

Haiti Trip Report, July 6 – July 12, 2011

Participants:

Elizabeth van der Weide

The Rev. Andy Jones (his first trip!)

The goals of this trip were to attend the close of school at St. Marc's; meet the new priest, the Reverend Wisnel Dejarin; and begin to work on planning for the 2011-2012 school year.

July 6: Arrived in Miami with ~200 lbs of supplies requested for renovations and other supplies for St. Marc's.

July 7: We arrived in Port-au-Prince and met up with Geoffrard (our driver from Voyages Lumiere) and Pere Wisnel. We picked up Eloi in Miragoane, then drove to Jeannette. After lunch, we spent time walking through the buildings of St. Marc's, noting areas of improvement and places to grow. We sat and talked for the afternoon, getting to know each other and planning out our time in Jeannette. After dinner, we all sat and watched a soccer game for awhile, and Andy and Elizabeth spent some time talking about the day.

July 8: Up with the roosters! Pere Wisnel has decided to have a service at 6:30 am on Fridays. Today was the first one. Pere Wisnel invited Andy to celebrate the Eucharist in English. What a blessing and an honor to be present and to participate, surrounded by our brothers and sisters.

After breakfast and some quiet time, we attended the close of school program. This is the day when students learn their final grades and find out what year they will be in, in the fall. It's also when the parents come and Eloi lets them know what is going on with St. Marc's. It was held in the church...with an overflow crowd. After Eloi and Pere Wisnel spoke, the children were dismissed to their classrooms and the parents' meeting continued. The children had a day of organized activities and fun...while Elizabeth reviewed a 2011-2012 draft budget with Pere Wisnel and Andy.

Following lunch, Elizabeth and Eloi met to discuss St. Marc's business (including the draft budget), while Andy took on the hard work of a nap. During a break in the rain, Elizabeth and Andy went for a walk around Jeannette with some Haitian friends, visiting the home of Pere LaFontant and comparing crops that grow in Jeannette vs. Wisconsin.

Another fabulous dinner and more soccer (if you're in Jeannette, you better be a Brazil fan!) and time for bed.

July 9: Once again, up with the Jeannette alarm clock, a busy day ahead. After breakfast, Pere Wisnel went to work on his sermon for Sunday, while Elizabeth, Andy and Eloi headed up to the school to begin an inventory and clean-up. The renovated Dortoire (teachers' dorm...we guess that name will stick) has two storage rooms (depots) on the first floor, with one for school supplies and tools. A group of people worked to count, box and move the supplies from the administrative office and Eloi's office to the depot, so that the offices could be cleaned and new shelves built in. This was also an opportunity for Pere Wisnel and Eloi to see what St. Marc's has, what is needed, and to get rid of trash. Before lunch, we had about 26 boxes of tools and building supplies and many more boxes of school supplies and text books in the depot.

After lunch, the Big Game was on (Brazil, of course). Being bigger American football fans than soccer fans, Elizabeth and Andy declared their loyalty to Brazil and went off to read. As the game ended, there was a wonderful surprise...all of the university students that have scholarships from the Haiti Project arrived to meet us and tell us about themselves and what it is like to be a university student in Haiti (and to have a small fete, complete with cake and champagne). There are five students: Felix Edrice (Education), Donald Eltius (Business Administration), Jonel Trisme (Business Administration), Oger Dacilla (Agronomy), and Rodrigue Sully (Computer Science). They all grew up in Jeannette and attended St. Marc's. When they finish their education, they will all return to Jeannette to work as interns at St. Marc's and with the community for two years. Rodrigue has already started at St. Marc's, while he works on his final paper for graduation.

After the fete, we had dinner and more wonderful time together, with soccer in the background...and an early night.

July 10: A beautiful, peaceful Sunday morning! A light breakfast and inventorying the supplies from the US before Sunday School and church. Twenty people attended Sunday School (which involved prayer and learning the words to a new hymn) and over one hundred attended church. Once again, Andy celebrated the Eucharist in English. In addition to Andy and Pere Wisnel, there were a number of acolytes and a thurifer. It is always a blessing and a joy to attend church in Jeannette, sharing our faith and love of Jesus Christ and each other in community. And as always, the Prayers of the People, as voices join and are silenced in prayer, swirls through the church in an all-encompassing, incredible experience. At the end of the service, Pere Wisnel presented Elizabeth with a gift on behalf of the parish of St. Marc's...a beautiful sand painting celebrating our wonderful partnership.

After church and greeting each other in the courtyard, it was time for a quick lunch before heading to Les Cayes to meet with Pere Kesner Ajax, director of the partnership program, and to tour BTI (Business and Technology Institute), a professional school. First we dropped Eloi off in Miragoane, so he could get home and begin his vacation. It was an easy trip to Cayes--the roads were pretty nice and the traffic was light.

BTI is a wonderful place! It was built by ERD and is six years old. There are 400 students in computer information or business administration programs. Many students who graduate are able to find employment in places like banks and other businesses. After the tour, Pere Ajax, Pere Wisnel, Andy and Elizabeth sat and discussed the partnership program. It was a good opportunity to know what expectations are and that we are on the same page. We have a truly wonderful partnership and all want to see it grow.

We traveled from Les Cayes to Port-Salut (about 30 minutes west) to the hotel we were going to stay at overnight. It was a beautiful town and the hotel was very nice. We shared stories about our families and enjoyed homare boucane (grilled spiny lobster) for dinner, before turning in to be lulled to sleep by the waves.

July 11: Up early to enjoy some quiet time walking on the beach. A relaxed breakfast and some last minute thoughts exchanged about Jeannette before the long drive from Port-Salut to Port-au-Prince. Although Port-Salut was a little out of the way, we were really glad to have made the decision (and had the opportunity) to go because Pere Wisnel has hoped for a small rest before going to Jeannette...and hadn't had time. So, this was it for him. First stop when we go to PAP was C.A.H., an artists' market, for some shopping. We then stopped at a Voila! Store (pretty much exactly like cell stores in the US!) and headed over to Wall House, where Andy and Elizabeth were staying for the night. We said our farewells to Geoffrard (who was a great driver) and he and Pere Wisnel left (Pere was staying at his aunt's house that night). We had arrived just in time for a quick beer before dinner was served. During dinner, we were kept company by a little kitten...until her mama showed up for a photo op. We packed up all the art, sat on the roof watching traffic and listening to the local cheers of the soccer game on in the distance, and turned in for our final night in Haiti.

July 12: Breakfast under an already-hot sky, finishing up packing, then relaxing and talking over a final Coke before it was time to go to the airport for an afternoon and evening of travel home to Madison.

Pere Wisnel has only been in Jeannette for several weeks, so he is still learning his way around. It was very generous of him to host us at this very busy time and we greatly appreciated that. There are many things to do in Jeannette and renovations/projects to complete at St. Marc's. Pere Wisnel, Eloi, Elizabeth, and Andy all came away from the "administrative discussions" with items to do, so that longer term planning can begin.

It is so exciting to have spent time with Pere Wisnel...and all our other brothers and sisters in Haiti. St. Marc's and Jeannette already say their prayers have been answered by the arrival of Pere Wisnel. We would agree. We look forward to sharing and growing together, in faith and in community. Praise be to God!

Submitted by:

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The close of school assembly at St. Marc's (Friday, July 8th).



Eloi and the Episcopal University students from St. Marc's, Jeannette (Saturday, July 9th).



Father Andy and Pere Wisnel during the Eucharist (Sunday, July 10th)



Father Andy, Pere Wisnel and the acolytes after church (Sunday, July 10th).