

Snake Bite:

Our Haiti mission has progressed through many events and stages. One year of challenge with differing ethics and culture. . One year with hope in developing leaders and industry through ecumenical associations. Blessed in January 2010, during the disaster of a lifetime, we shared grief and faith with Haitian friends. We returned to the US to a compassionate reception by "the church" and family. We moved from grace to grace.

You who have shared two years of these "blurbs" know I am both idealist and pragmatist. I believe God is totally trustworthy with my life AS I share the responsibility for the welfare of the vulnerable God gives me to serve. Part of that service is willingness to be vulnerable and gullible yet at times confrontational and unyielding when function and practice are at issue.

A post earthquake journey back to Haiti triggers the confrontational side of my nature. As a realist I accept a lengthy period for recovery and restructuring of a country with a 250 year history of brokenness. The future is a new era for Haiti and the people. It is not something new for those of us who "could of, should of" learned from Katrina, Indonesia, Mexico City, etc.

Our early disaster response experience in Mississippi following Katrina was one of crossing boundaries. Race, faith, denomination, organization, or government was non-issue in the face of injury, loss, grief, danger and immediate vulnerability. Later, those snakes began to bite.

The week following the earthquake, we experienced Haitian's sharing and caring for each other and us! Then for weeks NGO's and governments responded to the extreme need in a phenomenal way. United Methodists, not known for their rapid or great generosity, poured forth with immediate compassion. It seemed, once again, early Katrina. Our hope was for a lasting ecumenical and personal congeniality focused totally on the need of Haiti and the damaged populace.

The Methodist Church of Haiti, a small conference of the MCCA, has only one guest house, minimally damaged, with a need to respond to many who have depended on them in the past. The EMH has set 5 priorities for rapid recovery. The United Methodist Church of the USA is not the only denomination or NGO involved in their disaster.

Experience has proven the greatest barrier to rapid recovery is self-interest and territoriality, issues of Haiti's past. Oswald Chambers pointed out; the disciples were invited by Jesus to "just" get in the boat. He says, progress is delayed when those "in the boat" begin to decide the project, indicators of success and "who will be the leader."

As we return to La Gonave regularly, and "pass through" the guest house, I fear "the Katrina snakes" may begin to bite, and that could become another disaster for the church in Haiti.