, and these shanty towns grew. Then the companies realized cheaper methods for producing sugar—in other places, using other workers. And the people remain, lost and forgotten, along with the cane that once was their livelihood.

We say goodbye to the children, climb back into the vehicles and make our way down the bumpy, bumpy road to Ascension. A sense of dread and destiny awaits. There is a reason we’re here, though we may not realize it for some time.
As I write about Ascension, I need to focus on the hope I saw instead of the hopelessness. Make no mistake, the people of this tiny town are in dire straits. The whole place is unsustainable on its own. They rely on the generosity of others for their survival. Let me give you a glimpse of some of that generosity.

Martin and the doctor from Transformation House visit this town regularly and offer medical clinics to the people. Line-ups are always long.

Wonderful people come in to offer a feeding program three times a week. Those who are under 12 and over 50 are fed on a regular basis. There is not enough resources available to feed everyone regularly, so they focus on the most needy in town. It is not a perfect system, but many more are surviving because of their efforts.
Clothing, diapers and shoes are donated and provided to the people of Ascension. We brought bags and bags from the generous people of Sudbury, Ontario!

Teams have come into Ascension and built a church, a library/community centre, a fair-trade store, cement houses and stores, a school, a playground, and a workshop.
Fresh fruit and vegetables sit in a store window—proof that there is access to food for the people. Now how do they pay for the food? Ascension has a laundry facility for its citizens. Clothes hang to dry from fences, rooftops, and trees. The people make the most of the resources available to them.

There is hope for sustainability—farming is possible in the fields surrounding Ascension and livestock is available.

Most of the people are friendly and full of smiles.
They taught me that contentment is possible in any situation and happiness comes from within.

(Philippians 4:11-12)

*They live out the gospel for me as I try to live it out for them.*

Now I’ll give you a glimpse of the realities—just to provide awareness, not promote hopelessness.

Many of the children try to sell us items or ask for pesos. Some tell us they are hungry, or fake a cough and tell us they are sick. They have been trained very well and know the tricks.

One boy grabs my hand and grabs Luc’s hand and pulls us toward the clinic. He is not wearing any clothes, neither were his brothers at the house. I wonder why they are naked when so many clothes are available. We arrive at the clinic and he lets go of our hands.

Later we take him (Luigi) and his two brothers (Jonathan and Jeffrey) to Transformation House with us, along with a young woman who is very pregnant with twins. They want to perform a c-section so there is less chance of her passing along HIV to her unborn twins.

We learn the boys came with us because their mother has left. She took money given to her for a doctor and left. She has many clothes for the boys but chooses not to clothe them. Luigi knew exactly what he was doing when he took our hands and pulled us to the clinic. Even at 9 he knows where to go for help and how to get there.
The abundant sugar cane is a problem—diabetes is rampant among the people who often don’t have anything else to eat. We saw many children chewing on cane. Roots run deep for sugar cane and it’s hard to get out of the ground once it’s planted. This produces a stumbling block to farming other crops in the land surrounding Ascension.

It’s hard to wrap this day up. I think the whole team will be wrapping it up for the rest of their lives, each in their own different ways.

Days like Friday change your world. They change your life. They change everything. Maybe not right away, but they spill over into every nook and cranry, and rightly so. Would we want it any other way? Would we wish the experience of Friday away? No, I’m sure none of us would.

Even though we are left with more questions than answers.

Even though we are left looking on it in our mind’s eye—replaying the scenes over and over.

It reminds me of Easter. There was a Good Friday before there was an Easter Sunday. There was a death before there was new life.

Maybe we felt a death of some of our innocence that Friday. There are many things that could take its place. I pray we all opt for hope, faith, and action in whatever form we can take action.

Whether it’s in our families, our neighbourhoods, our work places, whether it’s here in Sudbury or on the other side of the world. I pray we let the death of innocence that Friday lead us on to Sunday. Sunday’s coming. New life, new hope—Sunday. May the whole world feel it!
Day 4—Work in the Morning, Play in the Afternoon

We head over to Transformation House right after breakfast and get to work for a few hours. We push lunch back a bit and work through until about 2:30. The bus shelter is taking shape, we have about 6 more bunk beds to finish, the safety gate is complete and the reception/pharmacy desk is coming together beautifully.

The team has pulled together in amazing ways these past 4 days in spite of the heat and humidity. We didn’t let the frustrations of illness or sharing construction tools and materials stand in the way of getting the jobs done. All of us tried our hand at a new skill or two. We learned so much so far and we still have 3 days to go!

Steven is one of the orphans who lives at Transformation House. He is blind and deaf and howled with laughter when someone was working with the saw close to him. He could feel the vibrations of the machine and he loved it!

Time for a much-needed rest and some down-time at the hotel this afternoon.

Lori, Amy and Francine all enjoyed their first time in the ocean. The waves crashed over them as the tide brought the pounding water to shore. They were not afraid in the least—they were thrilled to enjoy the fun of the ocean waves! Their laughter was heard all the way down the beach.

And Steve’s attempts to meet each wave head-on were amusing to say the least!

Others sauntered through the Dominican streets and bought souvenirs for loved ones from the local vendors. They sure do drive a hard bargain!

Dave was our resident go-to guy when it came to bartering. He helped many of us get some amazing deals on merchandise. Dave also bought many things from the vendors and especially those living in Ascension. One huge heart fits into that man - if you can get to it under that big hat!
Day 5—Rev. Josh Preaches & Visiting Puerto Plata

We walked to church on Sunday morning. There are a few North Americans who formed a group that meets every Sunday at a local resort. The resort allows them to use a space overlooking the ocean for a weekly outdoor service. What an amazing experience to have church outside, looking out over the blue of the Caribbean ocean! Many of the people who attend the church are also helping in the Dominican.

Josh was invited to preach that morning and he didn't mind filling pulpit at all, especially in such a beautiful place! Amy and Luc led some worship, with Sandy on the bongo.

After church Marcia was baptized in the hotel pool. It was an honour to be present for that event.
Sunday afternoon provided some time for the team to experience a couple of the local attractions. We opted for a stroll on the boardwalk in Puerto Plata. The scenery was breathtaking and we enjoyed watching the sights of the ocean as we walked and talked.

We stopped at an historic fort and leisurely took part in a tour. We learned much about the history of the Dominican from the tour of the fort, and got a glimpse of yesteryear on the island.

Sunday night we visited one of the restaurants at the hotel and enjoyed the company of those on the All Nations team.
**Day 6—Back to Work!**

This was our last full day at Transformation House. There was much work to finish, much cleaning to do, and many children to hold and play with!

Josh, Dave and Steve worked hard and had many creative ideas to get the bus shelter up and functional.

Work on the bunk beds was really a team effort and everyone pitched in with these in some way.

A couple of the Transformation House staff (and children) were happy to work with us on the projects and learned some valuable skills along the way.
A clinic was offered almost every morning during the week at Transformation House. After a time of rain, the clinic is usually much more busy. People suffer from cholera from the drinking water. There are also many upper respiratory tract infections from the damp and mould during this time of year.

After a full day’s work at Transformation House, we enjoyed a quick swim and an earlier dinner at the hotel. After dinner we gathered at the beach for our regular evening devotions. Sometimes we would sing, and sometimes we would chat about God and the work we were doing in the Dominican. It was wonderful to hear the waves behind us as we connected about our days as a group. There was a certain security guard who had to monitor the beaches at night, and he was witness to each of our nightly devotion times.

On Monday night we changed things up a bit and had a time of encouragement and communion among the group. We took turns telling each other encouraging words from what we’d seen that week in each person. Then we ended our time with communion. The security guard actually sat right in on our group that night. Even though he refused the communion, we did get to share with him who we were and what we were doing every night on the ocean beach. He was interested in what we had to say, and it was a wonderful way to share the gospel with someone at the hotel.

The rest of the evening was relaxing and some of us even took in an hour of karaoke! Josh and Amy had no problems getting up on stage and giving the crowd a serenade.
Day 7—Finish Up and Fly Home

We knew this day would come. Time to say goodbye to Transformation House and Dominican Republic. Time to rejoin our lives in Sudbury. We worked at the hospital for the morning and finished up the last of the work projects.

Bill and Marilyn finished up the reception/pharmacy counter and painted it white.

The bus shelter got a tin roof and concrete footings.

The bunk beds were completed and ladders installed for extra safety.

Clean up didn’t take very long, and then it was time to adios.

There were a few tears from our team and from the Dominican team as we said our goodbyes and loaded into the vehicles one more time.
We spent the rest of the day packing up our things, enjoying one more dip in the ocean and doing some last-minute souvenir shopping for the folks back home.

A special decision was made by Dave - he wanted to get baptized in the ocean on our last day in the Dominican. Josh was happy to oblige and we all witnessed this memorable event.

![Baptism](image)

At 7 pm we piled into the bus that took us to the airport and boarded a plane that took us to Toronto.

After a few glitches at Park N’Fly we started the long drive home at about 2am. Not the greatest idea, but hindsight is 20/20!

We meandered our way north to Sudbury and caught the mist and the pinks of the sunrise on the way home.

![Sunrise](image)

We pulled into the All Nations Church parking lot just after 7 am and said our groggy goodbyes before heading home.

Forever bonded and forever changed by our Dominican Republic missions trip, so ends the adventure of 2011.
Pray for Transformation House & Dominican Republic

Stephen - 8-year-old orphan living at Transformation House. Blind and deaf from infant meningitis. He cannot walk. He is full of love and laughter if you take the time to draw it out of him.

Melinda - Stephen’s sister. 3-year-old orphan living at Transformation House. Physical and mental issues from infant meningitis. Severe anger issues. She is learning to walk. Her symptoms are very similar to autism. She has the brightest brown eyes and the most beautiful face. She loves to be held and loves exploring the outdoors.

Saida - 2-year-old orphan living at Transformation House. HIV positive. Very happy, smart, and friendly little girl with the biggest smile and the best laugh.

Dario - 1&1/2-year-old orphan living at Transformation House. HIV positive. Congenital heart defect. Took his first steps while the ANC team was there. He is a very loving boy who enjoys being held and fed and loves to play.
Elizabeth - About 9 months old. Mother died during childbirth. She has the biggest dimples and brown eyes. She loves to be held and rocked. Nickname is Bouchee (Chubby Cheeks).

Twins - Kaylee and Kylee. Came to Transformation House with their mother just after birth. They were refused care in the hospital because mom is Haitian. Now 4 months old, they were going home as we were leaving.

Charlie - 2-year-old boy who came to Transformation House with his mom. Suffered a respiratory tract infection. He had to stay on IV for a few days. Healthy again and went home during our time there. Very active boy who loves to walk and explore.

Young mom from Ascension - Giving birth to twins very soon. HIV positive. Doctors will perform c-section in hopes babies will not contract HIV during birth. She has one son already. There is no father around and her family is moving around to try and find work.
Luigi (9), Jonathan (5), Jeffrey (3) - Brothers taken from Ascension village. Suffer ringworm, sores and neglect. Their mother took money given for doctors and abandoned them. Not sure when she will return. Mother chooses not to clothe them at home, even though she has clothes for them. Will stay at Transformation House until mother returns.

Staff at Transformation House - Nurses, caregivers and cooks are amazing people who love all the children who come to this children’s hospital/clinic. They are generous, friendly and attentive to their visitors and their patients. They are a great help to Martin and the doctor who work for the Dominican people. They were always willing to lend a hand, or show us how to lend a hand with the children.

Children at Ascension and everywhere in Dominican - There are so many children who need care, concern and resources for their future. Birth certificates are not always available. Many of the children are Haitians who are in Dominican illegally. Without proof of birth, children cannot attend school. Without school it is hard to prepare for the upcoming generation for a better future. Cycles repeat and must be broken to realize the hope that is available to them.

Martin & Cindy with their adopted son, Max. This couple runs Transformation House. Max came to live with them a year ago, suffering from severe malnutrition and dehydration. Max’s adoption will take another 2 years and thousands of dollars to complete.
What You Can Do…

- Discover more about Transformation House and how you can help this children’s hospital/clinic that serves the people of the Dominican Republic.
  
  [http://transformation-house.org/](http://transformation-house.org/)

- Pray for Transformation House and the Dominican.
- Pray for the children listed in this booklet.
- Raise funds to send to Transformation House.
- Contact Transformation House to find out specific needs you can fill.
- If you are planning a trip to Dominican, take some much-needed supplies and medicines to give to Transformation House.
- Join a team or lead a team to help at Transformation House or in the Dominican.
- Spread the word about Transformation House and the plight of the people in Dominican Republic.

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