

Haiti Mission Trip

January 22 – 30, 2018

Friday, January 19 - Packing Party at the church, with fajitas provided by Michelle! Common items were packed and bags were claimed as second bags to be checked by several team members.

Sunday, January 21 - Commissioning of our team at all 3 Sunday morning services. We are definitely personally covered in prayer as we prepare to leave on Monday morning.

Team members (alphabetical order) -

Terry Bechtel, George Bretz, Lynne & Steve Clark, Tom Fannin, Michelle Hall, Don Henderson, Mark Huffer, Linda Miller, Bob Sime, Bill & Jeanette Stoltz

Monday, January 22 -

We met at the church at 3:30 a.m. and were actually loaded, ready to go, and off by 3:50. We owe special thanks to Ed Scanlon, Brian Tuller and Larry Miller for chauffeuring us to IAH - all three vehicles arrived within minutes of each other!

Getting our boarding passes in Houston was challenging, but we got it done, and even had time for a coffee break before we took off for Atlanta.

In Atlanta there was plenty of time for lunch, and the newbies (Terry, George, Bill & Jeanette) began to hear details of previous trips to Haiti and how things had progressed over the years. Excitement is building steadily! We boarded and took off for Haiti!

Upon arrival in Port-Au-Prince, we went through customs without too much trauma. We all piled into one van - for about 1 minute, when a second vehicle showed up (yay!); people & bags were loaded and off we went on our first adventure in Haiti - the drive to the Methodist Visitors Center. Along the way we saw many interesting sights, and experienced an unforgettable ride!

After moving into our rooms, settling in for our one night at the Visitors Center, we met with Brulan, who shared with us some of the do's: flexibility, stay hydrated, take breaks; some don'ts: no tipping, no personal gifts (unable to give to all); we can give through the pastor, who knows the needs. Reminder: We are in ministry WITH, not TO.

Bob led us in a devotional, asking us to focus on paying attention to God's hand in what we experience this week, as God has placed us here for His purposes. After the devotional time, we discussed how the mornings should run, and specifically what we will do tomorrow morning to be ready for our trip to Petit-guave, our home away from home for the next week.

Tuesday, January 23

Our schedule each morning will begin with quiet time at 6:30 a.m. followed by a devotional at 6:45, before breakfast at 7:00.

Tom's devotional focused on the vision for Christ Church and our mission in Haiti, as God's plan is uncovered. He asked us to be prepared next Monday night (our last night in Haiti) to share one thing that each of us see as something Christ Church might be doing/changing/eliminating, as we see God's hands at work through our church home.

After breakfast our bags were loaded for our journey to Petit-guave, our home for the next week. The ladies met with Jody from PA, getting some ideas for possible sewing projects for the ladies in Olivier.

Before we were ready to leave our driver Johnny, and interpreters, Angie & Rodney arrived and our adventure began to unfold.

Our 2.5 hour drive to Petit-guave was interesting as we saw more of how the drivers know how to maneuver the roads to arrive at a destination safely. We made one stop along the way at a convenience store that had new bathroom facilities, as well as snacks & soft drinks that we could purchase. It has now been labeled "the Buc-ees of Haiti"! After arriving in Petit-guave at Pastor Claude Victor's home, we settled on rooms & beds for everyone. We did a bit of unpacking & settling in before we met with Pastor Claude & his lovely wife Gertrude for an informational meeting.

Following lunch we loaded up & headed to Olivier, about a 30 minute drive. In Olivier we were introduced to the Stewards of the Olivier Methodist Church, Lina & Nixon. Rodney & Angie interpreted for us as we heard what their vision for their church is: a school & a pavilion. We explained that we came with certain supplies this trip, and hoped to use those for immediate needs. A plan was set in place to distribute water filters & buckets on Wed., Thurs, & Fri., mornings. We will work with the women on a sewing class on Thurs., Fri., & Sat. We will hold VBS on Thurs. & Fri. afternoon, serving the children a meal at the end of each session.

After our meeting we went to look at the building under construction. The men (& some of our women) moved cinder blocks to the worksite while others of us became acquainted with some of the local children. They love having their pictures taken & seeing themselves - highlight of the day for some of us!

Mark led us in a devotional reminding us of honoring our parents and being aware of and honoring those we see this week who are parenting with honor. We ended our evening together by playing a game: give us one true and one false detail about yourself, discover which is which, and share some details. It was a great way to get to know one another a little bit better.

Then it was off to bed in our new surroundings, eager to begin a whole day in Olivier on Wednesday!

Wednesday, January 24

Bill led us in a devotional centered on wisdom, and how it makes a difference in how we handle situations, and how we let God lead us through experiences He has prepared us for.

After breakfast, we loaded up and headed for our first full day in Olivier.

The men spent time outside with the contractor and the Haitian men who have been hired to build the second floor of the activity building. They hauled cinder blocks, shoveled sand, and gave one-way wheel barrel rides to happy little children!

Some of us spent a good deal of time sorting fabric that Linda had brought for the ladies. I, for one, spent time doing this and was happily assisted by a local woman and a teenager, both of whom seemed thrilled to be asked.

Local people began gathering early to be there for the water filter presentation. Lynne, Terry & Michelle drilled the holes in the buckets (hand drill, very impressive!) Jeanette put filters in the drilled buckets and arranged them for the presentation.

The presentation by Rodney, with detailed illustrated charts, explained why the filters are needed. It appeared to be an excellent way for the local people to be educated on this matter. Angie followed this with a demonstration as to how to put the filters into the buckets. This was very concise, clearly done, and well understood by the participants, as exemplified when they got their buckets and were able to follow through on installing and flushing the filters with very little input from any of the team. Team members participated in this presentation by holding the charts and acting as standbys as the recipients installed & flushed their filters. 29 filters were distributed today!

We dined on hot bread from the local bakery (a staple for this team), along with ham salad, peanut butter & marmalade, and cookies sent by Pastor Claude's cooks. They also included some soft drinks & juices that we found were fun to mix to our own tastes.

The men spent time in the afternoon working with the builder & crew setting some rebar for the stairs to be built tomorrow.

Linda spent time with Madame JanD'arc, discussing fabrics and sewing samples. Then all women but Michelle went into Petti-guave to check on fabric (which we could not find), and ride along as Johnny picked up two more fans on stands that we will use and then donate to the pastor's home.

Johnny also went by to pick up the coloring sheets that he got copied for us that we will use in VBS the next two days.

Upon return to Petti-guave, we began showers (spread them out, so we didn't run out of water), then ate a delicious dinner prepared by our dear cooks at Pastor Claude's home.

After dinner Steve led us in our devotional, then we were off to bed, new fans in hand!

Thursday, January 25

Jeanette led the devotional, which reiterated that God has placed us all here at this time and place that He might use us in ways we may not even realize.

Upon arrival in Olivier, we find the local women preparing to cook the meal we will serve tonight - beans are sorted (team members helping), chicken is cut and the pieces are rubbed with fresh oranges, and the cooking is begun.

Some helped prepare the water filters for distribution, and the presentation & follow up was finished about 11:30 - 30 people got buckets!

After lunch Linda made her first color chart presentation to about a dozen women.

Others of us spent time outside playing with the children. They jumped rope and Bob let them take pictures with his camera. The numbers grew & grew.

The men spent time helping build the stair frame. Having use of a portable cement mixer, they were able to get the stairs poured today!

About 3:00 we started Bible school with a skit of the Lost Sheep Parable. We had 5 of the children (chosen by Angie) dress up as sheep and 1 as the shepherd. Mark Huffer, accompanied by Angie to interpret, narrated the story as the children acted it out. It was very well done!

After the skit, we gave out color sheets and crayons. Since we knew we would not have enough crayons for tomorrow, we asked them to return them today and they can take them home tomorrow - this worked well!

We then proceeded to distribute 500 plates of food - rice, beans & chicken, prepared by our happy local ladies!

The youth of the church were our saving grace with Bible school - we couldn't have done it without them!

After cleaning up, we drove home exhausted and fulfilled! After dinner Lynne led us in a devotional centered around joy - and what a joyful day this has been!

Friday, January 26

Terry led us in a devotional about Love this morning before we headed out.

Children began showing up immediately as we arrived in Olivier, and we got out jump ropes & soccer balls, which were a big hit!

The sewing machines were set up and tuned; Terry taught a class on crocheting and it was very well received!

Jeanette spent part of the morning organizing the crayons for redistribution, but the best part of this was the help received from 2 boys who pitched right in and got it done!

Our final day of water filter education & distribution saw 40 people going through the process and leaving with their buckets!

Construction workers were moving concrete blocks to the second floor, via the new stairs by the time we arrived today! Our guys helped with hauling sand, getting rebar in place and beginning to set the cinder blocks.

Our dedicated local ladies began cooking again early this morning.

We began Bible school by bringing the kids into the sanctuary in a little more orderly manner, youngest in first, which took a bit more time. So, singing was added, until we were ready for the skit. 3 children participated in presenting the Parable of the Lost Coin, again narrated by Mark, interpreted by Angie. Coloring sheets & crayons (for them to keep) were handed out. Once again the youth were amazing in their participation!

We actually served 650 plates of food today! We left a mess for tomorrow, and again leave exhausted but happy. We are so thankful to the faithful cooks at Pastor Claude's house for the delicious food they have prepared for us each day when we return!

George shared a touching testimony with us this evening, followed by a short meeting discussing past, present, and future hopes for trips to Olivier.

Saturday, January 27

Don led us in our morning devotional.

When we got to the church our amazing men spent a couple of hours mopping the floor of the sanctuary, with help from several of the local people, who worked very hard.

Linda held her color chart presentation for another group of women. And Terry was able to spend some quality time teaching crocheting.

The second floor of the building is coming along quickly (at this point). Lots of blocks were laid by the workers and another delivery of them was made today.

Worked wrapped up about 3:00 today.

Upon leaving Olivier, we drove to Marigone to see where the 200th anniversary of the Haitian Methodist Church was celebrated in 2017. When we returned to Petit-guave we stopped at Brulan's house and took a tour of that guest house. Then we went to the eye clinic, which was one of the first projects our team members helped complete early on in Haiti.

Tonight Bill led us in our devotional. Then Don presented a summary of some decisions that had been made, as well as requests that we have received since we arrived:

1. We will pay the youth up to \$1000 to help with their retreat expenses
2. The 10 ladies who cooked in Olivier will receive \$10/day (given out by the Stewards)
3. Regional you director asked for a computer
4. Pastor Claude asked for help with air conditioning in the house
5. Earlier in the day, it was approved that the sewing machines will be moved to Madame J's studio until the building is complete (plaques will proclaim them property of the church)

Sunday, January 28

Bob led us in our devotional this morning, and then we were served Freedom Soup for breakfast, which is a Sunday morning treat!

We headed to Olivier for church, which was a blessed time. A local lay pastor led most of the service. We sang *How Great Thou Art* and the congregation joined us in Haitian Creole. Michelle preached a moving sermon and Rodney interpreted. We came here to serve this week, but what we have received from this experience is hard to put into words.

We went by to see Madame J's studio and the part of the village she lives in which was built by Feed the Hungry after the earthquake hit in 2010.

We returned to Pastor Claude's to have lunch, changed and headed to the beach. We arrived on the shore where we boarded two boats and took a ride to a beautiful beach where we spent a few hours. The water was clear, soothing, and peaceful - what an enjoyable time!

After some serious negotiating, Don & Angie were able to secure a snack meal of seafood for us on the beach - it tasted wonderful!

When we returned we got showers and ate dinner. Michelle, Bob & Terry went over to the other guest house for a few minutes to meet a team from Highland Park Methodist Church in Dallas who will begin a medical mission at the eye clinic tomorrow.

Linda then led our devotional, and we headed to bed for our last night in Petit-guave.

Monday, January 29

We got up in plenty of time to pack & be ready to leave after breakfast.

Mark led us in our devotional before we ate breakfast. After our meal we said goodbye to Angie & Rodney, who will be interpreting for the Highland Park team this week. They have been such a blessing!

Then we loaded up and were off to Port Au Prince, making a stop at "Buc-cees" for snacks & the bathroom.

We got to the Guest House, unloaded our bags, and left in one van for a ride to the mountain top and a really nice restaurant - a gorgeous view of Haiti! People ordered quite a variety of food - from burgers & fries to various seafood dishes - along with Coca Cola & some exotic juices.

After leaving the restaurant, we drove further up the mountain, attempting to find Rodney's homesite. After a point at which we had to park and hike up a way (women in sandals & flip flops - not good!), most of us gave up & went back to the van. Through determination Don & Tom(?) did hike on and find the property. We drove away at dusk and watched as lights below began to come on, creating a beautiful sight. An almost full moon enhanced that view as well.

Upon returning to the guest house we had a discussion about Christ Church and visions we had for it, led by Tom.

Following this we visited, went to our rooms and packed for tomorrow's departure.

It is hard to believe that this is our last night in Haiti!

Tuesday, January 30

Michelle led us in our final devotional time, reflecting on some memorable moments during the week.

After breakfast we finalized our packing, then visited as we waited for the second vehicle to arrive so that we & our bags could make the journey to the airport.

We piled into one van and drove through the city up to Papillon Market where we took a tour of this amazing business that employs 200 Haitians when business is at its height. What a joy to see how a vision has become a reality to put people to work, able to support themselves & their families. Jewelry, pottery, and stuffed animals are quality products that are being marketed and sold. We contributed to their economy with a few purchases of our own!

Michelle ordered pizza for us from the café at Papillon, which was a good move. Traffic was extremely dense, so we ate in the van as we made our way to Deux Mains, the shoe factory.

Deux Mains is another extraordinary business that trains, employs & empowers Haitians to support themselves and their families. Our tour here was a bit rushed as we were running out of time to get on the road to the airport. There was time to purchase shoes however!

It is hard to put into words how appreciative we have been all week to Johnny, who was so faithful in transporting us safely in many different parts of this country. Besides driving, he kept us feeling secure when tentative situations arose. Thanks to God for this humble servant.

Leaving Haiti via the airport proved to an adventure - 2 security screenings instead of one with long lines. But, we managed to actually fly out a little ahead of schedule, as we also did in Atlanta. We arrived in Houston exhausted but happy & blessed by an amazing experience shared with brothers & sisters in Christ - those in Haiti, as well as those on our team. Thanks to Ed, Brian, & Larry again for picking us up at the airport - way past bedtime!