

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways", says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9

Our Haiti team has not yet been back in The Dalles for 24 hours, so my thoughts are coming to you without much time to recede, or to be crowded out by "normal" life. They are sitting at the top of my mind, mingling with the pictures, experiences and emotions of the trip. As happens every year that I've gone to Haiti, I am struck anew by the magnitude of the needs, the beauty of the people, the hardness of life, and the resilience of spirit in the midst of it all. God is surely in it all, and that is what energizes, sustains and gives hope to our team as well as to those we visited.

On this trip, in response to the requests of the teachers last year, our educators worked with the teachers of the younger children, particularly to address how to teach the children who were struggling, and not keeping up. Diane Walworth and Melanie Reaves spent three days working with the head teachers of the classes K-2, specifically focusing on ways to engage the children in reading, and to help them learn both reading skills and thinking skills.

It is amazing to see people learn, and by the end of the three days of teaching, it was apparent that some of the teachers did indeed, "get it". That alone would have been cause for Hallelujahs....but icing on that cake came on the next day, our last day to go to the school, when a group of teachers came in to view the new library. The school clerk, followed by administrators, followed by four of the teachers who had received training, came into Pere Noe's office to find sturdy new bookshelves (built while we were there) filled with books that Diane had specially chosen to be the foundation of the reading program.

One after another, delight filled their faces, and as they took the books off the shelves to look and read, I could just about see the golden glow of the Holy Spirit spilling over onto all of us...truly, it felt like we had been up against insurmountable odds against succeeding in any way....and yet, God's ways were not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts....and His ways and thoughts brought refreshment of spirit, joy, and the possibility and hope of real and lasting improvements. Diane will tell more of this story, but let me just tell you how very proud I am of Diane and Melanie and Ron for the work they did, and for the lasting effects that their faithfulness to persevere in spite of daunting obstacles will yield.

One of the most compelling stories that emerged from our time in Cap Haitien happened quite by chance...or *was* it chance? One afternoon, Pere Noe showed us around the vocational school, the new clinic for making and fitting prosthetics, and then took us to see the rehabilitation clinic. It happened that there was a very young boy there, Andy, 6 years old; Andy has a smile to melt an iceberg! He was at the clinic for help with learning to walk, despite lack of balance. He has a tumor in his brain, and the diagnosis and treatment of that tumor cannot take place in Haiti. He needs help from outside of Haiti....and we happened to be there, to meet him. Hmmm. We didn't look for this, plan for it, or have any of the skills or contacts needed to help....and yet, we were there. We hoped that maybe, some way, we might be able to bring Andy's situation to the attention of Dr. Paul Farmer, in Cange-remember *Mountains Beyond Mountains*? A long shot, for sure....but, God's ways are not our ways....His thoughts are not our thoughts...we prayed that God's will be done.

On the final two days of the stay in Cap Haitien, Ron was able to meet up with several groups who provide water- drilling, repairing wells and pumps, putting in purification systems...more trips may be in his future! One of the groups he worked with will install a water purification system at the school we have been working with- and in talking to the team who came to do the assessment and make the proposal for the system, Ron told them of our little boy, Andy. It just happened that one of the water team members has a son who knows Paul Farmer well....he will personally deliver our letter about Andy to Dr. Farmer. Unbelievable! We will continue to pursue the leads God is putting before us to try to get help for this young boy... how awesome it is, to feel the hand of God.

On our last day in Cap Haitien, after the stop at the school for the unveiling of the library, we traveled to the rural village of Terrier Rouge. Just outside the village in a community called Village of Hope, where the people live in small concrete homes built by Food for the Poor, we were able to distribute the 20 dresses that Lana Tepfer showed us at the Haiti Dinner. The dresses were enthusiastically and thankfully received- what a joy it was to give them and to know that they will be worn with delight.

As Fr. Noe, Ron, Diane, Melanie and I reviewed the trip, and shared the stories and experiences that touched our hearts, provided insight or encouragement or showed need for addressing problems, we each realized how much more God gave us than we had any idea to ask for or imagine. God's ways are *not* our ways, and His thoughts are *not* our thoughts....they are so much bigger! God has invited us to put aside our own understanding, and to trust that God's plans for each of us is for *good* for us....as the people of Haiti continually show us, trust in God brings ~~the~~ hope into the most difficult situations imaginable. WE ALL face situations that seem futile, from time to time...but God extends an invitation to see beyond the futility and into the hope and life that only God can bring.

Hold on to Hope. Hold on to God. Thanks be to God, we can say these words to each other and know that they are in fact God's words to us. Hold on tight!

*May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 15:13*

Janet+

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6