

Haiti Journey April 2021 by Tim Persons

This is both an UMVIM Journey report from the North Coast of Haiti (EOC 9947) and a personal reelection by Tim Persons, member at Church of The Saviour in Cleveland Heights. There is no attempt to separate the two. It is a shortened report from the original document to protect people's identity and to entice the reader to come and see for themselves! The hope is to inform and inspire new partnerships in Haiti. -Rev. Kathy Dickriede, Director of Missions and Community Engagement

Tom Sperl, Blair Porter, Mary and I visited Dondon, Latannerie, and Cap Haitien April 22-29. Bishop Dorcelly, Pastor Seraphin, and David Dreager were notified we were coming - along with several other trusted friends in the Cap area, for awareness and safety.

We had a wonderful visit - no illness, beautiful daytime weather, no significant changes of plan or delays (a rarity), days filled with students, parents, families, siblings, teachers, friends, friends of friends, new acquaintances, fresh food, fresh juices, pool parties, music, laughter, evening breezes, intentional conversation, discernment, learning ever more kreyol, and love.

I also came away with a sense that things are better in Haiti this year, at least in the North. We read a lot about the unrest, gangs, kidnappings, and political strife in Port au Prince, in the North, it has been a relatively stable year for the kids, schools have operated with only a few short disruptions due to protest or heavy rain.

We see continued investment in the North.

The electrification of Dondon. The electricity worked.

The beautiful plaza in the center of Dondon.

The continued construction of a wide boulevard in Cap Haitain on Route 3.

The clearing of the squatters slum down on the inlet.

The beginnings of a park and lighted walkway there (not diminishing the impact on the displaced squatters, but focusing on the overall better management of the city assets and infrastructure).

Cap Haitien streets were relatively clean.

Stores and markets were open.

Gasoline was plentiful.

People talked positively about their lives.

The underlying dysfunction and inequity and exploitation and unemployment have not changed. But, I sensed a hopeful attitude among those I spent my week with.

Facilities and Infrastructure: We spent time at the Dondon School and at Methodist School at Latannerie where East Ohio churches support scholarship. In partnership with the North Coast of Haiti, Church of the Saviour has successfully raised \$35,400 for a complete rip off and replacement of the Dondon Church roof. This was announced by Fr Muller St Vil the lay pastor during the service we attended on Sunday in Dondon. We expect the work to start this summer.

We visited with all of our scholarship kids.

S. is healthy and is studying hard to do well on the National Exam that follows in July. He has a tutor for chemistry after school and Saturdays; chemistry is his problem subject. We visited several times with Elcie his mom, and Yolcie his little sister who is in 6th grade at the Baptist School in Dondon.

J. is a serious student, has scored over a 7 the first two tri-mesters (7s are rare on Haitian report cards), and aspires to be the laureate of his graduating class. He is also a leader on the College Modele Student Council. J. mother also walked down to the Auberge (quite a hike from their house in Brostaj) to visit with us one day. She is also at the Baptist School in class NS3, seeking to finish the high school education that she could not do in her youth. This is a family that values education.

N. is a serious student and sets high standards for herself. It runs in her family. She scored just under a 7 last trimester and has a goal to score 7 or better for the year-end. N. also has a chemistry tutor (her problem subject) as well as physics and math after school and on Saturdays. N. is healthy and full of ambition. She does not like idle time; during the school closures last year she found an informatics school (computers, windows, excel and the like) and went there for 10 Saturdays and earned a certificate. She also learned to sew during the peyi lock shutdown last year.

And there is a report about all of the scholarship students they support that is filled with personal stories and personalities, hopes and dreams! Contact Tim Persons if you want to read more stories and see how you can be involved in these lives.

persons@gmail.com or Blair Porter blairbear72320002@gmail.com or Tom Sperl tsperl13@gmail.com . They are eager to hear from you!