

Carlisle UMC Team Journal HAITI 2015



Chuck Steel
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Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015
Kelley Loudon

Haiti! 2nd time to be part of this great service team! The travel day went like clockwork--the drivers (Bill and Kerm) were awesome--check-in went very smoothly! Mira & Rich have got this down--small groups worked perfectly--no delays in customs! Yay!

The drive to the guest house seemed quick--lots of traffic, noise, excitement. I enjoyed seeing/hearing Jo & Jacquie on the bus ride. Empathizing with Jo as she tries to "push the brake" when she sees a vehicle coming at us head on! Mosquitoes! Within 30 minutes of arriving at the guest house, the mosquitoes have found me! Feeling blessed, feeling at peace, feeling very comfortable.

Happy to be back

Awake at 12:45 for a 0215 show--Adventure begins

Inspired by Mira & Rich--Great leadership

Teamwork had already started.

Interested in learning more about our team members.

Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015
Jacquie Bunt

It was a seamless trip the whole way from CUMC to the guest house in Petitionville. The first sights and sounds in Haiti were captivating, but at the same time a picture of poverty that I never experienced in my life. Brulan, the manager of the guest house gave us an overview of rules, safety measures, anecdotes, and humor mixed in with so much grace. I saw the face of God everywhere from our driver to people on the streets, the faces of the beautiful children, our cooks, and Brulan. I know this is going to be a week of blessings.

Friday, Nov. 6, 2015
Doc Loudon

You'll know from the writing we are on the public bus (CHIC Transportation) from Port-au-Prince to Les Cayes. The leaders say it will be 4-6 hours--but that can't be right. We figure it to be about 90 miles. We have about 35 people on the bus. It is packed--5 team members in the back seat made for 4. They are so gracious to make it work--I guess God tells them not to complain.

Take your choice why the bus driver beeps so much- he has a lot of friends, or look out big vehicle coming through, or maybe it is how he keeps himself awake, or "Mission Team on Board". God provides a safe trip again.

As we go beyond the city and into the country, we see how beautiful the Haiti countryside can be. Looking at God's landscapes makes the trip go faster.

Three hours into the trip, we must be getting close. After traveling for 2 days, all the team members are anxious to "start" missioning- whatever it may be.

Friday, Nov. 6, 2015

Kate Anderson

Today we traveled to Les Cayes, which Haitians call Eu Caye. We rode in a coach bus (all of us except Chuck & Mira, who went with our suitcases and our generator). The bus was nice--it was even air conditioned.

We met Cas, our interpreter, at the bus station. He was with me last year, and he's amazing. He has such a warm and comforting presence.

This morning we kept working on our 1,000 piece puzzle. We're about half way done, and we should be able to finish it when we get back to Port-au-Prince.

Our guest house here in Les Cayes is really nice. We just had dinner and I think we're all ready for bed. Tomorrow we have a half day of work and then we'll be exploring the town.

Saturday, Nov. 7, 2015

Rich Charette

Returning to Haiti has proven to be a time of new experiences and familiar sights, sounds and smell. It is much hotter than on previous trips. We are not staying in the field (at our worksite) but at a Methodist Guest House in Les Cayes. The setup is very nice but not the same as being in the community where we are working. Regardless, it is good to be back in Haiti.

We arrived on November 5th, spent the night at the guest house in Petionville and on Friday rode four hours to the west and south of Port au Prince to Les Cayes. Dewoche is the village where we are serving. It is about a forty minute drive from Les Cayes with most of the trip over a bumpy unimproved road. We are travelling to and from Dewoche in a Tap Tap. Something different for us all ... a modified pickup with bench seats in the bed and a colorfully painted cap. Did I mention no suspension!

We have two projects this year. The Haiti Clean Water Project and construction of the Methodist church of Dewoche. Through the Clean Water Project, we are providing Sawyer filters for 100 families in the community. Sanitation classes are provided by Robenson, our interpreter. This instruction also includes use of the filter. His delivery is well received. He connects with the people and gets them to interact from start to finish. Each person who received a filter today was thankful. The small filter will last 10 years and filter one million gallons of water. This will have a huge impact on the health of people in the community.

We will also be helping with construction of a new Methodist Church in Dewoche. Work is still being done on the foundation. So, some trench digging and work with rebar and ... we will be flexible! In Haiti, things change, that you can be sure of. I'm looking forward to making new friends and doing a small part of the mountain of work that could be done in Haiti. I'm thankful for our team and for their willingness to travel so far and sacrifice much to help people who are in great need.

Saturday, Nov. 7, 2015

Jo Adair

After a nourishing breakfast of spaghetti, hard boiled eggs, salad, pineapple, and bananas, we prepared for our work day by drilling holes in white plastic buckets in preparation for the 1st work day. We packed up for our ride over a bumpy road in a "Tap Tap". What a journey with one area having to unload to make it across a bad area of the road enroute to Doroche. Upon arrival we waited on community Haitians to begin arriving for a presentation on the water filter system by Robenson and

then assisting the Haitians in assembling their units. It made me take pause when I saw a very pregnant woman putting together her system. For only \$30 each, what a difference it can make in the prevention of disease, hospitalization and even death.

Tools were not available upon arrival to work on the church foundation, so a few of the team worked on putting a roof and back on the toilet. Many Haitians assisted; some showed up to watch, some provided water to Haitian workers. It makes me reflect on how blessed our team is at home, but having the opportunity to serve Christ in this way.

The journey to and fro brought many beautiful scenes and fond memories; learning more about the country and people; not to mention learning more about our team members.

Arriving back home at our guest house for the week, we took a short break then took a tour of Les Cayes by Caz and Robenson. Haitian people are very warm and friendly. We saw some churches, schools, and the ocean. It was interesting and enlightening. There may be much pollution and trash in the city, but the Haitians greet you with a smile.

Sunday, Nov. 8, 2015

Pastor Mira Hewlett

This trip to Haiti has been unlike others--it is hotter than any trip, a bit more confusion between the pastor and local church site, and staying at a guest house versus normal on-site.

Today we got up, had breakfast and then went on our 45-minute trip to the church for worship in Doroche. Since the pastor of the circuit didn't come, Pastor Claude, I was asked to preside over communion. Luckily I was near Caz and had the service translated and could understand the main message of Ruth & Naomi and giving gifts back to God. Then I did a shortened communion liturgy, with Caz translating all along the way. It was neat, but took a while to stop at each point. They only serve communion to church members, which felt weird, but also had for all of us. I had to personally serve each person. A closing song then we were dismissed with several prayers & blessings.

This afternoon we went to a beautiful waterfall, about an hour drive towards Jeremie. The road (and tap tap) was an experience--super bumpy, didn't make it up alone and once had to be hot wired to start. And yet the scenery along the way was beautiful! This part of the country was filled with lush rice patty fields, trees, and lots of grass.

The waterfall was amazing--it was huge and into a blue green pool area. Rich jumped in quickly and so I followed suit and after the shock of cold water it was beautiful.

Overall, the trip has been interesting. We are learning step by step how the program has changed, how projects are assigned, supplies delivered, and the projects no longer earthquake recovery only. It's a new phase but one we, and they, must transition to so teams keep coming to experience the joy, hope, and love of the Haitian church and people.

Sunday, Nov. 8, 2015

Chris Benson

I am looking forward to today – the worship service in Dewoche – and a trip to the water fall or ocean – depending on road conditions and the ability of the tap tap. We had a lot of rain last night but woke to sunny skies. Banana pancakes for breakfast and then off we went.

The service in the small church building in Dewoche was filled with congregants. We were treated as guests. Several chairs were brought in for us to sit in near the front of the church. Some of the hymn tunes were familiar and the people sang them with enthusiasm. The people were beautifully dressed, especially by the several children. It was a very mixed generation congregation, many small children to elderly adults and every age in between.

The sermon included the text/story of Ruth, being welcomed in a foreign land. The people here have been so welcoming and gracious from the guest house staff to the drivers to the people we have met in Dewoche.

The engineer for the new church is a member of the congregation. He met us after church and expressed his thanks for coming to help.

The roads and traffic are generally good on the main roads. We have learned where the ditch on the gravel road to Dewoche is navigable only without passengers. We have gotten pretty adept at exiting and restuffing the tap tap on command.

Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are very tasty with choice of sucre' (sweet) or pimente' (spicy) – especially with local bakery rolls.

Our afternoon was exciting. A chance to see the beautiful mountain scenery and experience the road travel up close and personal. The waterfalls and pool were spectacularly cool and inviting leaving us feeling refreshed after a dip and swim. Two local boys showed us their expertise in rock climbing and plunging in to the pool below. The ride home included a couple uphill climbs on foot with the driver patiently waiting at the top with the empty tap tap. I loved the scenic view from the back of the tap-tap.

We were glad to stretch our limbs when we arrived back at the guest house. Another full day – already tired – devotions in a half hour.

Monday, Nov. 9, 2015

Chuck Steel

Today was our first full work day of the church. It was interesting because we already had half of a work day on the construction site that wasn't very productive. I was expecting another slow start to the day, but we got organized quickly. Everyone had a job in short order. Jacquie, Jo and Kate were helping Robenson with the clean water project; Mira and I were tying rebar, and the rest of the team was passing buckets and rocks to fill in the foundations. The morning was warm, but occasional showers helped to keep things cool. We did have one rain storm roll through, which resulted in everyone huddling in the small church while Robenson tried to continue with his demonstration. Thankfully, the rain only lasted a few minutes, and we were able to get back to work. Mira switched with Chris. We started working on more rebar on our own at first, but we were soon joined by some Haitians. One of them seemed to want us to continue doing the work, but two others seemed more interested in just getting things done. I appreciated that. At least one of them showed an interest in us participating in the work.

After lunch, I went to work with the bucket crew. Today was the first time that I saw Haitian women performing construction tasks at a work site, and I'm still trying to figure out what that means in its entirety. I can't decide if this is a sign of equality for these women that they have been allowed to help in this way, or if it is a sign that they are also hungry enough that they are willing to break down those gender barriers in order to get fed along with the men. Hunger can be a strong motivator, I suppose; but part of me hopes that what I saw today is part of something bigger happening in Haiti.

We had our third tap-tap today. Our first was alright as far as I was concerned, but Caz and Robenson seemed to think that it wasn't safe. Yesterday's tap-tap was more comfortable, thanks to the larger open window at the front that provided air flow. This was the one that made the arduous trek to Sant-Mathurine, returning us safely to Les Cayes despite a few tenuous moments. Today's tap-tap would be more comfortable except that the tailgate needs to be kept closed--there is less space available. There is also very little air flow in the rear cabin, so it can get a little stuffy. This truck does have the best suspension of the three, however, so the bumpy road is not as jarring as before. Of course, our bodies have been tempered to the jostling at this point, so maybe the smoother ride is just an illusion.

On food: There were some highs and lows for food today that I wanted to share. The high was that the confusion over a meal for the workers was resolved, and they were given a hot meal. They received it towards the end of our work day, but I imagine that some of them remained at the site until almost dark. The low was the cooks here at the guest house apparently haven't understood that Kate is vegan, so she was not able to eat her sandwich. She didn't make a very big deal out of it, but it made me feel discouraged. She has made a difficult choice, and a trip like this only makes things more difficult, needlessly.

Breakfasts have been good, and dinners have been excellent.

Monday, Nov. 9, 2015

Kelly Loudon

Today we started our day with oatmeal, bananas, yellow “spotted” cheese, laughing cow cheese and white bread. The Haitian coffee is one of my favorites!

Today we had our 3rd tap tap. We were off to our worksite around 8 a.m. – we still missed our turn – we’ll know it by the end of the week I’m sure.

There were many local villagers at the worksite – it was a great sight! We had so much help too. Everyone – men, women, teens, and small children helped with our rock and bucket brigades. I’ve never seen so much help – we accomplished so much. You could see the progress so quickly! Lots of smiles too.

I met Roberto – he’s from Cuba. I was able to communicate with Spanish which I enjoyed. We were all very dirty – Chris wins for the dirtiest!

Monday, Nov. 9, 2015

Doc Loudon

Today, we tied about 30-35 buckets to the roof of our tap-tap vehicle. At the site we gave our last clean water presentation, which culminates with mixing dirt in the five-gallon bucket and passing the dirty water through the special filter and Robenson drinks the clean water. (Kelly did also.) The 50 or so local Haitians think the two-hour presentation is quite entertaining.

We also moved rocks and boulders on the work site to where the workers needed them to build the foundation for the new church, and a bucket brigade of cement periodically to knit it together. Some team members worked along side the local workers, making columns of rebar.

Everybody worked very hard in the hot sun. We got a lot done. We piled into the tap-tap at 3:20 pm and showed up by 5:00, in time for a nice dinner.

Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2015

Kate Anderson

Today, we worked at the worksite. It was very hot and very sunny. I am a little burnt. I gained a shadow today. Her name is Dashika. I think she is 7 or 8, but she said she is 10.

I’m excited for a good night’s sleep tonight, and I don’t know what else to write.

Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2015

Pastor Mira Hewlett

Now that we are in a great routine at the worksite, we have only one day left. The weather today was cooler, which helped many of us. With the water project/filters all distributed, Robenson returned home to be with his family.

This morning we spent many hours moving buckets of concrete to fill in the footers. We all moved piles of rocks, literally throwing them rock by rock, to fill in what will eventually become the floor of the church. We got to see the plans for the new church, and it will include a large sanctuary, raised altar area and sacristy/storage space. I continue to be surprised at how many people from the church and community come to help each day. Our bucket lines are sprinkled with children and teenagers helping out.

This afternoon I got out my camera, and the kids enjoyed picture time. I probably have 100 pictures of about 15 kids. They just loved posing for pictures. A young mom with twin 11-month olds came, too. Kate enjoyed holding the boy (Fred) and girl (Sara).

Overall, the workers are warming up to us and are enjoying our help more and more.

With staying at the guest house, we have a 45-minute ride each way. The landscape is stunning! Lush green fields of rice, palm trees, bread fruit, corn and animals are scattered along the bumpy dirt road. This is an agricultural area and the people benefit greatly with better nutrition and

better lives. Although, from what we can tell, this means less of them go to school, since it is far—and there are crops to care for.

This trip is unlike others, as this area was not hit by the earthquake. We are staying in the second largest city, Les Cayes, and the guest house element is a bit more segregating of the team. But another great week, and the team has been flexible, understanding, and falling in love with the people in this part of Haiti, too.

Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2015

Jo Adair

Today no buckets to prepare. Breakfast and off to work. The ride seems shorter and less bumpy. Today, we didn't miss the turn-off. Worked all day passing buckets, throwing rocks (we tell our kids not to throw stones and sand) and shoveling sand with huge rocks. I'm thankful everybody remained safe—no one got hit by flying rocks.

Awesome experience working shoulder to shoulder with the Haitian people, especially the kids as they taught us a word in their language, and we one of ours (ex. Veet—Gusmo). Lots of heat and physical work today makes one appreciate all the modern conveniences we have back home.

Today was my brother's surgery back home, so he was constantly in my thoughts and prayers throughout the day. Lots of kids showed up at the end of the workday.

Someone called the boss—had a few too many drinks. First day I saw a Haitian smoking. Great to see home much progress was made since Day 1 of the project.

Thursday, Nov. 12, 2015

Jacquie Bunt

Today was our last day working at the worksite in Derouche. As every day since we arrived here, the day started with hot, sticky heat. We were sweating the minute we were out of bed.

Our tap-tap driver, Eddie, is a really nice guy. He has driven us to the worksite the past three days. He was much more careful driving over the ruts, ditches, and rocks on our daily trips to Derouche and back to Les Cayes. Today at lunch I discovered he speaks some English. He told me he has studied marketing and is currently taking theology courses and law courses. He seems to want to be a lifelong learner. He's a super nice guy!

The rocky, bumpy road to Derouche is a scenic ride. One can see mountains in the distance, palm trees, fields of rice, potatoes, and corn. The Hibiscus are everywhere and so beautiful. I think if I lived in Haiti, I would prefer living out in the country in a place like Derouche.

Each day the children have become bolder and bolder. I have been so impressed with their help. Even some of the littlest children have helped with passing stones or buckets of stones or cement. We found out that their school was not in session this week, which explains why they were around a lot this week.

Today, we had a bucket brigade passing stones and soil to fill in the low places inside the foundation of the church. It was so hot that we had to break every hour to hydrate and rest. Rich and Mira decided we would have to go back to the guest house in Les Cayes after lunch. The heat was definitely zapping our strength.

As we were heading out to the truck, one little boy took my hand. Pastor Mira wanted a picture of us, and when the other children saw her get her camera, they wanted to be in the picture, too. The children are so precious, and I feel sad leaving them today.

On the way back to Les Cayes, we saw a lot of children coming home from school. They all had uniforms on, which denoted the particular school that they attend. Education seems to be a priority, and I hope it means a brighter future for Haiti.

This trip to Haiti has been a life-changing experience for me, and it has been a huge blessing to me, too. I am so glad "I got out of the boat" and came here.

Thursday, Nov. 12, 2015

Doc Loudon

Up today early and showered and coffee and breakfast and off to work in the tap-tap. The ride seems shorter. We wave to the small kids and children of school age on the road.

At the church foundation site, we worked on two piles of dirt and stone, filling in between the cement foundation walls with this material that would support a cement floor. The high today—the kids showed up to help again! A few shoveled (a hard job), and one young girl wanted to dump the buckets out, which she did most of the morning (another hard job).

When it was time to say goodbye, well, it took awhile. Along with photos. Young Engineer Juele said he would keep in touch and let us know how the progress on the church is going and gave us a “safe travels with God’s blessing”—in Creole.

It was quiet in the tap-tap as we pulled away down the bumpy dirt road. We reflected what just transpired and the things we did the past week. We had done our best, and we were tired because of it. God picked us and our leaders to bring us here.

The faith that we shared with the Haitian people will go on long after we leave here.

Thursday, Nov. 12, 2015

Kelley Loudon

It’s not really my day to write in the journal, but I feel compelled to do so.

It was our last day at the worksite. We worked a half day. Our bodies are tired, and our hearts are a little sad. For me, it was a little emotional leaving—the last few days we have really bonded with the children and some workers. We’ve put our heart and soul into each day. Part of my sadness comes from not knowing how long it will take this community to complete their church. How long will it be before another team comes to help? Seeing the majority of villagers (men, women and children) assist with the construction really touches my heart. They are so faithful and full of hope. It’s very easy to get wrapped up in our own busy, hectic life. I will try to simplify and focus in different areas of my life when I return home.

I’m so glad Doc and I were able to be part of this team together. He does so much. He never complains, and he helps wherever he can. I sometimes get wrapped up with things, and he helps to redirect me—to focus on the big picture. Thank you Bubby—I love you so much!

Friday, Nov. 13, 2015

Chris Benson

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Morning devotions chanting, roosters crowing, dogs barking, friendly horns beeping, pounding plantains for breakfast. “Did you sleep well?” “Did you hear the dogs?” “How are you doing?” Sleepy faces, “merci,” scraping plates, strong coffee, hot dogs and spaghetti, hot dogs and eggs.

Caz and Robenson, Creole and Englaise, cell phones, benches with or without towels, air in the tires and suspension that cushions against the holes in the road, rocks and ditches, speed bumps, police lying down, “pot hole ahead,” motor scooters and bicycles, pedestrians everywhere, goats, cows, chickens, dogs.

Butterflies skipping.

Smile upon smile—young and old, acrid smoke—trash burning, fresh bread, slurry in the ditches, profusion of flowers, unwashed bodies grateful for a cool shower.

Laughter and more laughter—fresh insights.

More laughter—it’s not a Haitian or American thing—joy is a human condition.

So much to do—visible progress—leave an impression.

Joy transcends suffering, lack, sorrow

Culture meets culture and enriches both

Share an experience—share the load—share the faith—share the love—share an understanding—share curiosity—share tiredness and frustration, perspectives and history, expectations and visions, lessons learned and immense gratitude

Share thankfulness. Share empathy, share encouragement and knowledge. Share the sense of wonder and renewal.

Share commitment
Realizations
Possibilities

Leave changed

Challenged to
Remember
Keep open eyes
An open heart.

Saturday, Nov. 14, 2015

Chuck Steel

The last day of the trip. Today we return home after ten days in Haiti. We have all experienced things differently even though we have the shared experience of this trip. Each of us brought something with us and each of us will take something away that we probably didn't expect; connections, emotions, joys, tears, drums, walking sticks or perhaps a bottle of wine or two. There may be other things that we bring back that we aren't fully aware of, yet.

This morning we had a nice breakfast at the Guest House which included a special treat of donuts from Epi d'Or. I wish I would have known how good their donuts were on Friday when we were there! After breakfast we shared our final devotion and reflection including the revealing of our prayer partners. There were both smiles and tears during this time which gave perspective on the week and started the process of closure for the trip.

After some last minute shuffling of bag contents we were ready to load everything on the van and head downtown. The museum in Port au Prince was very nice and provided a good history of the country from the time of the original indian peoples that lived there through the current day. We even had a moment of excitement when the power went out leaving us in total darkness for about twenty seconds. The only thing I found disappointing about the museum was the lack of a gift shop.

We had an excellent but extremely slow lunch downtown at The Table of the Lord restaurant (sorry, but I don't remember the French name). Apparently the staff wanted to give us a leisurely lunch but we had to get to the airport, so Caz let them know so they brought out our food and we ate quickly. Johnny took one of his shortcuts and got us to the airport in plenty of time to drop us off and also pick up Pastor Tom and his team that were arriving about the same time. It would have been nice to see them but things didn't work out.

As I write this we are about an hour from landing in Washington. Our flights have been uneventful so far and hopefully that won't change. Soon we will all be getting into the van to drive back to Carlisle. Most of the team will see each other at church tomorrow, but I will have to wait until our reunion dinner to see everyone. As our lives return to normal I'm sure our thoughts will often turn to the last ten days. There will be more smiles and possibly some tears for us in the future. Haiti has a way of not letting go of you, even when you leave. The things we have taken with us will serve as a reminder of our time here and we will carry them in our hands and our hearts until we can return again.