



After flying all day and trying to sleep on a bus all night, we arrived at the church/school compound in Maturin, Venezuela at dawn. We were in the middle of a large city of a poor but proud nation. Each morning the kids line up at 7 AM and sing the national anthem of Venezuela as the flag is raised. They start their day early, well before the sun drives temperatures into the nineties. Once we had unloaded and had some breakfast, 200 students participated in a welcoming program for us.





There was traditional dance by this little girl, lots of singing and some skits. The hosts reciprocated national pride by inviting us to sing the US national anthem for them. We were happy to oblige, but the music they selected was less than “singable,” including a little improvisation in the music. We muddled through it and got our construction briefing from Eduardo, the church president. He had built a cardboard model to illustrate part of the project. It immediately involved mixing tons of concrete and mortar by hand as well as some guerrilla landscaping. A small garden had to go before we could build the covered entrance to the church. We worked in ninety plus degree heat each day, but at least the rain was warm!





We were asked to partner with the hosts in three main jobs. The first and main project was the covered entrance to the church. It would be an L-shaped porch that came out of the orange building directly through the garden area and stop at the parking lot. The second project was the floor in the church. Vinyl dividers were laid four feet on center and level. They had to be supported by mortar and after they cured, the squares would be filled with rich concrete and sprinkled with dye. The effect was one of a gigantic tile floor cast in place. There were over 200 squares. The third project was footings and pillars on a pre-school addition that met earthquake construction code. That meant 5' x 5' footings and lots of rebar.



We had two shovels and two wheelbarrows to start. Since we had a few thousand dollars collected from people like you, we considered a cement truck, but that was quickly vetoed by our practical and frugal hosts as too expensive and extravagant. We did manage to find a cement mixer and an engine, which we had to remove each night to prevent theft. We didn't have any bolts to mount it, so we wired it in each day. The spark plug came from the pastor's son's car. Everything was done by hand and we were able to stretch your contributions to the maximum. We even repaired a third wheelbarrow and placed it in service.





They certainly did things differently than we did. They are very practical and intelligent when it comes to putting the pieces together. But safety is not yet in their lexicon. Even though we had an electrician with us, this was the normal wiring code of the day. I did a fire inspection for them and made some recommendations, but I would be surprised if they make the changes that cost more than a few dollars.

The compound was about 5 acres in the city. Toward the end of the week we moved to the back of the property and hand cast giant columns for the pre-school addition.





No matter how they do things or how much money they have to do them, these folks were as pleasant and friendly as anyone else. They were happy as a church family and were excited to learn that Christians from other parts of the world were interested in them for no reason other than the love and faith that we share through Jesus Christ.







Thanks again for your support and contribution for this trip. I enjoyed the trip, especially the people I met from Iglesia Cristo Rey in Maturin, Venezuela. You've made an impact on their lives too.

