

Haiti Trip Report January 12-19, 2016

I was going home again, this time by myself to take care of a number of loose ends that had accumulated over the past year. While it is true we have specific targeted projects working in Haiti it is not about the projects we finish but the relationships we build. This trip was in part to make sure those relationships were staying shored up and that I was really able to take the time to understand. It was to this end that I thank God for this week with my brothers and sisters in Haiti.

The flight was uneventful other than the plane was delayed in Huntsville for 30 minutes taking off and with only a 45 min connection, I was concerned, but I'm learning the airlines have built in more leeway than they let you know about as we were only 5 min late when we arrived in Charlotte. Entrance into Haiti immigration was a zoo as there were one or two tour planes that landed at the same time and I've never experience lines like these. Haitians have taught me how to merge and I did it well. Bertone's smiling face was there to greet me and we caught up on events on our way to Leogane. We made a short stop to see Eliane and leave some items with her. We had a great welcome at the monastery where Frere Olizard was hosting 45 priests doing a retreat and my normal room was in use. To my embarrassment, Frere Olizard had given me his room and he apparently into one of the cells with the other brothers. This is so typical of Haitian hospitality.

Wednesday morning Bertone and I left the monastery at 5a to drive to Les Cayes to be there by 8:30. We had a lot of work to do in Les Cayes (about 100 miles west) before we got to our next appointment at noon in Fond des Negros. Cayes is home for Water for Life, one of three well drilling operations in Haiti that I am aware of. They are a solid Christian based operation headquartered in Iowa, but the owner Leon Miller has been drilling wells in Haiti for 20 years. As part of our Water Technology Center project, in order to model what the underground pools look like, we needed empirical well information and WFL had it for 1700 wells they have drilled over about half of Haiti. And they agreed to share the information with us. So Bertone and I met with Dr. Winnie Guerre who used to be our doctor at the St. Charles clinic in Palmiste au Vin and whom I have known since 2004. I had expected to have to copy all the well records but someone had put half of them on CD already and the other half Winnie had already copied for us. So we spent the morning's time sharing with Winnie and Dr. Johanna about the Water Technology Center we were putting together and the information it could produce. They were very excited to learn of this as Winnie had been reading what she could about geology so they could do a better job of predicting where they were going to drill. I could tell her heart was not in it when she asked, "can I stop reading about geology now?" and I said yes.

From there we drove back Fond des Negros to meet with Sister Denis the superior of the Petit Seours St. Therese (female side of the Petit Freres St Therese – Frere Olizard's order) in a convent at Premele. Well it wasn't a convent yet, it was a school and a couple of buildings that the bishop had asked the sister to take over in October and run. And the bishop said, "Oh by the way there is no water or electricity on the property and the four of you can have one of the classrooms to live in." This should resonate with those religious reading this document as the way we are to be obedient and to the rest of us independent souls that we are also called to be obedient just as Christ was and I can not think of a better example than this one. I had already arranged with Water for Life to drill the well for them and Sister and I had

to go through the covenant and project implementation plan as well as I had to get to know them and build on this relationship. There were five nuns there that day and I did not realize that the fifth one had traveled all the way from Jerome (about a 3 hour trip) just to meet me and cook the neon meal for the sisters. This was a big deal for them and their hospitality was not to be compromised. The well was drilled shortly after I left Haiti and Sister could not be happier. For now there is supposed to be a hand pump put on the well, but we promised to come back in April or so and drop a DC pump into the well with a solar panel and a 600 gallon tank so the water will now be more 'automatic'.