

Caribbean Calamity: Talked late yesterday with Louis on La Gonave. He said most goats drowned in the surge along the coast and many other livestock were dead from various aspects of the storms.

The market was open but retailers had little to sell and people had no funds to buy. Fishermen are pulling out pulverized fish and all garden products in lowlands were flooded and in the highlands washed out by the rain. The sun was shining, he said, and the wind was gone.

Father Roosevelt in Pwentaraket, and the school at Matenwa in the eastern mountains used food intended for school lunches to feed following the four storms. Picmy and Trou Jacques on the eastern coast, accessible only by boat are reported without water or food and suffering extensive damage and several deaths. I'm uncertain about North La Gonave.

We are asked, "why do the people continue to live there?" I generally respond, "why do people live in Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma and Nebraska threatened by killer tornadoes; why live in California expecting to "shake off into the sea" or wash down a mountain; why live in Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, Georgia, where the hurricanes usually end their journey?"

We left La Gonave a few hours after Hanna with Ike chasing us to Port au Prince. Stranded there two days we flew to Kansas over storm clouds and the first day home stood in our back yard watching a tornado pass just east of us, with our grandbaby and family in the basement. Disaster Response is an ever-growing program in every UM Conference. Red Cross is overdrawn at the bank with emergency supplies in constant demand.

Why do people live on La Gonave? They just do! Why do we beg for food for the hungry? Because hungry hurts! Why are there "storms" in life? Like my mom used to say, "just because, deal with it." Beg, bargain, whine, or brainstorm an appropriate response, but, deal with it.

John Wesley, lived a balanced faith. He gave away everything he didn't need for his own survival then spent time begging for the poor, preaching to them and being with them in their suffering. In the gospel according Mark, Jesus tells the disciples to "get in the boat". He doesn't tell them where to go or what to do, that's for them to figure out. Just "get in the boat."

It seems to me, we are all "in the boat" and at times it really rocks and even gets broken by the storm. But, if we are in the boat, "gathered in 'my' name," there God will be. Compassion: acceptance, healing, feeding, loving, touching, begging, crying, laughing with the living, sitting with the dying, is the only way I know of "dealing with it," Mom. I don't have time for "why".

Do I sound testy? I'm sorry, but there are people all over this great little earth, hungry, naked, sick, shivering, alone, and doing their best to live with whatever life has handed out. There are wonderful people and congregations trying their darndest to send things and even go help. They don't have time for questions either. If you're "in the boat" you understand, and I thank you.

..... Shirley, Kansas, Tuesday, September 16, 2008.....

