

**Miracles & Mayhem!** The South Dakota team will have a unique story to tell when they return to the US. Both chaos and miracle have *played out* my bent to Eastern philosophy of "both / and" .

The final game of the annual soccer tournament was played on the 6<sup>th</sup> so we rented three small boats for a trip to Port a Bonheur in the moonlight. The 11 blans entered the small stadium as special guests and claimed prime seats on wooden bleachers.

My opening prayer was displayed on a TV across the field and play began with ceremony and high tension. Lights shorted out for a time and fans refreshed with water and other unnamed liquids until play resumed. At the height of play we experienced the sensation of motion and realized the bleachers were buckling and pitching a few hundred people, including the volunteers, onto the playing field.

Remarkably, there were no serious injuries to the VIMers and only one young fan was hospitalized with a possible broken leg. We were rescued and extracted to return to our boats as people blessed us and demonstrated great concern for our well-being. The next day the entire Port a Bonheur team and officials walked to SAP to talk with us and check on our injuries. Today, they brought the video showing the game and the collapse of the bleachers and discussed plans to build new cement bleachers for the next year. The games closed with no winner and significant debt.

E mails home tell of the grace of God's protection and care, and the concern of the Haitians for the visitors. The Federation leader wrote Pastor Hank a letter of regret and expressed their belief the opening prayer was responsible for saving all from serious injury.

During devotions tonight, Annie asked each to share how they would continue the Haiti mission when they returned home. They have empowered more than 35 people this week with work on two projects, income to feed their families and the satisfaction of jobs well done. The team has played with children, taught and learned new songs, visited farms and caves and spent a number of hours drinking coffee and discussing theological and ethical issues related to missions.

Following devotions, Joe shared with us an e-mail received from Sam Dixon of GBGM. The UMCOR office in Port au Prince closed the last of December due to lack of funding and we have been offered a choice of a land cruiser or pick up plus a couple of badly needed motor bikes and other office equipment. We would prefer the UMCOR office to remain but the offer of more reliable transportation for teams is a miracle.

Pastor Hank asked us all to seek the epiphany of God this week and we have shared the many ways we have felt God's presence. The concept that God is present in both the chaos and blessing of life often raises questions in the minds of believers. This week has proven that in both the suffering and the singing, God is always part of the action.

Pastor Shirley, La Gonave, January 9, 2009.