

Fort Hill Presbyterian Mission Outreach



Terrier Rouge, Haiti May 1-9, 2015

It is a time of new beginnings at Fort Hill Presbyterian Church! A new building project is underway to freshen and update the campus, and with it are new programs and opportunities to expand our spiritual lives, stretching beyond our comfort zones by personally serving the less fortunate. Mission Outreach is up and moving, seeking to send teams from Fort Hill to care for our global families in need. We have planned several trips at locations near home or abroad for this year, giving those of you who wish to take your commitment to serve Christ up another level. Prepare to be blessed and transformed!

Our first team, led by Larry Sloan, visited Terrier Rouge, Haiti, to experience first hand the work of Bethlehem Ministry, its medical clinic and school, and farms. The team members were Larry and Cindy Sloan, Jim London, Art and Gail Williams, and Mary Barron. Trey Scott, the Co-Director of Bethlehem Ministry, from Athens, Georgia, accompanied us. We brought with us a donation from our church that helped build a house, paint a house, and provide enough food to feed hundreds of impoverished Haitians. We received the gift of sharing the culture of the Haitians, slowing our pace to go with the flow, taking time to

enjoy the curiosity and exuberance of the children at the school, listening to the marching band practice, walking the dusty paths in the company of goats and pigs, listening to the



background sounds of conversations of folks sitting and visiting in the shade of the trees, and having leisurely mealtime conversations with Father Bruno. We smiled a lot.



There is so much to share! Father Bruno, a native Haitian and retired Episcopal priest, shared his vision for the school at Bethlehem Ministry with other like-minded individuals in 2002, and now the school serves nearly 900 students, with 80 more enrolled for next fall. Next year they will graduate the first class to attend all 13 grades, beginning with a Montessori 3 year-old class to age 17. The school (Saint Barthelemy Center), located in Terrier Rouge (population 12,000), operated solely on its own solar-powered electricity until October 2014.

Father and Madam Bruno

At that time, the government finally installed electricity to the town. Terrier Rouge now has wells in the town with pumps for gathering water, but still has no running water or sewers available to the homes.

On the day we arrived to Bethlehem Ministry we met Melissa Hamlin, a new Co-Director of *Clinique Esperance et Vie*, the medical clinic. She took us on a tour of the facility that housed examination rooms, waiting and recovery areas, a pharmacy, and rooms for eye and dental care. All of this was built after 2002 when Father Bruno bought the property. Our Fort Hill Medical Eye Mission with Dr. Bob Brown and his team did eye surgeries here several years ago. The rooms in the clinic are furnished with donations from a host of benefactors and congregations who are helping to improve the health of the Haitian people. While we were there we learned of needs for stabilizing the rack holding the clinic's water supply, and saw evidence of the need for a qualified electrician to clean up the junction box (yikes!). They also need air conditioners, gutters installed, and a large storage room cleaned and organized. A mission team coming later in May will bring needed blinds to keep the rooms cooler.



Clinic hours and days of operation



Clinic entrance



Eye exam room



Tray Scott, Co-Director of Bethlehem Ministry

The need for a school, medical clinic, and industries to employ the workforce in this area inspired Father Bruno to work for change and empower his fellow Haitians. We were able to visit the HGO irrigated farm crops project, the Jatrofa Project for planting trees whose



seeds yield oil for soaps, the Heifer International Project goats, and the farm for growing plants, the fiber from which Haitian craftswomen weave to make goods for resale.



Knowing beforehand that we would be painting, we brought paint supplies with us to paint a house in Terrier Rouge. The house was built from donations to Bethlehem Ministry and housed a three-generation family. Previously the whole family had lived in their



approximately 12'x12' house made of sticks and mud with a dirt floor. We engaged the family members to share the joy of painting their home with us, one participant at a time, and soon had the whole family painting! It was a very happy experience for all involved.

Early in our trip, Father Bruno took us to see the houses that Bethlehem Ministry had built in town. Often on the property was the original stick home that had previously sheltered them. At one house, with a yard filled with young children, the grandmother of the family continued to inhabit the stick house, while the daughter, her husband, and her 7 children had moved into the new house. Father Bruno confided that he had made a *big* mistake because the result was that the grandmother felt quite a bit of unhappiness and jealousy.



He told us that he already had \$2,500 to cover half of the construction cost for a new house for grandmother, and wondered if we might divert \$1,500 of the \$3,500 we brought for food relief to add to the house fund. We talked it over and agreed to the proposal.



A day or two before we were to leave, Father Bruno took us to the house site. The children all smiled, jumped up and down, and one even clapped to see us. We soon found out why. The stick house was gone, and in its place were men digging the foundation for a new home. A transformed grandmother hugged Gail and smiled at us, obviously thrilled with the result. The last day of our trip we returned to see cement footings poured, cement blocks, sand, cement and rocks delivered. My guess was that life improved on many levels in that close community when Grand"mamma" was happy.

With the remaining \$2,000 we brought with us, our donation bought enough rice, oil, salted herring and pasta noodles for us to feed in excess of 350 families for many meals.



We packed and distributed the food to groups in Phaeton, Grand Bassin, and two groups in different areas of Terrier Rouge. Father Bruno went to the local leader in the area, asked for help in identifying the most impoverished, had the leader give out coupons to them, and when we arrived, those with coupons were able to redeem the food with them. The process was orderly and fair.



Grand Bassin families waiting

While we were at Bethlehem Ministry, we had a wonderful church service on Sunday led by Father Bruno, and daily devotions each morning led by our team members in turn. I must say, however, that even if we had not been studying God's word together, it was obvious that His Presence was working in this place. The scrubbed and shining faces of the children at the school; the earnest and enthusiastic efforts of the members of the band at band practice; the wonderful

young men, Edward Josef and Lenaud and his brother, who assisted us in many ways; Madam Bruno and Dominique who made our stay so comfortable; and Father Bruno who quietly orchestrated our experience in Haiti, all radiated the love of God. Wherever I go, when I hear the popular tune that the band practiced all week, I will be transported back in time to Haiti. For our family at Fort Hill Presbyterian, and the peoples in Haiti and around the world, may we always have the assurance that God will, "Stand by Me".

Mary Barron
FHPC Mission Outreach team member

In the evenings we had time to reflect on what we had accomplished that day, and talked about the ways our church could help Bethlehem Ministry and this impoverished nation of Haiti.

- Join us on a return trip and experience Haiti, extending the love of our church to those less fortunate.
- For \$5,000 we can build a house from concrete blocks with a concrete floor.
- For \$300 we can send a child to school, pay for the uniform, lunch, books, tuition, and medical care.

Items needed: water bottles, carafes for the kitchen, long cotton dresses, cotton shirts for men and women, shorts for children, underwear and socks for children, soccer balls

Bethlehem Ministry is a 501c Corporation. If you wish to make a donation, send your donations to:

PO Box 48387
Athens, GA 30604