

Carlisle United Methodist Church

Haiti Serve Team 2017

Team Journal



Team Members: Caz interpreter; Emily Clepper, Marnie Anderson, Christina Benson, Beth Heishman, Sara Boyer, Sam Butler, Heather Weiser, Patrick interpreter, Pastor Jim VanZandt, Rich Charette, Kayla Snyder, Chuck Steel, and Cindy Sullivan

Friday, January 6, 2017

Today (now yesterday) was the first day of our mission trip to Haiti. Our morning started out just fine leaving a bit early to make sure we got to Reagan airport on time despite some snow on the ground. We got to the terminal, checked in and checked our many bags without much of a problem. We proceeded to our gate, got a bite to eat, and took off to Fort Lauderdale for our connecting flight. Around 12:45pm we landed at FLL and headed to our new gate for our flight to Haiti. Most of us searched quickly for food and sat down for lunch prior to boarding. While we were eating I got a phone call from my brother. Although my brother and I talk often, it is not usually over the phone, so this alarmed me. I didn't answer, hoping to text him and ask what he wanted but before I got a chance he was texting me asking where I was. I told him we were in FLL and he informed me that there was just a shooting in terminal 2 and the shooter was possibly at large. I informed Rich immediately, not sure whether to believe the news or not since everything seemed perfectly normal where we were. I searched on line and within minutes learned that there had been a shooting, but the shooter was in custody. The reported incident was not in our terminal, and everything still seemed normal. Several people were watching/taking pictures out the terminal window of what I found out was the location of where everyone was being evacuated. Three were already reported dead, 9 injured. We weren't panicking, but did pay due attention to what was going on around us. At some point the airport made an announcement that service was suspended, but our next flight continued to board which we felt was odd. We were standing in the boarding line, three of our team members already having boarded the plane. The rest of us were next in line to pass through the gate when chaos broke out. I don't remember exactly what triggered the panic, but all at once people started screaming and running. As soon as I began to run into the bridge to the airplane, I tripped and was run over by several people. I saw my passport in sight while still on the ground and decided to try to reach for it before it got lost. I then used all my might to get up from the floor and continue running, not knowing what exactly we were running from. We all ended up on the tarmac and waited for direction. Although there was no formal direction, the crowd was all gathered in one place, attempting to calm down after what had just occurred. Our group found each other quickly and we knew three of our team members were safely kept on the plane. The next minutes and hours were draining- waiting for information, for answers, for someone to tell us what was next. Our group was moved back into the airport after several hours, and various people were treated with injuries related to panic/falling/running. Once back into the airport we did not know much. We contacted our families and Pastor Mira, who had figured out how to get us on the 6 AM flight the next morning. The trouble was, what would we do overnight? We had a connection to a local hotel, but figured we would not make it back in time to get on the flight. Meanwhile there was no confirmation as to when the airport would open. We decided to stay at the airport. So we got as comfortable as possible for several hours until the next dilemma- they were kicking us out. We had to go to Port Everglades where the Red Cross was set up to provide snacks, water, pillows,

and blankets. We got comfortable again, knowing it would be short-lived. Our flight remained at 6 AM and the airport was set to open at 5 AM. We left the shelter at 4 AM on a shuttle that charged us very minimally for our ride. We got to the terminal, checked in, and went through security. After 13 hours at the airport and almost 3 more at the shelter or in transportation, we were on our flight to Haiti. Oh yea, this whole time we had no idea where our bags would go- stay on the plane, be distributed to us and rechecked, been taken off the plane but put back in the morning? We are hoping the latter or else all of us won't have clothes to wear or sleeping bags to sleep in, or bug spray, sunscreen, etc., etc. Hopefully we will safely meet our baggage in Port-au-Prince and we will start our trip. Also hoping for a nap this afternoon.

Sara B.

Friday, January 6, 2017

"Airport Disaster in Ft. Lauderdale, but Champagne Gummies?!"

4:15 am – morale – sleepy

Made it to Reagan airport without a hitch! Got bags checked and some breakfast before boarding. 12:45 pm we landed at Fort Lauderdale airport hoping for a quick turnaround to Port-au-Prince.

Chris and I were asked to switch seats to an emergency exit zone (because we speak English). So, we were boarded shortly along with Beth. Next thing we know the doors were shut and locked due to (another—yes—two separate shooters—one at 1:00pm and the other at 2:30pm) security and evacuation. I am currently writing this while still in lock down on the plane (it's 4:49pm).

The other 9 on the team were evacuated to the tarmac far from the airport. Through texts, it sounds like a few lost their boarding passes upon evacuation and some fell and got bumps and bruises. But all are to be okay. Security is still checking the terminal and now a suspicious bag needs tested. Families are concerned at home and now all phones need charged, but at least communication was available.

Incident report: US veteran from Alaska arrested in airport; 5 dead, 8 wounded.
What a day. Prayers to all involved in this mess.

P.S. Last night evacuated from the airport to Port Everglades where the Red Cross was more than generous and friendly – giving us blankets and food. A few of us got a little more rest after getting out of the cold airport.

Heather

Saturday: Morale is up this morning as we finally are on our way to Haiti!

Saturday, January 7, 2017

"Thoughts in pieces"

Piece one:

The day began with a quiet peacefulness as if one is resigned to circumstances they cannot change. The group is of one mind and heart. Rich continued his stellar calm and confident leadership that has benefited the group following yesterday's events.

We left the cruise terminal at 5 and after receiving news at the airport that in fact our bags will be on the plane, we experienced relief as we all knew what held in the balance if they were not.

After a fast trip through security – and what was for many, the first hot meal in 18 hours, we settled together in the waiting area – and all went smooth to PAP.

Piece two:

PAP airport is busy, but not crowded. We moved through immigration and customs without incident – save 2 lost bags which have a high like-li-hood of showing up, so says director Tom of the VIM guest house in Haiti. I can only describe our ride to the guest house as a Disney Land “E” ticket ride that even Mr. Toad himself would think twice about. Personally, I loved it – the dodging and weaving and sharp turns. Exhaustion isn’t the word to describe the teams fatigue – it’s not deep enough. The stress and lack of sleep has caught up to us all, and yet, not one sour word is heard. We remain a team.

Piece three:

The guest house complex is bigger than it looks. Sarah asked me to accompany her around. We found the church on this 11 acre site – and watched a Haitian wedding. We were clearly under-dressed in our shorts!! They were even playing some “Kenny G” sax music.

The pool proved refreshing. Others took showers and slept the afternoon away – except for Emily and Heather who took Marnie shopping for clothes as her bag didn’t arrive today. Supper will soon be served and imagine as darkness sets in, we will retire early as we need to be on the road at 6:00 AM for the 3 hour trip to Sobier -wearing our Sunday best as church is the first thing on the agenda when we get there.

We’re all agreed that today has been a good way to acclimate ourselves to Haiti before this mission begins.

Jim VanZandt

Saturday, January 7, 2017

Well we made it! I’ll say that I was so impressed with how everyone is still in good spirits. I was so proud to be a part of this team with how everyone, despite the struggles of Friday, put others first. It was humbling to watch and motivated me to do all I could, not only during that situation but going forward.

Today is a day of rest. We arrived in Port-au-Prince without incident. However, there were some issues at the Port-au-Prince airport with a few bags. Marnie’s missing her personal bag, and we’re missing 2 team bags—one with Rich, Sam and Chris’s sleeping bags. Who knows when we’ll see those bags again?

Upon arrival in Port-au-Prince, the first thing I saw was just how beautiful Haiti is. The mountains seemed to reach the sky. I was taken aback how arid things looked. I expected more jungle and tropical areas. The ride to the guest house was uneventful, but thrilling. I’m surprised my wife, April, who came to Haiti 3 years ago, made that trip because she has a hard time with me driving almost anywhere. Someone told me driving in Haiti was chaotic but a symphony, and boy was it ever. The roads seemed to widen at will and vehicles allowed others to merge at will. It was strangely beautiful.

I took some pictures at the airport and then broke my camera when it dropped on the ground. So, I’m bummed about that.

At the guest house there’s a P.E.T. cart, one of the projects we do at CUMC. It’s a personal transportation device powered by a hand crank. I’m told this one did not come from CUMC. I’m also not sure if it’s all that effective on this type of terrain. Maybe they’ll let me try it out.

Listening to Jean-Philepe’, No-No and Miss Luluenjay telling stories in Creole was a pretty neat event. Mr. Brulan suggested talking with the Haitians and listening to their stories; he was right. It put a smile on my face.

Despite the lack of sleep and the struggles of the last few days, I’ve really enjoyed my time so far. I hope to get to explore this new country and culture while getting to know more about my teammates.

Sam

Sunday, January 8, 2017

Before I write about today---

Thank you to the team for your calm and support at Fort Lauderdale—especially too Rich for leadership and to Sam for using his body to shield me when I was knocked down by a panicked crowd-surfing injury to himself. Sam also recovered my passport which was knocked out of my hand in the chaos.

Today was an early day with a scheduled 5:30am breakfast (a little delayed) with eggs, sausage, croissant, toast, pb&j, cornflakes, mangoes, bananas, pastry and fresh-squeezed juice in the offering. Loaded the truck with luggage and donations and another with 5-gallon buckets for the water-filter project. People went in a Toyota van driven by Johnny.

The drive out of Port-au-Prince was a bit more chaotic than our drive up to the guest house from the airport yesterday. More traffic and pedestrians out and about. Some church goers, but there were small markets set up as well. Port-au-Prince looks cleaner than most of us who have been here before remember it looking, and we even saw a large garbage sanitation truck with a crew scooping up litter from a pile on the street to be taken away. They've also curtailed burning a bit—although the acrid smell of burning garbage is still in the air. They no longer burn right behind the guest house, which is a blessing.

It was about a 3 ½-hour drive to Sobier. We drive along a rather coastal road along Port-au-Prince Bay that many previous CUMC teams know well—through towns like Carefour, Miragone, Lagone' and Petit Guave. At the beginning one town blends into another like Camp Hill blends into Mechanicsburg. Houses and businesses are close to the road, and people walk and do business. Many folks are clearly heading to or from church in their Sunday best. We can tell we are close to water when they are selling fish and shrimp at roadside stalls. Gradually, the towns are more spaced out, and we see people planting. There are groves of plantain trees and some sugar cane. We head into more mountainous and rural terrain after a stop at a Quick Mart for cold drinks and snacks until we need to turn onto the "road" to Sobier—it looks more like a dirt track. We need to transfer bags and people into 4-wheel drive pickup trucks to climb very steep, very rutted, pitted, holey road. There is a million-dollar view of the road at the top. We make turns onto paths barely recognizable as roads, and at one point Brelin even takes a wrong turn on the complicated network of paths. People along the road look curious but not surprised to see us, and they return waves with a wave and a big smile.

We arrive to our village of tents (6 of them) in the yard of Jacob and his family. They live in a 2-room cement block house with a small porch behind a compound wall. They allow teams to use their cooking/living room as a dining room—a tight fit for our team of 14—12 from CUMC plus our translators Car and Patrick. We've missed church.

We take a walk, and many children join us. We stop at the Catholic school, which is missing half of its roof from Hurricane Matthew in October. We are told there are more than 240 students—there appear to be seats/desks for about 50-75. No visible supplies at all, and no chalkboard. No storage. We walk further to a beautiful view of a very blue-looking Bay at Port-au-Prince. A sailboat is visible as is the island of LaGonave where CUMC once sent a team. In open spaces cows graze, donkeys graze and chickens scratch.

We walk down a long, relatively steep grade to the Methodist Church. It is small—one room, high open windows with no glass or screens in concrete block walls. A small, simple altar on a raised platform and simple wooden benches (backless) for pews. There appear to be a few homes around, but it is a bit of a hike for those in Sobier around Jacob's house.

The children really engage with us in the church building. They've already been holding our hands as we walk. In the church building names are exchanged, songs are sung, and hand games are taught/learned by Haitian children and American adults alike. It is good to be out of the intense sun for a season. I'm guessing the outside temperature is between 80 and 90 degrees. We walk back up the hill—children eager to "help" by holding hands and carrying water bottles. Some openly ask for food, water and "dollars," which we cannot provide. A woman calls us over to see her month-and-a-half-old twin girls. She seems very proud of them, and they look bright-eyed and healthy.

We return to Jacob's yard for a brief respite. Pastor Jacob comes from Petit Goave to greet us. We walk to the project site—a health clinic. Looks like three rooms—one larger and two small. Cement block walls are up but no roof. The beginnings of a cistern have been dug, and it sounds like we may work on that as well. We continue along a dirt path (for walking and "motos" (motorcycles). We detect more children—many half naked (shirts only) and some completely naked. We pass several homes, a gravesite, and come to a community grass/dirt soccer field. A brief scrimmage happens using an unripe mango as a ball. A lot more visiting happens with a beautiful valley/mountain view. On the walk back kids begin to ask about Band-Aids—apparently a previous team had provided some. Sarah and Beth

(both nurses) set up an impromptu clinic for small wounds—real and imagined. Band-Aids are a miracle cure!
Marnie

Sunday, January 8, 2017

We woke up at the guest house and had a wonderful breakfast. I was really sick the night before but feel much better today... just a little weak. After that we packed up and drove to Sobier. The level of poverty is overwhelming. I was surprised along the way we only smelled burning wood. The only other real smell was by the fish market as we drove out -- the driving is crazy. As we got out of the city, you began to see more farm animals...cattle, chickens, pigs and donkeys. There seemed to be rivers of trash in the city but began to clear up as we got into the country.

We stopped at a grocery/gas store which was very clean and nice. We got a few snacks. As we drove up the level of poverty became higher and higher. Still can't believe how fortunate we are. Our biggest worry at the guest house was not putting our toothbrush under the running water which for them must just be to get a small meal a day.

We had to switch vehicles to drive up the mountain. There was only a dirt road that was hard to traverse. When we arrived to our "test village" for the week I was feeling a bit overwhelmed and felt really bad for all the stuff I thought I needed here. We were greeted with all smiles and the children just keep staring.

11:30 – We are just setting up and the 2nd load of people arrived. We all seem a bit apprehensive to interact just yet. Just trying to get our stuff situated. Lunch was a wonderful bean dish then peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

We have been toured around the area and played/talked with the children. They seem to have been learning our names. Some were asking for dollars but all loved having their picture taken. Dinner was very good and so much food! With a cake.

We are now preparing for devotions and getting ready for bed. It was a good day overall. I am looking forward to working tomorrow.

One of the best part today and the last few days was getting to know our group of people personally. Everyone is so great!!!

Cindy

Monday, Jan. 9, 2017

One of the wonderful things that starts to happen is the way the team begins to coalesce. Each team member brings so many gifts; after the initial introductions and exchanging life experiences and personal details, it's so enlightening to start learning about the skills and talents of each person. Rich, of course, brings a sense of connection between people he's begun relationships with from former trips, but a magic sense of inclusion with new people – at the camp site and at the work site. Pastor Jim is very laid back and absorbing everything he's sharing that this is a time of spiritual renewal lets me see how important that is to me and each of us. Marnie also has a genuine sense of connection to children and adults. Bringing the books along – and reading to the children was a golden inspiration and opportunity. She is so practical and considerate of others. There are several quiet, introspective people on this team –who are processing information non-stop. Emily imbues the simplest things (like meal-time) with a wonderful senses of humor. It's fun to see her interact with the children. Cindy asks such excellent questions – looking to understand in a very active way – and helping the rest of us grow in our integration in the community. As Heather stepped up to clean the cuts of a young boy, she had an efficient attitude about her, yet comforting. Soon, a host of young boys were checking themselves for hurts that needed to be cared for. Chuck, ever prepared, and promptly brought out just the tool to make cutting holes in the 5 gal. buckets a snap. He has a smile for everyone and every situation instilling confidence and a

can-do attitude. Kayla has a delightful youthfulness – children respond to her and invite her into their confidence, despite the lack of ability to talk the same language. Her phone case was an instant point of interest and conversation. Beth has a very calm demeanor which creates an atmosphere of trust, especially with children and babies. Sara just steps out and takes on the next project – she has put on such a positive front with those we are working with and reserving dealing with her experience at Fort Lauderdale in private – or when she'll have time and space to make sense of it all. Sam is such a gentle soul, easily gathering children to him like the pied piper – whether it's a game or incorporating them into the work assignment. I feel privileged to be part of the team – a group of people who have already faced adversity together, but who finds strength in God and serving others.

Today was our first day at the work site/teaching site. Six of us went to work on the porch for the morning – we moved rocks to be used in the porch steps and foundation and sifted varying grades of sand. Being so close to where we are staying means lots of children and people observing and commenting. We are very welcomed-and the Haitians are generous with their patience and training. We moved 2 substantial rock piles from one side of the building to the front. The caution was watching for “fomi” – fire ants-tiny ants with quite a bite. A few of us had ants on our clothing. Kayla had several bites. Sifting sand is definitely a shared job-and a chance to exchange names and attempts at conversation.

After a lunch of meat pockets, spicy coleslaw and fries, several of the team took off to the soccer field for some games of soccer, jump rope, coloring pages and visits with Sara for a band-aid. The children and youth were exuberant players and participants-solicitous of the team members. The young women flocked to team members with long hair – braids become the universal hair style. The cows seemed unperturbed by the activity – grazing quietly nearby. The weather has been mild and overcast – a few brief occasions of mist – but obviously raining along the ridge line and a breeze that made work and play comfortable.

Reflecting on today – I see the generosity of those around me – Haitian and American. I feel God's world in a way that is very close – mango trees filled with fruit, poultry and livestock sharing the same space we work and live in - the weather in the field and compound areas, children posing for photos. Despite the help we are able to share, I also see some of the limitations of limited resources – how great are the needs. People face each day with resolve; appreciate what fortune may come their way; understand that life is precarious and find joy in simple things.

I appreciate small things: spaghetti for breakfast, a shower and feeling clean, a warm place to sleep, the ability to sleep and tune out surround sound of generator and radio, fresh juice and Haitian coffee, the friendly and patient attitude of people – the help of Caz and Patrick, the desire of so many people to help each other, motorcyclists bringing water and supplies, fresh baked bread.

Today, I met Yve at the work site. He is perhaps 45-50 years old and was sifting small particle sand into very fine sand. He is small and wiry and easy with his smile. Yve is married, but not sure whether he has children. When we first saw him, he sat on a mason block sifting sand. Yve worked with Jim and me – first letting us sift the sand, then trading off. Another man about the same age, perhaps a few years older was also there and introduced himself. A third man joined us –much older-perhaps closer to 70-with a radio, which he turned on and played soft kreyole music.

Christina

Monday, Jan. 9, 2017

Our first night sleeping in Sobier was windy, which helped to cool things down a bit. I don't know if anyone would say they had a good night's rest, but we were certainly are ready for a good day of work. The coffee was as good as I expected it to be, meaning to say that it was great.

After a quick introduction to the clean water project by Patrick, we split into two groups for the morning. Backing up a bit, I should have mentioned that we don't have a drill. This is important because without a drill, it is difficult to create the hole in the bucket for the filters. The homeowner had the correct size bit but not a drill. Thankfully, I have a multi-tool, and we were able to use it to drill the holes by hand.

Anyway, I was part of the water filter group, and we went to the Catholic Church to hold the class. Patrick did a great job teaching, and his students were attentive. Sara did a great job of drinking the filtered water and even hammed it up a bit to get some laughs from the crowd. Helping to put the filters together was also fun and fulfilling.

Lunch was light fare but good as always. After some time to rest, we split up again with some of us going to the work site to sift sand, and others headed to the soccer field to play and run a small-wound clinic. There isn't too much to say about sifting sand, so I won't write much about it.

This afternoon there was a brief moment of excitement when a driver appeared with a drill. Unfortunately, part of it was missing, so we won't be able to use it after all! There is also the possibility of a storm coming, which has some people worried; but I am not too concerned. I trust that if things look bad, the staff at the Guest House will get us to safety. It is a bit windy and may rain tomorrow, but we can only put our faith in God and do what we can.

Chuck

Tuesday, January 10, 2017

Today was our 2nd day of work. Our part of the team stayed near the house first thing and worked on rebar towers. We cut some wire and helped tie the rebar to the cross bars. Three of our group stayed to keep helping, while Marnie, Sara, and I went to the worksite with Caz. We were sure the workers were glad to see three white girls come to the rescue! ☺ We made several trips with sand back and forth from the sand cave to the worksite. That was a good workout. Then we carried buckets of dirt and then stones to the left side of the steps.

After lunch, most of us went back to the worksite while Cindy, Chuck, and Marnie stayed back to work some more on the rebar towers. We brought more dirt and rocks to the right side of the porch. We had two "bucket brigades" which worked really well.

Around 3:00 pm, we went for a "walk" (hike really) up the hill behind the house where we're staying. I thought I was going to have to stop (so not in shape) but I was so close to the top that I kept going. Sure glad I did, because the view was amazing. Not so amazing was the hike back down! These sneakers were not made for hiking. Small rocks were treacherous, but hey, I only fell twice! Well, just took a quick seat, really. No injuries to speak of. Patrick and Yve were such gentlemen, helping me down the path. And Yve, even with a large thorn in his leg, which Sara took care of when we got back. Right now we are getting showers and looking forward to dinner.

The meals continue to be amazing. For breakfast we had a cream of wheat type dish, eggs with peppers and ham, bananas, and bread from Yve. Lunch was more bread and a wonderful bean mixture, almost like a sloppy joe. Can't wait to see what these wonderful ladies have for us for dinner. It's a tough thing because we all feel guilty about eating too much, knowing there are hungry people here and that the leftovers will be distributed. But it's just so delicious!

The weather today was beautiful. Sunnier than yesterday, maybe mid-80's. A nice breeze now and then. I am so glad to be here, especially when we were unsure we'd even get here after the events in Ft. Lauderdale. The people are so welcoming and accommodating. The children can't seem to get enough of us, and the adults are extremely friendly, if a little shy sometimes. They all like to gather around the house, so it's like a party all the time!

Our team has been great. Everyone is always ready to jump in and help wherever needed. And we all get along extremely well. There are always pockets of people sitting around the compound and having great conversation. I couldn't have asked for better teammates or a better experience with the people here in Haiti!

Emily

Tuesday, January 10, 2017

Our second work day in Sobier, and everything seemed to run smoothly. The morning was beautiful, and I knew we would all have a good day when I heard an amazing Haitian song moving through the town. As Jim said, it was an 8-count tune. I really think the song was waking up all the rosters, though. HaHa. We had eggs and porridge for breakfast, and the food here never seems to disappoint. I was at the Catholic Church today helping with water filters. Things were crazy at first; but after things calmed down, it went off without a hitch. Patrick was all smiles and really loved what he was doing. All the people getting filters seemed very interested and very involved the whole time.

We finished pretty early before lunch. At lunch we had that ham sloppy joe stuff—always delicious. After lunch we worked on the handicap ramp for the Clinic. We finished it except for the corner. We have gotten a lot done at the worksite and can really see our progress.

After dinner and devotions, a couple of us (Caz, Patrick, Sam and I) started talking about "stuff." We were trying to explain American life a little more to Caz and Patrick. We told them about all the stuff we keep or put in storage units. The things we keep because we think we will use but never do and the ones we find after 10 years but don't throw them away. Haitians have only necessities. It makes me wonder why—what is our need to have these things. Why do we feel the need to buy more things? Is it to make us feel good about ourselves? Status? Power? I don't want

to want those things, but these things do make one feel good. Being here this week has made me want to live more simply because we don't need "stuff" to make us happy. All we need is connections with the people around us and love. If these people can find happiness in nonmaterial things when they have nothing, we can find it in all our chaos and "stuff."

Kayla

Wednesday, January 11, 2017 Community Meal Day Temp: sunny and clear Temp 85 F

After 3 sessions of rooster calls, some women of the village have already begun to prepare the meal for the community. Supplies have been transported via motorcycle from a nearby town. A goat has been smoked and all pieces appear to be in use, including the head. Other items being prepped are: key limes, mangoes, rice, beans, beets, carrots, potatoes, chicken, oranges, and grapefruit, garlic, butter, onions. The meal will be at 4:00 pm and it seems that all the village children are extra excited today – possible they caught wind of the meal prep.

Worksites today: 25 more water filters and at the site we sifted finer sand for smooth stucco inside the building. Also at the site, cement laid for the porch and stairs along with placement of the rebar towers in the cistern area.

This afternoon before the meal we will be all back at the worksite and then our team picture. 4:15 update: we got a lot of work done at the site this afternoon. The community meal began around 3:00 pm at the site and all of the people seemed so excited as they brought the food down. Music was playing and the smallest children sat in the building to wait. Over 400 people were fed starting with the smallest kids. Apparently the older kids got impatient waiting and started to get aggressive. Therefore, the cooks brought all the rest of the food back up to the tent site enclosure. From what I could tell from the crowd volume, not all were fed and were angry about that. The enclosure was locked and people continue to have raised voices outside. I'm not sure if or how the remaining 100 will be fed. One of the teen girls helping with the cooks came to a few of us washing her hands and apologized for the way it all went down.

I'm unsure if this was a result of food insecurity, poor leadership or simple impatience. Perhaps it's a combination of all three. Regardless, we offered our best in God's name. May they all sleep well and comfortably this evening.

Heather

Wednesday, January 11, 2017

Third Day here in Sobier—community meal. Our day started out the same with going to either the water filters or the worksite. I chose water filters, and it went better than Monday when I was there. Today it was a younger generation, so everyone was putting the buckets together themselves, and I felt more as a guidance than doing it for them like on Monday. Then in the afternoon after we were all at the worksite, the cooks served the community meal. It didn't go like I thought it would. The whole community had heard about the meal, so everyone had gathered early. Then when they saw the food coming, all the kids ran into the unfinished multipurpose building. Kids started throwing rocks and were taking food from each other. Some of the adults even got impatient when they thought the food was running short. The cooks ended up ending the distribution early, and we had to come back to our tents. We ended up feeding over 400 people, which was a positive. The negative is that it got out of control. I understand that meals are small here and hunger is real, but I just had more expectations for it to be more civilized? I feel very criticizing of the event. I don't know what it truly feels like to be hungry, and I'm very fortunate for that. I don't know how I would have acted under such circumstances. It just makes you think about how people can be so neighborly and helpful but be different when it comes to basic necessity. Haiti still amazes me, though, and it amazes me watching them rebuild. I think I take most interest in them putting rebar together and then putting cement around it and all this is done with their bare hands. It amazes me. Tomorrow afternoon we are to head back to the guest house, and it makes me sad because I don't want to leave Sobier yet. I like the daily routine and seeing progress. I like trying to communicate, even though I'm terrible at it!

Note: Take Creole for next year. Second note: Get the ginger dessert recipe and not the fudge...

I hope that even after leaving tomorrow, that my prayers can still help Haiti. I hope that I don't go home and get caught up in "stuff" and that I remember less is more.

Until next time!

Beth

Thursday, January 12, 2017

Today was a busy day. We started off around 7:00 am with breakfast and cleaning out our tents, packing up our things, and gathering the donations for the community. We finished up the morning with our last distribution of water filters. The people of the community were engaged and willing to listen, however there was some chaos with children running around and others gathering in the same church area as the presentation. The group returned to our tents, got ready to leave, and waited for our ride to arrive. 4 people went down from Sobier in a pickup truck with our luggage to the main road and waited there until the next trip when the other 8 of us traveled down. We then switched over to drive the rest of the way in a van and another pickup truck. Beth and I rode with Patrick and one of the drivers, and it was nice to be able to ask questions about what we were seeing. We made a stop at Caz's house where we got to see the house he has built for his wife and daughter. We continued on the road and finally made it back to the guest house around 4:45, spending almost 4 hours traveling, just in time for the dinner bell. We had a great dinner and went to bed early since everyone was exhausted. \

Sara

Thursday, January 12, 2017

Today was our last day in Sobier. This morning we packed up our suitcases after breakfast so the tents could be swept out. Then we transported the suitcases with the school kits, stuffed animals, and other items to the Catholic school to be distributed later. The last water filter training/distribution took place after that.

When we got back to the house, we got our suitcases together and waited for "the bus." While waiting, we decided to head to the worksite for a team picture.

The local pastor and lay leader gave us a beautiful blessing before we left. It was a lovely, sincere send-off. Cindy, Heather, Sam and Patrick rode the first truck down with the luggage. The rest of us "shot the breeze" surrounded by Haitians at the house. I got to ride in the back of the truck on the way down. It was a tight squeeze but wonderful views!

It took us maybe 4 hours to get back to the guest house in Port-au-Prince, including a rest stop where we all got drinks and snacks. I enjoyed my Pringles, Kit Kat and diet Snapple. We also got to see Caz's house. We met his wife and 3-year-old daughter, who are beautiful. Caz is doing a great job on his house. We were able to see the kitchen. It's a great space.

Back at the guest house, we all claimed our beds, got showers and relaxed a bit. Bucket showers were nice, no complaints, but a real shower with warm water felt immaculate! Dinner was delicious, as always—beef stew, rice & bean sauce, fried plantains, green salad & watermelon. We are decompressing with a game of Quiddler.

It was a little sad to leave Sobier, but I am also ready to go home and see my family. I was anxious to get to the guest house to be able to text them and be in contact a little.

I have enjoyed my time in Haiti and would come back again. I, like many of our team, got a bit frustrated with the sheer number and persistence of the kids after a while. Holding hands, trying to communicate...that's great. But constantly asking for money or other items, even when we say "no," poking at us, pushing...it just got a little old. But, I had a great experience this morning. Sara, Rich and I walked back to the house for a potty break part way through the water filter presentation. A boy grabbed my hand halfway back to the house. We exchanged "Bonjurs" and that was it. We walked quietly to the house, no begging, no pulling. When we got to the door, we squeezed hands and let go. He waited quietly at the door until we left to walk back. It was a very sweet moment that I will remember for a long time.

I do want to write a quick word about the people who worked so hard at Jacob's house in Sobier to make our stay as safe and comfortable as possible. The young men who kept us safe overnight, who went out of their way to accommodate us. I saw so many acts of kindness and Christ-like service from them...always making sure we had chairs to sit on and water to drink and take baths with. Clearing the way of rocks and debris as we went on our walks. Making sure the crowd inside the walls of the house were never overwhelmed with people. I never felt unsafe with them watching out for us.

The women at the house were more behind the scenes, but their work was no less appreciated. The food they prepared for us at every meal, well, it felt like we were in a high-class restaurant. Then after meals, they would clean up, and things would be immaculately clean for the next meal.

I'm also so appreciative of Caz and Patrick. They were always willing to translate for us or answer a "how do I say...?" I'm grateful we were able to provide them employment for the week. They are very open, helpful people, and I wish them all the best.

Emily

PS Kayla was just showing us videos of fainting goats (a real reed of goats), and she spit her coffee all over the table. There may be evidence of this in the pages of the journal.

Friday, January 13, 2017 – AHHH

Today we had pancakes for breakfast. Pancakes! I for one was excited that it was more normal...there's just something about spaghetti for breakfast that I still can't grasp. After breakfast we went to Grace Children's Hospital. The hospital consists of an eye clinic, TB, HIV testing/treatment, children in-patient section, a psychologist, pharmacy, radiology, ob-gyn, and an emergency area. (I'm sure I'm forgetting some things). The hospital is opened Mon-Fri and most people come in the morning. At least that's how it sounded because the director said that if people come too late and it's already really crowded then they might not be seen. Haitians travel from all over to come to this hospital. We met the Director and got to ask questions. We also got to see the plans for the new hospital that will be bought but is going to cost 8 million dollars. It seems so little - like something that we should just pay for or fundraise. We got to hold and play with the children and give them stuffed animals. It was hard seeing them cry when we left. We weren't even there that long and it was like they already had felt the love and care from us. After the hospital we went to Epidor, where again I got to be Merica! I had a cheeseburger, fries, and coke.

We then went up to the Overlook which was an amazing view of Haiti. Also, up there was shopping and I got to barter with the Haitians trying to give me a run for my money. A painting I bought for \$10 was originally stated at \$45...like I would pay that. Made a stop at Giant on the way back to the Guesthouse where everyone loaded up on goods to take home.

Once back at the Guesthouse we had dinner and did devotions. I thoroughly enjoyed tonight's devotions. It made me realize some things and also that this group was exactly who HE had planned for me to experience, for my first time, Haiti with. Beth

Friday, January 13, 2017

So quickly the Haiti trip is over...except for the flight home. As always, it was great to be back in Haiti. Though I am feeling as though another "bandaid has been put on a sucking wound," I can't help but feel that I have once again been made whole. We come to serve not be served—but in serving beside our Haitian friends, we are the ones being served. To see poverty at this level is heart breaking...to see hope and love without condition is heart healing.

I find it difficult to share the experience through writing in the journal. Only those who have experienced Haiti can truly know...we, we happy few. We will attempt to share through our stories and pictures, but only God knows how our hearts have been changed. Thank you Lord for the blessing of this team, for this opportunity to serve beside the people of Sobier, and to see once again that though God may be in the rubble, God is not hidden in Haiti.

Rich

Saturday, January 14, 2017

Oh my golly gosh...what a week we had. I know I would for sure come back and I would love for any/all of the other 11 team members to come with me. One of the great things was getting to know everybody.

We are at the airport in Haiti, waiting for our flight. All went well with check-ins. Some ate here and others are waiting for Miami.

We debriefed with Tom this morning and that went well. I think as hard as it is to leave knowing there is so much more we can do...everyone seems ready to leave and get back to our families.

So we ended up having no problems at the airports or getting home. We are all home safe and sound with a few folks recovering from rashes and being sick with colds. (Jim was so sick, it was pitiful).

All in all it was an awesome and powerful experience. We left knowing (again) there is so much left to do there and Haiti seems to welcome the help with open arms and love in their hearts.

Thank you dear Lord for blessing us beyond measure!!!!

Cindy

Saturday, January 14, 2017

So it's my turn to write again. I'm not sure I can close this journal any better than the way devotions went last night. I've never been much for prayer or reading the Bible, and frankly my faith isn't that strong. I try to live each day by being the best I can be for others, and I've been told that's what Jesus did. Last night's devotion was that for me...it gave me a wonderful sense of completeness and togetherness. Rich has said our team has been through a lot on this trip, and I think we all would agree, but last night showed that we are really closer than we might have realized because in some way each of us were "hurt" or "lost" or "searching" for or by something. Some of us found what we might have been looking for, and others are still on that personal journey.

For some Haiti was an escape, at least 3 of us commented that our stress and anxiety was so great that we "just needed to get to Haiti," and it appeared to have a positive impact. Haiti was that escape for me, and I am glad to have been a part of this experience, and it has been a privilege to share this week with each of you. Each of you has helped me heal in a way I never anticipated and will be forever grateful for your support, love and guidance.

I'd be remiss if I didn't work in some pop-cultural reference into my musings, and here it goes, because it was a very powerful moment for me:

While in Sobier our host, Jacob, played a song that appealed to me. Throughout our time I heard this song daily and wondered if it was a heavy rotation on the radio or a recording. One night I was sitting under the almond tree (said to lower blood pressure) when the song came on and I just started grooving to the tune and attempted to communicate that I loved the song. I'm sure the Haitians enjoyed my head nods and taps as I saw them join in. Shortly after, I broke out my iPod and shared my love of music with Jacob. For that night we bonded over Bob Marley and Lucky Dube. That moment showcases that despite all our differences and all the other "things," we are all humans and can love one another—no matter what language we speak, where we live, the color of our skin, or our personal beliefs. Love—that's what Jesus taught, that's what God does and what we are supposed to do. It's fitting that throughout this week, I've hummed and even quietly sang one Bob Marley song, and it seems a great way to close things out..."**One Love, One Heart, Let's Get Together and Everything Will Be Alright.**" (Robert Nesta Marley)

Goodbye Haiti, until we meet again.

Sam