

Ying & Yang of Mission:

Mission team leaders prepare members from a set of VIM training issues. One addresses risks of travel and time spent in another culture and country without the "safety nets" that surround most middle class Americans. Other issues concern expectations of behavior and boundaries and most leaders and team members are asked to sign covenant agreements related to ethics and personal activity. Teams arrive on site, well trained with expectations of "doing good works." What a blessing when the experience is positive and in most cases meets best expectations.

The "yang" is always a possibility and can't be overlooked as much as we would hope to. Looking back over the years many incidents now seem funny when at the time they were certainly not laughing matters. Few have been serious enough to warrant other than reminders or some medicine and brief recovery.

The Nebraska team that recently blessed the community of Sousafilip, worked hard, laughed much and spent many hours with children in the community. Food was plentiful and received with relish (pun?) and they swam, explored caves and even took a grueling truck ride to visit project sites. The heat and sun necessitated sun screen and "bug off" in increased quantity and we welcomed the bed nets that had been provided by previous teams. They returned to PaP for a day of touring and rest prior to the flight home.

At the guest house a couple of team members, including Joe began to feel a bit ill, with headache, fever and general discomfort. There were some skin rashes and itching as expected and even some GI problems. Emails from the US sent us searching for medical advice related to tropical issues that had not occurred before.

One team member, a Kansan on her 6th mission called this the "best ever" experience and is now hospitalized with Dengue Fever and complications of a rather serious nature. Another team member recovered from a fairly typical bacterial GI infection to be overcome with a GI virus that will take some recovery time. Joe recovered quickly but some with skin issues may well be related to some growth in the sea related to recent rains and extended very high temperatures.

As hosts we encourage preparation; accident insurance through the conference, a well supplied first aid kit, malaria prevention and most of all attention to fluid intake and use of only approved water. How much protection is enough when the reality of "events beyond our control" take over? It really is not "ying and yang" it is the inevitability of things outside our control.

We came to Haiti knowing we would live outside of our ability to cope at times. We anticipated illness, rats, challenge, frustration, inadequacy and confusion. We believed God would always be present. We have not been disappointed. We are never "in control" no matter how well prepared. But God has proven to always be "hovering" in both the Ying and the Yang of experience. May the hovering presence of God be with the Nebraska team, and Diane.

Shirley, La Gonave, September 19th, 2009