

REPORT OF HAITI MISSION TRIP FEBRUARY 28 – MARCH 7, 2015

The morning of Feb. 28th, four team members from St. Mary Magdalene left from the Kansas City International Airport to Miami with hopes to join up with another team member from St. Christopher's Episcopal Church from Pensacola, FL.:

Jim Grant, Executive Director, "The Incarnation Project"

Mike Barnes, Parishioner

Abby Kimbrell, Dental Assistant

Rev. David Lynch, Rector-St. Mary Magdalene

Nancy Kulb, RN, St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, Pensacola, FL.



We made our American Airlines connection to Miami with little trouble, even though a large snow storm was spreading from the SW to the east across the country. Once in Miami, Nancy (our medical lead) called Jim to inform us that her flight had been canceled and she hoped to reconnect in a later flight that night or early in the morning. Long story short, due to all the flight cancelations and bad weather, Nancy never made it to go on the mission trip. We spent the night in

Miami, with time to wonder how to salvage our plans for a medical mission once in Haiti.

Intent on forging ahead, we boarded the second leg of the trip on American Airlines from Miami to Port Au Prince, Haiti, on Sunday morning March 1st, and arrived later that afternoon. Traveling out of the country had its usual encounters with long lines and custom's checks, and we all made it through without any difficulties.

Once in Port Au Prince, we waited with our transportation supervisor Joseph Chery, AKA "Zo", who helped us load all our stuff in a van and travel southwest to Les Cayes, where we would stay in our home base at a hospital complex, Brenda Stafford Institute. Zo is an excellent driver who knows how to manage the traffic; however, much like being with a New York cab driver having had too many cups of coffee, the ride had its harrowing moments as he articulated his way through the maze of cars, people and market places. The road trip to Les Cayes (approximately 100 miles) took about 3½ hours, with arrival around 5 pm. There we settled into our rooms and had a wonderful meal prepared by the house staff of Brenda, Rosalyn, Monette, and Marie. Later that evening we organized our plans for caring for the people in Le Pretre. Jim had brought supplies and other articles to give to the people in this mountain village that included reading glasses, vitamins, flip-flop sandals and some cool Frisbees to hand out to, and play with the children.



On Monday we met up with Lackson who would be our driver, interpreter, and local superintendent for our week's mission work. Lackson is the Senior Warden of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Torbeck, with our Haiti mission partner Fr. Jean Pierre Jean Alphonse. It

was great to have him assist us in our travel and encounters with the village people. Lackson would meet us every morning for our journey and bring us back to home base at Brenda.

We spent most of Monday purchasing medicine to treat the people in Le Pretre, and gathering supplies to complete the new latrine that was built in a recent mission trip, and to build tables for the school, which is housed in the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation until the formal school can be built. Once we gathered the medicine and ordered building materials, we returned to Brenda where we organized the medications into individual dose packs to distribute to adults and children.

Although Nancy could not make the trip, we were able to communicate with her to identify what meds we could still give, the correct dosages and other medical details that would allow us to complete most of the planned medical care. Most in need was to get vitamins and worm meds to the people. Intestinal worms are common in countries without clean water and clean food handling. This is why the latrine and well that was built in previous trips is so important to Le Pretre. Our visit was a chance for Jim to also follow up on the previous work and to plan and prepare for what additionally needs to be done to get the school building started. There will always be a need for medical support, and continuing mission trips will help insure those follow up treatments can take place.

Tuesday, we gathered for a great breakfast prepared by the house staff at Brenda and met up with Lackson, ready to take us to Torbeck to meet with Fr. Alphonse and then travel to Le Pretre to begin our work. Once at the rectory in Torbeck, we were introduced to a young lady who would travel with us for the next couple of days to help interpret and care for the people in Le Pretre. Daphnee Boncoer is a college student that Jim met as a new translator at MN in October. She was a delightful addition to our team and kept good company with Abby, who before this point on the trip had little female companionship. Fr. Alphonse welcomed us and gave us a tour of the rectory and shared his gratitude for our presence. As we made our way out of Torbeck and up the mountain to Le Pretre, the scenery changed from the city to the country. The views were beautiful with green farm land of corn, rice and rolling hills. The people were also beautiful, inviting, welcoming and curious. People walked everywhere, carrying their supplies balanced on their heads. Some pulled carts and others traveled in pickup trucks designed to serve as taxis. People also rode scooters, motorbikes and bicycles as primary modes of transportation. Forging river beds, streams and narrow rough roads was the routine of the day to get to Le Pretre. Once in Le



Pretre, we were warmly greeted by school children and other villagers. We toured the school in progress, saw the new latrine and well and set up shop on the porch of the Lay Reader's house, Italis, from the Church of the Incarnation. Daphnee helped us organize the school children into lines so we could distribute medication and vitamins without total

chaos, as our visit was big event. Fr. David, Abby and Daphnee managed the medication distribution and Mike managed the distribution of reading glasses with Fr. Alphonse's assistance. Abby also distributed sandals (flip-flops) to the children and adults until they were all gone. In all we saw and treated over 200 people.

Reading glasses distributed	160
Sandals (flip-flops)	100
Medical Treatment	210

Jim and Lackson managed the building preparations for the school and then assisted with medical care for the people. We returned to Les Cayes where we regrouped, had a wonderful meal at a local restaurant and made plans to return to Le Pretre on Wednesday to finish the medical care and final prep for clearing the land to build the school.

On Wednesday, we returned to Le Pretre and spent most of the day with medical care and playing with the children into late morning. Jim brought some collapsible Frisbees and we had a great time distributing them and watching the children go crazy playing with them. By the end of our visit we saw another 90 people that got treated with meds and vitamins. In all we saw and treated more than 300 people.

Thursday we traveled on a road just outside of Torbeck heading towards the mountains to visit **Maison De Naissance**, the birthing center, built in that region to provide the needed medical and delivery services to expecting mothers. This campus and facility, immaculately clean and very well organized, is being led by Director Mme. Rosena Baptiste, who is responsible for the campus and the overall medical care that happens in this center.



Unfortunately, due to lack of funds, deliveries are not currently conducted there, but much needed prenatal, well-baby, women's health, HIV/AIDS testing and treatment, and postnatal visits are still occurring. We were there to get a firsthand view of the center and for Jim to conduct the business needed to assure that the birthing center's business is ongoing – administrative oversight, facilities management, and problem resolution. After this tour and the business meeting with Jim

and the center's staff, we returned to Torbeck to bid Fr. Alphonse farewell until our next visit. We then ventured further west to a coastal place to see the ocean and have a wonderful late lunch of seafood, chicken and usual Haiti fare of fried plantains and spicy coleslaw. This was a time to kick back a little and enjoy the beauty of Haiti and take in what had been accomplished in the last several days.

Friday was spent packing up and returning to Port Au Prince. We said our farewells to the house staff at Brenda, who were just delightful and a joy to be with as our home-base staff. We bid farewell to Lackson and greeted Zo for our trip to the big city. After another 3-4 hr drive we made it to a hotel where the gentlemen shared a nice room and Abby had one to herself. We enjoyed a hot shower, more good food and some rest before our trek back to the states early Saturday.

Our return to Miami was uneventful with a typical experience through customs of long lines and waiting for our luggage. We managed to make the trip without losing anything important (accept for tools at the beginning of the trip that inadvertently got put in carryon bags). We managed not to contract any illnesses, and with the exception of a few mosquito bites, we weathered the trip well. Our leg from Miami to KC was also uneventful, and as a direct flight got us home by 11:00 pm Saturday night.

We left KC in single digit temperatures and returned to temps in the 50's which was nice. In all we were pleased with what was accomplished and what God's grace provided for us. I commend this opportunity to all who have the interest and desire for adventure. It was delightful to interact with the Haitian people. Not at any time were we concerned for our safety and we felt welcome everywhere we ventured. I am humbled by this trip and I look forward to promoting it to others with the hope and desire to return.

Blessings to all who made this trip possible, for the prayers and contributions and especially for Mr. Jim Grant who unselfishly has dedicated his life and work to the people of Haiti.

Respectfully submitted, Fr. David