

**Creative Thinking:** I began mission experience 30 years ago in answer to the song, "Is It I, Lord?" and now, years later I sit in Haiti, following 4 storms singing, "Why Me, Lord?" UMCOR-Haiti will purchase food next week in bulk with GBGM grant money. Whatever percentage of the requested grant that La Gonave receives will be included. They will also use \$8,000.00 we have designated for food which allows more for our money. We retained \$2,000.00 for transportation, storage, security and distribution. This will require some creativity, I think.

We spent the morning receiving people with greetings and stories of the last storm, which stranded us in PaP. They assumed we would not return early unless we were working on something special so didn't ask "what" but thanked us for "the surprise." We tried to unpack and move the spiders outside as we reviewed reports of loss and damage. With food still scarce, Donize created brunch with only slightly moldy bread (skillet toasted you hardly notice) and clumpy spaghetti.

The old captain told us his wife died Sunday and was still in Point a Rocquette as he had no money to bring her home or bury her. Traditionally, the community gives small amounts for dancers, but he had received nothing. Joe slipped him 500 goudes (12 dollars US) and as darkness falls the first "death dance" begins. The dancing (and the rum) will bring forth money for the funeral. Recently, I refused him 500 goudes to pay a healer to rub stuff on her as I would give her medicine free at the clinic. The healer rubbed for 200. They dance now.

Later we reviewed reports from the south side. More than 600 livestock drowned, homes, schools and churches flooded or wind damaged, cisterns contaminated, and charcoal ruined along with flooded gardens and trashed trees. Roads are now deep gullies filled with rock from mountain tops. The floods did turn the island into a rainforest, complete with bugs, mold and an array of colorful flowers as fragrant as the dead pig in the brush.

As our dinner of rice, beans, pasta salad and goat got cold; we talked with a young school teacher and his wife about her stomach problems. He was embarrassed when I asked if they had a meal each day. In the storm, 9 of 25 bags of his charcoal flooded, and the remaining 16 went to market today. The school has no students enrolled yet and he said, "some days we like to eat two meals." He and Pastor Fequiere admitted, eating every day is not possible for most, and when there is no food, "you just wait for something".

Early afternoon, we walked the village, pockets filled with packets of rehydration powder, and antibiotics for a variety of intestinal "bugs". Returned empty of pocket, covered with blessings and dismayed we cannot stroll all the villages on the south side.

Now, we ponder, how little one must eat to qualify for free food for a few days. How do we decide who of the 20,000 people on South La Gonave get fed? Probably not the majority that are eating every other day or every 3<sup>rd</sup> day! The "death dance" is a cool Haitian culture but we pray for some real creative thinking here.

Shirley, La Gonave, September 24<sup>th</sup> (our Anna's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday tomorrow) 2008.