

FRIENDS FOR HEALTH IN HAITI



WORDS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN HAITI

“For on the day of trouble the Lord shall shelter me in safety; the Lord shall hide me in the secrecy of the holy place and set me high upon a rock.” Ps 27:5

Here in Haiti, we have been praying daily for safety as the level of political instability and violence has escalated. We have, indeed, been kept safe and we appreciate the prayers that you all have offered on our behalf. In this newsletter, we will discuss the present political situation and some of the factors that led to our being in such an unstable environment. And, we'll show you some of the areas of our ministry where we have been able to make progress, in spite of the problems in Jérémie and the rest of the country.

Dr. Catherine Wolf

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS HAPPENING IN HAITI?

The present state of insecurity, gang violence and lack of government's ability to function has been building in Haiti over the course of many years. It was exacerbated by the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021. Since that time, Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who was appointed by Moïse before his death, rules by decree.

According to its constitution, Haiti is governed by a President who is elected by the people for a five-year term. The President appoints a prime minister who is ratified by Parliament which consists of a 30 member Senate and 119 member Chamber of Deputies. When he/she doesn't govern well, the President removes them and replaces them with another prime minister, upon approval of Parliament.

President Jovenel Moïse was elected by the people of Haiti in 2015 but the election was fraught with problems so another election was held in 2016 and Moïse won that as well, in spite of low turnout. His presidency was marred by accusations of corruption and gang alliances, leading to protests in the streets of Port-au-Prince calling for his departure. In mid-2018 some of these protests spread to the rural areas such as Jérémie, leading to roadblocks and burning tires but the protests were usually short-lived and didn't significantly impact our work. In early March 2020, the US State Department designated Haiti as a Level 4 Security Level, advising Americans not to travel here due to political instability. That level has persisted up to the present time, with additional warnings against travel due to kidnapping and gang violence. (As a result of the Level 4, we have not had any visitors to our clinic since March 2020).



Tires burning on the streets of Jérémie



WHAT IN THE WORLD IS HAPPENING IN HAITI? continued

The terms for most lawmakers expired in early 2020 because parliamentary and local elections were canceled in 2019. Moïse replaced the prime minister frequently during his time in office but after 2020, there was no functioning Parliament so his appointees were unable to obtain parliamentary approval in keeping with the constitution. Thus, when he appointed Ariel Henry as prime minister prior to his assassination, it was through a decree published in the official state newspaper. After the assassination, the international community recognized Ariel Henry as the defacto leader of Haiti. In December 2022, he along with representatives from the political parties, civil society organizations and private sector signed an agreement to hold general elections in 2023 with a new government taking office in February 2024. Due to increasing gang activity, which most people think is due to support from the wealthy elite and politicians, and weakening of the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), elections have never taken place. The increasing insecurity, gang violence and paralysis of transportation and basic functioning have brought frustration and despair to the Haitian people.

When former police chief and paramilitary leader Guy Philippe returned to Haiti in November 2023 after serving a 6 year prison term in the US for drug charges, he was welcomed as a savior by the people. His calls for a popular revolution reverberated throughout the country and caused people to take to the streets to demonstrate against Ariel Henry and the present government. The protests began in mid-January 2024 in every town and city in Haiti. Protestors have totally shut down multiple streets coming in and out of Jérémie for the past several weeks, making it impossible for us to travel up and down the mountain to reach our clinic in Gâtineau. The protests quieted down recently, but Ariel Henry has refused to step down and let a transition government take over so we expect the situation to become worse again in the coming days and weeks. Henry is waiting for a multinational military force to come to Haiti, led by Kenya, to assist the Haitian police as they fight the gangs (who now control 80% of the capital of Port-au-Prince) and restore order to the country but most people here do not want the outside help (because it supports Henry). What they want is for the international community to convince Ariel Henry to step away and let Guy Philippe and his followers decide the future of their country. It's a complicated situation and we anxiously await the next steps.

Cherlie and I have remained in Haiti since we feel relatively safe at our home and at the clinic, when we are able to travel there. We consider it fortunate that we've been able to make some progress in our community development programs, thanks to our Community Coordinators, who you'll meet below.

Gemi Baptiste

Community Coordinator



Wilton Charles

Assistant
Community Coordinator



ANNUAL
BANQUET

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024

THE WISCONSIN CLUB
MILWAUKEE, WI

OUR DEDICATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Gemi Baptiste is our Community Coordinator and he is assisted by agronomist Wilton Charles. Gemi is trained as an electrician and an agriculture technician and he's been working with us since 2013. If anyone understands our philosophy of service to the Haitian people, it's Gemi. When he tells me (Dr. Wolf) how he answers questions posed by people in the communities regarding our work and our methodology, he sounds like he's repeating my own words! His responses show me he's truly internalized the philosophies into his own. For example, in our recent bean seed program, here are some of the responses to questions asked:

- No matter how things are set up, we can never satisfy everyone in the area.
- If a person can't help themselves, they can't be a beneficiary.
- In everything we do, there has to be participation by the person or the community because we won't do everything for a person.
- If a person gets our aid and doesn't do anything with it or sells it, he will never benefit from our help again.
- If the community or leaders don't do their work well or show corruption, they need to know that the institution (clinic) will leave the community.

We want our Community Development programs to empower people to help themselves. We come alongside them and help them but we don't do everything for them. It's obvious that our staff have learned these lessons themselves!

So, what do Gemi and Wilton do? They work with the Community Promoters in our Water and Sanitation Program in doing hygiene teaching, building latrines and capping water sources. They also work with the promoters in distribution and use of materials in relief programs such as our recent Earthquake Relief Program. Each community in which we work sets up committees to choose recipients of our programs. Then, the promoters and Gemi and Wilton make sure that the materials are distributed as planned and that the beneficiaries are using the materials to actually do the work (building latrines, repairing latrines, repairing houses, etc.). As such, there are two levels of supervision with reports that come back to the clinic.

Gemi and Wilton oversee the supervisors in the 8 communities where we have our Goat Program and work with the veterinary technician on mobile clinics and annual vaccination campaigns. They do the training and supervision of our Agriculture Program (giving black bean seeds for planting) in communities up in the mountains. They have spreadsheets to enter into the computer and weekly reports on their activities. They help with maintenance of the electrical system at the clinic and the water pump and filter system.



Gemi conducting educational session for recipients of our bean seed program



Wilton examining a latrine that was repaired through our Earthquake Relief Program



Veterinary mobile clinic for goats in our Goat Program

WAYS TO PURCHASE TICKETS OR A TABLE
 ONLINE: <http://bidpal.net/fhhbanquet2024>



GIVING MORE BEAN SEEDS

We're conducting our Agriculture Program again this year by giving farmers black bean seeds in 6 new communities, 2 for each of 3 planting seasons. The first two communities were given their seeds in January with 250 recipients, each receiving 4 cans of beans. They first attended an educational session led by Gemi and Wilton, ate a meal of rice, beans and meat prepared by local community women and then received their seeds. Both of the communities were ones in which we had not previously worked and they were very grateful to be the beneficiaries of our generosity. We're praying for a good harvest in a few months so their families will be able to send their children to school, put food on the table and have some money for family expenses. It's our way of helping to strengthen rural Haitian families.



Farmers in Cochoix gather for an educational session prior to receiving bean seeds



Plates of rice, beans and goat meat await participants in the seed program



Bean seed recipients patiently wait their turn to receive their 4 cans of bean seeds

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH

With an eye to future sustainability of our organization, and in an effort to decrease the burden of responsibility on Dr. Wolf, Friends for Health in Haiti recently embarked on a journey to recruit a new US-based Executive Director. This person will become the new face of FHH, responsible for the organization's finances, programs and development. Dr. Wolf and Cherie will continue to manage the Haiti operations with a long-term goal of having other physicians and administrative personnel taking over most of the daily work. We appreciate your prayers as we move the organization forward, desiring to put in place those people who have been called by the Lord to serve in this manner.



WATER and SANITATION PROGRAM

We're excited to renew our collaboration with faculty and students at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing to advance our Water and Sanitation Program. JHSON will be helping us standardize our curriculum for training new Community Promoters and will help us develop tools for monitoring and evaluation of the program. For now, our work will be virtual due to the insecurity in Haiti but we're hoping to have students and faculty come help us out in person in the future.

Dr. Diana Baptiste, JHSON faculty and FHH board member studying water and sanitation teaching booklet 2016

