



HAITI TWINNING MINISTRY (HTM) NEWSLETTER  
16<sup>TH</sup> YEAR IN TWINNING WITH SAINT GABRIEL PARISH  
DECEMBER 2023 Edition 58- 5<sup>th</sup> year!



**Vision:** We, the parishioners of the Sacred Heart have been called to enter in a twinning relationship with our brothers and sisters at Saint Gabriel, Haiti. Together, we follow the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to foster faith-filled relationships, self-sustainability, and an end to dependency.  
**Mission:** End dependency while following the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

**NEW: Learning Haitian Creole, 1 Sentence at a Time.**  
Jwaye Nowèl | Merry Christmas



**GREETINGS FROM FR. FITHO** | *Dear Fr. Paul, friends of the Sacred Heart, and the community,*

*On behalf of my parishioners, I wish you a prayerful Advent season and a blessed and Merry Christmas. May the Lord incarnate illuminate your homes and the world with continued acts of love and compassion. The students at St. Gabriel Middle and Highschool are taking their 2<sup>nd</sup> term exams December 11th-22nd, and the children at Fr. Block Lower School (2 schools in 1), December 11th-15<sup>th</sup>.*

*We thank you for your prayers, your kind greetings, and for the gift of textbooks the school will receive for Christmas. Let us remain united in the Lord during this Advent and Christmas season.*

Father Fitho, Pastor at Saint Gabriel, Lascahobas, Haiti

**22ND ANNUAL FAIR-TRADE FESTIVAL** | FAIR TRADE PROMOTES RESPECT, DIVERSITY, & FAIR WAGES FOR ALL



As of tradition, the sale team “**Feed 1 Child, 1 Sale at a Time**” took part in the two-day 2023 Annual Fair-Trade Festival this month. We shared a table with Holy Family that sold Peace Cycle bags from recycling plastic bags from Port-au-Prince and Just(ice) Haiti coffee, and Sowers of Justice, that sold Catholic Relief Services (CRS) chocolate.

This happy event took place at Elation Brewing, in Norfolk. Customers enjoy delicious food, drinks, and live music. Merchants sold Tea, Coffee, Chocolate, Art, Textiles, Jewelry, Clothing, and Ornaments. Our team sold some colorful Haitian craft, costume jewelry, crocheted cat toys etc.

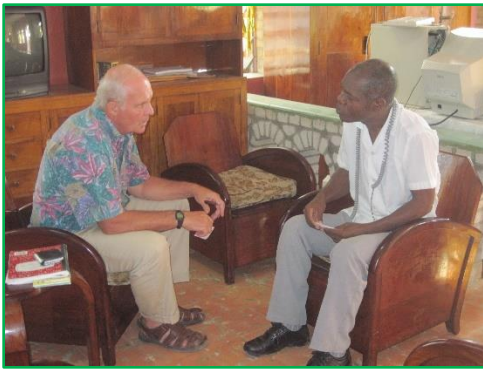
**The \$675 collected for the Lunch Fund** will feed 1 child for 1 year and another for 6 months. The larger goal is to feed 11 children at the St Gabriel cafeteria this year. Our 9 sales throughout the year help with 8 students. With the school growing to 754 students, getting sufficient rice and beans for all remains a daily struggle. Sadly, CARITAS (or Catholic Relief Services USA) is no longer able to send the regular bags of rice and beans to St. Gabriel School or any schools, due to the gangs blocking the major roads from Port-au-Prince. **Many thanks to all of you who have stopped by & contributed to this sale.**



**SAVE THE DATE:** Our next Sale (indoor) will be Sat., Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, | 10:00 am-2:00 pm. Ghent Village Apartments Club House (inside the courtyard, by the swimming pool) 100 Westover Ave., Norfolk, VA 23507. Signs will be out. Please, park in a non-numbered parking space, against the building.

**Most needed for future sales:** costume jewelry, toys, small holiday decorations, Fair Trade articles and craft, volunteers to clean tools and silverware, a neighborhood yard in the spring

**SHARING STORIES FROM ST. GABRIEL** | “*I have nothing to give you in return.*”



In 2007, during one of our early visits to our twin parish, St. Gabriel Parish (SGP), in Lascabobas, both our Sacred Heart Parish (SHP) and SGP agreed to commit to a pen pal program. Most of those participating were parish council members at SG and members (and friends) of SH's Haiti Twinning. Since there is no post office services out of large cities in Haiti, the letters were exchanged with the help of pilgrims from other Haiti ministries in our diocese who carried them back and forth for us when visiting their twin parishes in the Diocese of Hinche. The coordinators of this program are Fr. Fitho at SG and Francesca Smith at Sacred Heart.

**Communicating our mutual news, care, and prayers with our family in Haiti is essential to our mission.**

When we started the program, Mr. Venel Lamy, an active member at SG, became Mr. Neil Walsh's, (Director of Social Ministry at SH for 19 years), pen pal. Mr. Lamy and his wife, Micheline had two beautiful and musically talented young girls attending SG Gabriel Middle School. Neil and his wife Pat pledged to support the family by providing scholarships for both Velinda and Micheveline. At first, Venel told Neil, "I have nothing to give you in return."

Neil was a champion at respecting a person's dignity. He asked Venel to give him some Haitian Creole lessons in return, which Venel gladly gave. Whenever Neil visited Lascabobas, each day the two friends would sit side by side in the living room of the rectory. They became close friends and got to know each other and their families very well.

Soon, Neil shared with his pen pal that one reason he wanted to learn the language was to be able to speak in Haitian Creole to the parishioners after Sunday Mass. It is a tradition for pilgrims to say a few words to the parishioners at SG on each visit. Neil would write a short text in English and Venel, who spoke and wrote English well, would translate it to Creole. Then they would read the text over and over until Neil was able to read it by himself.

Twelve years later, in 2020, Neil became ill and was unable to accompany the group of SH pilgrims on their visit to SG. (At this point, he had made 26 visits to Haiti.) So, he wrote this message, which was read to the parishioners on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020:

*...Our twinning relationship is a big strength to me, knowing how much our Father is pleased with our mutual connection and prayers. It is always good for the people of Sacred Heart, Fr. Paul, and our families and students to be spiritually close to you. You have worked hard to support your parish with the building and running of the Saint Gabriel School. Stay strong and may God bless you!*

Sadly, Venel Lamy died on Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and Neil Walsh, on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. May their souls rest in peace and may eternal light shine upon them. Both Velinda and Micheveline graduated from St. Gabriel Highschool and continued to college.

**What can you do?** Become a donor for the Scholarship Program at SG. It costs \$275 each year to send a student to SG School and \$420 to the School for Teachers. **100% of your donation goes directly to the program since this ministry is blessed with generous volunteers.** Donations are entirely tax deductible. If you wish to help one of the 20 students in this program, please write your check to SH Church and add "St. Gabriel Scholarship Fund" on the memo line. For online giving, go to the SH website: <http://www.sacredheartnorfolk.org/>, click on the "Giving" tab, then click "online giving." Under "designate fund amount," scroll down to Haiti, and type "St. Gabriel Scholarship Fund".

<http://www.sacredheartnorfolk.org/ministries/justice-and-peace/haiti-ministry/>

### FISCAL YEAR 2<sup>nd</sup> QUARTER IMPACT OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2023

RELATIONSHIP	OPERATION COST (see <a href="#">pledge form</a> on website)	SUSTAINABILITY INVESTMENT	ADMIN., FORMATION, FUND RAISERS
Pen pal notes/greeting cards: Ordinations, Anniversaries, Birthdays, Christmas etc.	Salaries 6 teachers/ 1 quarter 1 nurse/1 quarter	Parish Farm provides some beans, manioc, banana, pistachios. Tended by the Blanc family.	Monthly Ministry & Admin. meetings Social Teaching & Sustainability Formation Planning Annual Eastern Vicariate Haiti Twinning Lunch 4/20/24
Weekly WhatsApp phone calls/meetings/ Fr. Fitho,	Lunch for 11 students/ 1 quarter	Parish Stationery Shop	Monthly newsletters, Lessons in H. Creole, Book study: The Lambi's Call by Dr. Tom Fame

Bi-weekly texts/ Fr. Adelin, /school operation/pictures.	11 scholarships (\$275 annually) + 1 scholarship (\$410/Teacher College) paid in June 2023	New Kindergarten class opened. Scholarship Endowment	Website updated <a href="https://sacredheartnorfolk.org/ministries/justice-and-peace/haiti-ministry/">https://sacredheartnorfolk.org/ministries/justice-and-peace/haiti-ministry/</a>
Monthly texts/2 School Heads	Medical assistance \$300/1 quarter	1 Sustainable project, build 2 additional classes for 2024	4 Yard Sales (9), Small Change Collection

Thanks for your continued prayers for Haiti and for your support of the students. While their challenges are numerous, the school community is making progress.

### CALENDAR DATES

**Monthly Meetings**—We share a light meal at 6:00 pm in the Commons, followed by the meeting. All are welcome to hear stories of close relationships, and faith in action, to a better life.

-Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, 6:30 pm-7:30 pm

-Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 6:30 pm-7:30 pm

**Monthly Sales**—Next Sale (indoor), Sat., Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, | 10:00 am-2:00 pm. Ghent Village Apartments Club House (inside the courtyard, by the swimming pool) 100 Westover Ave., Norfolk, VA 23507. Signs will be out. Please, park in a non-numbered parking space, against the building.

### WE REMEMBER OUR FRIENDS IN THE HAITI MINISTRY



Ellen Renn, Feb. 16, 62-Sept. 10, 2017  
 Neil Walsh, Aug. 25, 1946-Mar.10, 2020  
 Nicolas Valcour, Sept. 9, 1960-Feb. 20, 2022  
 Dr. P. Farmer, Oct. 26, 1959-Feb. 21, 2022

Patricia Britz, Chair [patprovidence1@yahoo.com](mailto:patprovidence1@yahoo.com) Cell: (757) 621-1860  
 Brendan Pigott, Assistant Chair

<http://www.sacredheartnorfolk.org/ministries/justice-and-peace/haiti-ministry/>

2023-2024 PICTURES BY FR. ADELIN | Pre-school and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

