

Our Savior Lutheran Church  
Bettendorf, Iowa  
Haiti Team 7  
Final Report  
March 15 – 22, 2015

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” - Matthew 25:40. This simple verse was the overall theme of a week spent by eleven Our Savior Lutheran Church members in Croix des Bouquets, Haiti. Haiti team seven consisted of Darryl Johnson, Amber Meyer, Tim and Caitlyn Raymon, Mike and Mariah Kennedy, Tammie and Tyler Harper, Claire Honsey, Katy Kneple and Andrew Pratt (also Greg and Amber Kern in spirit). Some members were long time friends or acquaintances, however for a few, this was a chance to meet new people who share a common interest and devotion to Christ. Haiti Team 7 was the first Mobile Medical team sent from Our Savior and consisted of a perfect mix of clinically trained professionals and those with little or no medical training. However, each member had a unique skill set to offer the people of Haiti.

There is a military principle called the five “P’s” of success: Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance. For a trip of this magnitude, this philosophy was no different. Starting (what seemed like a very short) nine months ago, the team assembled for our first official meeting. Following the first informational meeting, the preliminary team list was whittled down to the final thirteen members. Over the next months, assignments were given and everyone broadened their knowledge of our Caribbean neighbors. Not only was this an opportunity to research all aspects of Haiti, but also to learn about those with whom we were to spend a full week of EXTREME closeness. After the months of patiently waiting and preparing, the time arrived to fly.

Day 1 – March 15, 2015 - Our joyous departure started bittersweet, for in the eleventh hour, two members of our team had to make the extremely difficult decision to bow out of the trip. Although they were not with us physically, we know they prayed for us from home, and they certainly remained in our thoughts and prayers abroad. So, only slightly awake and before the sunrise the team of 11 fumbled through check-in while juggling heavy and very awkward baggage. Once checked-in and through security, we were able to walk onto the plane with minimal wait time. We arrived in Atlanta, both tired and hungry. Team members split up and while some sought food, others embarked on an epic journey to find the elusive Hartsfield-Jackson Starbucks. Following hunger or caffeine satisfaction, we were airborne again for Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Upon arrival in Haiti we were met by two of our four wonderful hosts, Bert and Rob. They brought with them a cadre of Haitians that The Village of Hope employs to secure equipment. The drive to the Hope House was our first view of Haiti’s extreme poverty. We arrived at the Hope House, met our two hostesses (Roberta and Trish) and got settled into our rooms. We were orientated to the facility and ground rules before dinner. After dinner we geared up for the next day: the first day at the mobile medical site.

Day 2 – March 16, 2015 – The first mobile medical day started out with a morning devotional, loading the day's supplies onto the truck, breakfast, lunch packing and departure. As we navigated the streets of Croix des Bouquets, the first glimpse into everyday Haitian life allowed for many great photo opportunities. We stopped periodically along the trip to pick up the team of Haitian translators, whom would prove to be invaluable throughout the week. Following a brief stop at the main clinic, we traversed the narrow bumpy rural routes of Ganthier to arrive at the site. On arrival we were welcomed by the church's pastor, whom had no complaints when we (for lack of better term) ransacked the church constructing a makeshift urgent care clinic, complete with pharmacy. The team had settled on roles the night before, and for some, these were positions with which they had little to no experience. Not one person knew what the week had in store, but we put our trust in God and dove in head first. The first day we were able to serve 136 people. Furthermore, the dedicated and amazing pharmacy staff saw their position as the perfect opportunity to pray with (or in one case baptize) our Haitian brothers and sisters in Christ, a trend maintained throughout the week. The clinic day wrapped up and we returned "home" to eat dinner, restock and reflect on the day with evening devotional.

Day 3 – March 17, 2015 – Today was on par with day one as it started and progressed the same. Like a well-oiled machine, we were able to pick back up where we left off the day before, moving another 130 patients through the clinic. We became more comfortable with our Haitian teammates today and even started sharing our love of music and sports. One minor incident occurred on the way home in the afternoon, as we learned of a hole in the oil pan of our air-conditioned transport van. This meant that the van was out of commission for a couple days. This was not a huge deal, as it allowed a select few team members with strong backs (the young crew) a true Haitian experience in the days to come. We made it back safely to dinner, restock, devotional and bed.

Day 4 – March 18, 2015 – With the van (so aptly described as) "toes up," the youngest half of the group piled into the back of the truck to experience what it feels like to ride a true Haitian "tap-tap." The trip was indeed bumpy, but the open-air feel of the truck allowed for immersion in the sights, sounds and smells of a typical day in Haiti. This also allowed time for bonding with our Haitian team members. With their help and some music, we turned an ordinary truck into a mobile party. Day three also offered a guided tour of the Village of Hope clinic and school. The clinic was very nice and it was interesting to learn of its capabilities. However the highlight of the tour was the school. We saw and greeted many school children, were exposed to the stunning landscape views from the school and were treated to songs by the Kindergarten class. Soon we were back on the road to the remote clinic for the last day at site one. On this day we saw another 137 patients from far and wide. Most notably, we were reminded of the unconditional love a mother has for her child when we found out that a pair had travelled on foot for two days, sleeping

alongside the road, to seek care. This also served as a reminder of God's unconditional love for all of us.

Day 5 – March 19, 2015 – As in the days past, we packed up and headed out to the first day at the second mobile medical site. We took the same paved road out of town, however this time when we turned off the main road we started following what was more akin to a cattle path. The trail was very questionable with many deep ruts that almost sent the 17-passenger truck onto its side. We managed to stay upright and after making many wrong turns before heeding directions from a gentleman sporting a machete, we made it to the site. The second medical site was a welcomed view as we traded rocky landscape for a lush area with beautiful views of the mountains and rural Haitian landscapes. The patient load was on par with the prior days, but there was greater variety in cases seen today (i.e. hydrocephalus and exploratory surgery). Once the workday was completed, the team was given the opportunity to stop at the Tin Shops while en route back to the Hope House. This area is world-renowned where artists fashion beautiful artwork from 55-gallon oil drums. Artwork included nativity scenes, crosses, ornaments, etc. Everyone was in awe at the artwork and many members purchased pieces for souvenirs. The team then loaded back into the trucks for the LONG ride back to the Hope House, arriving safely even after a slight “tap-tap love tap” (fender bender) along the way.

Day 6 – March 20, 2015 – After what seemed like a very fast week, our final mobile medical day has arrived. We reached the site and got straight to work. There were a few people waiting for our arrival, but not nearly the amount as days past. The final day we saw 99 patients. This made for a total of 624 patients for the week! We all welcomed the slower workday, as it gave us ample opportunities to get to know our translators better. This included a small celebration for one of our awesome translator's 30<sup>th</sup> birthdays. As the sun set on the final mobile medical day, we all exchanged email addresses and group photos were taken to commemorate our time spent here. We made our trek back to Hope House and once there, Bert was gracious enough to shuttle groups of 5 to the local grocery store to stock up on Haitian coffees, vanilla, etc. Tired from the week, we all were looking forward to a day of relaxation that awaited us on Saturday.

Day 7 - March 21, 2015 – As the saying goes “work hard, play hard.” Following a tiring, hot and very rewarding week staffing the mobile medical clinic, everyone was looking forward to spending a day at the beach. Some of us slept in a bit longer and after breakfast, we loaded up the van to make the journey to Wahoo Bay Resort. We received another detailed guided tour while in transit to the resort by Bert, highlighting a donkey parking lot and the earthquake memorial. We arrived at the beach and headed straight for the water. Following a long swim and lounging, we ate a delicious lunch at the resort restaurant. The group was able to get in another afternoon swim (or snorkeling trip for some) before we loaded up the van to head back to Hope House. We enjoyed a light dinner that night, as well as a nice evening discussing and wrapping up what was a terrific week of sharing God's love.

Day 8 - March 22, 2015 – All great things must come to an end and this was no different. Following a final meal at the Hope House, we loaded all of the bags into the truck for our departure. Our flight was not scheduled to depart until late afternoon so as our last experience in Haiti, we were able to attend a service at a local church. The service was much different from our normal services at Our Savior. Different members of the church were dressed in similar uniforms with different colored scarves and cords representing achievements in knowledge of the gospel. The service included children singing, reciting verses, men's group singing and even a skit done by older students. The church service lasted over 2 hours and on a day that reached 95 degrees, to say it was hot is an understatement. Following the service, we headed directly to the airport for our flight. The team breezed through check-in and soon we were in the air heading back to the states. After two very smooth flights, we arrived back in the Quad Cities at approximately 10:00 PM. With many hugs and goodbyes, the group disbanded to head their separate ways, both eager to see our families and share our experiences.

All eleven team members had their lives forever changed following a week of proclaiming God's love in the beautiful country of Haiti. After witnessing extreme poverty and malnutrition, we committed ourselves to leave a lasting mark on the people of Haiti. With the remaining money, as well as our Lenten meal proceeds, we were able to donate close to \$530 to the Village of Hope malnutrition program. Our Haiti mission remains an important means by which our congregation can minister to God's people. We did not initially know how Our Savior's first medical mission trip would unfold; especially how non-medical personnel would fit in. However, as we were able to demonstrate, these individuals were deeply involved and proved to be a vital asset frequently called upon to utilize their skills. These folks, as well as the amazing medical professionals, contributed to the overwhelming success of the team.

In His Service,  
Haiti Team 7