

Bunchastuff: October 11th 2007, Joe and I moved to Sousafilip, La gonave, Haiti. We had been here a few times to work on short term projects and became concerned about the economic conditions on the island. Haitian Methodist Church President Raphael told a team in 2006 the long standing Methodist Church Project with a compound in Sousafilip had no funds to maintain a director or support churches or schools as it had done for many years.

Selling our two motorcycles and garnering support from several local congregations of Kansas East Conference, we managed to establish internet accesses, powered by solar energy and set up shop to work with the Haitian Methodist Church. During the first few months we traveled to most of the 16 churches and did assessments on 8 schools and a goat farm. We published needs for work projects and began hosting teams.

As others were made aware of living conditions on the island many conferences and individual churches began to send designated money for issues of hunger, health care, advanced education and safe water. For years the church struggled to pay teachers with decreasing income from impoverished peasants unable to feed their families. Most had no money to access health care which is 4 hours or a day away and no money for medicines.

Four storms provided opportunity to add to a Water Grant from GBGM and for a significant UMCOR food distribution to 12 communities on the south side. A year later gardens were not planted for lack of seed and livestock ranged free to be killed by dogs and hunt poor forage and limited water. Teams made the hard travel to work on churches, schools and compound buildings at the request of HMC but major issues persisted. No food, water, education, health care and no industry.

With generous support of UMC congregations and individuals we attempted to address the issue of discouraged teachers and a hopeless attitude related to a better life. We sent teachers for training in new techniques and attitudes to a Training Center established years ago. Through them we met with a Haitian organization that once was associated with the HMC and was eager to work to improve industry in Zone 6 on south La Gonave. Sharing expenses with them we provided intensive training for leaders from 12 communities. Now there is a budding Association for the development of agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing on the south side. There is hope growing along with some new gardens.

Next week, we return to the US to live. With the help of many conferences and individuals we have planted the seeds for growth and change. We plan continued support for improved industry with a contract with AAPLAG for 3 years: water for Dent Grien and the west end; and the scholarship program for advanced education. We will be returning on a regular schedule. There is a "bunch a stuff" left to do...but the seeds are planted and growing!! Thanks to you, all!!

Pastor Shirley, Sousafilip, la gonave. Octem 6th, 2009 web: www.centralumclawrence.org