

St. John's Episcopal Church in Ellicott City, MD, where I was Rector, started a relationship with St. Mary's, Port Maria, Jamaica. The purpose was to help people realize what the larger church looked like, and to see how God guides us to do God's work. After establishing a covenant relationship in 1990, we began a Medical Mission to Port Maria sponsored by the two parishes.

Last year 30 doctors, nurses, and volunteers paid their own way to go for one week. In that short time, they reached out to over 2,000 people in this small and poor part of God's kingdom. There were gynecologists, opticians, general practitioners, pediatricians, dentists, and others who gave their time and gifts to help raise the level of healthcare and quality of life in Port Maria.

The "Medical Mission" is now primarily supported by two parishes in Leesburg, FL and Pembroke Pines, FL, but people in other parishes contribute over-the-counter medicines, give money to help the mission go forward, and volunteer their time.

2015 is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this joint mission between St. Mary's, Port Maria and several Episcopal parishes in the US. I plan to go back for this 25<sup>th</sup> year mission trip. I invite you to also be involved in a variety of ways:

- Come to the Adult Education on Oct. 5 at 9:15 or 11:15 in the Parish Hall to learn about and pray for the mission.
- Bring over-the-counter drugs (a list is provided) on Oct. 12 and 19 to support the mission.
- Make a donation to support medical costs of the mission (make checks to Church of the Ascension, marked for Medical Mission.)
- Consider going on the mission Jan. 25 – Feb. 2.
- Pray for those who will go and those who will receive medical assistance, that we all may see God more clearly in our lives.

This Medical Mission has given me a clearer picture of what reaching out in God's name is all about. The people of Jamaica changed my life, and I have received far more than I have given. I invite you to join me, however you can, to be a messenger of God to the people of Port Maria in January 2015.

Faithfully,  
The Rev. Dr. William R. Shiflet, Jr.