



**MARCH
2015**

God Has a Sense of Humor

We have officially entered into the season of Lent. Lent is a season of the year created by the Church to help Christians prepare themselves for the coming of Resurrection Sunday. (I prefer this term rather than the more common word of Easter, due to its pagan origins. I'm not dogmatic about it, or insistent upon it, but I prefer it nonetheless.)



Pastor Bob Zoba

Lent is a forty-day period meant to echo the time Jesus spent in the wilderness where He was tempted by the Devil. This is to be a forty-day period of our own wrestling with temptation, aided and abetted by the "giving up" of something. Traditionally, Christians have practiced fasting during the period of Lent. Of course, fasting can consist of a whole array of practices as some followers give up eating on certain days of the weeks, or abstaining from certain types of foods like sweets or meat. In more modern times, folks have become more creative by giving up television, Facebook, video games, or dating supermodels;-)

Protestants in general and Evangelicals in particular have not been too keen on fasting during Lent for reasons that stretch back to the Reformation. However, as a Protestant Evangelical, I have found the practice to be quite helpful in my spiritual walk. How so? Well, let me list a few examples.

1. By observing Lent, we are marching to the beat of a different drummer. Rather than being dictated by the agenda of the secular calendar, we are declaring ourselves counter-cultural. And I believe that is fitting with Christ's agenda for His people. Would that we might be more counter-cultural in every area of our Christian life!

2. It establishes a unifying link with other Christians both locally and globally as Christians all across the community and all across the globe are engaging in the same season of self-denial. Thus, we are able to build a bridge to our other brothers and sisters in Christ, particularly our Catholic and Eastern Orthodox friends.

3. It helps to remind us of the struggle that Jesus went through as he wrestled with sin, set his face toward Jerusalem, and willfully and purposefully denied his desire for self-preservation and instead willing gave

**Sunday Services
10:00 a.m.**

**Adult Sunday School
9:00am**

**Sunday School
PK-12
10:30am**

**Choir Practice
Sundays 12pm
Thursdays 7pm**

Weekly Activities

**Ladies Bible Study
Tuesdays noon-2pm**

**Small Group
@ the Rivera's
Tuesday 7pm**

**Men's Breakfast
Wednesday 7am**

**Women's Study
Wednesday 7pm**

**Prayer Service
Thursday 7pm**

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Rev. Robert Zoba

Gustavo Gonzalez
Youth Leader

Himself up for us. Thus, as we give up “stuff” that we enjoy, we give ourselves up to God and to others in service.

4. Fasting prompts humility in our souls as we discover how weak our flesh really is by trying to deny it certain innocent pleasures that we normally enjoy. I figure, better to be reminded of that now in innocuous things, and thereby learn to rely on God’s help, then wait for a serious sin to bring us down without the spiritual training to resist.

5. Fasting makes us grateful. When you force yourself to skip a meal or two or three, it is so wonderful to finally sit down and enjoy a meal with praise and thanksgiving. We should do this at every meal. But let’s face it, we don’t.

6. It allows God to show us He has a sense of humor. A case in point; one of the things I’m giving up for Lent is one that many people choose: dessert. (OK, this is a little self-serving for it now gives me a holy excuse to say no to sweets and to put a damper on a waistline that keeps growing.)

However, I think the Lord wanted to pull my chain a little because on the second day of my Lenten observance, Christie was summoned to Costco to pick up items that Costco generously donates to our Backpack program. But, one thing about Costco, we never know for sure what they have to donate. And since beggars can’t be choosers, we accept whatever they give us with gratitude. However, this visit was especially unique in that Christie brought home ten massive flan pies, two huge birthday cakes, a red velvet cake, four chocolate loaves, and, my all-time favorite dessert, four layered tres leches.



Who says God doesn’t have a sense of humor? Or that the Devil is not working overtime? I’m sure the possibility of bread was more tempting to Jesus after forty days of fasting than tres leches was to me after two days, but I still found it ironic and amusing and oh so tempting.

But God is good. He provides me with the bread of heaven and the dessert of His presence in my life, and, believe me, that is more than enough. Indeed, everything we give over to God He gives back to us 30-fold, 60-fold, and even 100-fold.

Come walk with us to Golgotha.

The journey will bless you, refresh you and deepen your joy in the Lord.

Pastor Bob

Second Union Church is a unique place with a very special calling. Pastor Bob calls us a 'sending church', because people move from 2UC and the island with alarming regularity. God's called us to welcome, encourage, and be family for those who have found their way to our church.

Puerto Rico can be a little like summer camp. Hard at first, because you miss home, but by the time summer is over, you realize how much you've grown and how much you are going to miss all your new friends.

And it's not just what we offer those coming and going, but they teach us as well. And we find that we too have grown and changed. And our hearts break with each goodbye.

These broken hearts God widens and mends so that with each hello we have grown in love. Since January we've said quite a few good-byes.

You would think with all the practice we get, it would become old hat for us. But, it never gets easier. Ever.

Some years are harder than others. I think maybe God is softening our hearts instead of hardening them from all the constant goodbyes: these pliable, living hearts He has put in us.

God's love truly does cover the sadness with the joy of knowing it was His plan that brought us together.



Anita Rodriguez

(A note from the editor: Saying goodbye is difficult, but both the Yosts and the Myles plan to return in June of this year! And Juan Gonzalez will also be back from time to time to visit family. Ain't God grand??)

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Second Union Church

The Pagés Family wishes to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of those who called, sent cards and came to the funeral home when Hector's father passed away in January. Although death brings sadness, there is comfort in knowing that a loved one is resting in heaven. In other news, their grandson, Hector Cruz is growing quickly. The new mom and dad proudly report that their 3 month old son is sleeping all night and in his own room! The Pages family looks forward to a reunion next month in Tybee Island, GA. They will celebrate a milestone birthday for "Grandpa Hector".

JoAnne Varon writes: We recently celebrated my mother-in-law's (Carmen Roman) 84th birthday on Valentine's Day. On February 5th-8th, Milton & his father, Milton attended the American Association for Orthodontics Winter Conference in Miami, FL. Rosabella & I joined in on the trip and even had a chance to meet up with my parents (Lolo & Lola) who escaped the snow and cold winter of New Jersey for a few days.

Luis & Mimi Gandia write: Greetings from Orlando! We are fully settled in our new home and are enjoying being near Aaron & his wife, and of course, the two grand kids! Regards to all.

Madelyn Vega writes; Xavi , Raymond and I spent Valentines Day in NYC. It was freezing at -17 degrees!!! Yet we had the opportunity to be together as a family and went to see the Phantom of the Opera!



John & Evelyn Alberts are up in Connecticut watching their grandchild so that Willie and his wife can come down here to PR to get warm.

Bill Stowell's dear daughter, Nicole, was back at church recently. We have to believe that Bill is rejoicing in heaven as a result.

Joe Calcolli just landed a big contract with Kress Stores. Congrats Joe!

Marissa Serrano writes: Everything's going great! I'm still an Education Director at the Puerto Rican Family Institute in NY. I supervise 22 teachers for 2 preschool programs for children of low-income families in Brooklyn & the Bronx. I still live in Brooklyn, but soon I will be moving to the Queens area. I'll probably be visiting PR in August, since I'm getting engaged to my boyfriend Jason & he's coming to PR to meet my family. He has been such a blessing in my life and he loves the Lord with all his heart.



Tuesday pick-up basketball is back at 2UC. Every Tuesday evening a group of guys play in La Villa de Torrimar at 7pm. If you are interested, see Pastor Bob or Man-up Manny Fernandez. The group also includes Jared Adams, Jeff Blacker, Daniel & Armando Rivera.

Our own Denise Hill of Arthur Murray Dance Studios will be offering our Couple's group salsa lessons on the evening of **March 14 at 6:30pm** at 2UC. Come join us!

Retired Brigadier General, Von De Loach, was back to 2UC recently and sang the great hymn "It is Well with My Soul".



Juan Gonzalez is moving to Orlando to be nearer to his many wonderful daughters in Missouri, Texas, and Florida. We will all miss this great man of God.

Maruicio & Bernice Solano gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. It turned out to be a miracle delivery as serious complications were avoided and mom and baby (and papa) are doing great!



Our first Jubilee Anniversary event was a hit as our trip to the first Protestant church in Puerto Rico was attended by over twenty folks. Thanks George and Joan McMurray for your great work! (See page 6 for more about the visit)

We bid a sad farewell to Derek & Susanne Myles as they are relocating to Montreal. However, Merck will be sending Derek back here to PR often and Susanne plans on accompanying him.



Steve & Loida Spivak are back and have brought a wonderful couple from Scotland with them. The couple actually knew Myles family from their years in the homeland. Go figure.

Rosa Trinidad's dear daughter, Ivette, recently married a strapping young man from Great Britain. They were all at church so everyone got to meet Ivette's new hubby. Ivette will be moving to London as soon as the visa process is completed.



The Yosts report that they arrived safely in snowy Pinetop, AZ and are getting settled in. We sure do miss them;-)

John Alberts will be competing in the Puerto Rico Marathon, the full 26.2 miles, on March 22?



Christie Zoba recently spent a few days with Tish Grosek at her mom's place in Key Largo, Florida. Tish was holding a showing of her 'wraps' at a nearby Spa. See Tish's great website at: wrapitbytish.com

Manny Fernandez' sister, Monica was visiting from Jacksonville, Florida in February. For those of you who haven't been around 2UC for a long time, Manny and Monica were born and raised in PR and attended Sunday School here for many years! Their mom, Claresse McClendon, was a Sunday School teacher and was very active in Women's Guild and Bible Study, on top of the fact that she was one of the funniest and most genuine people you could ever meet! It was great having Monica here!



Dennis Gonzalez is going through an intense program as a part of Jovenes en Riesgo (Youth at Risk) program to become a mentor to a teenager? This is an excellent organization that Women's Ministries has supported for several years. (see article on page 8)

Audrey and J.B. Wilcox had daughters, Hannah and Catherine visiting in February!



Christie and Pastor Bob also had visitors: Bob's son, Nate and his beloved, Sheila were here for a week escaping the cold and snow in Boston!



La Piquiña

The Luis A. Ferré Expressway, Route 52, runs from San Juan to Ponce. The scenery in the mountains south of Caguas is indeed a sight to behold. A drive to Ponce from San Juan takes about one and a half hours each way.

This was not always so. Once upon a time, before the construction of highway 52 with its engineered bridges, the only way to Ponce was over a two lane roadway called "La Piquiña". This road can best be described by translating the word piquiña. Piquiña means 'the itch'. When Puertorricans have to do something difficult, they say that this gives the piquiña. In other words this gives them an itch.

This paved road was 83 miles long and ran from north to south over the mountain range, the Cordillera Central. It stood out because of its winding blind turns. 18 wheeled trucks literally inched their way up the mountain. The ensuing traffic jam stretched for miles behind an impassable truck. Impassable because the combination of two lanes and blind turns meant taking your life into your hands, in order to pass a truck, only to get behind another slow moving truck as well. On good days it took three to four hours to get to Ponce. For this reason Ponce remained a small town isolated from San Juan. Ponceños developed their own ways and expressions. For example a nickel in S.J. is called a "vellón" but in Ponce it's called a "ficha". In 1898 this same roadway was used by the American Army as they advanced towards San Juan.

Everything changes, sometimes for the better.

Brother Joe



Bible Study Opportunities

Adult Sunday School (9am)

Book: 2nd Samuel

Lizzette Kelley leads a study on the book of 2nd Samuel in the conference room at 2UC.

Tuesday Lunchtime Study (noon-2pm)

Book: Girls with Swords by Lisa Bevere

Join us as we meet over lunch to discuss the study, pray and share our lives with each other. Bring your own lunch or order from Anita for \$8 (anita00926@aol.com) Contact Christie for more information: 787-717-4001.

Tuesday Evening Bible Study (7pm)

Study: Biblical Topics

Meeting at the home of Luis Alberto and Loraine Rivera in the San Francisco neighborhood, the group is open to all and anyone can join at any time! For more information contact Luis Alberto: (787) 232 - 8654

Wednesday Evening Bible Study (7pm)

Book: 12 Women of the Bible

This group meets at the home of Anita Rodriguez. for more information contact Anita: anita00926@aol.com

Condado / Isla Verde Study

Contact Pastor Bob or Laurie Foster for days and times!



After months of public discussion and misinformation about the so-call “gender perspective” curriculum, the same coalition of Christians groups behind the manifestation against same sex marriage in Puerto Rico two years ago held a manifestation for all who opposed to this teaching to come out to “El Capitolio”. They did it in a period of only two weeks and the people responded amazingly. The organizers estimate that more than 250,000 people came to the south side of the “House of Laws” to send the message that we don’t desire that kind of philosophy in our schools.

I just want to take some time to express our experience as a family on that march. It is really hurtful to read all of the reactions to it (especially on social media) of people who were not there talking like if that was a concentration of the Nazi party in Germany. It is also upsetting to see the lies spread by those who were there, on the counter march of course. For instance we felt that we were at a family day enjoying a beautiful day with the family of God.

There was a prayer and four short speeches addressing the subject from a legal, psychological and spiritual point of view. Nothing hateful or offensive was ever said about the government or against any other group of people.

We were really surprised to see that the group of about 100 (I’m being generous with the number here) demonstrators that were in favor of the curriculum were right in the middle of the larger group of people. It made me wonder: Aren’t the police supposed to organize things to avoid confrontations? Why they were allowed to be there instead of the other side of the “Capitolio” as originally announced? Regardless, they were spotted and everyone there acted very lovingly with them, but as I read the news that same afternoon I read that the organizer of the march is complaining that they were pushed by the Christians, and that they didn’t march towards “La Fortaleza” because they were afraid of the violence of the Christian group. A total lie! Also, false quotes starting to appear on social media saying crazy stuff that the speakers never said! Why do they lie?

In conclusion, in was a great day surrounded by great people. God gave us the perfect weather and nothing bad happened. It was a true example of the “power” of the people, yet sadly there is no sign of any change on the plans of the government.

Gustavo González, Youth Leader



Couples' Ministry: Dance Your Way to a Better Marriage!

March 14, 2015 at 6:30 pm
Fellowship Happ at 2UC

Don't miss this opportunity to work on your relationship and learn a few moves! Our very own, Denise Hill, co-owner of the Arthur Murray dance studio will be here to teach Salsa and more to the couples of our church. We will have a pot-luck meal, so please bring something to share. It promises to be a great evening!!



As most of you know, I have volunteered to be a mentor for a young adolescent . I am in a program called "Jovenes en Riesgo de Puerto Rico" which is translated as "Youth at Risk of Puerto Rico". This program is an intense one-year program that selects appropriate men and women to serve as mentors to teenagers.

To become a "mentor" I have to go through a training that includes a one-day seminar, a two-day seminar, a one day "ropes" training course and a five-day continuous camping experience between the mentors and the youth to ascertain the best combination of mentors and teens.

Yesterday I had the "ropes" experience where all of the mentors went to a facility in Salinas, Puerto Rico. The aim of the ropes course is to promote bonding and teamwork in addition to stretch the boundaries of the individuals so that each person can come out of "ropes" with more self assurance and overcome their fears. I have always had a fear of heights.

No one knows this except Amarilis, as she is the only one I have ever told. I have been able to force myself to face my fears by sky diving from 13,500 feet in 2008 and riding rollercoasters and other exciting rides, but I still have this fear.



In the ropes course we were asked to climb up a 40 foot wood pole. At the top of the pole there were no handrails, no guardrails and no platforms. There was just the top of the pole which had a flat surface of about one square foot. Just enough space to place your feet side by side.

As I climbed the pole my fear of heights was so great that the only thing I was wishing for was that the pole would never end and therefore not have to reach the top of the pole. When I finally made it to the top of the pole, it took me a long time to hoist myself up , as I had hardly anything to pull me up except the rope of my safety harness.

When I got to the top we were supposed to jump into the air and catch a swing like the circus trapeze artists. The swing was about 8 feet in front of us and higher than me so I had to jump out and up to grab the bar. The pole was shaking and I was shaking more than the pole, so I decided that I had to jump early before I got petrified from the fear within me. I spread my arms wide and counted 1,2,3 and leapt into space and grabbed the bar. My hands slipped off the bar but the harness held me, and I was lowered triumphantly down to ground level by the members of my team.

In my life I have gone down 100 feet beneath of the surface of the ocean while scuba diving, I have flown from San Juan to Caracas in a one engine plane that took 11 hours, I have jumped out of an airplane from 13,500 feet, I have raced cars at over 150 miles per hour, but I have never done anything in my life more terrifying and difficult than overcoming my fears to climb and jump from that pole.

This experience really showed me that we all can expand our boundaries when we are determined to overcome obstacles.

I will just have to add this to my list of adventures. This WAS NOT on my bucket list but I am glad I was able to do it!!

Dennis Gonzalez





A visit to the First Protestant Church in the Caribbean

In early February of this year, a group of over twenty people traveled to Ponce as a part of our Jubilee 50th Anniversary Celebration. The purpose of the trip was a visit to the site of the first Protestant Church English language church in the Caribbean, La Mision Santisima Trinidad.

This is now an Spanish-speaking Episcopal church offering English services from time to time. The priest and his predecessor met with the group from Second Union and Union Church to discuss the history of the church.

It was through a special dispensation, influenced by Queen Victoria,



that the church was permitted to open its doors in the late 1800s. At that time, of course, the Roman Catholic church was 'the' religious authority of the realm. The Protestant church was able to offer services only in English and they were not allowed to promote themselves to anyone outside of the English-speaking community. So too, even though the church bell was donated by Queen Victoria, they were not allowed to ring it for any purpose. After the Spanish-American War, religious freedom was granted and the bell became a liberty bell.



The priest conducted a brief Prayer Service which was much appreciated by all in attendance. After leaving the church, the group continued down the street to visit the Museo de la Masacre, a massacre perpetrated by the original American governor in Puerto Rico. In the afternoon, the group continued on to a special guided tour of the Museo de Arte de Ponce. It was a blessing for all who participated.



The celebration of our 50th Jubilee Anniversary continues! During the month of February, Chuck Hitt, of the Union Church, came to bring a message of encouragement and congratulations. Chuck, 96 years old, is a pillar of the Union Church and an inspiration to all.

On March 1st, sopranoist, Diana Villafaña, will be singing during the worship service to commemorate the 50th anniversary. Diana was once our organist and choir director. Her contribution is sure to be something you don't want to miss. She was invited to attend our upcoming concert on May 16th featuring Yadira de Jesus, Luis Manuel Tirado, and the Orfeon Choir. However, since she is relocating to the States in April, Diana is making a special visit.

We will be holding a gala banquet to close out our 50th Anniversary year on November 7, 2015. Whether you are in Puerto Rico or elsewhere in the world, we hope you can make plans to attend. It promises to be a very special reunion and celebration!

"Study the design you were given on the mountain and make everything accordingly." God's instruction to Moses found at the end of Exodus chapter 25, MSG.

This morning, I was pondering these words and others in reading Genesis, Exodus, and Job thus far this year. The Bible version in English I am using is called "The Message". What is a message but the imparting of information? Let me explain further. Science loves to create theories on how the universe began. We have all heard of the Big Bang theory. The latest news I have read is that science now believes Big Bang is wrong. Something else must then come and take its place. Science ideas change as we discover new information and concepts. God's information, "God's Word" stands.

In Genesis, we are told that God spoke and it came into existence. In other words, God made information come into existence. There is power in words and in information transfer. This era is often called the Information Age. What kind of information is being spread around the world? With the book of beginnings, Genesis, we read that God spoke and it came into existence. God made the information become real. There is power in the spoken word. There is power in information. God originated information. God invented it. We use it daily. Information stands as integral to science, engineering, and architecture. Study the design. Learn from it. God will give you and me the plans if we are willing to stop and listen.

by Bill Heffley

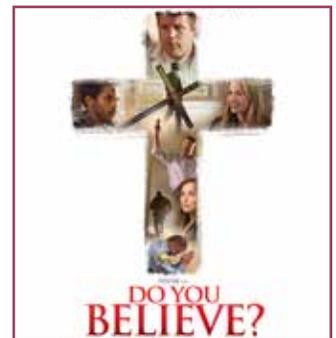
Do You Believe? Movie Premiere

In February, a special premiere of the new movie, "Do You Believe?" released by the producers of "God is Not Dead", was held in February. This is a 'must-see' movie for all. It will be in theaters in Puerto Rico beginning on March 19. Below is a synopsis:

A dozen different souls—all moving in different directions, all longing for something more. As their lives unexpectedly intersect, they each are about to discover there is power in the Cross of Christ ... even if they don't believe it. Yet.

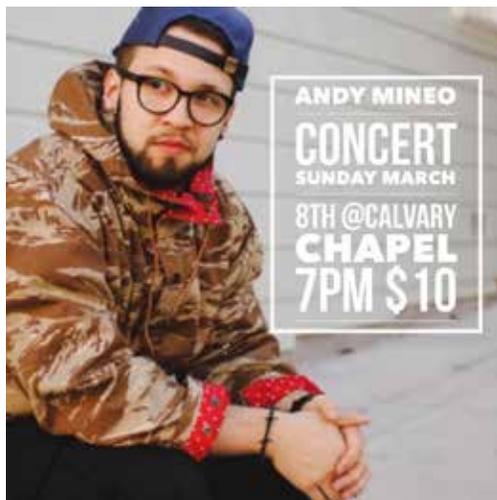
When a local pastor is shaken to the core by the visible faith of an old street-corner preacher, he is reminded that true belief always requires action. His response ignites a faith-fueled journey that powerfully impacts everyone it touches in ways that only God could orchestrate.

This stirring new film from the creators of God's Not Dead arrives in theaters March 20, 2015.



Christian Rap Concert

From a senior high school student at Tasis in Dorado:



It is my hope that this concert can be a way for teenagers and young adults who have had very little exposure to see Christ and his message to what Christianity is. I would like to use this as an opportunity for kids in various youth ministry groups around the island bring friends to a Christian activity which they would normally not attend.

I believe that this could be a much needed spark for Christ in many lives. For more information, contact me, Nate Neugebauer at (512)-695-6646 / nateneug@me.com.

Blessed are the Sunday School Teachers ...
Who tell the children the truth about Jesus,
For they will be called the teachers of God.

Blessed are the Sunday School Teachers ...
Who love and hug the children,
For they will be embraced by God's glory.

Blessed are the Sunday School Teachers ...
Who endure the talkative children and the ear-piercing screams of little girls,
For they will hear God's joyful laughter among them.

Blessed are the Sunday School Teachers ...
Who behave and play like the children around them,
For they will receive youthful vigor for the next 10-15 minutes.

Blessed are the Sunday School Teachers ...
Who listen to the children's concerns,
For God will reveal His heart to them.

Blessed are the Sunday School Teachers ...
Who teach the children to pray,
For they will experience God's power through answered prayer.

Blessed are the Sunday School Teachers ...
Who lead one of the children to saving grace, through Jesus Christ,
For they will have treasures in heaven.

Blessed are the Sunday School Teachers ...
Who call on God for wisdom in teaching His Word,
For the Holy Spirit will speak the truth in love through them.

How have you shown love to the Sunday School teachers in your child's life?

A big thanks to all who volunteer to lead our Sunday School classes. We are so blessed by their contribution and their commitment. We would love to pay them; however, we know will be well rewarded in heaven for their willingness to teach our little ones!

Our Sunday School teachers for the month of February were:

Pre-k & K	Elsy Perez
1 & 2	Dalia Gonzalez
3 & 4	Loraine Rivera
5 & 6	David Benson

A special thanks to Dalia Gonzalez, who is working behind the scenes to make sure the classroom supplies and lessons are all ready for Sunday morning. She makes teaching a delight!!

Are you interested in teaching Sunday School? We can always use more committed volunteers! Please see Dalia Gonzalez, Elsy Pérez or Mabel Varela.



We are very grateful to all who are helping with our Backpack Program as well as our Tuesday afternoon tutoring sessions for the Backpack students.

Each week, 52 weeks a year, we provide 31 students whose families have great economic need, with a backpack full of food. The backpacks usually contain a large box of cereal, milk, tuna, vienna sausages, Chef Boyardee, beans, juice, canned fruit and often cookies, crackers and snacks. Each month we receive a shipment of food from the Banco de Alimentos de PR (Food Bank), but the amount of food varies greatly from one month to the next. The February shipment was much less than we have received previously, therefore we needed to rely on donations and purchases to be able to provide a full and nutritious backpack. We are grateful for Yoav Cohen who consistently provides fresh fruits and vegetables and to Omar at Costco who allows us to pick up bakery goods from time to time. If you would like to donate food, we'd be happy to receive it! Thanks to Audrey and Anita who help deliver backpacks to the school and to Chris and Mike Strong for their help in picking up the orders at the Food Bank.



a recent meeting with parents at the Juanillo Fuentes School

In addition to the Backpack Program, we offer after school tutoring for the students of the Backpack program on Tuesdays. We currently have seven regular 'customers' and we are hoping that more parents will bring their children. At the present time, our tutoring consists of assisting the students with their homework, but we hope to expand this to include English class and more in-depth studying. We are looking for Sesame Street or similar 'easy English' videos! If you have any to donate, please let Christie or Loraine know!

We are grateful for our tutors: Audrey Wilcox, Brenda Ferrer, and Loraine Rivera from 2UC as well as Yolanda Ubiñas and Carlos Plaud. A Baldwin National honor society student, Alejandra Pou comes with a contingent of seniors from Baldwin School!! We are also grateful to Sofía and Regina Cuevas, also Baldwin students who come faithfully to pack backpacks - and boy, do they do an amazing job!

If you'd like to be a part of the program or contribute: contact Christie Zoba 787-717-4001 / zoba129@gmail.com



Juan and Carlos 'Caco' Plaud



Meralisse & Alejandra Pou



Kiara and Audrey Wilcox



Laurie Yost & Alejandra



Yoly Ubiñas & Angelo



Sherlyn & Loraine Rivera