

Carlisle United Methodist Church

Haiti Serve Team 2018



Team Journal:

Team Members: Rich Charette, Mira Hewlett, Chuck Steele, Beth Heishman, Christina Benson, Cindy Sullivan, Caz and Bob Ford (Water to Life)

1/6/2018

Today was filled with new experiences for me in Haiti. There is another church group here with us that is working towards establishing an egg laying operation in Mellier. We spent the morning with them as they learned more about the potential partners with whom they will be working. We visited a small chicken farm where one of the men is engineering incubators of different sizes for Haitians to use. The smallest one is powered by a solar panel and heated with a kerosene lamp. We had a late lunch at a restaurant that served mostly American style food. Afterwards we visited the iron market, an area where most of the metalwork that is made is sold. Today was quite warm and now at about 8:30 it is still muggy. Thankfully the air-conditioners work very well. Everyone is getting along well and we are excited to get to Mellier tomorrow. Chuck

We got in yesterday around 2:30 PM and came to the guest house and hung out today. We went with another team from Missouri as they were gathering information about a chicken egg project they raised \$60,000 to start. They will develop this project in Miller which is where we are going tomorrow. It is very interesting as we went from one local farm killing, bleeding, and plucking feathers in a very primitive manner to a \$2 million a year factory. The gap between the two was crazy. As we drove around we saw tons of people on the street trying to make a living. It seems to be the same products over and over with nobody really buying. I can't fathom how they make a living here and support a family. We then went to a lunch at a fast food restaurant. It was actually good. I had a piece of vegetable pizza and fries. We then went to the Iron/Tin market to get souvenirs. They all wanted you to walk in their shop and bless their family by buying something. We then went from seeing raw meat, vegetables, fruit, etc. sold on the trash-

ridden street to the Giant which is actually nicer than the ones at home. Again the gap between the haves and the have nots is very wide. Now we are back at the guesthouse waiting on dinner. In all it has been a good reminder on how poor the Haitian people are and their daily lives. Pictures say 1000 words and I took plenty today.

Cindy

1/7/2018

Today we packed up and left for Mellier. After an uneventful trip, of which we had air-conditioning, we got to Mellier right in the time for church. Service was good and they had great children's moment and choir singing. It were adorable even if we didn't understand a word.

The afternoon we walked around the community a bit and went to the local bakery. It smelled wonderful and warm bread is hard to beat. The homes were very simple structures, with many tarps still apparent. There are many more animals than I remember from before: cows, goats, dogs, pigs, and chickens on our walk. In this area they are doing an excellent job on local farming with lush crops of black beans, sugar cane, and plantains.

In the afternoon Rich and I talked with Jean Claude about microcredit and learned a lot. We are very interested in the program and I think it might be feasible on a smaller scale for us. Right now it's for women only, but looks to expand to men too. In one year they fully pay back the loans and the bank becomes self-sufficient. The power of the entrepreneurial spirit here is amazing and encouraging. With a bit of help they really can transform their families.

We walked to the river which is very wide and a place (in the dry season) for washing and bathing.

I continue to be inspired by the hope and power of God's spirit in the people. Their excitement and willingness to overcome all obstacles, to take risks, and always improve continues. Always a blessing to be back here in Haiti.

Mira

Although events seem to be on a somewhat haphazard schedule – it is truly a remarkable experience. We had two extra bunkmates; a mother/daughter duo from New Jersey joined us last night. Their team was on its way to Furcy.

Breakfast, loading the truck in vans, a one and a half hour drive preceded our arrival at Mellier at 9:15. We attended the first service and were heartily welcomed by the congregation and pastor. The music was especially beautiful – we listened to their adult choir rehearsal – amazing sound.

We had a bit of improvising as we discovered that some crucial bits and pieces were left behind at the guest house in Petionville – everyone seems willing to be “flexible”.

The church facility is lovely – and big – and was filled this morning. People came over to greet us during the hospitality moments and share the "Peace of Christ".

I enjoyed our walks through the community – the first to find a local bakery and fresh bread - so good! The second to see the river – which is very low at this time of year, but in May is impressively wide and deep. I am really enjoying being back in Haiti – and exploring what building relationships and community development may look like probably larger in scope than I had envisioned, but certainly within our realm. As Rich said at devotions last night – God is mighty – and we need to believe in a God capable of mighty things. Haitians have been praying to an awesome God and we are partly an answer to their prayers.

As I listen to the music and prayers of the people during the evening services I hear the devotion. People do not hold back – and don't expect God to hold back either.

I'm excited to be part of this trip and I am looking forward to being with the group helping people with assembling their water filters.

Christina

1/8/2018

Being back in Haiti fills me. I missed it and it's nice seeing that even in just a year, things have changed. It doesn't smell as bad and although there is still trash, it's much less. Mellier appears to be a "better off" community than Sobier was last year. It's not as far away from the city. Today we had toast, fruit, warm bread and eggs for breakfast. I'd have to say I love the food a lot here. We then tied the cut t-shirts into school bags for the children which were then filled with notebook paper and little school kits (pencils, scissors, markers, ruler). The children in the community started jumping in to help tie and even with the language barrier, they picked up quickly on how to tie them. The children didn't have school today because the teachers had quit over Christmas break and hadn't gotten paid since September. It's hard to know children go without an education and who knows for how long. Around lunch we walked through the community checking water-filters that have been given out on previous trips. Many people seem to still use their filters; a lot of them just need to be flushed. Some of the people had moved because they had been renting homes. The children walked with us and held our hands.

When we got back to the church we sanded the wood that was purchased to make school tables/benches. A gentleman in the community with an electric saw was hired to cut the large boards down. I always like how when we are here, or any team is, the people in the community have work for the time being. Everyone in Haiti is always so pleasant, grateful and generous.

Beth

Tired...

Very busy day... Water filters, schoolbags and kids, checking filters issued on previous trips, purchasing materials to build school benches and repair of the school roof, closed doors, open doors, many decisions. The team is happy to be busy and feeling a sense of accomplishment. Improvements in Haiti are noticeable but the evidence of people struggling is all around. But the Spirit of the Lord is here. As always there are many contrasts. We are staying in a big and beautiful church while the school buildings standing just a few feet away are in despair. Children arrived for school this morning but no teachers because they haven't been paid. Parents cannot afford the small tuition but the principal allows the children to attend school...without payment. The Haitian people are so grateful we are here and their hope in God makes it all worth these minor frustration.

Rich

1/9/2018

Today was a busy day with a lot going on. We cut and sanded wood for the school benches, we distributed water filters, and we checked water filters in the community. We paid to have the six desks built and the roof fixed on one school room. In addition some of us got to participate in our Missouri team's groundbreaking ceremony for the egg farm behind the church occurred. On a sad note, the other team left today. We enjoyed having them around and they were more than happy to help with our projects. One lady in particular (Sandra) was a hoot and fun to be around. On a better/sweet note, Bob and Rich were able to negotiate with the teachers and principal to stay at work at least for two weeks as they apparently have not been paid in 15 months. There are plans in the works with Bob as to how to get them paid. In addition we were able to pay several local men to help with the desk and roof. They were very grateful for the work. Rich mentioned that one carpenter cried when he was paid. I felt blessed that we were able to bless his family. It is hard to see the poor and hungry school kids but by paying for work done we know it goes so much further even though we could have done some of the work ourselves.

This evening was hard as we were trying to figure out how we could best serve the community with the rest of the blessings from our church members (a.k.a. money). We could have done more repairs on the school but eventually decided the one and a half more months of schooling would have more of an impact than two wall partitions for this one school room. The sad thing is that the Haiti United Methodist Church is so broke and/or mismanaged that they can't pay the teachers to begin with. There is such a discrepancy between the church and the school that I question where the priority lies. Growing children by teaching them through the church seems to be the most productive long-term plan but it isn't for me to say.

There are many questions that are hard to answer so you find the blessings where you can while you are here. Questions lead to more questions and that leads to a dark hole. Keep it simple and find a focus that you feel you can impact and get the biggest bang for your buck. Shifting their mindset of giving and taking it to one of giving a leg up for them to reach new heights on their own is something we struggle with in our poor communities in the US. What is best? Where will God lead us? What do you Haitian people want/need? How much of our ideas get in the way? Who can you trust? Was that a fishtail...or was that the accurate number? Can they trust us enough to know that if they tell the truth then we will listen and still come back?

Lights out!
Cindy

Afternoon

As I write this I believe that I am the only white person in the vicinity. The rest of the team has gone into the community to check water-filters but I stayed behind. It is getting very hot today and I wanted to stay out of the sun.

This morning I was able to attend the blessing ceremony for the Kansas City team's chicken project. It was a nice gathering and it was great to see their faces while Pastor Chris used the trail to lay the small bit of

cement and place the first ceremonial stone. A few of the local church leaders, including two women, also placed some stones in cement.

We also worked on building the benches for the school. We cut and sanded the legs but then handed the work over to Haitian carpenters to assemble them. Once they were assembled we will sand and finish them. While I appreciate that we have the means to hire them and this will prove a greater impact on the community through those funds, it is also disappointing to not have work to do. One of the greatest aspects of visiting Haiti for me has been working alongside the people here, but has not been happening much on this trip.

Evening

It's almost bedtime now. We went for a walk today to a bar/restaurant here in Mellier. It was a nice establishment and we enjoyed having conversation with our cold sodas while the fans cooled us. I have been surprised by the pockets of wealth in the town that I have seen on this trip. The community has much more to it than I saw six years ago.

We have continued our discussions concerning the best way to be in a long-term relationship with a community in Haiti, be that Mellier or someplace else. Relationships take time to form, particularly if they are to be truthful, last long-lasting, and productive. The early stages can be particularly stressful while both sides learn trust and adapt to changes as we become closer. There is always the risk that being too truthful can harm the relationship too, and this only adds more complications to the equation. If we are truly to be equal partners then there must be a balance on both sides of the figurative equal sign between us.

Enough musing... The school benches have been constructed. Tomorrow we will sand them and apply the sealer. There will be another water-filter distribution of up to 49 people. We are also planning a trip to a nearby orphanage. It should be another busy day.

Chuck

1/10/2018

Haiti and the people still amaze me after seven years of trips and meetings. Their never ending optimism and faith are constant reminders to me that nothing is impossible with a loving, faithful relationship with God.

Our trip has been extremely productive in regard to our projects. We were able to distribute 127 water filters, repair school roofs, build desks, and provide money to keep the school open for two more months.

One of the most important things we accomplished was the renewal and strengthening relationships that have been ongoing for seven years.

Planning continues for development of community sustainable projects. My prayers for the coming years is to listen for God's words and to listen and respect our Haitian brothers and sister's dreams for Haiti children and families.

Bob

Today was a very productive and inspiring day. This morning we started to sand and then shellacked six school benches for the kids and finished after lunch when more sealant was obtained. They look great and the principal was very happy for them. During the sanding I worked with Bob to take photos of the kids to provide scholarships for them from the States. The kids enjoyed their own photos and loved seeing themselves. We even got photos of the principal and teachers – which they enjoyed as much as the kids. Some have taught for 28 years and others just a year. They each were so proud and love teaching the kids.

Side note: school here is very hard and complicated. The UMCOR hot lunch program lasted a year and has been discontinued with UMCOR leaving in December. The students here mostly can't afford school, so the quality decreased when the good students who could pay, left. The teachers haven't been paid since September but continue to show up but without the support of the Methodist Church of Haiti (which is broke financially and organizationally). It's very hard.

I was proud our team decided extra funds should be used for teacher salaries – with the hope and almost promise that Water For Life will pick up the rest for this academic year and gave the principal and Pastor time to set a plan to fund the school. Although still being saviors with a checkbook - we could clearly see improvements on the school won't be needed if there aren't teachers. Community development – small steps!

Other events of the day:

- A third round of water filters giving out 43 today – and the people are so appreciative. This made for a total of 127 this week in Mellier.
- Gave teacher supply bags.
- Got cold sodas today –even Diet Coke!
- Visited His Hands Orphanage nearby doing an amazing job across the sugarcane field to house, educate, and raise 24 orphans
- Ate an amazing Denia dinner buffet again. I certainly gained weight again- eggplant casserole and mac & cheese my biggest pitfalls.
- Devotions tonight included a hard but critical question that only some teams can handle, “How does your Haiti experience bring alive a Bible story or scripture?” This team gets it. They saw God and scripture come alive and connected it. (Happy proud pastor moment for sure!)

As we wrap up our time in Mellier and prepare to leave in the morning, the week has been encouraging and inspiring. We see partnership opportunities and have heard their challenges, hopes, and dreams.

I pray we can make the leap and help our congregation to do it too; to move from rebuilding and structures to development of local people and resources for Mellier to grow organically and not be dependent on others! We need to help shift from handouts to hand ups to a better life – continuing to infuse our love and support while being an answer to prayer as they hope, dream, and do for themselves. This is my prayer!
Mira

1/11/2018

Going back to the guest house and leaving Mellier today.
First light reflections – where do I see God?

In the faces and hands and feet.

Faces:

Dark brown glistening, beaded brow
Laughing, teasing – pure joy, exuberance
Soulful, serious – intense and focused
Shy, quick smile
Distracted, inner thoughts predominate
Scolding – bringing a mischievous child in line
Earnest, attentive, responsive
Smiling – open and welcoming.

Hands:

Strong and capable, well worn
Small interesting, hand in hand
Quick – flying in a stone or a bottle cap
Reaching, beseeching; rubbing a flat belly
Generous – serving
Precise and sure; practiced
Gnarled, well used, a lifetime of hard work
Delicate and fine boned

And

Feet:

Bear and calloused, unmindful of dust or rocks
Shiny patent leather and frilly anklets
Flip-flops, utilitarian, fashion statement
Measured pace, ready to stop and chat
Washing feet before bed – so good to be clean
Shoe -shine stand
Tennis shoe shops on the sidewalk
Changing to dress shoes outside the church

We are the hands and feet to serve in Haiti – and all the more appreciative to be served every day.

The question I've been pondering while here – Lord, what do you want to do through me?

So many thoughts – so glad to be here part of this team.

Chris

Today was our last day in Mellier. Breakfast was fruit, eggs, and pancakes. I'm really going to miss meal times – the food is amazing here! Trying to cook it ourselves just doesn't do it justice. It's a bittersweet day though. We head home tomorrow to family and friends whom I'm sure we missed. It's hard to say goodbye to our interpreters though and friends that we have made connections with. We pulled out early today from the church around 10 AM. We rode back in the back of a tap tap "patty wagon" because the vans were broke down. It had benches that folded down and was a pretty bumpy ride, much more airy though. We rode back to Petionville to the guest house for the night. Along the way we stopped at Pappion (A Parent Project). It's a store with an attached restaurant but it employees about 200 people. A couple from

the US was adopting and found out that the child actually had parents but they couldn't actually keep this child. This US couple sold what they had to move to Haiti opening this place so that the jobs would help provide money and families could stay together instead of their kids being put up for adoption. The store also uses a lot of recycled items and makes what they sell.

We stopped off at the Giant as well to pick up a few favorite items that we can't get back home.

Now that we're back at the guest house we have the opportunity to reflect on the week. I always feel spiritually rejuvenated when I'm here because I feel as though I was placed here for a reason. We are in every spot and position in our life for a reason at an exact time and to always act with intention. We come here to help the Haitians and to provide clean water but really they help us. To see hope through their eyes that even in the worst of times they don't focus on the negatives. I always pray that Haiti, and really any one that needs help, realizes that they aren't forgotten. That even when nothing is happening in that moment, there is something "in the works" behind the scenes.

Beth

1/12/2018

Already we are heading home. Today is the eighth anniversary of the earthquake. After that event many areas in Haiti were left in rubble. Lives were lost and lives were changed forever. This was my seventh trip to Haiti...certainly things have improved though they improve at a snail's pace. Not much evidence of the quake remains but it still weighs heavy on the Haitian people. The "Haiti Response Plan" has ended (sponsored by the United Methodist church... UMCOR and UMVIM) so fewer teams and fewer dollars. The Methodist Church struggles to make ends meet...they cannot in many cases pay their bills. The need in Haiti is great.

The shift from recovery to community development isn't easy. Long-term relationships in Haiti will require us to pray and pay in big ways. We returned this time to find opportunities...we found many but what is the right fit for Carlisle United Methodist Church? We visited Mellier where a big church building (the result of the Haiti Response Plan) sits near a school that is in disrepair. Teachers don't get paid and parents can't afford tuition. The principal is committed to keeping the school open...he struggles. We helped with teacher salaries. The school will remain open for two more months. \$1200 pays six teachers and the principal for one month. It doesn't create jobs for parents to afford tuition. No money is left to repair the school buildings.

We met with a man named Jean Claude. He provided information about micro credit loans...small loans to help finance the start of a business or expand a business. I struggle with how many people will this impact? What are the needs? How many jobs does a small business in Mellier, Haiti create? How can we make the widest impact? Would Carlisle United Methodist Church with other partners building the school or repairing the existing buildings create jobs? Certainly during construction but what when the work is completed? I always compare the situation in Haiti and our part to "putting a Band-Aid on a sucking chest wound". That doesn't seem like a fair description of our mission in Haiti. A Band-Aid will do very little to repair a sucking chest wound. Our trips to Haiti have a much greater impact. Maybe not in terms of creating jobs, solving hunger or fixing structures, but in terms of sharing faith and hope. Maybe we just need a bigger Band-Aid? I'm thankful for this opportunity to represent Carlisle United Methodist Church, along with the 2018 Haiti team, as we look for ways to make an impact in our world for Jesus Christ

Rich

Today we are leaving Haiti. I am honored to be with the awesome group of people I was here with. Our church is blessed with giving people and I love being a part of it. Although I think we made a small impact in the community of Mellier, I have hope for the future that with our church and the generous people that we have we will be able to make a greater impact in the future. I know we need to shift from giving handouts to creating an environment where the people of Haiti can help themselves; I'm just not sure how this is going to be done. Although we have some ideas it's going to be a hard road to hoe. I will continue to pray for the Haitian people and pray for our church that we can find a solution to help the people of Haiti. God bless those that serve and those that provide the funds to help. God bless our church as they start making the hard decisions on how to help those in need, both in our community and elsewhere. God is great and it is easy to see his glory in CUMC.

Cindy