

Lutheran Mission Association

March Mission Trip

Spring 2007

What's Happening in the North District, Haiti?

Traveling to Haiti is always an adventure! Who could have guessed a blizzard would hit Minnesota the day we were scheduled to leave! God was watching over us all and got us all through the blizzard to our destination thanks to your wonderful prayers!

Our trip was good! Five of us went. Deb Larson, Paul and Lil Spilde and their granddaughter Crystal (age 18) a high school student from Washington and a niece Valery (age 20) a college student from Grand forks. The trip was really and "eye opener" for the young ladies, but an experience they will never forget.

We spent 11 days in Cap-Haitian and did a variety of things. The planes and roads to the city remain unchanged "very bad"! The traffic remains colorful with Tap Taps and brightly painted buses. We were so happy to see Lynda and Pastor Bernard at the airport. We were excited to learn what was happening and how everything was going in Haiti.

We drove directly to the Madeline complex in Cap-Haitian just as the kids sang their national anthem and rose the Haitian Flag on the flag pole. It was such an honor to behold! The sewing students were busy in the women's center. The preschool had outgrown its current space and the Haitian congregation had built another small building at the back of the complex to house the second class of preschoolers. The school area for the older students was bursting at its seams! The teachers relayed concern due to lack of space for students and that some had been turned away this year. They are hoping we can help fund the building of classrooms on the next addition to the complex. The classrooms are brightly painted this year and the front of the church has an awesome mural painted by a 18y.o gifted young man. With support the spirits of the teachers and the students are raised. The support to the school is really making a difference in these kids' lives. Thank you! Adopt A Student supporters you have made a huge impact!

Then, we arrived at the clinic. We were anxious to see it in operation. Pastor Bernard had to hurry to the clinic because it was his turn to do clinic services before the clinic opens. We went to the clinic to see 30 clients waiting.

Deb, a registered nurse, spent most of the time working in the clinic with Nurse Margaret a Haitian RN. Dr. Messidor an internist visits two mornings per week and Dr. Jean Pierre a Gynecologist visits Thursday and Friday's, they are affiliated with Hospital Milot. There are many patients 30-40 per day and the laboratory is hard pressed to keep up with the lab work. Mario Thelus works in the lab. We are very blessed to have his services. He is in need of an assistant to keep up. Large numbers of prescriptions are dispensed per day from the pharmacy for malaria, parasites, infection of the lungs, stomach and wounds. Medication is expensive and hard to keep

stocked. The clinic board has done an excellent job of managing costs and wages.

The clinic is very tight for space and budget. We met with the clinic board (Vicars Riche and Gergens, Lynda, Pastor Valery and Miss Wickland) to ask them what their needs were. The clinic is in need of expanding the clinic in size and service. The GYN is in need of more equipment for his women clients. The clinic has some credit with a pharmaceutical company but donations are needed to help pay for medications. The Haitian clients are charged 50 Haitian dollars for basic exam, medication and lab. This however doesn't cover the cost of service and wages, but it is what the clients can afford. Thank you! Clinic supporters, having access to health care is a real blessing.

Pastor Bernard has no office due to the need for more classrooms. During our visit Pastor spent many of the evenings back at the complex with Easter services, meetings and classes. He has a busy schedule and was happy to have use of the rental car this week. The Bernard car is being held together by prayer. Please pray that we can find a solution to help Pastor Bernard and his Vicars, so they can more regularly visit outlying churches.

On our first Sunday we shared communion with the congregation in Madeline. It was really a privilege to participate. Three groups sang for us: the Children's Choir, the Women's Choir and the Airport Church Youth. Vicar Riche did the sermon and Pastor Bernard translated. Many of the hymns and music we were able to understand because they are the same but in a different language. The orphans attended the service. Pastor Bernard had us say a few words to the congregation. It was a special blessing to be reminded of the best and most important reason for coming to Haiti!

Pastor Valery and the Vicars are very involved at Madeline complex during the week. The Vicars help with the Lutheran Medical Clinic, the Airport Church and Madeline Church. Pastor Valery works at the Grande Riviere du Nord Church. Vicar Riche is in charge of the orphanage, the St. Raphael church, manages the airport church/school and designs many of the construction projects.

Through a generous supporter we were able to send Pastor Eliona's secretary Miss Wickland to school for computer key boarding and other duties to manage the huge responsibilities of this emerging district. She is cute and will be quite a catch for someone. We are so thankful for her faithfulness to Pastor and his work. She has many responsibilities.

Vicar Riche and Lynda Bernard manage things at Orphanage. We met with Vicar Riche to discuss the needs of the orphanage. He expressed an immediate need to move the children. This was due to many social and health issues related to living in the airport area (a slum). He is a very compassionate and caring young man. We are confident that he is a good man for a very difficult calling. Many of the children have psychological issues from the despair of their upbringing. The orphanage staff is learning from Sister Claire (a nun) with many years of experience how to deal with a orphanage. She runs a orphanage nearby and we are grateful for her assistance in teaching the Haitian staff. Please keep them in your prayers.

The children were moved since our visit to a very nice home with a yard and tree's close to Madeline. To rent this home for two years cost \$6,000 dollars. The church and school will continue in the airport area. Hopefully, within two years we can build a lasting home.

You can help the children by sending money for food, education furniture, toys, outdoor play equipment and a power source for electricity. We visited the orphanage and met the children. Riche and his wife are house parents. A woman was hired to help with the washing and cooking for these 16 children.

Land is being purchased for a home for these kids by a generous supporter, it is very fertile and

has some nice fruit trees' established. The church can plant the fields for food before construction can take place. The size of the lot is larger than the Madeline land.

Sunday evenings are amazing in Haiti because it is family and date night. There are no electric lights on the streets, the people light small lamps and visit on the steps or walk holding hands. Service station's are run by generators and the additional light attracts many young students to come and study.

It was hot during the day 100-110 degrees and we really appreciated the hospitality and fans in pastors home.

At the complex we all had set tasks. Deb got updates on the clinic and women's center. Lil organized the storage container for the next shipment of a container, gathered information on the orphanage and costs for upcoming projects. Paul assembled school desks and gather information for the generator project. Valery and Crystal began by helping Lil and Paul and when they felt comfortable began interacting with school children and teachers. The children and teachers loved them. It was good to have some interaction with the school kids.

A small generator runs the complex during the day and cools the fridge for the lab reagents, runs the lab equipment, the clinic computer, and one electric sewing machine at the sewing center. Everyone makes use of the generator when it runs for charging things and there is never an unused plug in during church services. Cell phones are your communication life line in Haiti.

Lunch was French bread, sweet rolls, tuna fish, pop and the fruit of the day. Bananas' taste really good in Haiti! The work day is over by 2-2:30 P.M. to allow time to get home and cook supper before it gets dark. Lights are a luxury in Haiti.

Lynda Bernard has many responsibilities at the clinic, sewing center, orphanage and the rest of the duties expected of a Pastor's wife. Lynda really could use an assistant too! Lynda is a wonderful cook and mother.

In the evening we played games with Pastor Bernard's boys Brian and Elliot, learned French with the boy's homework or by playing UNO or Vale au Fish (Go Fish) until the boy's bedtime and then talking into the night with Pastor and Lynda. Lynda's mother speaks Creole and Elliott was our translator. Elliot and Brian are very good boys and we really learned from them. It was fun learning and we felt confident we could count to ten in French by the time we left.

Another, LCMS nonprofit visited one day to check on their feeding program called "Trinity/Hope" they feed many children at the various Lutheran Schools in Haiti. We are so thankful for the help they give. Haiti really needs support and we hope they have funds to help feed the new schools in the growing ELCH North District.

Valery and Crystal had a wonderful time with the kids and shared beans and rice lunches with the them. The girls also explored the world of Haitian cooking and laundry. Pastor Bernard was excellent at talking to these young women about what life was like in Haiti and we all learned from listening.

We enjoyed coffee, French bread with soft Swiss cheese and fresh papaya from Pastors trees each morning. Then we were off through the crazy streets of Cap-Haitian to Madeline. Most day's took us down town to shop, pickup food and ice, and pickup the boys from school. There is no fridge so food is bought fresh daily and kept cool in coolers.

We did not have much time to visit with the women in the Women's Center this visit but Lynda's first three year students will graduate from the sewing program this year. The annual fashion show will be held after Easter and they need more space and storage for the women's projects. Deb was able to discuss many issues with Lynda regarding the women's center.

We learned together by visiting our Haitian family, we have a lot of work to do yet.

The trip to St. Raphael was eventful like most travel in Haiti. The road was very bad and mountainous. We took along communion wafers given by a congregation in MN near the cities and played catch with it and the communion wafers through the car sized pot holes. We had only two bolts holding our rear tire on by the time we got to Don Don. Luckily, we have church friends in Don Don, Lay Pastor Frans's son saw us and got a mechanic to fix the tire and rim. God was looking out for us. We had a renewed respect for Vicar Riche's twice monthly visit to St. Raphael. We drove into a semiarid dessert of rock and cactus passing an oxen cart slowly moving in the heat of the day. Crystal and Valery were getting a little car sick and hot in the back of the SUV's jump seat.

When we got to the church 40 or so men, women and children were waiting for our arrival and church to begin. One tree gave little shade in the blistering heat. The elders met us and gave us a quick tour of the property and work done on the church building. We realized how difficult it was to build a brick building where there is no water for cement. The water was purchased and hauled to the site. Vicar Riche designed the church and it looks great. Further money is needed to put the floor in and a roof on. LMA is hoping to find someone to drill through the rock to water for the village.

We entered into the church and realized Vicar Riche was respected and liked. We felt honored to share communion with them and in knowing how far their first communion wafers had traveled. We enjoyed our short visit and they appreciated our visit. We visited and wished we had more to give. We gave each family soap and toothpaste. These people were short in stature and size, their babies were small and many women were pregnant. It was easy to see that hunger lived here and soon there would be more. Many showed signs of ringworm infestation. This community will need help on many levels.

We passed the land purchased for a church in Don Don on the way home. Someday there will be a church built on the site. We just need to find supporters to help build it. We were so glad to get home.

On our last Sunday we traveled on the same road but turned to go to Grande Riviere du Nord. We met Pastor Valery and the new church members. It was just a few months ago that he was installed and the church began. When we arrived early and he was holding bible study with about 15 people studying out of the book called, "This We Believe" and they were having a discussion.

We have gotten to know Pastor Valery and were impressed by the growth in his new church. His church ladies served us oranges to eat and they were so sweet and juicy. They sent coconut milk back with us to try. We were happy to meet the church folk and really thankful. Pastor Valery is a dedicated worker in the north district. We are thankful for him.

When we returned to the city we met with another group called Kobinite Sante trying to help the airport area's TB with a special clinic, they are helping rebuild the public health system too and bring the Justinian Hospital into the 21st century. We learned that the records room at the hospital and the new pediatric wing had caught fire from someone tapping into the generator during the night. Most of their records were lost and their container never arrived in time. They are trying to do a census of the city and part of the record for this was lost too, so they were very distraught when we saw them. We learned and shared. They will help plug the Lutheran Medical Clinic into the network of clinics and health care in Haiti.

We got held up in traffic that night on the way home and found out there had been a bad accident with a bus and small car. While we waited our thoughts traveled in silent reflection over our visit to

Haiti and why the Lord place our paths together.

Lynda brought us out of our silence with the call "Who wants Ice Cream!" so we went for ice cream on our last night at a popular service station. We watched the students study under the lights and realized how well we have it at home. We went home and packed. Night comes early in Haiti but mornings come earlier.

It rained the last day in Haiti. Lynda hurried off with the boys to school as we said goodbye. A sort time later she called to say the radio reported the plane would be leaving earlier for some reason today. We all scrambled "plan's change in Haiti." It turned out Florida's time changed with "Spring forward" and Haiti's didn't.

We would be very happy to share the story unfolding in Haiti with you!

The Container and other Projects

The container will arrive the end of May and we will have two weeks to pack the many items received by your help in Minnesota North. The storage area in Bemidji is brimming. The cost of the container is paid but the cost for customs is not. We are looking to raise about \$5,000.

The generator (60 KW) we are hoping to send in the container to save on shipping cost. We have about \$6,500, of a \$10,000 dollar LWML grant, but we still need to raise about \$8,000 to get it on board. Please consider donating to get these two projects done.

The next three goals for the North District of Haiti are:

1. Relocate the orphanage. (Accomplished)! Cost \$6,000
2. Finish construction of the St. Raphael Church. Cost \$8,500.
3. Continue construction on the complex in Cap-Haitian to accommodate growth at the school and clinic. Cost ?

To ponder, we have tried to furnish every 5th grader with a bible in French and it is time to try and fund this project again.

God Bless!

LMA