

Haiti Mission: A missionary's perspective

Being a part of St. James's church, whether you are sitting in a pew on Franklin Street or abroad in Mirebalais, Haiti on a mission trip, always has a way of feeling like home. And the relationships formed with fellow members on mission trips create a sense of camaraderie and community that will never be lost.

For me, mission work is an opportunity to help other individuals and communities in need while also developing and strengthening relationships with other parishioners. It is a way to recognize the blessings that we are handed daily and to realize that others are not quite as lucky. It is amazing to journey to a country as poor as Haiti, yet leave the country with a feeling that the people there were overflowing with faith, love, passion and resilience. While working on a construction project that is so meaningful to the struggling community, you can see God's work, not only in the end product, but through all the hands that are involved, as well. Digging the footings for the expansion of St. Pierre's Church in Mirebalais in 95-degree weather, through arid ground of concrete and rocks, was excruciatingly difficult and tiresome for grown men wearing gloves and using sledgehammers. But within minutes of us arriving at the site, a swarm of children formed an assembly line to help us remove the large chunks of rocks that we had to dig through. Some children weighed less than the pieces of rubble and did not have shoes on their feet, yet they were ready to help in any way they could without being asked. The Haitian children embraced our group with open arms and warm hearts, even if we did not speak their language, or have the same color skin. The children are so full of faith that it is heartening and inspirational to witness.

Mission work has allowed me to see God beyond a formal church setting. I saw God in countless places that week in Haiti. I saw God in the children eager to be hugged and held, in the laborers working without gloves for protection or power tools, in the artwork colorfully decorated on the Taptaps riding through the villages, and in the slight glimpse of beauty in a land so stricken with poverty. I am so grateful that I have mission experience to reflect on when I get caught up in daily stresses of work, or when it is not easy for me to get back for church service at St. James's. I know I will always hold the members of my mission trip close to my heart, right next to the faith I gained from my trip to Haiti.

– Tyler Hetzer