

Onè! Respe! Honor! Respect!

Established 2008



## Annual Report 2025

A Partnership of

Grace Episcopal Church  
Minneapolis, Minnesota U.S.A.

Eglise et Lekol Episcopale Bonne Nouvelle  
Bigonet, Haiti

with the participation of

Trinity Lutheran Church  
Hovland, Minnesota U.S.A.

## Onè! Respe! Honor! Respect!

Approaching a home, a visitor in Haiti calls, “Onè!” (Honor!)  
Those inside reply, “Respe!” (Respect!)

### Goals of Onè! Respe!

Educate ourselves about Haiti.

Build relationships with Haiti.

Partner with Bonne Nouvelle Episcopal Church and School in Bigonet.

Build community with other Minnesota churches participating in Haiti.

See where the Spirit leads us.

### Grace Episcopal Church Haiti Committee

Liz Athorn, Katy Bennewitz, Barb Buehl,  
Rev. Susan Daughtry (ex officio),  
Kurt Hall, (Co-chair), Mary Heltsley,  
Michele Krakowski, Susan Maas,  
Mary McKelvey, Karen Murdock,  
Ginny Olsen,  
Louise Robinson (Co-chair)  
Susan Newman, Avis Thomas,  
Vicky Tusken, Cassie Williams.

The Haiti Committee welcome and values your support, ideas, and participation.

Please consider joining us.

Contact any committee member for more information.



A typical home in Bigonet.

For more information about our partnership,  
Go to the Grace Episcopal Church website:  
[www.GraceEpiscopalMpls.org](http://www.GraceEpiscopalMpls.org)

# Haiti Partnership – 2025

## 2025 Year in Review

### The Heart of our Partnership: Friendship and Conversation

Friendship has stood at the core of our partnership with Bonne Nouvelle for 18 years – and despite our inability to visit each other for nearly a decade due to political turmoil, that’s truer than ever. Our monthly phone calls with community leaders and Père Sèmé are crucial to helping sustain and enrich that connection.

To break down the obvious language barriers (English/Haitian Kreyol) we have an interpreter, Raphael Cheron, for these conversations. All calls are recorded and detailed transcriptions are sent to committee members so everyone can stay apprised of current challenges along with the good news and laughter that we share.

“The community is thirsty to see you guys,” is a common refrain in our phone calls. It’s mutual. A new international airport opened last year in Le Cayes, and we’ve read of recent flights between Le Cayes and Florida. That opens a door slightly for renewed travel, but safety continues to be a significant concern. And ideally, we want travel in both directions. It’s clear that Haitians would not be granted visas to visit Minnesota in the current political climate. Visits between our two communities was a highlight of our early partnership, and it’s painful to see it halted in this way.

Many Episcopal partnerships focus more on the relationship with priest than on the local leadership. Père Sèmé is in Leogane and has a home parish there, in addition to four mission parishes that he visits quarterly. He is Bonne Nouvelle’s third priest since our partnership began. Since we haven’t been able to meet with him face to face, it’s taken longer to solidify our friendship with him. But we believe we had a breakthrough with Père Sèmé this year. We had the clear sense that he was concerned about being “left out of the loop” of our conversations with the local leaders. We finally had a direct conversation where he



**Kindergarten Graduation --  
Students entrance and performance.**

admitted to being a bit jealous of our relationship with the leaders, and we agreed that we need to respect his position of authority in setting up our communications. It was a warm, positive advancement for our continued working relationship.

At the direction of Bonne Nouvelle elders, who believe the community's future lies with the children, we continue our support of Bonne Nouvelle school. We work with the parents to support the teachers' salaries and the school lunch program, adding our funds to the tuition fees paid by the families. Several additional school programs and events are made possible annually through our support:

- An in-service in the fall which provides continued education for the teaching staff

- A celebration and luncheon for the teachers during the holiday break
- A community meal provided to all who attend the parish's anniversary celebration each November

Our pledge drive goal was to increase the number of pledges from 68 to 75 – and we surpassed that goal! Unfortunately, the total dollars pledged fell slightly from the previous year. We were able to continue the core program, but the increases for salaries and the lunch program were smaller than we'd hoped. Our partners, always gracious, reiterated that the strength of our friendship is the heart of our partnership, not the money.

We're able to augment financial support for Bonne Nouvelle in two significant ways:



**Baptisms in 2025 with Pere Seme (above) and in 2011 with Pere Delicat and the Ven. Cannon Ben Scott.**



**The Blessing of the Palms, 2025.**



One is through additional partners we have had through the years including Trinity Lutheran Church in Hovland, Minnesota. Trinity friends often organize fundraisers to support our work in Bonne Nouvelle.

Another source of revenue are the coffee and art sales we are part of through the year including the sale of Haitian coffee and the second Sunday of each month in the lobby of Grace Church. Additionally, committee members staff several fair-trade sales throughout the year.

### **Getting our Financial Support into Haiti**

We've had remarkably smooth sailing getting our support wired to Haitian banks over the past 18 years. But this fall we experienced some hiccups. Some of the issues seemed to occur with the U.S. banking system, and others at the Haitian end. The extremely unfortunate result was that the teachers went unpaid from May to December - but they still showed up for work and saw the students through their December exams! As of this writing we have been able to get funds through to Pere Seme's church bank account in Leogane and payment has finally reached the

**Flag Day in Haiti is May 18. It marks Haiti's history as the first free black republic and symbolizes resilience and unity.**



## Grace Episcopal Haiti Fund 2025

<b>2024 Year End Balance</b>		<b>\$ 24,142.00</b>
<b>INCOME</b>		
Core Income	Pledges	\$ 31,330.00
	Coffee/Art/Chocolate	\$ 5,961.52
Other - Unrestricted	Misc Donations	\$ 100.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>\$ 37,391.52</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Core Expenses	BN Teacher salaries*	\$ 22,130.00
	BN School Lunch*	\$ 13,300.00
	Priest Discretinary Fund (seminars)	\$ 3,000.00
	Diocese of Haiti	\$ 1,050.00
	Bank Fees	\$ 888.00
	Internet for BN	\$ 250.00
	Phone/Interpreting	\$ 620.00
	Coffee/Art/Chocolate	\$ 2,124.00
	Fundraising expense	\$ 608.00
	Special teacher pay	\$ 600.00
	Church celebration	\$ 1,600.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>		<b>\$ 46,170.00</b>
<b>2025 Year End Balance</b>		<b>\$ 15,363.52</b>

**\*In July 2 wire transfers totalling \$5,710 were sent to the Diocese of Haiti but have never been received. US bank continues to investigate one of these wires, and we continue to hold out hope that the other remaining funds will surface and ultimately returned to us.**



**Several members of the teaching staff at Bonne Nouvelle School.**

teachers. This doesn't resolve all of our issues, but it is a major first step.

### **Possible School Expansion?**

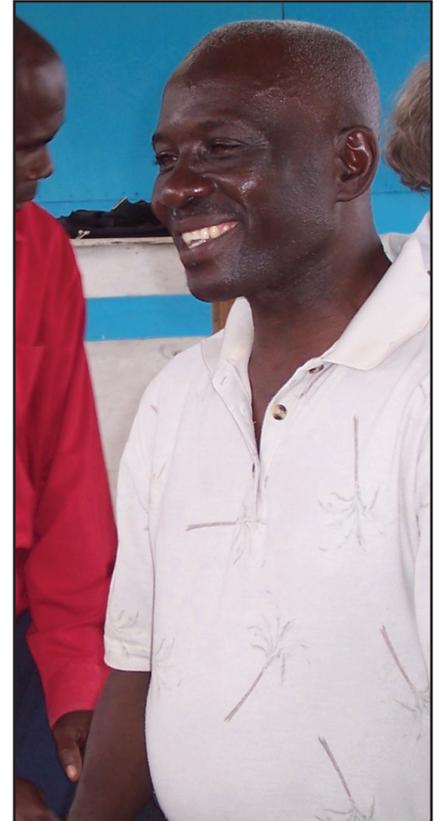
We were able to support the construction of several walls within the school to separate spaces for classrooms, offices, and storage. This is the first step in a high-priority goal for the school which is to expand through 10th grade (students currently end at 9th<sup>th</sup>). Families can't afford to send the children to schools in Leogane or Port-au Prince, currently the only way for students to continue their education. Gang activities in the cities also present obvious security concerns as well. We have seen a budget to achieve an expansion to 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and the expense is not as exorbitant as we expected. It also gives the current teachers more work and thus more income. We're discussing focusing on this for our 2026 Pledge Drive, so please stay tuned!

### **Education at Grace: Spring, Fall Parish Forums**

In April we shared photos and videos of community celebrations that we've attended during our visits to Bigonet – weddings, baptisms, funerals, and school graduations. Many of the photos accompanying this report are from those trips and events.

In November we shared a video and discussed the current political situation, including the impacts for the country generally and for our partners in Bigonet specifically.

These forums have been very well attended. Thanks to all for your continued interest and curiosity about various aspects of our partnership! As always, we encourage you to join us for committee meetings and/or for our monthly phone calls. We welcome every aspect of your involvement of this life-changing partnership.



**These are the community leaders with whom we have monthly phone conversations. From left to right:  
Principal Luckner Demosthenes;  
Lay Leader Ceder Nelson with his wife Junie Impert and his mother-in-law;  
Senior Warden Voltaire Pierre-Louis.**



**Students' performance at the Kindergarten graduation.**

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