

**Wilderness Wishes:** My Mom would have accused me of "fiddling around" the last few days. I had no instrument and was making no music as I wandered the house, touching, tossing, then back to the chair to catch my breath. Pneumonia causes "fiddling" which accomplishes nothing, and makes me crazy! Action should not be pointless! Cough, cough.

In Haiti, there is little time to contemplate so I have been "fiddling" with the lectionary readings for Advent. Seems John "came out" of the desert to cry out, smooth out, and straighten up the path to God. Near the Jordan or the Caribbean, the mission call is the same. There is always a Christmas.

The last 14 months I have tried to paint a word picture of what life on La Gonave is like for the 100,000 people who share a rock in the ocean. In the world millions face certain death in refugee camps or at the hands of violent warriors. Remote areas of Haiti offer a slow death with "some" food, sporadic health care, simple technology, limited communication and inadequate protection from nature. Advanced civilization that "isn't" civilized, and "labels" hard to erase keep things status quo and aimed down.

South La Gonave, suffered from four storms and primary response was from the few dedicated NGO,s who work quietly to improve life on the island. I say, "Quietly", because communication is limited and access to the island is difficult and expensive.

Last week, a lectionary commentary I like, pointed out that at times it seems there is always winter with no Christmas. Centuries of Hebrew history was one of darkness and oppression yet God's vision was for a world of peace and wholeness. This week, Isaiah offers comfort in God's "alwaysness" yet the call to mission that says, "God won't change things without help."

"Someone" must speak to the heart of healing; "someone" must straighten out the roads, lower the hurdles, raise the playing field, and offer a map. The "way" through the wilderness will be found in hands and plans and the expectation of God's vision for ALL people.

When we return to La Gonave the end of December, we will be full tilt trying to work with the Haitian Church to reopen the clinic with a salaried nurse and community health worker. That requires a commitment to help them become community based and self sustaining in a year.

Haiti Outreach is already addressing our GBGM grant for water at Dent Griern and Piqua-maby and by August we hope for good water to numerous communities on the west end.

The meeting in Atlanta squashed long term planning for change in the education system on La Gonave so we leave that to future volunteers. A few meals will be served this year and some teachers paid.

Quiet starvation has become a way of life. We plan to work with others to make food available at reduced cost so family money can go for education and health care. We will continue to encourage local fishermen and retailers to form cooperatives and help each other.

I believe the cry in the wilderness is for Haiti to finally have Christmas.

Shirley, at home in Kansas, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008. Thinking La Gonave.