

Radical Faith: Thunder, lightning and pouring rain, like an instant Ike replay, so can't upload any emails or aggravate any organizations. Not sure I'm bold enough to take my soap to the back yard for a good clean shower, either. I may have curly hair for the first time in my life.

At 4 pm there was a town meeting called regarding the start of a new school in Source A Philippe. Not long ago a delegation of the L'glise Methodiste D'Haiti, ask us to tell Pastor Abner, he could not start another school in this community. The Methodist church had run the school for 40 years and it was "unthinkable" anyone would challenge them. The real concern seemed related to economy and the fear that none of the schools would have good enrollment this year.

Gardens have failed without rain, then flooded and washed out with repeated siklons. On La Gonave, markets have been imitating the American Banking Industry with retailers going belly up along with many hundreds of livestock. Boats broken in ports, thank goodness, and either too much wind to fish or fish pounded soft in the surging waves. We are surrounded by walking bones covered with various shades of black, brown and the blans who chose to share this existence in the Caribbean. Survival is critical and the first step on any hierarchy of needs. Food and water are second only to air.

While people protect bits of money and meager possessions, focused on self-protection and "me first" attitude, it is thrilling to watch a debate on quality and quantity of education for children and youth. Communities, sans latrines and electricity, called primitive by the callous, eloquent speakers, debating the future of youth, community, and nation impress the aliens perched on rocks with the "natives."

Tomorrow we begin the daunting task of administering an emergency food distribution from GBGM to a few hundred in an area where over 20,000 are hungry and anxious. Forms to identify the neediest in 16 communities must be distributed to trustworthy leaders. Food will be purchased in bulk by UMCOR and we aren't yet certain how much our share will be. When we know the amount we will select transportation and storage with local "advisors" who don't trust one another. I am in denial regarding the actual distribution, hopefully in the next couple of weeks. Or sooner?

The roads on La Gonave are virtually gullies filled with rocks and tonight running water again. It is hard to find the roadbed in the overgrowth from rainfall, and bugs walking on your eyeballs. Tuesday we will take a boat to assess damage to Trou Jacques, the village that pretends to be Atlantis every few years. I look forward to that beautiful 4 hour sailboat ride, but not the vision of a washed away community.

I vacillate with joy to have food to offer to those in severe distress; I cringe at the task of handing out food to a few and saying "no" to so many others; I despair at my lack of ability; and I celebrate a people who debate education on a street corner as if they were gathered at a conference table in a fine office. Jesus said, (to those in the boat) "where is your faith?" I hope I didn't leave that radical faith he was referring to, at home. *Shirley, La Gonave, September 28th, listening to the rain.*