

News from your Mission & Justice Committee

Hope for Haiti

Our decades-long connection to the Haitian village of Gwo-Jan continues. At the point of this connection stands our friend Yaya, who lived among us while achieving his college degree and then returned to attempt good work amid the despair, frustrations, and very real dangers of his home. He persists in his work and dream to build a better Haiti for himself, his family and friends, and the future. Most of the time, the odds of success appear slim at best. Haiti is the poster child for a failed state, with a long history of inept, ineffective, and corrupt leaders, governed now in the day-to-day as much by gangs as by its broken political system.

A story that is often remembered and referenced by the Mission and Justice Committee is that of a man walking down the beach that comes across a scene of thousands of starfish washed up on the sand and dying. The man begins to toss them one-by-one back into the ocean. A passerby notes the futility of his effort, commenting that he cannot possibly save them all. The man simply responds by picking up another starfish and replying, "Yes, but I can save this one."

We recently received from Yaya the names of 13 Gwo-Jan children, ranging in age from 4-19 and ready for school grades K-7th. They lack the required tuition to attend, which ranges from \$ 115.00 - \$ 375.00 per student. They are a snapshot of Gwo-Jan's future, destined to be recruited by the local gangs but possibly--through this schooling--to find a way to avoid that fate, perhaps even to follow in Yaya's footsteps and someday join him in the difficult work of building a safer and better-functioning community. Please take a moment to read their names and offer a prayer for them:

Saïsha, age 7
 Annie, age 7
 Redashkaïna
 Bechaëlle, age 6
 Marvens, age 11
 Naïra, age 4
 Soraya, age 4
 Rosalanda, age 7
 Ovensly, age 11
 Bifendel, age 13
 Jonas, age 19
 Anne Rose, age 12
 Gavenchy, age 12



Their schools are mostly in the main city of Petion Ville or the local town of Pernier. Most of the children will probably walk for about 30 minutes to get there. Taking a tap tap (small trucks that provide public transportation) would cost about \$ 1.50 each day and take even longer due to the road traffic. The families will also need to buy school supplies, uniforms, and books that further cost around \$ 150.00 each year.

After much discussion, we are determined to help them in the present even while not knowing if or how we can continue to assist them in the coming years. But for today we have stepped forward in faith to support these "Gwo-Jan 13," though doing so essentially emptied our special fund for National and International Relief. So, if you would like to be a part of our shepherding of these 13 children, watch at this year's Advent "Gifts for Strangers" event for the opportunity to make a gift of education for the children of Gwo-Jan, those gifts to replenish the fund and ensure our continuing help. If you would like to direct help sooner or later, you can at any time direct a donation to account #2037 and specify its use for "Haiti Tuitions." The average annual tuition per child is about \$170.00.