



# **Carlisle UMC - Haiti Team**

## **Aug 30-Sept 7 2013**

### **Team Journal**

#### **Day 1 – Aug. 30, 2013**

##### **Kayla Snyder**

Superexcited to finally be here. ☺ I hate flying so I was nervous about the travel but it was a great flight and it was fun to drive to the guest house. It was kind of like those safari rides at amusement parks with all the bumps.

Getting out of the airport was a little overwhelming because I have never really been put in a situation like that.

I love this rain and storm!

The tour of the Haiti Methodist Church guest house and school grounds was awesome. I've already taken like 100 pictures. Ha! Everybody here is so nice and I love the environment. So excited about the rest of the week and what is to come!

##### **Charles Phillips**

We left Carlisle on time, before 2:15 a.m. We arrived at Reagan Airport about 4:10 a.m. We were in three vehicles. All three drivers did a fine job of driving and following.

At the airport many of us had problems with the automatic ticket machines and we needed to have our tickets processed at the ticket desk.

The trip to JFK and then to Haiti was uneventful.

Arriving, we began to experience the heat and humidity. Customs agents did not bother to check our luggage. I began to try out my limited Haitian Creole. We arrived at the guest house.

## **Day 2 – Saturday, Aug. 31**

### **David McClintock**

It's been an incredible day today! Woke up early this morning to the crowing of roosters, who never stop, but I slept very well through the night. The Methodist Guest House staff has been very hospitable and caring.

I met a guy named Johnny, a nephew of Eric, today. He's studying computer science. I was very impressed with him. I was extremely humbled by his kindness in telling me he would keep me in his prayers.

I was glad to see the joy in the schoolchildren's faces at they received their backpacks from the Carlisle United Methodist Church congregation.

The drive to Yvon was filled with ups and downs, figuratively and literally. We traversed mountains and hills, roads and boulders to get here. The smiling faces and the countryside were beautiful, but the despair in several towns and communities was saddening. I must say we were truly blessed with clear weather for the drive. I'm not sure we would have made it through some of those roads if they were wet.

We arrived in Yvon to bright faces and settled in. We explored the church site where we will be working. There's much work to be done, but we have a good start.

The surrounding scenery is breathtaking.

This evening we had a very hearty meal, courtesy of Madame Lulu, our cook. We had pork, fried plantains, rice with beans, onion and carrot medley, and bread – sooooo good!

We played Frisbee golf and monkey-in-the-middle with the kids. I don't think they would ever have stopped, but fortunately we had to eat.

I am extremely excited about the rest of the time here with the glimpse I've gotten of Haiti and its people.

### **Mira Hewlett**

We had a very fine day. We started with breakfast at the guest house, loaded our vans with all the donations and luggage and then organized the backpack giveaway.

It was great to see the kids – and even more their parents – so thankful for the backpacks and supplies. It was an honor the day prior to have Carine say she felt so bad sending all those names to us prior to the trip and to be the bearer of all the generosity of our church. It was a very wonderful time telling her our congregation donated not only the backpacks but also supplies and snacks.

A little girl was so shocked and happy when I showed what was inside her backpack. For these families, these were greatly appreciated and will help them a lot.

During our four-hour trip to Yvon we stopped in Mellier, where two of our teams had worked previously. It was great to see the now two-story church with balcony. I was on a team that dug the first ditches and another that started the walls.

The road to Yvon was very rough but our driver was amazing and we made it. After settling in we walked to the site of the church we would help construct. They have started the walls and we will work on the floor and rebar supports.

The team is doing well and we all look forward to the week to come.

## **Day 3 -- Sunday, Sept. 1**

### **Rich Charette**

A cool, cloudy night. The cooler temps were most welcomed, as they made for good sleeping. Not sure what time the rain stopped but the clouds gave way to a quarter moon and many stars. The stars are more visible in Yvon because there is very little man-made light.

Sunday worship was spiritually filling. The hope and faith of the Haitian people is humbling. The service was held outside under a shelter made of a bamboo frame and covered in palm leaves. About 50 people from the surrounding village attended.

Our team sang "This Is the Day" in English and French for the congregation. Our interpreter, whose name is Kaz, and Madame Lulu helped us learn the French and they sang with us.

The people of Yvon expressed their gratitude for us being here to help with the construction of their new church. Worship lasted about two hours but went by quickly. This afternoon we walked to Lake Miragoane. Yvon is on a hill overlooking the south side of the lake.

The walk down was on a rugged goat trail but with each turn a new view of the lake and the surrounding mountains was exposed. We stopped often to take photos and enjoyed a rest at a waterfall. The sun was hot but an occasional breeze made it bearable.

The lake's water was very warm. We swam for a short time, then headed back up the steep trail to the old church. We were all exhausted and happy to be back at our temporary home.

Shortly after arriving there it began to rain. Several members of the team took advantage of the storm to shower. It was very refreshing after our long hike. We are hoping for such a timely rain each afternoon (it has rained each day since our arrival) so that we can shower again in the rain.

Zachariah 9:12 reminds us to place our hope in God: "Return to your stronghold, you prisoners of hope." God is here in Haiti and God can be seen in the hope that the Haitian people have in God's promises.

### **Susan Stewart**

We celebrated worship with the community of Yvon in an outdoor shelter made of wood and palm leaves. An older worker came early this morning to sweep the grounds with a clutch of branches, clearing the fallen twigs and leaves and preparing holy ground for the coming worshipers. Two others came and cleaned the benches, adding their blessing.

We all joined at one table for the Lord's Supper, symbolizing for some of us the one body of Christ in a new way. On a humorous note, our Haitian brothers and sisters are not so different from us – the back pews filled up first.

In some ways Haitians are similar to Americans in other ways, too. They laugh and cry, they worship and pray. The children are curious and love games. They are doing the best they can to make a good life for themselves and their families.

But this is where the similarities might end. Their good life looks so different from ours. We tend to think "stuff" makes a good life. They have very little "stuff" and not much chance of getting more.

We might tend to think success or achievement is part of the good life. Success is defined very differently here and is much harder to attain.

We spent the afternoon hiking about 2 miles down the mountain to Lake Miragoane for a nice, refreshing swim, then hiked 2 miles up the mountain and ruined the whole effect. The scenery, however, was fantastic.

Tonight consisted of showers in the rain, a tasty meal and some free time before our hard work tomorrow.

## **Day 4 – Monday, Sept. 2**

**Sara Boyer**

Happy Labor Day.

Ironically, it is Labor Day back in the U.S., and here we are in Haiti doing more labor than any of us has done in quite some time.

The first day on the church site went well – no injuries and not too much sunburn.

Half of us sifted sand first and the other half collected rebar from the nearby school, where the pieces were being stored. We dragged the rebar over to the site to bend it into long, straight pieces to use as part of the church floor. The Haitian workers laid the rebar and we helped them wire it together in a grid pattern.

We were all very hot, sweaty and very dirty, but it was nice to see the progress that we made. It looks like tomorrow we may even finish tying the rebar and completing the grid across the church floor.

It was interesting to see a lot of the surrounding community gather at the worksite because we were there. Pastor Jacob, the superintendent of eight Methodist churches in the area, traveled to Yvon to visit us and express how thankful he and the community were for our service. He said we would be welcome back at any time.

Once we ran out of water and the rain was starting to come, we gathered our things and headed back to our "home" for the week.

After a shower and some rest, we held our first vacation Bible school for the local children. We were expecting 30-40 children, with Kaz our interpreter predicting it would be more like 20 or 25. But 80 showed up.

We taught them – or tried to teach them – the American alphabet. We practiced each letter and then tried to teach the children the A-B-Cs. Susan followed by teaching the children a song. After it became apparent the children weren't participating with much enthusiasm, Madame Lulu came to help with her singing skills.

We ended with a game taught by April for the older children and brought out a “parachute” for the younger children.

We ended with a small snack, but many children stayed for hours after “class.” Team members took a short walk up the hill to get another great view of the village and finally ate dinner – goat, rice and beans, potatoes and carrots, avocado, bread and water. We enjoyed a Sprite after dinner.

Children were still there enjoying our company. I am sure that the children play together on a regular basis but I bet it is also nice for them to have some organized activities to enjoy.

The best moment for me today was having a little boy smile so big after I took the time to remove a splinter from his finger.

## **Ed Montague**

I woke at 6:55 a.m. today as Fred was saying, “Ed, it’s almost time for breakfast.” It consisted of mamba (spicy peanut butter) on toast, pancakes and syrup, juice, cassava and potatoes.

Today we made our first trek down the hill to the church site. We are staying in the old church – earthquake-ridden but patched. Our temporary home is equipped with cots, tarps and mosquito nets. We have two lights lit by a gasoline-powered generator outside. It gives us a good hour for devotions and time for the staff to charge their cell phones.

I learned what it’s like with 20+ people sleeping in the same room. Those who stay awake are blessed by four or five in a chorus of snoring. Perhaps it can better be compared to the brass section of a band.

The first half of the workday included laying rebar and moving gravel. We met the church’s superintendent under a tree after lunch.

The second half of the day was devoted to the Yvon church’s children. “Communion” was served in the form of cookies as the children moved in line to receive theirs one-by-one. Also, we all exchanged our first names, with the team members first in English and then the children in Haitian Creole. Also, we all sang in Haitian Creole and did the ABCs in English.

I must say the fun with the Haitian boys has moved me a lot. I am approached often by the boys to get out the soccer ball that Warren J. sent with us. The boys are barefooted and the soccer area is right next to the old church. The little space is rounded and the ball often goes over the bank and down the hill.

A boy whose name sounds like Jimsum is the best soccer player of more than 20. He along with “Argen” and “Ens” have been my fun guys.

So many people live here in the mountains, and they travel by donkey, mule, motorcycle or by foot. Such beautiful people – little girls with big brown eyes, handsome boys with so much energy and big smiles.

I must end my journal entry with how I learned how the extra 60 pounds I carry has left me scarred, as our trek back up the mountain from the lake caused me to take frequent rest stops. But, thanks to Pastor Mira, Rich, Fred and all, I enjoyed compassion along the way.

## **Day 5 – Tuesday, Sept. 3**

### **Charles Phillips**

After breakfast we made our trek to the worksite. We worked most of the day, taking a few rest stops and lunch until 3 p.m., when we returned to play games with the kids.

We first worked on the rebar while some of the Haitians began mixing the sand, stone and cement. We then formed a conga line to pass buckets of concrete to place on the floor. By 3 p.m. we had managed to lay down about one-seventh of the flooring.

At 3 o'clock the children were at the old church to play games and to learn how to count and say the English alphabet. They played soccer with two soccer balls. They jumped rope, with two long ropes that could accommodate two children jumping at the same time and with two short one-person ropes. They also played London Bridge Is Falling Down.

When supper arrived, rain was threatening. I hope it storms because I have my dirty cement-covered clothes out on the clothesline. A good downpour may be able to clean them. After I showered I put on the clothes that I had worn the previous day. Last night it rained, and today with plenty of sunshine the clothes that I had worn the previous day were dry and "clean."

Ed will give the devotions tonight.

### **April Butler**

Today was the second day at the worksite. Some of us started out straightening rebar. Then everyone helped lay down the concrete floor.

We formed a line from where the cement was mixed to where the concrete was spread over the rebar. About 15 people were in the line. We would pass buckets filled with concrete from one person to the next. Some of us had to catch the empty buckets so they could be refilled. It was awesome to see all of us working together and the amount of work we accomplished today.

At lunch we had the opportunity to try coconut and drink the liquid inside. It was unanimous that the fruit of the coconut tasted much better than the liquid.

After the worksite we came back to our "home" and we had our second night of vacation Bible school. We taught the children how to count in English and reviewed the Alphabet Song, which the kids learned yesterday. Susan taught the kids the song "B-I-B-L-E." Then they played Duck-Duck-Goose and had a snack.

After VBS the kids remained to play soccer and Uno, jumped rope and played soccer. Some of our team even joined in the rope jumping, along with Madame Lulu and Nancy, her assistant. Somehow I managed to jump rope rather fast as the kids like to do it first.

There was a little boy down the road who seemed to be too afraid/shy to come up with the rest of us, so I took a puzzle down to him. We did that for a while and then a few other kids joined as well. Eventually the little boy came back to the church with the rest of us and joined in the playing.

## **Day 6 – Wednesday, Sept. 4**

### **Mira Hewlett**

Today is our last full day in Yvon and the time has flown by. We have gotten into a routine of hard work with concrete (beton), wonderful meals from Madame Lulu and our cooks, and lots of time with the children. The joy and hope of the Haitian children are infectious once they open up and get to know you.

Each trip to Haiti I rediscover the love of people, their ability to live in the moment, their faith and assurance in God's grace and care, and their resourcefulness to use materials over and over in new and creative ways.

Yvon has been a great worksite (minus the steep hills, which have drastically impacted my mobility and work due to hip issues). The lush vegetation is everywhere – with avocado, almond, papaya and plantain plentiful. Lake Miragoane is visible in the distance, adding a resource when water doesn't flow nearby.

Homes are tucked into many crevices, with one stable road that is 20 minutes from the main road. In its harsh roads the beauty of greeting neighbors and enjoying one's setting can occur.

Again this afternoon we loved playing with the kids, teaching English, singing songs and enjoying lots of games and laughter. I loved playing with 2-year-old Nepheline, who enjoyed being tickled and playing with flash cards.

Our evening ended with high/lows and devotions. Then it was the night to get our cards and encouragement from home. It is always nice to know that many at home are praying for us and thinking of us. We really are a piece of our entire church present, but it took many, many people from our church to get us here and uplift the ministry in Haiti. Thanks to all for listening to God and serving as you could.

### **Kayla Snyder**

Today was an awesome day! It is the last night in Yvon and it's pretty bittersweet.

My day started out great! The day before I had befriended a little boy named Odelay when we drummed on an empty water jug. On the way to the worksite today Odelay wanted to carry my gloves and hold my hand the whole way there. He was such a sweet little boy.

At the worksite the day went by very fast and with little to no injury. We started out by tying a couple rebar together. Then we started our "beton" (concrete)-swinging line. I started out carrying empty buckets, which got me coated in concrete.

After the first beton I swung buckets for a little, then three little boys, JoJo, Jimmy and Odelay, came to help with the buckets. The boys were very eager to help and were fighting over who got to carry buckets next. That was the last round before lunch.

After lunch we got to shop. There were so many things to choose from – woodwork, stonework, paintings and jewelry! It was all really fun and cool. I was getting frazzled because I was running out of time to shop. I got souvenirs and we went back to the worksite. We only had time to finish one round of concrete before leaving.

On the way back up to our home for the week two little girls met up with me while Odelay took my water. Betina and Metsina held my hands. They are very energetic so we would run, jump, walk and everything in between. Then they started to teach me some words in Creole. That was a highlight of my day.

After we were back we tried to teach kids the English names of animals. Then they all dispersed and played their own games. I played a clapping game called “Pepsi-Cola” with the girls.

The group ate, then had devotions, which were interrupted by a frog that surprised us all by hopping down half the table. Everyone freaked out and screamed. It was pretty funny.

I ended my night listening to Charles’ interesting stories. He’s great. I don’t want to go to sleep because I don’t want to say goodbye to everyone tomorrow! ☹

Tonight is bittersweet.

## **Day 7 – Thursday, Sept. 5**

### **David McClintock**

Today, in my opinion, has been the toughest day, as we left the people of Yvon, with whom we have worked, worshiped and played for the past three days. I guess I could say that goes for everyone. It’s amazing how these relationships can have such an impact in our lives in such a short amount of time. I just pray we will never forget.

I know how easy it is to get home and get caught up in the busy-ness of everyday life, but this trip made a profound impression on me. I hope I can make it back some time.

I woke up this morning feeling more tired than usual and also pretty sore, especially in my back, probably from scooping concrete the day before.

Today we hauled buckets and wheelbarrows full of dirt, clay and stone from in front of the church to the tree line in order to make room for the construction of steps in front of the church. I could tell by the look in everyone’s faces as they passed by with their buckets that they were working extremely hard. I was impressed by the girls; they were really pushing themselves.

We definitely got most of it cleared out.

We got back to the quarters at 11 a.m. to eat lunch and finish packing, hoping to leave at 1 p.m. But, as expected, time is not a major factor in Haiti, so we left at about 1:45 p.m. It was not easy to say goodbye to everyone there, although it was bearable, but I’m afraid if we had stayed any longer it would have made it that much harder to leave, so it’s probably a good time frame.

Not much to say about the ride back to Port-au-Prince. It was very quiet; we were tired from the morning work, and we were sad. We did pass a vehicle on the other side of the highway that looked totaled. The front end was really smashed in. Surprised we didn’t see more of those, with how the driving is here.

At the Methodist Guest House we had a phenomenal meal; everything was delicious. We wrote “Shares of Hope” thank-you cards and got in the pool, which was very refreshing.

Lastly, and quite ironically, my sandal broke – after I had given my shoes away in Yvon. Now I’m the one in need of footwear. Oh, well, maybe I’ll find out what it’s like to walk in a Haitian’s shoes – or no shoes.

Also, the rain just stopped – preventing me from showering in the rain.

It was a tough day.



## **Rich Charette**

Today was our last day in Yvon. Seems as though we just arrived.

We worked at the site this morning, moving buckets of dirt. The area in front of the church had to be cleared to prepare for the steps. Much work has to be done before the steps can be constructed. It was a project that needed to be done. Our team of Haitians and Americans worked together to quickly finish the job.

We took a group photo and said our goodbyes to the workers. As we walked up the hill to the old church that we had made into our home for a few days we looked back to see what had been accomplished. About half of the floor was now concrete, moved to the site one bucket at a time. It doesn't seem like much, but when you consider that all the work is done by hand, you realize a lot was accomplished.

Back at the old church we packed and spent time with our new friends, playing last-minute games with the children and trying to learn a few more words of Creole with the adults. When our vehicles arrived we said our sad goodbyes: many hugs, a few tears, handshakes and "bonswa," "mesi" and "padkwa," thank you and you're welcome. They sent us on our way with many blessings.

As with my previous two trips, time passed so quickly. We leave with heavy hearts but we are happy to be returning home.

Haiti is still a country with incredible need. I can't even imagine what it must be like to live in poverty. It's everywhere in Haiti.

Pastor Jacob thanked us for leaving our homes, our community and our country to help rebuild his country. He extended an invitation to return.... I will.

What I've written doesn't seem to make sense or even express how I'm feeling. Not sure I can put it in words.

Hope gets us through. The Haitian people have it. Here we walk beside them. We ache at their poverty and we are amazed with their hope. Both get your attention.

I pray that God will continue to soften my heart for Haiti.

## **Day 8 – Friday, Sept. 6**

### **Susan Stewart**

We began our last full day in Haiti with a visit to Grace Children's Hospital. It's impressive how much they do with so few resources and so little space. And they don't stop with the clinics in Port-au-Prince but go out into the community with vaccines and education.

Our guide, Robenson Luceus, was so excited about showing us around and sharing his passion and pride in the ministry.

We spent about an hour with the children in the inpatient room. There were several young children, mostly suffering from malnutrition, and two older children. It was wonderful to cuddle the kids and play with the older ones, but it was very hard to leave.

Our final trip was a tour of part of Port-au-Prince, the palace (mostly torn down now) and lunch at a Haitian fast-food restaurant ("fast" being relative). What we saw of the city was an interesting mix of well-to-do homes, average or adequate homes, and shanties and tents amidst the rubble.

The number of people and cars is incredible. Too much for me, really. A bit depressing, seeing how much work still could be done. But I don't think I noticed the sense of desperation or despair I might have expected in such conditions.

All in all I am encouraged by what I found in Haiti: The hope and joy in the people (especially in Yvon), the faith in God and the knack of taking life one day at a time.

## **Ed Montague**

After a dip in the pool last night

at the Port-au-Prince guest house and a good night's rest, we were up again at 6:30 a.m. for breakfast. Today would be our visit to Haiti's only children's hospital, Grace Children's Hospital.

We sang upon our arrival "All the Children of the World" to a large audience of Haitian families waiting to be seen at the hospital. We then were given the grand tour: the eye center, AIDS/HIV testing center, X-ray lab and administrative offices. After photos we entered the children's inpatient room, which housed mainly babies and a few older children. We interacted with them, held them and did coloring books.

Fred and I spent time with a 14-year-old girl. Fred is good with instruction. He had the young lady, who had one arm set with an I.V. drip, learning 1 through 10 in English while I worked with the two of them on numbers in Haitian Creole.

Upon completion of our visit we loaded back into the Toyota mini-bus and headed to lunch at Epi-D-Or, Port-au-Prince's fast-food restaurant. It was a wait for food as we spread out to save three tables while Koz, Mira, Kayla and Dave waited to get the meals and drinks.

The drinks and fries were good but the burgers were very small and well done on an extra-large bun.

After eating we grouped out front to plan our next two stops before heading back to the guest house. Pastor Mira took hands for or against visiting the museum: 3 for and 7 against. So a quick trip around the central park and a quick look at the museum's exterior and off we went to Giant Market. It was not like the Giant Market back home but had a drive-in parking garage below the two-story supermarket, attached only by an elevator for entering.

I made two laps around the store and settled on all-Haitian products – Haitian rum, Haitian almonds, Haitian cashews and some interesting packaged sweet wafers.

Back in the elevator for all 11 of us and down to P-1 for the parking garage, with John sitting in the van waiting for us. Back to the guest house and a quick dip in the pool for most. The rest of the day consisted of resting up, doing devotions after dinner and getting ready to leave. It was another special day and the end of a great mission trip.

I felt today it was such an honor to share with Carlisle United Methodist Church this most inspirational trip. I guess today I was moved the most within my spirit. It happened while at Grace Children's Hospital. As we were debriefed I thought of my life and how much this mission trip meant to me as a Christian, how we as a small group of 10 learned a little of the Haitian language, learned their story and saw the need for better medical care and infrastructure. But we also learned of a people who could get the greatest joy over a soccer ball, jump rope or a fun run in the pouring rain.

As I write this tears stream from my eyes, knowing how short a time I have left to be able to repeat this quest to share God's love and spread his word. I feel in my heart we, as Jesus did, took this week to spread God's love to a needy country. I feel in my heart we are doing what we are supposed to do as Christians.

Yes, I truly believe, as written in the Bible, "It is more blessed to give than receive."

## **Day 9 – Saturday, Sept. 7**

### **Sara Boyer**

Today we leave Haiti. I am excited about getting home but sad to leave. It was an honor to work next to the Haitian people of Yvon on their new church. The children of Yvon will be missed greatly but will continue to be in our thoughts and prayers as we return home.

Yesterday we visited Grace Children's Hospital of International Child Care. It was interesting to see the facilities and the people waiting patiently to receive services. We held devotions with those waiting, which helped them to understand our purpose for being there.

Our tour of the hospital showed the team the facilities that the Haitian medical team has to work with. We learned about the different services that they are able to provide, including child care, ophthalmology, gynecology and so forth. We were able to visit the sick children that stay in the hospital overnight to hold them and play with them. The children enjoyed our company but were very sad when it was time to go.

I spoke with the PR coordinator about coming back to Haiti to volunteer with the hospital in March. I hope that it works out because I think it would be a great experience for me.

Today will be a long day of travel but I am looking forward to sleeping in my own bed tonight.

### **April Butler**

Today we are leaving Haiti. I am excited about seeing my family, but it is sad to be leaving Haiti and this amazing experience. We have met some amazing people on this journey, including Madame Lulu (our cook) and Kaz (our interpreter). Madame Lulu very much enjoyed singing hymns and teaching us.

On the first day of VBS, Madame Lulu helped with getting the children to sing the song Susan was trying to teach them. Madame Lulu made sure they sang it correctly and didn't shout. She was great with the kids.

Koz was very personable and friendly He was great not only with us but also with the people and children of Yvon. He became part of our team, sharing personal information and a lot of laughs.

We also met an older lady one day on our way back from the worksite She was so happy to see us that she started dancing and kissed each of our hands. She danced all the way to her home and then gave each of us a hug.

I believe we all hold a special place in our heart for the children. We had so much fun with VBS (teaching a lesson, song and game), and afterwards the children would stay and we would play with them (jump rope, soccer, Uno, puzzles, flash cards, Pepsi-Cola). They would stay as long as possible with us each night. Some would be at our "temporary home" first

thing in the morning, walk with us to the worksite and then walk back with us. Some even worked at the worksite and were happy to do so.

It is also hard to say goodbye to the team members. They became my family for the past week. We looked out for each other, making sure everyone drank plenty of water and rested when needed. We also worked well as a team at the worksite. We shared not only the happy times but also the unpleasant and sad times. We shared personal stories and had a lot of laughs together.

This group of 10 really helped make this experience as amazing as it was. Some I may see again and some I may never see again, but I will never forget any of them.

Our flight home was uneventful. Even going through customs went smoothly.