

OUTREACH HAITI

MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT

Report

June 2018 visit to Haiti by Jon Dutton, Jacquelyn VanWeelden, Chris Knight
on be-half of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Ladue, MO.

The period of 1991 to 1995 was particularly difficult for Haiti. Shortly after the first democratically elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide took office a military junta ousted him in a *coup d'etat* that brought severe international consequences to the entire country that was already suffering from years of dictatorial neglect. A United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) led by the US Government (Operation Support Democracy) helped maintain security and stability in Haiti while negotiations with the military junta were underway, ultimately resulting in the reinstatement of the Aristide government and return to constitutional rule, a new national police force, and assistance for holding elections.

UNMIH provided training and capacity building through more than 1,000 smaller projects. Convinced that "turning on the lights" and improving living conditions would help maintain a secure and stable environment, UNMIH personnel worked with Haitians to rehabilitate water, sanitation, electricity supply and roads. Police stations, schools and other public facilities were repaired, and training was provided in disaster management, first aid and other fields. UNMIH engineering units rebuilt the critically important bridge in Jacmel, destroyed by a hurricane in 1994. Overall spending for this phase of the UN mission was over \$300 million USD.

It was during this period of time that Outreach Haiti was born. When asked for an overall description of Outreach Haiti, The Rev. Robert Childers, Rector of The Good Shepherd, in Chattanooga, described it as Mind, Body and Spirit; the school, the clinic and the church, the whole package. Today it is a partnership with 3 Episcopal Churches in the Diocese of Eastern Tennessee; Church of the Good Shepherd (Chattanooga), Church of the Nativity (Ft. Oglethorpe, GA) and St. Stephens (Oak Ridge). Each mission group partner focuses on the needs they are best suited to fill, like construction and maintenance, health and medical needs or general support of the church. There are of course lots of gaps that are filled by a variety of volunteers some affiliated with these churches some not. These include the school lunch program, communications and coordination and the ever present need for fund raising. One of the most encouraging aspects of Outreach Haiti is that it has more than 2 decades of uninterrupted involvement and multi-generational relationships with Petit-Harpon and the Diocese of Haiti. Many of the initial volunteer missionaries are still participating on the ground in Haiti and some have passed but their stories are still part of the fabric of the mission. Some of the children that used

to carry the backpacks for these folks on the mountain walk in to the church (for a dollar) are today involved with ongoing work at the church and the school as adults. Given its longevity and continued success in Petit-Harpon it is so interesting that Outreach Haiti had its genesis in a chance meeting at an Art Day School.

THE MIND

In 1995, Ann McKenzie Aiken (Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Lookout Mountain TN) was assisting in Port Au Prince with a group of organizers of an Art Day School program for young Haitian children. During the camp, Bishop Luc Garnier, the first indigenous Bishop of Haiti nearing the end of his tenure met Ann and learned she was an architect. He asked if she could design a school for the remote mountain community of Petit-Harpon where he was born and raised, also the home of St John the Evangelist Episcopal Church. Ann reached out to Lou Garcia, a structural engineer and Jim Hudson, a general contractor and together they decided to design it and raise the \$80,000 required to construct the school that Bishop Garnier had dreamed of for his home community. By January 1996 they had the funds and Jim made an exploratory trip to the site, confirmed their needs and loaded containers of supplies that shipped from the US to Port Au Prince. Before they could actually start building, they needed to figure out how to transport the containers of supplies to the remote mountain community which was about 2 hours from Port Au Prince by road and another hour long trek up the mountain. This is where the Rev Cannon Bill Squire stepped in.

Following his retirement as Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of East Tennessee, Bill became a missionary to Haiti for three years, helping to develop this partnership program with the Diocese of Haiti and traveling throughout the country in support of its many other missions. Bill was instrumental in bringing parishioners from St. Stephen's Church (Oakridge) in to Outreach Haiti with a particular focus on medical needs. Bill had a well-placed friend who happened to be in charge of the UN Peace Keeping force in Haiti and together they came up with a unique plan for the delivery of the school building materials. The result was a huge Chinook helicopter with a shipping container filled with the disassembled St John the Evangelist school in tow, beating its way over the horizon to the school's mountain building site. This legendary event lives in the memories of the community; both from those who experienced the sight of the big bird's arrival and the sweeping downdraft that destroyed one home and two make-shift cook shelters and also as a result of hearing the story retold so many times that it has become 'real' to those too young to actually remember it.

After rebuilding the house and the cook shelters, they started building the school on property owned by the Episcopal Church of Haiti. It ultimately took 4 years to complete; 2-4 trips per year, 4-18 participants each spending a week at a time at the site. The school was dedicated in 1999. Outreach Haiti continues to support the

operational budget for the school including paying for teachers and supplies, and support for an ongoing Children's Nutrition lunch program that is cooked on site in a rudimentary kitchen.

Today the school has about 175 students from Kindergarten to 9th grade. There have been multiple priests in charge of the school over the years and Outreach Haiti has always worked to build relationships with each of them. While it hasn't always been easy, they have always succeeded in moving the project forward in support of the community's desires for the school. The current priest, Pere Banna, has been priest and Head of School at St. John's the Evangelist for 2 years and has developed a vision to expand the school to include the final 4 classes (NS1, NS2, NS3 and Philio) required for students to complete their high school education in their home community, expecting the enrollment to increase to over 200. This is a prioritized project that Outreach Haiti is currently supporting.

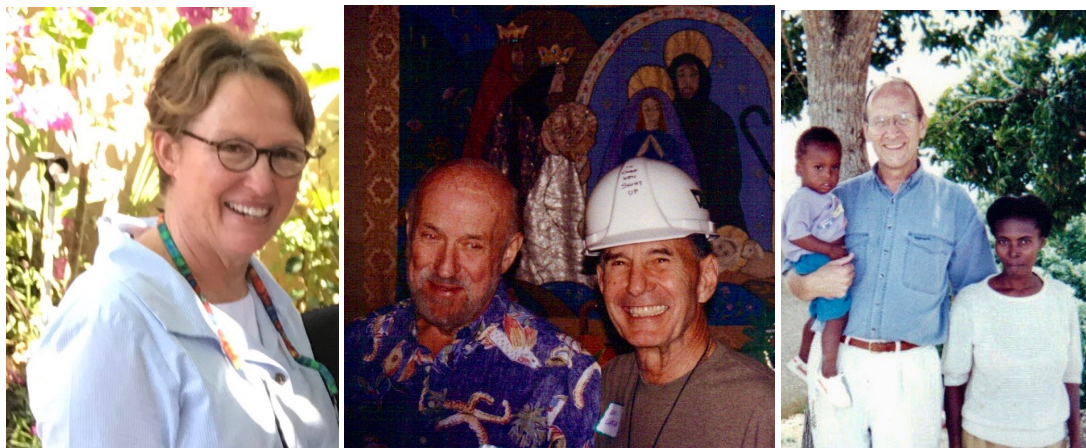


Figure 1. Ann Aiken (Architect), Jim Hudson (General Contractor), Lou Garcia (Structural Engineer), The Rev Cannon Bill Squire (retired Haiti Missionary). These 4 missionaries played pivotal roles in establishing St. John the Evangelist school, supporting the CDC effort to build the clinic and rebuilding the church destroyed in the 2010 earthquake.

THE BODY

While Outreach Haiti was constructing the school, Bishop Garnier asked Ann to design a clinic for Petit-Harpon as well. Ann designed it to Center for Disease Control (CDC) specifications, Lou engineered it and the CDC built it. Bricks and mortar are sometimes easier to plant than to actually create and support a fully functional health clinic in a remote mountain community. While the clinic was built adjacent to the school property, in fact it's not totally clear who owns the land it was built on which has created some confusion on exactly how the structure can be used. Still structurally sound, today it serves as a temporary rectory; however, Outreach Haiti still plans for it to be the center for health services in the Petit-Harpon community at some point with a separate rectory for the church. For now there is a small health clinic housed in the Church.



Figure 2. St John the Evangelist School, Petit-Harpon, Haiti

THE SPIRIT

In January of 2010 a 7.0 magnitude earthquake rocked central Haiti. Its epicenter was near the town of Léogâne, about 2 hours from Port Au Prince and less than an hour drive from Petit-Harpon. With over 200,000 deaths and many thousands more injured, the earthquake created a humanitarian crisis of vast proportions for the island country.

In addition to nearly 200,000 homes destroyed, 4,000 schools were leveled along with 100's of churches. In the aftermath of the quake, The Rev. Lauren Stanley, liaison to Bishop Duracin in the United States, reported that almost all the Episcopal facilities in the Diocese of Haiti sustained damage: the 200 parishes, congregations, missions and preaching stations including the cathedral which was totally destroyed; the 254 nursery, primary and secondary schools; the university; the seminary; the community college; the three trade schools; the hospital and numerous medical missions; St. Vincent's Center for the Handicapped; and a Jubilee Center. This list unfortunately included St John the Evangelist church in Petit-Harpon that was totally destroyed although the school and the CDC-constructed clinic buildings both survived.

The construction crew for Outreach Haiti responded to the call to rebuild the church on the site of the previous one. Over a 3-year period, Outreach Haiti raised the funds, designed the building, transported materials and constructed the new church that is there today. In addition to all the new materials inside the church, the group

obtained and transported all the pews and communion rails from a church that was being demolished in Tennessee and installed them in the rebuilt St. John the Evangelist church. The church was consecrated in 2013 with the Bishop of Haiti officiating. You only need a few minutes at the site of the church to realize what a huge undertaking this was and it makes the end result all the more inspiring. Follow this YouTube link to see the transformation for yourself. (<https://youtu.be/jgDmka7GM8I>).

Designed into the new structure is a small clinic and dispensary to serve the needs of the school and community. Dr. Wilkine, a graduate of the St. John the Evangelist school, attends it one day a week. Wilkine's medical school and living expenses were covered by Outreach Haiti donations that included tuition, living expenses, a used car (pre-earthquake) and a replacement car (post-earthquake) as the first was buried by a crumbling concrete wall in Port Au Prince. The rest of Dr. Wilkine's week is spent developing a practice in nearby Jacmel. While there is certainly great need for medical services in the city, it is not common to be routinely paid by patients. Consequently, Outreach Haiti is helping to support the Jacmel practice to insure that medical support remains at the school as well.

Parishioners from St. Stephen's are also funding Wilkine's sister, Genous, to attend nursing school in Leogane. (See Fig 4b). She has completed the first of 4 years of training and assists her brother occasionally along with other nursing school students on his visits to Petit-Harpon.



Figure 3. St John's the Evangelist-Petit-Harpon, Haiti, rebuilt after 2010 earthquake, consecrated in 2013.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The visit just completed was designed to plan for several subsequent visits in early 2019. On the construction front, Outreach Haiti plans to build a metal pavilion in front of the school (Figure 2) so that there is a place for the students to eat lunch out of the sun and rain. Additional work will be done to re-side the container from the 1996 airlift to preserve the only current storage on the school site. There will also be work to strengthen the siding and roofing on the makeshift kitchen adjacent to the school. What desks exist for teachers are in poor repair so there are plans build teachers desks for each of the classrooms, replace doors for the outhouses and some general maintenance for the facility. There will be some termite remediation done at the church and some additional security for the louvered windows.



Figure 4. L to R, Frank and Jean Anne McDonald-architect and photography, Chris Knight, Jon Dutton-ex-parishioner of Good Shepherd, Ann Aiken,-architect and mission leader, Robert Childress-priest Good Shepherd, Joanne Allen-longtime friend and compatriot of Ann; Jacquelyn VanWeelden, Caleb and Ethan Collier-builder-developer, Sam our translator. Picture is taken in front of the CDC clinic.

Pere Banna hopes to begin adding the final 4 classes required allowing Petit-Harpon students to graduate from the school in September 2018. This will come at a cost of about \$6600/yr for each of the additional 4 classes (\$26,400/yr when all 4 classes are added. Half of the cost is for teacher's salaries and the other half for added cost to the lunch program.

Pere Banna wishes to establish a small egg laying chicken flock (~ 100 hens) on the site to supplement the nutrition program and generate small income to support general supply needs for the school. This is a relatively large undertaking that will require some capital, site security and training for a committed group of animal caretakers.

We anticipate St Peter's could participate in this ministry in a number of ways including fund raising to help establish the additional classes for the school and there are a variety of possibilities within the school itself, including improving desks for students and teachers, replacement of blackboards and other maintenance needs. In addition, given the request to establish a small laying hen flock on site a possible project would be to prepare to run a small scale experiment to establish a very small laying hen flock (20 hens) to see that the school community can maintain and care for the laying hens successfully. If successful, we could work to establish the 100 hen flock they are asking for in the following years. Finally, there is always a need for on site help for transport, staging and labor to complete the projects. This provides multiple opportunities for volunteers with a passion for getting their hands dirty and having first hand experiences with those that are being served by the mission.



Figure 4. Pere Banna with Robert Childers. Genous (nursing student) with LaFiss, her father. Ann Aiken, Dr. Wilkine with wife Anne and kids, Cameron Ellis - St Stephens, Oak Ridge.



Figure 5. St Peter's parishioners; Jon Dutton, Chris Knight and Jacquelynn VanWeelden overlooking St John the Evangelist Church, Petit-Harpon, Haiti, June, 2018.

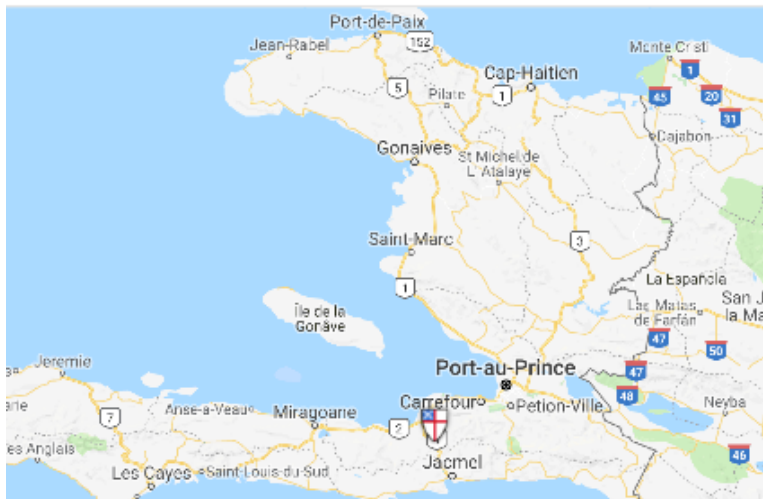


Figure 6. Location of St John the Evangelist Church, Petit-Harpon, Haiti.

Statistics for Haiti.

2016: The Diocese of Haiti is the largest diocese of the Episcopal Church, with about 200,000 members reported in 2010. More than 65 members of the clergy oversee the roughly 250 congregations, preaching stations, schools, and community institutions maintained by the diocese.

A FEW STATISTICS FOR HAITI:

- Total population (2012): 10,174,000
- Life expectancy at birth (2012): 62.7 years
- Annual number of births (2012): 265,000
- Under-5 mortality rate: 31%
- Population below international poverty line of US\$1.25 per day (2007-2011): 61.7%
- Total adult literacy rate (2008-2012): 48.7%