



An update on the school and church in Bayonnais, Haiti



Our Trip to Haiti with the First Presbyterian Team

It's hard to capture the sights, sounds and smells of Haiti in the written word. But as we bumped and jostled our way up to the quiet mountain area of Bayonnais, leaving the city's crowds and beggars' hands and the heat behind us, we couldn't imagine the adventure still to come. Arriving in the late evening after a seven-hour trip – the same trip in the United States with our gift of infrastructure would be only an hour and a half- we were met

with welcoming arms and a specially prepared dinner served around 10:30 pm.

We were greeted the next morning from our dorm-like rooms by the sounds of roosters crowing and children laughing. Cameras took away any initial shyness we might have had, because the children, dressed wonderfully in their bright plaid uniforms, loved to have their pictures taken and then see the picture

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Why Visit OFCB Ministries in Haiti?

Here is a difficult imagination exercise for you: Imagine that you live in a mountainous area of Haiti, where you work very hard in your small garden, yet can barely feed your family in a meal a day, much less more. You have no education. Your family lives in two very small rooms between walls made of sticks and mud mixed with a little cement. You have no toilet and use a smoky kerosene lamp for a little light. You may attend a Christian church or you may believe in voodoo or both. Three of eight children born to you died within a few weeks of birth. One other child died of an unknown illness at age 5. There is no medical help except in the city 17 miles away. The only hope you see is in church and school four miles away, where your children can receive an education. They get a hot meal on school days, so you don't have the burden of feeding them much on those days.

During the 15 years the school has been open, some visitors have come from the United States. Very few in the early days. They all said they wanted to help us, and the school and church grew. More children were getting education and proudly wearing school uniforms. More people attended the church and were inspired by God. A group of teens from the U.S. came in 1999 and each year a few more people visited. They kept telling us that they came because they loved us, and over time, we could see they really did. *(continued on back cover)*

In 1999-2000 a multipurpose building was constructed, giving much better housing for visitors and more visited. The foundation for a big church was laid and in 2003, it was finished. A new, larger classroom building was started in 2006. In 2007, the number of visitors increased. Eleven groups came from the U.S., totaling 79 visitors. In addition to these short term trips, Morgan Dibble (one of the 1999 teens) was the first long-term U.S. visitor, staying three months. Peter Daniel arrived in September to stay for most of the school year

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Long-range Hunger Planning

Much prayer and planning has been directed toward improving the ability of the Bayonnais residents to be able better to sustain and control their agricultural security. Look for articles in future newsletters about the following:

- Among the first graduates of the Bayonnais high school who were sent to college and now will be returning after four successful years in college are Wallace Manasse and Vilate Charles, agronomists. They will be available to work on projects such as irrigation, reforestation and teaching better farm and conservation practices. They have committed to a minimum of ten years service to the community in this critical field;
- Drip irrigation project, an experimental plan to increase vegetable production (a project of First Presbyterian Church of Florence, S.C.);
- Fish farm and poultry farms, plans that not only could provide more food, but also offer business opportunities and improved infra-structure to the community;
- Granary project, an opportunity to exercise better control prices and inflation.



FPC Visit *(from front cover)*

magically appear on the camera screen in front of them. As long as you had time and film, anyone could be the Pied Piper. It was a treat to hear Actionnel tell some of his story and his dreams that first morning at breakfast and to hear from Peter Daniel about the months he had spent so far at OFCB (Organization of the Christian Force of Bayonnais)..

We learned fairly quickly that Plan A was not going to work because the paint had not arrived. We would continue to learn about the importance of flexibility in working with the Haitian people. After you are there for a while, you understand that they are never in a hurry like we habitually are, and that their pace of life is one we would envy and learn from. Plan B was to walk around the area outside of the school boundaries and see a little of the village and feel some of the rhythms of the countryside. The building we were painting used to be the sanctuary before they built the present one. When we were finished painting, it would become the school's new language lab. Once the paint arrived, we enjoyed making a plan and then painting the exterior of the building a beautiful "Carolina" blue with white trim and the next day, we painted the interior. While painting the first day, we had many people watching us; the next day as we painted inside, classes were taking place outside under the trees. After class, lots of students came inside offering to help and many of them cleaned our hands at the end of the day. It felt like Jesus washing our feet.

One day we were invited to someone's home that is probably fairly typical of the homes around Bayonnais. It had two rooms which might set it a little above the average house with a small food shelter built on stilts outside the home. There were many rice paddies on the way to the house and we were fortunate enough to see the rice harvesting which is one main source of income. There was some kind of music festival going on the whole week we were there, so when we woke up in the morning and after supper beautiful sounds were coming from the church. We went to sit and listen many times and enjoyed dancing and laughing with the children afterwards. Sunday worship was very special with Katie Crowe preaching and Actionnel interpreting. So many people later told him how wonderful it was to hear a woman preach the gospel and say exactly what they needed to hear. In preparing for the trip, Doug Wilson had said a lot to us about how it didn't matter that we did not speak Creole, or that we weren't master builders or painters, but what did matter is that we practice the ministry of presence and make the people we came in contact with feel we were so happy to be with them and discover more about their culture and their families and about what they were learning in church and in school. We want OFCB and Actionnel to know we will continue to sponsor children, to keep the ministry of OFCB in our hearts and to respond to God's call to be a witness for Him in that corner of his world.

‘Peter, you are a Haitian now . . .’

By Anna Rainey

Saturday nights in Bayonnais have changed this year. Students of the Institut Classique de Bayonnais, as well as members of the community of Cathor, a small rural village in Northern Haiti, now gather into a small, concrete building to watch movies projected on its back wall. The lineup has included the acclaimed Planet Earth series and a documentary on Gandhi, among other well-known comedies and dramas.

Nights spent at the cinema are facilitated by Peter Daniel, who is no stranger to turning white canvases into colorful works of art as his donated projector has turned the wall of a school building into a stage for figures that teach and entertain OFCB moviegoers. A recent Davidson College graduate and visual artist, Peter has spent the last seven months living in Bayonnais, playing various roles (and a lot of soccer!) in the local community. This was something for which he was somewhat prepared, as his own description of his expectations for the year told his blog readers in September 2007:

“My primary goal was simply to go, to live in community with the people, remaining open and flexible to the various ways in which we

might learn from one another. Among the many hats I wear, some include teaching English, art, and computer science, playing local physician when necessary and soccer quite often, and pursuing my vocation as a visual artist.” These autumn expectations have been fleshed out as Peter has become more and more of an integral part of the OFCB community. In addition to teaching and providing occasional medical care (including assisting with the birth of a good friend’s baby boy in April), God had brought Peter’s gift of creativity to life by allowing him



opportunities to step into the pulpit as a guest preacher, work with local bakers to learn new, nutritious recipes, and begin imagining inventive ways to fight malnutrition in the community through a project centered around peanut butter. And, true to his calling as an artist, he has captured the faces of children and adults in the area as a part of his “Incomplete Series” of sketches, thanking his often-hungry subjects with protein shakes.

Peter will be the first to warn against understanding his time in Bayonnais in terms of what he has been able to “accomplish” or “do” there. Rather, with characteristic humbleness, he more readily recounts the blessing of a recent comment from a Haitian friend: “Peter, you are a Haitian now.” If his goal for the year has been to experience the gift of shared life in Christ, one can only imagine that it has been a year well lived. To the Christian observer, it is clear that the faith that led Peter to OFCB is a faith that recognizes the value of investing in the lives of those whom God loves, and in process, facilitates a fuller knowledge of the love of God. For more information about OFCB or to read Peter’s own reflections on his time in Bayonnais, please visit his blog at <http://peterbdaniel.wordpress.com>.

Contact Information

If you have questions or would like more information about mission work in Bayonnais, contact David Nichols at 704.847.3059 or davidfivecents@aol.com; Douglas Wilson at 704.364.5059 or dougandanne0667@cs.com; Helen Hunter at 704.553.3806 or GramaHu&@aol.com; or Gibbs Ives at 704.366.0048 or gibbsives@gmail.com.

BAYONNAIS BLESSINGS

Prayer Corner

- Pray for a quick and perfect healing for Actionnel Fleurisma's ankle. A motor-bike accident on the "road" between the city of Gonaives and the school resulted in a broken small bone above the ankle. A full cast on his leg, combined with the pain and the discomfort of the tropical heat, make for quite an inconvenience to our pastor/school director friend.
 - Pray for First Presbyterian Church's student sponsorship program to grow. We now have more than 80 children being sponsored by families in our church, an outreach which is bringing much hope and light to so many. We are raising our goal from 100 sponsorships to 200. Do you have friends or neighbors who would be blessed by participating? Children are starving in a land just a few hundred miles from our country!
 - Pray for the various mission teams that will be visiting the school and church in Bayonnais in 2008. It is not too soon to be prayerfully considering joining First Presbyterian's mission trip, yourself, this coming December. Seven trips have been planned for 2008, so far.
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Why Visit? *(from front cover)*

(except December). Already fluent in French, and persistent in learning Creole, he used his college art degree and talents as an artist and as a Christian to enhance the learning and Christian climate for high school students. Six Christian churches from the Charlotte area visited last year. Many from Engineers Without Borders came to work on technical projects, including solar power and other electrical needs. The first medical team ever to visit, coming from Emporia, Va., came in 2006 for a three-day clinic, treating 700 people. A second clinic group came in late 2007. So far in 2008, 15 people have visited, including four from EWB and two others working on a planned medical clinic. Two U. S. college students are planning a 30-day and 90-day visit respectively this summer. Seven other trips are planned for the year, including another teen trip and a third temporary medical clinic.

Why is it important to visit Bayonnais? It's important to have financial support for the great things that OFCB is accomplishing. However, the biggest message that is given by people bringing their time, love and talents to where these people is this: You are not alone. We care, God cares. We are all the same, except for the accidents of our births to the poorest and richest countries in the Western hemisphere.

How can we not help? Many of us can show we care by being there with them, encouraging them and learning enough to get others involved when we return to our comfortable life at home. If we cannot make the trip, we can encourage others to do so. Don't miss the opportunity.

BAYONNAIS BLESSINGS

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