**“Houses for Haiti” Mission Trip Report — April 18-19, 2023**

By Diane Albright, Houses for Haiti, President & Co-founder,

Because of the continued violence and kidnappings in Haiti, Pastor Leon instructed us not to tell anyone we were going this year. He also told us it was too dangerous to go see our families or the new houses that were built last year. This is a hard one for us because it is the first time this has happened in 20 years.

Actually, we wouldn't have gone at all this year, except we had a mission to accomplish. You may recall that last year our friend Dady (pronounced "Dottie") and his family had to flee their home in Croix des Bouquet because of the violence. They have been living with family members in Cap Haitian for over a year. There are no beds for them, so they have been sleeping on pieces of cardboard box on the cement floor. Dady begged us to help him get to America to find a job. After securing a passport and being granted a humanitarian visa, there is only one thing left to do.. get him out of Haiti. As the blues Brothers would say "we are on a mission from God."

**Day 1**

Our flight to Haiti leaves Miami mid-afternoon. We are surprised and relieved to see several other Americans boarding our plane. It gives us a sense of relief knowing others are willing to risk a trip over there. Pastor Leon and Bill are waiting for us outside the airport where they quickly whisk us out to the parking lot. We don't have much luggage this year so as to avoid drawing attention to ourselves. Pastor Leon explains that he had to take a different route to the airport because there were many shootings nearby. Instead of going straight to the hotel, we zigzag through the streets of Port-au-Prince to make sure no one is following us. We ask Leon if the gangs ever have "plants" at the airport to notify the gang leaders when Americans are deplaning. He answered in the affirmative. He said they refer to those people as "antennas."

When we arrive at the Palm Hotel and are safely inside the big iron gate with the guard nearby, we can breathe a sigh of relief.

Bill announces that Dady's bus has arrived at the station. He has been on the bus since 4:00 a.m. this morning coming from Cap Hatian. Bill goes to pick him up and when they return, the smile on Dady's face reassures us that we have done the right thing. Dady's wife and sons all cried

when he left, but they know he is doing this for them.

The owner of the hotel informs us that dinner will have to be early tonight. His employees are afraid to be out after dark, as that is when gang violence surges. We enjoy a nice spaghetti dinner and then have time to sit and visit afterwards.

It doesn't take us long to unpack this trip because we are not going to see our families, so we only have 1 large and 3 small bags to unpack. We brought the usual items. toiletries, peanuts, raisins, granola bars, fruit snacks, cookies, crackers, toothpaste, toothbrushes, washcloths, seeds and clothing. New this year are wallets, digital thermometers, and painkillers.

Bill and Leon will be here early in the morning to take us to the airport. They will also take the filled bags and distribute them to our friends and families in the neighborhood who can use the food we brought compliments of North presbyterian church and the other items. We are exhausted and call it a night.

**Day 2**

We have an early breakfast before our trip to the airport. We ask Dady how it felt to sleep on a bed for the first time in over a year. He didn't really need to answer that question.

We get a quick goodbye picture and hug from Bill, then pile into Leon's car. Although our trip was short, we feel nothing but gratitude that everything went well and we can't wait to see what is in store for Dady in America.