



Ede Nou Priye- Help Us Pray

Greetings, dear friends,

I wish to thank each and every one of you for your faithful and generous support of our ministries in Haiti. As you probably know, I have served the people of Haiti from the U.S. for nearly three years. It's been a difficult journey, but I am grateful for the opportunity to remain in a position of accompanying our dear friends there.

Since 2018, the people of Haiti have suffered greatly, even more so than in ordinary times. Certainly, more than in the nine years I have been honored to serve as a mission co-worker with Haiti. The history of this tiny island nation is bold and inspiring. Fed up with egregious mistreatment and violence, enslaved people rose up against the French army and against all odds, won their own freedom. As the rest of the world turned its back on the First Free Black Republic, though, Haitians were not able to create their own wealth. Even in desperate times, the people remain courageous. But long-standing battles between the political elite and ordinary Haitians continue to take their toll.

Most people in the country are struggling to find food and clean water. Gang warfare is present in every facet of life. Kidnappings are prevalent, and criminal activity is rampant. Cholera has taken dozens of lives since October.

I've lost dear friends to violence and disease. Between hunger, illness and crime, it is easy to die in Haiti.

Haiti is ruled by a de facto prime minister, Ariel Henry who appointed himself in charge after the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in July 2021. Vastly unpopular and apparently unwilling to govern the country in a way that benefits the people, Henry has asked other countries to intervene militarily, but that has not come about. Though a foreign military intervention seems as though it would bring gang violence under control and put Haiti on a path toward democratic elections, most Haitians disagree. In its long history, such “boots on the ground” interventions have bolstered unpopular and corrupt leaders and left the living situation of most Haitians worse off.

Diplomacy, too, seems to have failed, as a number of so-called mediations between Henry and a group of civil society leaders have fizzled out. Civil society leaders, most notably those who make up the Commission for a Haitian-led Solution to the Crisis, also called Montana Accord, have repeatedly stated that given the stability of security, Haitians are able and willing to create a way forward.

Most of us who have followed Haiti news closely have been flummoxed by the absence of other choices for Haiti’s welfare. If military intervention isn’t probably and diplomacy fails, then the status quo continues and Haitians keep suffering. It has been my stalwart prayer for months that another choice arises, and in mid-November, it came to be.

The U.S. government has ordered sanctions on known gang leaders, canceling their visas and freezing any funds held in the U.S. The Department of Justice and F.B.I., similarly have handed down arrest warrants and \$1 million bounties on gang leaders accused of kidnapping U.S. citizens.

Likewise, Canada took the extraordinary step of sanctioning former Haitian President Michel Martelly and former prime ministers Jean-Henry Ceant and Laurent Lamothe. With these sanctions, Canadian officials accuse the three former leaders, along with a number of other former elected senators of bolstering drug and other criminal activity.

As we wait to see what impact these sanctions have on the situation, the people are no safer. From September until early November, one gang leader, Jimmy Cherizier, blocked access to the country’s only fuel depot, effectively stopping traffic, transport of food and clean water, closing hospitals, and limiting the ability of utilities and other industries to function. The fuel was unblocked in early November, but even as travel is again possible, so is the opportunity to be kidnapped.

I returned to Virginia when the first case of Covid-19 was discovered in Haiti. That was March 2020. Since then I’ve virtually visited churches, presbyteries and synods. I’ve kept in touch with friends and partners in Haiti every day. One of my friends asks me this every day: Ede nou priye. That’s Haitian Creole for, “Help us pray.”

I’ve followed the news closely. I’ve participated in governmental advocacy, fighting for the Haitian-led solution our partners have requested.

And I’ve prayed.

That I am able to continue our work in Haiti – connecting U.S. churches with their Haitian partners virtually, broadcasting news updates and staying in touch as best I can – is a testament to your faith in our work.

One day we will work together IN Haiti. That I know. The timing of that, not so much. Please continue to keep the people of Haiti in your prayers. They covet your prayers and appreciate your love.

Cindy