

**New Vision:** It is 6:30 pm, my bed isn't made, reports aren't written, sent my ballot at 6 am, just gave malaria medicine and Tinom needs a diving mask. Late yesterday we returned from the Haiti Consultation in Atlanta to sick babies, a variety of needs, and some who just must greet us. Numerous emails asked our "take" on the consultation and I'm uncertain how to reply.

A food distribution was just completed for 10 communities, SAP church leaders were angry at us, and we had a team to prepare for when we left for Atlanta. The song floating in my mind is "Both Sides Now" as we often work from both sides of situations; misunderstood Americans attempting to work in a culture hard to understand. As Louis says, "let me 'splain you".

La Gonave, and our "psyches" suffered insult from the storms to the already existing island isolation issues of normal life. We approached Atlanta cautiously in agreement to observe and keep still. The agenda allowed time for the Haitian Church to explain structure, operation and emergent needs on mainland Haiti following the recent four storms. Speakers for the church were prepared and open concerning income and expenses and programs of the church.

Haiti UMCOR and UMCOR/GBGM representatives carefully led participants to explain their purpose and share expectations. Small groups worked to address and develop interventions for problems prioritized by the Haitian Church. Number one was education, more difficult since the storms but a long standing problem. Other issues were water, rebuilding and health.

Small groups fulfilled assignments as directed and the meeting ended with an adapted Wesleyan Covenant service. Individuals were invited to make personal commitments to the newly defined "partnership." Teacher salaries, school lunches and getting schools rebuilt, repaired and back in operation were the primary focus.

Informally we met with Pastor Ralph who affirmed our position on La Gonave and the work we are doing. We asked about UMCOR lunches for La Gonave students and were told there would be no meals for La Gonave this year. Pastor Ralph suggested the clinic be closed as he has had no success dealing with World Vision. Rather than reports we will share our planned activities with him.

The volunteer nurse is gone so I drew clinic duty today and medicines are running low. Every baby and mama I saw has some degree of malnutrition. Despite the food distribution they still eat only three meals a week. 8 month old babies weigh less than 6 kg. All but a few live on the edge of survival.

There are no workbooks for school children and many have not paid tuition. Teachers are still to receive 4-5 months of last year's salaries. Education systems need more than roofs and paychecks, and, people who live off the tarmac, in the hills, or on islands, are slowly starving, receive unreliable health care, have no water, work unbelievably hard for a pittance and wish constantly they were somewhere else. How was the meeting? Good, I guess. My mind was on Haiti.

*Shirley, La Gonave, November 4, 2008.*