

# Trip to Haiti – November 15-20

by Mary Friedman, Haiti Committee; photos by Pedge Daniels

On Saturday, November 15, at 4:00 am Mark Pohlman, Lucy Cassells, Pedge Daniels, Rev. Kelly Gallagher, Matt Friedman and myself as well as Pauline Bassett and Judy Sherman from First Churches in Northampton, set out for a five day trip to Haiti. We carried twenty nursing kits with twenty copies of “Where Women Have No Doctor” in Creole, medical teaching supplies, cans of chalkboard paint, chalk and erasers, and school supplies and toys. Our Haitian “shepherd” for the week, retired Global Ministries missionary Daniel Gourdet, was once again our Creole translator and guide. Daniel and Dr. Kim Bentrott (our newly arrived missionary) met us at the airport in Port-Au-Prince. Rev. Patrick Bentrott, Kim’s husband, was sick and resting back at Wall’s Guest House. (Fortunately Patrick was well on his way to recovery by the time we left. The Bentrotts will live at the Guest House until February when they plan to move into their own house.)



During meetings with Pastor Patrick Villier and his wife Francois we learned that a new umbrella organization of Haitian Protestant churches has been formed. A major goal of this group is to press for justice and equal government recognition of these Protestant churches in an historically Catholic country. A big march is planned for February 14 to highlight this cause. In other news, Pastor Patrick told us that sixteen nursing students will graduate in mid-February, 2009, and that the school is moving toward accreditation. We presented Pastor Villier with a sample nursing kit which will be given to each of these students upon graduation.

Our trip was very full. On Sunday we split up to attend two separate church services. Although the services were in Creole, the spirited preaching



and beautiful music were very inspiring. Rev. Gallagher preached at the service she attended, bringing a message of partnership and hope. We taught classes at the CONASPEH School. Matt spoke to high school students about depression. Mark taught nursing students about dislocation of hip, knee, shoulder, and fingers, and I taught them about rehydration drinks, malnutrition, and first aid for bleeding and shock. Pedge worked with the computer class and was our still picture photographer. Rev. Kelly filmed each day’s activities for her documentary on Haiti. Lucy worked with Kim in the clinic. Judy taught the nursing students about disabilities. Judy



and Pauline did an art project with the fourth graders and brought school supplies donated by Brownie groups and Sunday Schools. They also donated a number of Bibles in Creole for Patrick Bentrott's use with the seminary students. The \$8-\$10,000 provided by First Church each of the past four years has enabled more than 100 additional students to attend this school.

The young students at CONASPEH were all neatly dressed in their blue and white uniforms. Many of the girls wore bright ribbons in their hair. We watched them say grace before their lunch of cornflakes and milk, perhaps their only meal of the day. We distributed vitamins.



One day we had a bumpy but wonderful trip up into the hills above the city in an open truck bed. We visited an orphanage, a Baptist Mission compound, and enjoyed some beautiful scenery and fresh air!

We visited Carrefour (really part of the megalopolis that is Port-Au-Prince) where Matt and I had a class with pastors and seminarians on depression and post traumatic stress disorder.



The pastors are on the front lines of dealing with the grief that has accompanied the four hurricanes which swept through Haiti as well as the recent school collapse that killed 94 children and injured many more. While in Carrefour, we also visited the clinic where Dr. Kim works on Wednesdays. This amazing young woman works all day with the nurse from CONASPEH, Madame Fano, seeing patients with no translator and virtually no supplies!



The recent disasters in Haiti were the topic of a live radio talk show in which several of us participated. The host of the show, Pastor Guy, also asked about our recent Presidential election and President-Elect Obama.

On our last night we had a time of sharing and an intimate communion service led by Reverend Kelly and Patrick Bentrott. We shared much laughter and a few tears during our five days with this brave and inspiring missionary couple. (Check out their blog at [www.kimandpatrick.blogspot.com](http://www.kimandpatrick.blogspot.com).) It is difficult to summarize a trip which is so deeply moving and which leaves us with images that linger long, long after our return. Haiti is a land with such incongruities, but its people possess a contagious spirit. We receive from this experience "full measure, pressed down and overflowing." We are not the same as we were before.

