

OFCB Ministries, Bayonnais, Haiti – A Brief History

In the summer of 1984, Helen Hunter of Charlotte, NC, traveled to Haiti to visit her daughter, Heather, who was volunteering at EbenEzer Mission near Gonaïves, Haiti. When Helen arrived in Haiti she had no inkling of what lay in store for her during the following years. After she returned to Charlotte, EbenEzer's founding minister came to visit the Hunters and Helen introduced him to her church's mission chairman. From that meeting a work group of 43 members went to EbenEzer in the summer of 1985 for a week of work on the mission. While they were there, an American missionary working at EbenEzer went to each member of the work group and asked if they would sponsor a child's education. Standing with the missionary was a young man and Helen asked if he had a sponsor. When told he did not, she said she would sponsor him. So from that time on, the Hunters sponsored Actionnel Fleurisma through his schooling, a year of accounting in Gonaïves, and 2 years of attending CPCC while living with them. It was during these two years (1990-1992) that Actionnel became a charter member of the newly-formed South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church (SMPC), along with the Hunters.

The School

One of the most treasured aspirations of the Haitian people is to obtain an education. Helen Hunter, who is a teacher, tells of her first time walking into a classroom there. Spontaneously every student rose!

After completing his studies, Actionnel returned to Haiti, married his sweetheart, and began a family. He also felt called to start a school and in late 1993, he together with Dimilsaint Mondelus, Firmin Saint-Louis, Lucner Saint-Louis and Saint-Victor Sejour in co-founded a school in their childhood neighborhood in the mountain region of Bayonnais. At first they had 105 students and 3 teachers. There was no building, so they used a vacant Roman Catholic building the first year. The second year found them in a makeshift school of banana leaf mats. Other classes were held under the beautiful mango trees. Each year the number of students grew by leaps and bounds. Searching for a way to build a school building, they found a Canadian organization in Port-au-Prince willing to fund a building. The organization gave half the money promised and the building was begun. After ascertaining that the money was being spent correctly they gave the other half and a five-classroom school building was born.

The Church

During the early days, Actionnel attended seminary in Limbé and was ordained as a minister. From left over school building materials, they built a small cinder block church. Many souls have been saved. One of those souls was Actionnel's own father.

A new and much larger church building was erected and completed in 2001-2003. Major support was provided by First Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, SMPC and First Baptist

Church of Huntersville. It is also used for education classes during the week and for community meetings. The smaller church building houses classes as well.

Continued Success

At this writing, they still are using the small school and church buildings, but the mission continues to grow. The student body in December, 2006, numbered 1,528 students with three kindergarten sections plus grades 1-13. In addition, the Professional Women's School has 10 adults enrolled and there is an Adult School with 30 enrolled (for those who were unable to go to school as children). The school has 50 teachers and another 10 of other school staff. Over the years SMPC started and maintained a sponsorship program, funded a multipurpose building with 4 bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, dining area and a large classroom. The building is used for retreats, mission work groups, and will be used for computer classes soon.

Two churches in Gastonia and Boone provided a large electrical generator since there is no power within miles of the Bayonnais Christian School and mission. Engineers Without Borders added a solar power system to keep electricity costs as low as possible. EWB also is assisting OFCB and the community with a bridge over a nearby river. Internet via satellite was added in mid-2006.

Long range plan for a medical clinic

In 1999, OFCB dared to plan to bring medical treatment to Bayonnais. They sent a promising young man to medical school, and bought a piece of land on which eventually to build a clinic. That long range plan will come to fruition in 2-3 years at the end of his medical education. At that time, they hope to build a clinic to give medical help which is now only available some 15 miles away across mountain terrain.

Results!

The quality of the school can be judged from the substantially above average performance of students in the mandatory national exams at the end of 6th, 9th, 12th and 13th grades. In 2003, all nine of the first graduating class were sent off to Haitian colleges. One of them will be the second doctor. Others will be agronomists, high school teachers and other vital functions.

In 2004, a local bank was started, and a small business loan facility began to help capital-poor single person businesses to grow. It has been very successful.

Ten students from the 2005 high school graduating class joined those in college. Career intentions of these people include: teaching high school science, language and kindergarten, dentistry, nursing and lab technician. An assistant minister for the church is in seminary. All of the college students are under written contract to return and work for OFCB (15 years for

the doctors, 10 years for all others).

And so, the Lord's work continues at Bayonnais, giving children and their families hope through education, food for the nourishment of their physical bodies (one meal per school day), and preaching and teaching of God's Word.

The Future

The future can be a greatly enlarged version of the past, bringing hope in an area of 80,000 neglected people, This future would include a much broader education, expanded college enrollment, trade school courses, real medical treatment for the people, a growing economy (up from a strictly agrarian economy now) and a growing presence of the church in the valley and mountains of Bayonnais.

To have this happen will require substantial support beyond what can be raised just by those who have helped so far. There are many opportunities: prayer support, financial support for the school and the growing group of college students, technical help (computer/ Internet education, farming improvements), visitors to cheer them on and help with short term projects, founding of businesses that can use the increasing pool of educated young people and many other possibilities.

Haiti: Actionnel Fleurisma, OFCB Ministries HYPERLINK "mailto:yargagiv64@yahoo.fr"
yargagiv64@yahoo.fr from US 011 509 437-6189

U.S. Contact: David Nichols (Matthews, NC) 704 847-3059 HYPERLINK
"mailto:david5cents@aol.com" david5cents@aol.com

September 7, 2007

BLOG & VIDEOS FROM BAYONNAIS (Peter B. Daniel)

<http://peterbdaniel.wordpress.com/>

www.peterbdaniel.com