Fourth Mission Trip to Haiti (Operation Go)

Our fourth mission trip to Haiti was without our leader, Michelle Bertram, due to her becoming a Mom and having to pick up her adopted baby, Asa, in Las Vegas, NV (what a blessing). However, we were in the very capable leadership of Ann Berendt and Michael Bertram as our co-leaders.

We landed in Port au Prince, Haiti about 1 PM on Monday, March 25th, 2013. We maneuvered through customs and then what a joy to see the friendly faces of our driver and interpreters, as well as their warm hugs. Our bags and carry-on were loaded and we were on our way, in our limo for the week, to the guest house. Warm hugs again greeted us at the guest house.

After unloading our baggage, we traveled to the Choaids Orphanage for a short visit to see the children, the workers, and Fan Fan. They were so excited to see us. While there we took some measurements for the forthcoming projects to be done.

We then returned to the guest house where Vivian had a delicious meal waiting for us. After a short team meeting we were all ready to retire after the long day.

On Tuesday, March 26th, after Bible Study and breakfast, our driver and interpreters were ready to take us shopping for the materials needed to complete the work at the orphanage. In Haiti this is a very time consuming task. As we stopped at a bank to have our US currency exchanged to Haitian Gouds, across the street was the US Embassy. Carol and Ann walked down the street to get a picture of our Embassy, with the verbiage visible. This was a “No, No”, and the security guards came out and warned us not to. As we waited in the Mall parking lot, on the truck, they sent a patrol over to drive through and check on us. We did not want to get into a Haitian jail. I am thankful they did not check my camera.

After lunch the men delivered the materials and began the work at the orphanage. The women stayed behind at the guest house and sorted through the donated items, to be delivered in upcoming travels.

Wednesday, March 27th, on our way to help lay the floor in Berlin’s house, we stopped to see Kalipsos’ home. This home we have aided in building financially. Kalipso’s sister, who is a nurse, has opened a clinic/pharmacy in the porch of the home to serve the community. We were pleased to see how well his home has worked out for him and his family.

A young Hidden Valley Church member has helped earn money to build a home in Haiti. The funding she had earned has been applied to Berlin and her family’s home. Berlin and her brothers and sister lost their parents and grandparents in the earthquake. Berlin was injured as well. We worked very hard in the heat delivering buckets of cement to the Haitian mason laying the floor. We formed a bucket team, passing the bucket of cement from one to the other. We were joined by a group of neighborhood boys who we welcomed to our bucket team. They were the return bucket team. During the free time we enjoyed forming a relationship with them. We sang and tried to learn Creole with them. They also enjoyed Jim’s Trail Mix.

After dinner we celebrated Kalipso’s birthday with a birthday cake and candle. Kalipso is 30 years old and this was his first birthday cake. He was so happy about the cake that he took some for his mother and family.

That evening after the hot sun and work we were ready to retire.

Thursday, March 28th began with a visit to the TB/Aids ward of General Hospital for the women team members, where we delivered the sheets, pillow cases and towels that had been donated, as well as a cash donation. We met with Doctor Coffee, who handles the Choaids Orphans when they are ill and in need of hospitalization. The hospital does not provide sheets, towels or food to the patients. This must be provided by the parents. Since the orphans do not have parents to provide these needs, Doctor Coffee has a mission to do so. We found this unit to be very, very crowded and with severely ill patients. Doctor Coffee sees on the average of 75 patients per day. The building is similar to a pole barn or machine shed here in the USA.

After visiting the TB/Aids unit, we went shopping for appliances for the orphanage. That afternoon we had delivered to the orphanage a freezer, television and a bunk bed with mattresses.

The men worked all day on installing window screens and the kitchen cabinet doors. When the men had finished, Fan Fan, manager of the orphanage, invited the team to a delicious dinner at his home. The meat that evening was goat.

Friday, March 29th, we had two trucks to take the orphans and workers, as well as the team, to the beach. This was a long and tiring trip but the team and children had a great day in the ocean. This was a beautiful site, however, very rocky. We provided a fish or chicken dinner to each. After the meal, Pastor Maxeau had a Good Friday service on the beach for the children, workers, and team members. At the end of the service Pastor Maxeau asked if any child would like to invite Jesus into their heart. Four children came forward and we prayed over them. This was a great ending to a special day. The trip back was long with very tired children.

Saturday, March 30th- This day we delivered Easter outfits for each child to the orphanage. The plan is to take the children to church at AFCA on Easter Sunday. After distribution of the clothing, Barbie’s, and toys, we sang with the children from the Bookmarks that had been handed out. The children enjoyed singing Jesus Loves Me and Jesus Loves the Little Children of the World with help from Berlin. She had them singing in the English version and they loved it. They liked the English over the Haitian Creole. She had the girls sing one stanza, the boys the next, and then joined together for the chorus.

The boys enjoyed playing catch with Jean, as well as dancing and putting puzzles together with team members. The children also did a service for the tent city children, by coloring 300 Easter Bags, to be filled with food items for the children to be handed out on Easter. They wrote messages, enjoyed the project, and did a great job.

The men completed the projects at the orphanage. Once back at the guesthouse each team member signed birthday cards for each child at the orphanage. These are to be given to the child on their birthday by Fan Fan.

Sunday, March 31st – Easter Sunday was an early rise. After our Bible study and breakfast, the women team members went to AFCA to prepare the Easter Bags for the tent city children. Vivian and her team had boiled 300 eggs for us and purchased bananas. Without their help this project would not have been possible for us. Pastor Renes and Monique organized the children and performed a short service with singing and prayer. Ann explained what was happening and that we were there to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, how He loved the children, and how we loved them. Each child was then given an Easter Bag, a toy, and a drink.

We then attended the Easter Service with Pastor Renes. The children from Choaids were in attendance. Pastor Renes introduced the children as well as our team. Ann made a short speech as to why we were there, thanked them for having us, and blessed them.

After the service we walked through the tent city. We have been told that within two months all people in the tent cities in Haiti will be moved into homes. We met the 80+ year old Blondie who we had built a tent for on our first trip to Haiti. She was doing well and some of our team members helped her with some cash. We went to visit Kirby and see how his chicken project, which we started on our second trip to Haiti, was doing. Kirby looked well and he stated that he had lost some of his chickens due to sickness and that he had sold some to purchase a goat. The goat then was stolen.

The men traveled to the foothills to visit Pastor Maxeau’s church, The Valley of Hope Church, and his projects. Each were impressed with the many projects and the five churches he has in that area. They now hold school in a building and not a tent as it was on our last visit. A chicken coup is now being built, more like we had originally planned, and the original coup will now be used as a kitchen for the church and school. He has a number of men who are trained and able to hold services to support him in his mission.

We returned to the orphanage where we passed out Easter Bags filled with goodies to the children.

This was our last visit with the children. Sad goodbyes were made.

Our last long trip in our limo (the truck) took place after returning to the guest house, over very rough roads (streets). We drove out to see Pastor Renes’s project Siloe, where he hopes to build a church and a clinic.  We helped build the wall for this project on our last visit to Haiti. He has the school already active with 40 students. These are students whose families are not able, financially, to send them to the other area schools. The need is great for the education of the people and this is Pastor Renes’ passion. This is his fourth little community he has organized that includes schools to educate the people.

From Siloe we traveled quite a distance to see Vivian’s home (in progress) and take some pictures she wanted for Michelle. She is progressing very well with her home. On the way we saw many signs of improvement in Haiti, such as the new road being built.

As we traveled through Port au Prince, we did see signs of the country rebuilding. We saw many new buildings going up, streets being rebuilt and cleaned up, the damaged Parliament building down and debris taken away with much improvement at the airport. Transformers have been built to improve electrical issues and this is a donation from the country of Venezuela.

The next day, Monday, April 1st we did our final packing for our trip back home. Flight time was 1:00 PM.

Our trip was successful with all our planned projects completed and many persons touched along the way. We thank God for our safe trip and for keeping us healthy. We ask him to be with the people of Haiti and let them grow in His love and that they feel our love and concern each day. We were really blessed by God in getting Michael’s keys to him before our flight took off. This was a miracle in such a short time available.

Our debriefing took place in the airport in Newark, NJ, during our layover. Each of us felt a special time during our trip and we each grew in some way. We have grown more attached to the Choaids children, love them, and wanted to bring them home with us.

We are all thankful to God for the opportunity to witness God’s love to the people of Haiti on this Mission Trip.

