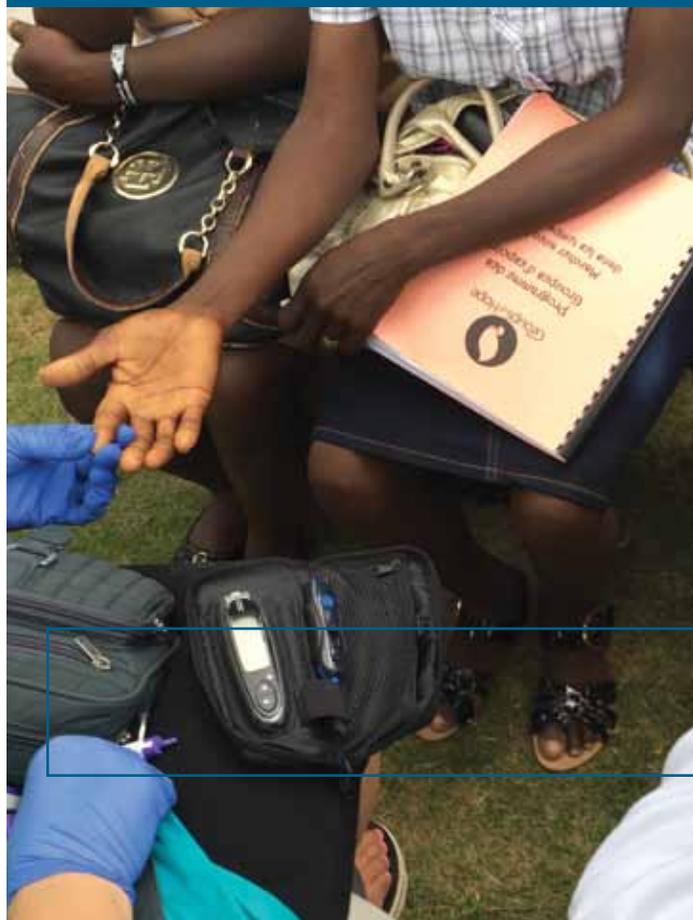


HOPE In Haiti

In mid-August this year, Baptist Women sent a five-member short-term mission team to Les Cayes, Haiti. Invited by the women's committee of the Mission Évangélique Baptiste du Sud d'Haiti, the team took part in a pastors' wives conference and a spiritual leaders conference.

Diane McBeth, executive director of Baptist Women, led the team. Team members Faith Holwyn and Rev. Dr. Judith Mercer led sessions on Groups of Hope and counselling techniques respectively. Kimm Ladoceur-Espinoza speaks French fluently and served as the team's translator. Renée James was the final team member.

Team members shared their experiences with live magazine in early September.



What surprised you on this trip? Why?

Faith: I was surprised at how much Haiti resembled India—overcrowding; housing looking often very temporary; the little stores along the streets of towns and villages. I was reminded that poverty has a similarity in whatever culture and country we see it.

Kimm: What surprised me the most was the hunger to believe in something that Haitians whom we met had. I witnessed that hunger transform itself into music of praise, of hope and of supplication to the Lord. I witnessed that hunger display itself in Bible study, memorization, servanthood, obedience and discipline.

Renée: How at home and yet far from home I felt! At home because I was finally in the Caribbean, my first trip since 2012. Far from home because my skin colour was different than the Haitians we had come to meet. I understood in a way I hadn't before, how those fair-skinned Californian missionaries must have felt visiting my home church in Trinidad in the late 1970s and early '80s.

Tell us about one highlight of the trip and why it was a highlight for you.

Faith: I was grateful for how well the Groups of Hope was received and especially how Marie Lucie, our host and translator, grasped the concepts of the program and was teaching the women in the church by the third session that we had! It was a reminder that the program is transferrable, and facilitating it is easy to learn.

Judith: Having the chance to get to know the other women on the trip. Relationships between women are so important and to know now that team members are no more than two hours away is great.

Kimm: There are so many to choose from and my desire is that the one that I speak of does not minimize any of the other highlights that I

Led by Faith Holwyn, the team tests blood sugar levels of pastors wives on the last day of the conference.

Photo courtesy: Renée James

HAITI, AND THIS STM, BY THE NUMBERS

3 Haiti is the third largest country in the Caribbean. (It is also the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.)

4 Four key women leaders from the Haitian Ministry of Women's Affairs died in the massive 2010 earthquake. They had successfully fought to prevent domestic violence against women. Until 2005, rape had been considered a moral offence only.

14 Over 40 per cent of the population is under 14 years old.

54 Even before the 2010 earthquake, only 54 per cent of Haitians had access to toilets, indoor plumbing and sewer systems.

79 Nearly 79 per cent of Haiti's people live in rural areas. The STM team stayed in Les Cayes, long considered the breadbasket of Haiti and one of the towns devastated by Hurricane Matthew.

189 The number of French-language Groups of Hope manuals distributed to pastors' wives and coordinators during the STM.

380 Haiti has one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates (380—per 100,000 live births; on par with Rwanda, Sudan and Afghanistan).

1804 The year when Haiti became the world's only nation founded by its slaves (Haiti had been a French colony). Every Sunday morning, the STM team enjoyed delicious pumpkin soup. Every January 1, Haitians make and eat pumpkin soup to remember their hard-fought independence in 1804. Pumpkin soup was previously a dish only enjoyed by the French.

2000 Experts told the STM team that a simple two-room concrete brick home with a door and a roof made from galvanized sheets would cost approximately US\$2,000. The STM team met dozens of pastors' wives whose homes were destroyed by Hurricane Matthew and have not yet been rebuilt. Others shared that their churches had not yet been rebuilt.

experienced on this trip. The highlight for me was the music . . . the music before, during and after church; music that stopped chats before conferences and signalled the beginning of a session; the music that shouted out words of gratitude; the music that reminded us we were singing to the King of Kings. It all moved me.

Renée: Seeing small-statured women like Diane McBeth and Judith Mercer raise the big name of Jesus Christ high in their preaching and teaching. Watching them serve, I *knew*, as if for the first time, that Jesus Christ is the hope of the nations! He is God over all peoples, all languages, all cultures.

What can we celebrate as sisters in Christ with our Haitian sisters?

Faith: We can celebrate God's faithfulness when life is difficult. I will never forget the pastors' wives who raised their hands at our last gathering at the beach to indicate they were still not living in houses to replace the ones that were flattened by Hurricane Matthew in September 2016. Life was hard for them but they presented as women of faith and hope with beautiful dresses and headscarves and attentiveness to the teaching that was happening at the conference.

Judith: That we are sisters and love each other; that we're one.

How has this trip changed you?

Faith: God asks us not to judge others. What we criticize, God

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can and does honour when it is offered to Him.

Kimm: This trip has inspired me to be less “me” focused and more “He” focused.

Renée: With each gathering we attended and/or led, I felt more and more the delight of God in the elemental worship and service that we (Haitians and the team together) offered Him.

I returned to Canada knowing with certainty that God doesn’t need a big production, or indeed, any production at all from any

Top: Mme. Marie Lucie Jeune (L), our hostess and translator smiles with a pastor’s wife at the beach outing on the last day of the conference

Bottom: A woman holds up her origami cross. Kimm Espinoza taught this craft to the women’s group at Marie Lucie’s church

Photos courtesy Renée James and Diane McBeth

of us. All He desires is for us to gather and delight in Him.

I also returned knowing that God was knitting together my Trinidad faith (I came to faith as a young teen in Trinidad) and my Toronto/Canada faith. I am being made new!

How has this trip confirmed (or not) your thoughts about you as a servant woman of God?

Kimm: It confirmed that God can use anyone to glorify Him and impact others, even me—the daughter of a nonbeliever, a mother, a pastor’s wife, a secular-



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working, non-seminary-student, everyday woman.

What do we Canadian Baptist women never stop doing . . . no matter what?

Faith: We need to be aware of need and to keep reaching out beyond our small First World, to those who need hope and provision.

Judith: Praying for our sisters all over the world.

What do we need to start doing?

Faith: We need to call people in our churches to

pray! Prayer meetings are almost considered old-fashioned or too fundamental in our fast-paced society, but concerted communities of prayer mean God working in ways that we cannot imagine to meet the needs of those with whom He brings us into contact.

Judith: Be more closely and specifically in contact with other women—those overseas, those around Canada and those beside us in the pew every Sunday morning. RJ ■

A WINDOW on Africa

AS MEMBERS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN'S UNION (NABWU), Baptist Women has an amazing opportunity to pray for our prayer partners in Africa – the Baptist Women's Union of Africa (BWUA).

Joina Dhlula has completed her presidency and we welcome new president Marthe Nguime Ekollo from Cameroon. Here are Marthe's recent prayer requests, edited for clarity and brevity.

1. Thank God for our prayer partnership so that our people may be impacted and saved. Pray for renewal and revival of the Spirit of prayer so that we may stay connected.
2. Thank God for the successful outgoing office led by president Joina Dhlula. They are hardworking and fully committed ladies. Pray that the Lord may continue using them in His vineyard.
3. Thank God for the EC members appointed into leadership for the next five years. May He grant wisdom, humility, patience to listen more and speak less in order to work according to His Word. May His Light keep shining upon us and our families.
4. As I shall be representing BWUA at BWA General Council, may the Lord fill me with His Spirit to be an ambassador of Baptist women of Africa. Pray for divine provision, grace and protection while travelling.
5. Pray that languages, tribes and cultures will

not prevent Baptist women in Africa from walking and labouring together. May our differences be a praise to the Lord. Let us rise and shine to face challenges.

6. Pray that God may increase membership in BWUA and attendance in conference.
7. Pray for peace and stability throughout our continent. Pray for those who are involved in peacekeeping negotiations.
8. Pray against political unrest; the fundamentalist Islamic sects Aqmi and Boko Haram that commit suicide attacks, kill innocents and burn down schools and churches.
9. Pray for the hundreds in Niger now homeless due to huge floods.
10. Pray for the grieving families of Baptist sisters who passed away while driving back home from a spiritual retreat in North West region in Cameroon. May they rest in peace.



Marthe Nguime Ekollo

Marthe Nguime Ekollo, president ■