

## HSJM Trip Report Mar 8-15, 2022 Lauren Bryant & Bob McCoy

**Haiti -Day 1 Tues Mar 8-** Lauren Bryant and I leave for Birmingham at 2:30a to take the 6:15 to Miami. It's either Nashville or Birmingham to do the trip in 1 day. Only one AA flight in and out of PAP right now. There used to be at least 3 plus Delta plus Jet Blue. All coffins of Covid now. AA uses its cargo space for freight, not your bags. There is a hard restriction of 2 bags per person for the above stated reason. This is Lauren's 2nd trip and she reminds me of me 20 years ago when I traveled with John Wolfsberger. Eager to see what God has in store. It was one year ago since my last trip due to so much violence over the year. Thankfully things are calmer now with a new interim president and prime minister. Up until the first of the year the only government left were 10 senators. The representatives' terms had all run out and the past president wouldn't call elections so everyone went home including many of the senators whose terms had ended. The 10 were all that were left. Picture for a moment that scenario in the US and you can see how close to total chaos Haiti came. This interim crew are good guys. Pray they will be effective in bringing peace and stability back to the country. Pray for the police who have a tough job reining in the gangs, especially when some of them are tied in politically. Such is life in this second home of mine. It could be better and Lauren and I are here to hopefully contribute to that betterment. Thank you for all your love and prayers.

**Haiti-Day 2 Wed Mar 9-** Yesterday afternoon, we met Bertone and Arie in the parking lot and then began a grueling 4.5 hr trip to the monastery. This trip has never taken longer than 2 hours in the past 20 years but to be absolutely safe we have to go way up in the mountains to go around the problem. Needless to say, we were all exhausted and especially Bertone who had to fight the traffic and bad roads.

We spent this morning from 830 to 11 driving to Jacmel and then up the mountain to Cap Rouge where the brothers have a house. If you want to see how remote this place is, the lat and long are 18°16'19.6"N 72°25'13.8"W. It is a very difficult road to say the least. They have built a house manned by 2 brothers and a school with 350 students, K-13. We spoke to some of the older students and teachers and learned so much. They are very excited about the book program started at PAV two years ago and now coming to them in September. In the afternoon we went back down to Jacmel to visit the Alphonse brothers and our 23rd water purification system. It is the most beautiful system and Fre Wilfrid was already ahead of us on selling water door to door and delivering by truck. We got back at 5p and at dinner presented Arie with a check for 12K\$ so he can continue building houses for earthquake victims in the Les Cayes area. See <http://holyspirithaitimission.org> for more detail. He was blown away. We are all well and safe. It's very calm here. Thanks for all the prayers.

**Haiti-Day 3 Thu Mar 10**- chapel with the rosary, matins and communion at 530a. The pic was taken about 6:15 while the sun is coming up over PAP. This was a day of many things. They don't seem like a big deal but in Haiti everything takes longer. We are working the Leogane area today and the first order of business is changing money to buy fuel. Bertone goes by one of several street (non-bank) facilities and Lauren's green money turns to the many colors of the Haitian gourde. At the gaz (what Haitians call diesel) station we fill up at \$3.5/ gal. While this seems better than the US which is now \$5+ a gallon for diesel, Bertone reminded me that much of the price of the diesel goes into roads in the US, etc. but not the case in Haiti. From the look of the roads, it appears to go into someone's pocket.



Off to drop off some ink at Fre Olizard's and get reacquainted. A year ago, when I was here I apparently in jest, suggested he get a lawn mower. I can't believe the difference. The grass between his compound and the retirement home is gorgeous. Right out of a movie set. I'm sorry I don't have more pics but Lauren has been snapping most of them.

Then onto the LWW office in Leogane to interview a nurse for the vacant LWW102 position. We hired her. Then onto another school who miraculously has a well with no bacteria. But they are cautious and suspicious because they have a school there so we sold them a bag of 25 tests that they can do once a month.

On to meet up with Dr Yanne while she is doing a mobile clinic in Dufort. It was a very tearful meeting with joy all around being able to see each other after such a long hiatus. Every mobile clinic helps 25-50 people for that day with resources otherwise unavailable to most of these folks. Her reputation far exceeds her, especially in the mountains.

Then onto the orphanage to drop off all the shoes and clothes that everyone recently purchased. Thank you!!! You cannot visit NDC without eating a meal so a late lunch it was.

Then onto another clinic and then back to Leogane warehouse to put some parts in a take a few out for a new water system for Fre Olizard, out Haitian IP is about to install. His 3rd this year and all funded by Haitians!

Then back home just at dark. At dinner much is discussed and tonight we listened to Fre Arie's long term plans for building stronger communities through the scholarship program. I am very excited for the children under his influence over the next 5 years because through the education that PFST will provide, many have a chance to get ahead and build their

community stronger with knowledge that just wasn't available a generation ago as we learned from Bertone who grew up in the area.

Tomorrow we are teaching class so for now I will say bon nuit.

Haiti-Day 4 Fri Mar 11 - this was teaching day. We stayed on campus which means not one bumpy road on my elfa delfa today. From 10-12 we have 20 teachers and brothers that we



teach two subjects. 1) building a stronger community through education and 2) Lauren did a great class on teaching the solar system. Both had good interest and a lot of questions.

We then went to visit the new Votech school and everywhere we go we are welcomed like you see with the kids holding signs they made and singing to us. We interviewed Modeler, a recent graduate of the PAV scholarship program who is the teacher of the Votech school and two of the students. See the website shortly for the questions and answers. Very insightful. We then did an audit on the tool room of the Votech school and all was

accounted for. We did a sit down with Fre Arie and Modeler to suggest a couple of organization changes that I think will make their life easier.

Back for a late lunch and more conversation with Fre Arie and some of his future plans for the kids. Then Bertone and I sit down for two hours to do some LWW work and a quick lesson on Excel.

Tonight, we had a special birthday party for Bertone whose birthday was last week. And then something Lauren and I have really enjoyed on this trip; playing UNO after dinner. This

evening, we had 6 at the table with lots of laughter in 2 languages. It was great fun to end a really productive day. Thanks for all the prayers. Grace and peace.

**Haiti-Day 5 Sat Mar 12-** up for chapel at 5 and then breakfast and then we hit the road. Today we go to Our Lady of Guadeloupe Catholic Church in Carrefour which is just west of PAP. To make certain our day starts off on the right foot, we run into a major traffic jam because one lane of the bridge is gone. In Haitian traffic all rules are fair. This is a two-lane road approaching the bridge but some choose to drive up to the bridge on the right-hand shoulder and others chose to choose the on-coming lane just so they can get there a little bit earlier. In essence we now have a 3-lane road going to the bridge and guess what? It's the same way on the other side of the bridge. Somehow everyone makes it eventually work. Needless to say, we were an hour late to arrive at OLG.



Pere Joseph is a very dynamic priest who loves young people and loves his community. It is he, that modeled a similar program to PAV university scholarship

program to send young people to university to be teachers and then they would come back to teach at his 400-pupil school. In the morning we got a chance to talk to the group of ten that you are sponsoring and then interview them. It is hard to express how impressed I was with all of them. They are dynamic and full of life yet so grateful that Pere Joseph has made this opportunity available to them. They also got a chance to ask us questions. See the website shortly to read the questions and some of the answers. They are very inciteful.

Pere served us lunch and then we had the whole LWW team together to discuss what will be done over the next year. There is no better team that I have ever had the privilege to work with than these men and women. This is the team that maintains the almost 100 LWW water purification systems in Haiti. Most covenants were only written for 3 years and some of these systems are coming close to running 20 years, so there are churches that still need

some occasional assistance. If you want to adopt one, please let me know. We met for 3 hours and it was chock full of discussion. They are ready to serve for the coming year

Tonight, after dinner the UNO deck came out again with lots of fun and laughter. Tomorrow, we attend mass at St Andrews and then spend the day at NDC. Grace and peace.

**Haiti-Day 6 Sun Mar 13**- today was full of beauty and hardships. As we all know daylight savings time (DST) happened at 2a this morning and I did not think Haiti observed it but forgot to ask. Then I set my alarm but forgot to press GO so at 540 I get up and have 20 min to get ready for the truck to church. The iPhones changed to DST, but it took a couple of phone calls to find out that mass started an hour later because of DST. So, the morning began more normally than I would have thought. Unfortunately, Bertone had a bad battery in the truck. so he spent most of the morning trying to fix the problem while we went to mass at Sr Andrews in Dufort. It was a beautiful mass. The choir was angelic and while I understand little of the language the Holy Spirit was all over me this morning. Everywhere we go we get some sort of warm welcome and Pere Preseme was no exception when he welcomed us from the pulpit and just before mass concluded. On to the orphanage where it is our general practice to spend Sunday with Eliane and the kids. We had several pieces of business to attend to at NDC, but it begins with a breakfast and of course lunch later. We photographed 71 youngsters and with Lauren's super camera and much better photographic skills the sponsors should have better pics this year. In between discussions we played with the kids. The younger girls are fascinated with the hair on my arms (which should be on my head). They kept gently rubbing my arms. At 3 we began the board meeting and concluded at 6:30p. It was the best board meeting I've ever attended. There was a lot of discussion on several topics with everyone participating and contributing where they could. There are 6 on the board but only 5 of us were there as Alex I am sad to say is not well. It probably doesn't sound like much but it was a very full day and a very joyous one for me. We get a little dinner at the monastery and then of course the UNO deck comes out. By 9 I take advantage of a little Wi-Fi so I can answer some email and then the best part of all. Fre Arie has absolutely spoiled both Lauren and myself. On Thursday he introduced us to a Haitian hot shower and it was wonderful. He gave us each a plastic 1 gal jug of very hot water. You put some cold water in the bottom of the 5-gal bucket, pour in the gallon of hot to get to the right temperature. You begin with washing off with the cold water from the shower, but then with a provided big 2 cup scoop you pour out the hot water on yourself. It was heavenly! Not too different from sitting in a sauna and then jumping in a cold lake only the opposite. Lauren, who has long hair and washes it each night was particularly grateful. Thank you Fre Arie!! We have but one more working day and then our journey home begins. Tomorrow will be equally busy as we have important banking business and several other things to do in the Leogane area. Bon Nuit. Grace and peace.

**Haiti-Day 7 Mon Mar 14.** Today began with matins as usual and then breakfast. All of today was shopping in Leogane, meeting with Olizard and auditing the LWW warehouse. That was completed by 2p and we stopped once more at NDC to pick up mail going back home. We packed up all the "stuff" we are supposed to bring home and at dinner we had the honor to meet with the nine PAV University students. It was a wonderful dinner, full of laughter and comradery. After dinner we were able interview the group. This



interview will be on the website shortly, but the answers to questions such as "if you had the power to change Haiti what would you do?" , being 'education and family' as answers we thought to be very inciteful. Now we pack up to begin the journey home. Grace and peace

### **Haiti-Day 8 Tue**

**Mar 15.** 430a wake-up to leave for Jacmel. Its only about 30 miles and the scenery is gorgeous but at 5a there's



nothing to see, the road is treacherous and unlit and there's a bit of fog. So driving is slow. We've chartered a flight from Jacmel to PAP for a number of reasons but the main one is Bertone only has to drive 2 hours round trip with no security issues as opposed to 9 hours. And the road is so much better. Ancy was kind enough to have his cousin pick us up at the little airport and drive up a mile or so to the big airport.





The next hurdle is 2 negative Covid tests. Once that's done our day has been a lot of hurry up and waiting for airplanes. When we landed in MIA, I won the prize to be randomly selected by customs for a second level inspection. I had a sense it was

random but could not help but imagine that if I were from another country what it must be like. It was a serious interview that filled a page of info and then they wanted me to give them my passcode to my phone so they could inspect it. I very reluctantly relented as the consequences probably would not be fun. Meanwhile, Lauren is separated because she went through global entry and I went through regular customs. I was able to get a text to her to let her know but couldn't catch up for about 30 min until they released me. They were very thorough and very polite so it did give me a sense of how our borders are being protected.



We have one more leg to go to Birmingham and then a short trip north. Hopefully be home about 2a. Ironically that's the time we left 8 days ago.

It was a great trip! Lauren and I are the representatives but HSHM was the focus on everyone's mind that we met. Your support has been and is deeply appreciated by all our brothers and sisters in Haiti and we were told many times how grateful everyone was of the work you sponsor. Thank you!! Grace and peace.