

Asaph

Christmas 2021

UPDATE

Presenting Christ in a Rural Haitian Community...One Lesson at a Time

From: Andy

Greetings from Haiti! As I sit down to write these lines, it is hard to say what will be happening in Haiti by the time you are reading them. In my time here on this island, Haiti has gone from being a calm but poor island into being a society perched on the edge of anarchy. Sin is winning the day.

The government has always been aloof. Now, we aren't even sure the government even exists...on paper maybe. Gangs rule the capital city and decide much of what happens and doesn't happen in the country.

Still, life goes on for the 10 million people who live here. It is harder to plan ahead. Young people have more reasons than ever to detest their futures.

Some might take this opportunity to pack up and go home. I feel the opposite way. The people with whom I live and work deserve as much hope as they can get. God's message of grace and love is as relevant as ever. He gives hope where there really is none. He gives peace in the midst of turmoil...in the country we call Haiti.

ASAPH STORIES :

(Names changed for privacy reasons)

- 1) Albert is a teenager. As such, he has been mostly all about himself lately. God works in teenagers, though. Last week I spent an hour with him. He was helping me with a task, and he genuinely made my job easier. He was calm, mature, and balanced. I came away impressed. It is a special moment in the life of a young man when he begins to see others before himself.
- 2) Carl and Jimmy, I found out last month, have been enemies for years. If one is present somewhere, the other is absent. I spoke with them about it. There was no immediate change. After a few weeks, they did sit together in a rehearsal. Last week, I came upon the two of them sitting together playing trombone...just the two of them. I just smiled. They did too.
- 3) Laura and Julie are about 15. Young ladies in Haiti tend NOT to show much leadership. They hide talents as well. These two young ladies are beginning to excel on several musical instruments, and are willing to stand up front and lead certain activities. Their confidence is flowering.

Asaph is a safe place for people to grow. God built us to grow, and growth glorifies Him !

“THE HOLIDAYS” IN HAITI:

I have often spent the Christmas holiday season in Haiti over the years...probably more often than not. People in Haiti, as in the USA, seem to feel that Christmas in the old days was better than today. It might be simple nostalgia. I don't know. I wasn't here then...until 1992 anyway.

When I first arrived in Haiti the churches made Christmas a huge deal. Music groups worked for months preparing special music. Some churches had a special Christmas Eve service that ran until midnight. Others celebrated on the 25th, or even the 26th. In our town, the churches organized the services so that a person would not have to miss one to attend the other.

Those grand services no longer take place in our area. When churches learned that Jesus was most likely NOT born on December 25th, and that the date was selected to replace a pagan holiday, they pretty much ran away from the holiday altogether. Years ago our congregation would sing Christmas carols on Sunday mornings beginning in December. Now, we don't sing them. Young people do not even know them. It is a tradition about to be lost.

Christmas in many countries is more of a raucous celebration than a silent night. Haiti is like that. **Firecrackers** are part of every evening in December. Kids make their own. Adults make seriously dangerous versions. It is not uncommon for a shot to ring out whenever a crowd gathers. People who are faint of heart avoid being in the street on December evenings.

I remember a specific Christmas evening service at our church. I was playing piano while our choir sang a song that we had worked on for weeks. The piano was situated under a window. It was getting late. The level of mischief was rising outside the church. In the middle of the song, I heard a bang from just outside the window and simultaneously smelled gun powder. A second later dust and debris were floating down onto my fingers while I played. At that moment, I made the firm decision to spend Christmas in PA the next year.

December is a special month for those who practice Voudou (often misspelled voodoo). Many people in this community feel obliged to make sacrifices to dead family members during the month of December. For them, it is a way to **purchase peace for the coming year**. According to those who serve the spirits, a dead ancestor who is placated with gifts will not want to reek havoc in your life.

National Geographic and many other “scientific” publications love to refer to Haitian Voudou as a quaint, peaceful, and traditional way to address life. They speak of lively ceremonies and devotion. They never mention the people that use Voudou to kill each other. They never mention the fear and dread many people deal with because of Voudou. They never mention the slavery that binds people their whole life long. They never mention the possessions that turn healthy young people into near animals.

Christmas is all about the arrival of a Savior who delivers **true peace**. The Divine Baby grows, teaches, performs miracles and lives in pure Love. Then He purchases our freedom from sin with His own death. That is Good News. That is Christmas. That is the message we live and preach here at Asaph Teaching Ministry in Pas-bwa-dòm, Haiti.

Thanks for being a part of what we do.

Lives are changing. Light is shining. Love is growing.



CHRISTMAS WITH the ASAPH BRASS BAND



*The First Noel Emmanuel Mary's Boy Child
Felix Navidad O Holy Night Silent Night
Jingle Bells Il Est Ne Le Divin Enfant L'Esprit de Noel*



The ASAPH Brass Band celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ with a couple of Sunday afternoon concerts, one in *Labaleine* and another in *La Hatte Jolibois*.

The subject of the concert is the arrival of our Lord as Savior...the manger, the shepherds, the angels, Mary and the Baby. GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO!

The concert ends with a few songs about His impending return as Judge :
SOON AND VERY SOON WE ARE GOING TO SEE THE LORD and I'LL FLY AWAY!



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“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever.”

Psalm 118:1

Tax deductible contributions can be made to:

ASAPH Teaching Ministry

Mail to:

Christ Lutheran Church
c/o ASAPH Teaching Ministry
126 W. Main St.
Dallastown, PA 17313

Phone: (717) 244-2605

www.asaphteachingministry.com



E-mail: andyclairstump@yahoo.com

Cell in Haiti: 011-509-3872-8186

Cell in USA: 717-719-9085

The official registration and financial information of Asaph Teaching Ministry may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



JR. YOUTH - MEXICAN TRAIN

FRUIT from YESTERDAY?

Many of the first twenty years I spent in Haiti were spent working in a primary school. We worked hard to make school both fun and educational. We organized spelling bee's. We organized science fairs. We had annual geography and math competitions.

Those special events made a great impression on many students at our school, but sadly the events did not continue.

Those students are now teachers and leaders in area schools. A few are serving here beside me at ASAPH Teaching Ministry as well. WEC is one of them. Soccer coach Jude is another.

We are making plans to introduce those activities to local schools once again. The beauty of this is that I don't have to tell the leaders how beneficial this kind of program can be. They lived the events as children. They are proof.

This is an exciting opportunity for ASAPH to become more involved in academic education...through young teachers who are engaged with schools. Help us to pray for the development of this dream.

Many good projects take time. I continue to be amazed at the projects God makes happen around me. His plan is marvelous, even if it takes more time than we would be willing to spend had He trusted us to know the plan!

SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH A FRIEND.

JOIN AMAZON SMILE, CHOOSE ASAPH AS YOUR CHARITY, AND EVERY AMAZON PURCHASE YOU MAKE MEANS MONEY IN OUR HANDS.