



From Father Bruno

Dear Friends,

A retired assistant bishop of my diocese always begins his sermons with the words, "God is good all the time" to which the congregation responds, "All the time God is good."

Those are not just words for us here at Espérance et Vie in Terrier Rouge, but our creed, an experience that we live every single day of our life. The goodness of God is manifested by the fact that we can survive one crisis after another and can still be alive. God, in His goodness uses the channels of faithful, dynamic, heartfelt men and women to reach out to us. We are blessed, chosen people called to be witnesses of God's love.

As we were struggling to find food, gas, to educate our children, to take care of the sick, to alleviate the sufferings of our elderly and the poor, COVID-19 exploded to complicate our life more. But, sustained by the faith that God is good all the time, we are facing our new situation with hope and determination to resist and survive.

Following the Government's prevention measures, St Barthélémy School closed on March 19th, as we were about to complete our second trimester and with exams starting the following week. After meetings with the staff and teachers and later with the parents of our seniors, we decided to utilize technology to work with our senior class, preparing them for their national exams. Since only a handful of our seniors have access to technology, we created study groups of 4-5 to meet with their teachers via Zoom. We encouraged all other parents to help their students remain focused on their studies at home. We have continued to pay the teachers, however. It is our hope that we will be able to finish the school year in late Summer and begin the 2020-21 school year in late Fall.

In the meantime, Clinique Espérance et Vie has stayed open, offering continued services to the community in general medicine, pediatrics, ophthalmology, and dentistry. Due to the pandemic we have noted a small decrease in attendance as people stay away out of fear of exposure to COVID-19. Prescription drug prices have skyrocketed, but fortunately, we are not lacking supplies to respond to the needs of the community.

Currently, the main focus of the NGO, Espérance et Vie, is humanitarian aid and COVID-19 prevention. As soon as the Haitian government declared that COVID-19 had reached our soil, we began our prevention campaign by spreading the word, informing the community about the danger we were facing. Our next step was to make masks and buy soap. In a record period of time, we made the first 5,000 masks which were distributed to the population along with 5,000 bars of soap. As the needs were increasing, we made and distributed 2,000 more. But our task was not limited to just that. The NGO reached out to the most vulnerable people giving them kits of food. In the last three months we reached out to more than 2,500 families in despair because of the confinement. As the toll of confirmed cases is growing, we are getting prepared for the worst.

We give thanks to the Lord for using us to serve His people. We are obliged to you, our faithful benefactors for providing the means for the work. Please receive our heartfelt thanks and be sure that we lift up our voices to Heaven for you.

In His Name,




Making a Difference in Haiti

Bethlehem Ministry

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Things are at full throttle as Jatrofa Projenou helps rural communities meet the twin challenges of COVID-19 and a collapsing currency that is breeding hunger. To give you a sense of what we're doing, here is a photo spread. All were taken in the past two weeks and sent to me in my weekly WhatsApp brief from the JP staff.

HELPING PEOPLE STAY SAFE



To remedy the lack of water to wash hands frequently at home, JP developed a hand-washing station to go along with its soap products.



A JP trainer teaches a group of farmers about COVID-19 and gives them masks, liquid soap, and hand-washing stations for their households.

HELPING PEOPLE PRODUCE FOOD



These Yellow yam tubers are bound for planting. A true tropical yam (different from what we call a yam in the US), it produces harvests year after year without replanting. A harvested yam is nutritious, weighs 5-8 pounds and can be stored for 3-4 months, making it an excellent and reliable food staple.



A single yam is planted in a deep pit, where it will develop into a large mass which can be harvested twice a year. It is back breaking work but farmers willingly do it to keep their families from hunger. It is also a good cash crop that grows family income.



A hillside is being planted with Yellow yam, where it will grow among trees, which are also being planted. Farmers use their own labor but JP supplies the tubers, which are expensive (planting 1 hectare of tubers cost \$750.) Once established though, planting stock can be harvested for other farmers to plant.

THE RISING RISK OF HUNGER



A currency exchange graph shows a massive drop in the purchasing power of Haitian money against the US dollar since March. Inflation is increasing hunger, as the cost of imported rice outstrips what families can afford - underlining the importance of the effort to increase local food production.

Relying on food imports raises risk

Many countries that are highly dependent on food imports, like Afghanistan and Haiti, also have high numbers of people experiencing acute hunger.

New York Times, June 12, 2020

Taken together, all of these snapshots represent a work in progress that is improving the lives of people in need by helping them develop the resilience to withstand health and hunger challenges. The global pandemic is painfully teaching us an important lesson, that no matter where we live, we're all in this together. Stay well.

Rob Fisher

DIRECTOR, PARTNER FOR PEOPLE AND PLACE

Clinique Espérance et Vie



Terrier Rouge is one of the 13 municipalities of Haiti's Nord-Est Department, the capital of which is Fort-Liberté located near the border of the Dominican Republic. An estimated 36,000 people live in Terrier Rouge, an area roughly 60 square miles, about the same size as St. Louis. It contains 15 small villages and many more women than men. According to a 2009 census, 39% of the population of Terrier Rouge is under the age of 15; people aged 15-64 account for 53.4%, and those aged 65 and over 7.6%. Agriculture and livestock farming are the main economic activities in the area, with the main crops being corn, potatoes, cassava, pigeon peas, and sisal.

Prior to the arrival of COVID-19 in the Nord-Est Department, about 40% of new mothers managed to breastfeed exclusively. When the pandemic reached Haiti, forcing the shutdown of the country's borders, access to food (and food diversity) became increasingly scarce. This new normal has left breastfeeding mothers without access to enough food to produce adequate milk for their children, leaving the babies lacking proper nutritional intake as well.

Prior to the pandemic, in the Nord-Est Department, 66% of children were living with anemia and 36% of children under the age of 5 were malnourished. That was before the borders, ports and airports were closed. It is important to note that the country has been mainly relying on imports over the past 10 years, with food coming from the Dominican Republic via Dajabon, a Dominican town next to the north-east border with Haiti.

Families living in Terrier-Rouge were already surviving in extreme poverty. With the arrival of this pandemic in March 2020, life and livelihood have been paralyzed due to the closure of Haiti's borders and with the absence of government assistance. The children are completely neglected thus the medical team of Clinique Espérance et Vie is dedicated to providing health and nutritional assistance to the children of the area. Unfortunately, we do not yet have the data to know how children are faring against COVID-19 in Terrier Rouge. And we do not have the testing or medicines to diagnose and care for children suspected of having the virus. We will continue to raise awareness in our community in order to protect children as much as possible while promising to provide their families with medical care, quality food, and face masks.



Dr. Bendson Louima speaking at a conference on COVID-19 prevention in March

Dr. Bendson Louima,
MEDICAL DIRECTOR,
CLINIQUE ESPÉRANCE ET VIE



Did You Know...

There is no postal service to Terrier Rouge?



Although international mail is delivered to towns close to Terrier Rouge, such as Trou de Nord and Cap-Haitien, there is no postal delivery to Terrier Rouge. This makes it challenging to send and receive correspondence from sponsored students at St. Barthelemy, a request we get often. We are always happy to bring a letter to a student when we are traveling to Haiti. Unfortunately, with a Level 4 Travel Advisory from The State Department, we do not expect to travel to Terrier Rouge until 2021, at the earliest. We miss seeing our friends in Haiti and visiting with the students at St. Bart's so we will return as soon as possible!

Making a Difference in Haiti

Bòn Fèt, Pere Bruno!

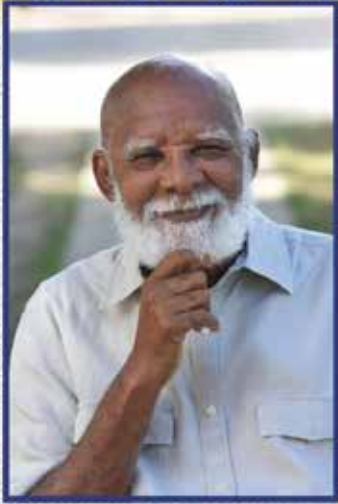


Photo by Bob Gore

BÒN FÈT

Celebrating 75 years of Father Bruno

We are celebrating the man who started it all and keeps us inspired daily! Because of Pere Bruno's vision, life has changed for tens of thousands of people in northeast Haiti over the past 50 years. From building schools for children and adults, to helping bring access to healthcare to his community, or leading humanitarian aid efforts in the wake of floods, earthquakes, and pandemics, Pere Bruno continues to change lives.

This year, **he is turning 75 and we are celebrating throughout the month of July**, culminating in his birthday on July 27th. You can participate by sharing a memory or story of Pere Bruno on social media. Be sure to use the hashtag #HappyBirthdayJMB and tag Bethlehem Ministry on Instagram and Facebook. **Our goal is to raise \$7,500 in support of programs near and dear to Pere Bruno.** When you make a Bon Fet donation, share a memory of the impact he has had on your life and we'll share it with him! Let's make this third annual birthday celebration the finest yet!

From the Board



A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. John 13:34

Collectively at Bethlehem Ministry we are heartbroken and angered by the violence against Black bodies in this country. As we struggle to find a path forward as a nation, we feel called to make an unequivocal statement that for all of us at Bethlehem Ministry, Black Lives Matter, ALL Black Lives Matter. While our ministry for the past 30 years has focused on improving the lives of people in northeast Haiti, we are Americans, deeply affected by the brokenness we see in our own country. We will continue to work for, pray for, and dedicate our lives to creating the world we want to live in, a world that is racially equitable, safe for ALL people, and with opportunities that do not differ with the color of one's skin.

