

Cholera Epidemic Comes to Ouanaminthe and National Elections Carried Out

By: Pam Mann---Sunday morning before church, November 28, 2010, Election Day in Haiti

Teaching is not for wimps. Neither is cross-cultural ministry in a poor country. I felt myself wimping out by the end of the week and really thought God should send in someone else – you know that lion-hearted, truly sanctified individual who is rarely discouraged, ever confident in God's provision. I have prayed previously in earnest that God would send someone else to do the work, someone who has greater faith and patience than I do. You know what comes back as God's clear response to that prayer? "Good idea. Now, you become that someone else." God does love to staff His kingdom with unlikely characters, doesn't He?

Between the cholera epidemic and Election Day, rumors have flown this week that school would be canceled, probably Friday (it didn't happen) or maybe Monday (it could happen yet if there are riots in Port-au-Prince at voting sites). Such rumors make students antsy. Managing classrooms (no cake walk on an average day) becomes a daylong battle. So, yeah, I confess I did have that shake-the-dust-from-your-feet feeling when Dave and I left through the school gate on Friday afternoon.

Friday and Saturday we watched double episodes of *Law and Order* (the first season on DVD). Normally we ration them out one episode per weekly date night. But we were feeling wild and crazy. The dedicated tenacity of the police and the DA's office always inspires me, especially how they can wrap it all up in 60 minutes and move on. Now, after a break of 48 hours away from the classroom, I admit I would have been among the unruliest if I had been an IU student this past week. And it wasn't all bad.

In one 11th grade class we were reviewing the texts to prepare for individual oral English exams. I had chosen some Scriptures in English and some famous lines of British literature. I read from Elizabeth Barrett Browning with the students repeating after me, struggling to pronounce correctly "th" sounds. "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee from the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach." I explained in Creole how Mrs. Browning wrote that poem for her husband who was also a poet and then translated the content. Several girls tilted their heads and sighed. I smiled at them and they smiled back. I can endure a lot of hours of unruliness for one moment of connection like that. Why should the *Law and Order* police and prosecutors be the only hang-tough folks on the planet?

Dave stopped in at school Saturday morning when a 10th grade class was challenging a 12th grade class in soccer. With the portable sound system, Wesley, a twelfth grader, was at the mike announcing the play-by-play, doing a great job, Dave thought. Over a hundred students were in attendance, cheering or just hanging out. Last night was the final stage of the singing competition for UniStars, a Univers version of *American Idol*, organized by the 13th grade class. There's a lot to like about these kids. A patient sanctified teacher would forgive them for last week's unruliness. Also at IU, Dave saw Lynne-Vie, a 2009 IU grad now attending Quisqueya University's new Ouanaminthe campus. She was in jeans, strolling as stylishly as any other co-ed, no indication that she'd lost her foot in the 2010 earthquake. Thanks to friends in the U.S. having provided a prosthesis, she can hang tough too.

The cholera problem continues to be a concern. In Ouanaminthe now there is a tent set up at the government hospital in town for cholera cases. Michele, UALC nurse at UMC, and a couple other UMC staff, visited the cholera tent. She said that the cholera victims lie naked on their cots, covered by a sheet. Each cholera cot has a hole cut in the canvas for the diarrhea to exit. (With cholera the diarrhea can flow pretty much non-stop which is why victims die of dehydration.) There have been cholera deaths in Ouanaminthe but, as statistics are not valued here, we know no hard numbers. Our impression is that it is not an epidemic locally. We've heard no double-digit numbers for deaths or even cases. Everywhere I see people being more cautious about hand washing and cleanliness. In the market, people put their hands in small plastic sacks when handling food to be eaten directly. At IU, the kitchen staff no longer sets filled trays on the tables for lunch but requires the students to form a line, picking up their trays as they are filled. It makes lunch distribution much slower but less at risk for fly-contamination. People

have even ceased shaking hands, instead tapping wrists, elbows or simply nodding. Some future mission team leaders have expressed concern about their safety in coming. We personally feel no increased health risk. Zoulit, who cooks for mission teams, is very cautious. She has banned fresh produce from the menu until the cholera scare ends. If you're coming on a team soon, you may want to bring dried fruit to maintain fiber in your diet.

Today is Election Day. According to the polls, Mirlande Manigat and Celestin Jude are the front-runners. Both Dave and I received text messages on our cell phones yesterday, urging us to vote today. Manigat is #68 and Celestin # 11. I wondered if the candidates' names are numbered because so few people are literate. Even the illiterate must read numbers in order to buy and sell. On past election days, we've see that wheeled vehicles have been prohibited and the border has been closed. Somehow this is supposed to decrease voter fraud and intimidation. The logic of it escapes me but I am a foreigner. I do hear occasional motorcycles however so maybe that rule is not being enforced today. We expect that the service at the Baptist church will be cut shorter in order to allow people more voting opportunity. There are many candidates on the presidential ballot so a run-off election is scheduled for January. Senators and representatives are also decided in this election. Our own UMC doctor, Claude, is running for representative. He has worked the night shift in past weeks and campaigned during the day. He's got to be tired.

Some people have continued to ask about Moviette, IU employee who has been very ill and has become quite thin. She has visited us twice, received additional medical treatment, thanks to financial assistance from friends, and I think she has put on a few pounds. She says her appetite is returning and she is sleeping at night. I suspect some of you have been praying for her. Moviette's replacement at IU is Dieula, an equally pleasant attractive tall young woman. I love her name. It means "God is here," a good [Advent](#) message, isn't it? So is becoming that sanctified person we wish God would send to replace us.

Hang tough. The Kingdom is coming. God's law and order may not straighten everything out in 60 minutes but He delights in enabling us to hang tough and trust in His timing.

*What sort of people ought you to be
in lives of holiness and godliness,
waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God? ...*

*But according to his promise
we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth
in which righteousness dwells.
Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these,
be diligent to be found by him
without spot or blemish, and at peace.
And count the patience of our Lord as salvation.*

2 Peter 3:11, 13-15