

Mission Minute—Hartsocks in Haiti

by Charlotte Hartsock



Francois, Dr. Destiny, Seth Bowman,
Michael Smanz, Langdon



The Riverbed market in Bonne Finn



The whole team at sunset

South Carolina Orthopedic Association's foundation supports three orthopedic residencies by sending a team every other month to Hospital Lumière in Bonne Fin, Haiti. MUSC goes twice a year. My husband Langdon had gone there in 2010 after the earthquake, so I was excited to be able to go back with him for a week this past January. Besides Langdon and myself, there were 7 other members of our missionary team: Dr. Robert Belding and his wife Ann of Columbia (she is a junior at Wofford doing her interim project); Seth Bowman, a chief orthopedic resident at MUSC; Michael Smanz, an OR nurse; and Dr. Destiny and Francois, two Haitian residents.

Bonne Fin is located high in the mountains of Southern Haiti, a 5-hour car ride from Port-au-Prince. Bonne Fin is a beautifully lush place. The temperatures are 10-20 degrees cooler than in Port-au-Prince making it a fairly ideal place in Haiti to care for the sick. Hospital Lumière was founded in 1976 to help alleviate suffering and disease which is very common in Haiti. After the earthquake of 2010, Hospital Lumière almost closed down. MEBSH, the Haitian organization that now owns the hospital, appealed to World Relief for assistance, and together they were able to keep the hospital open.

The travel from Port-au-Prince to Bonne Fin was harrowing. We spent 5 hours driving from the airport to the hospital, swerving and passing cars, donkeys, chickens, children, ladies with water buckets on their heads, and men carrying sacks of charcoal. There were many times I just could not look as the driver confidently passed a moto or a slow-moving truck on a curve in the left lane. Luckily for all, our driver honked at just the right moment to alert those in our path to get out of the way. We arrived safely late in the day on Sunday, January 14, and all 9 of us stayed in one guest house. Our supper was a pumpkin soup, traditionally served to welcome guests on their first night at Hospital Lumière.

Each day after breakfast we met in the hospital chapel for a worship service. We sang songs, read the gospel, and the hospital chaplain gave a short sermon in Creole. Our new favorite song is Bezwèn Jezu. Langdon operated all day, saw patients in the clinic, and taught the Haitian residents. I helped in the hospital with Jimmy, the physical therapist, and worked with Ann Belding in the clinics seeing patients. I was also able to spend time with the American missionaries at a private school in Bonne Fin. The school had no electricity and no running water, but the children were neat, clean, and healthy.

Hospital Lumière is run by missionaries from the Apostolic Christian Church. These missionaries move their families and commit to living in Bonne Fin for 5 years. During our trip, the missionaries were able to show us some of the Haitian culture by taking us to Les Cayes, a large city about an hour from Bonne Fin, and also to a very small town nearby that had an open market in a dry river bed. The way of life is amazing.

Our mission trip to Hospital Lumière in Haiti was humbling and certainly increased my faith in Jesus.