

## February 2011

### Traveler's Thoughts – Rebuilding Lives

During our trip in February, we met too many fascinating people to list. One that comes to mind is The Rev. Canon Bill Squire, a retired Episcopal priest and former director of St. Vincent's. His kind spirit emanated through Fr. Sadoni's office as we spoke and he gave us the uncanny feeling that we were long-time friends. Canon Squire shared some brief historical information about St. Vincent's while our group ventured outside the present facility's walls and walked to the location of the former compound.



*Dieumene, one of St. Vincent's graduating students who is going on to university this year, and Canon Squire*



*A street view of the old property, behind the gray wall*

Behind a long, and obviously new wall, was a large piece of property strewn with rocks and trash. A mountain of unused wheelchair carcasses were piled in a heap. Some workers sat underneath a single tree in the midst of this wide-open space.



*Photo: St. Vincent's property*

In the meantime, the only building left standing—the former brace shop and dental clinic—is being rehabilitated. Walls are being repaired, equipment is being installed and preparations are being made to clean and paint.

If the building we toured is any indication of the former facility, it was quite impressive before the earthquake. To enter, we attempted to open the metal door but it wouldn't budge. One of the workers came to our aid, putting his hand through a hole in the wall and managed to open the door.

Inside were the remnants of St. Vincent's dental clinic that housed the skeletons of two dental chairs and a broken dental x-ray machine. Paperwork was scattered across the dusty floor, some of the only things left after the extensive looting that followed the earthquake.

In the same building was the brace shop, a series of rooms, which boasted multiple drill presses, ban saws and industrial ovens for the manufacturing of custom prostheses. A separate room held a set of parallel bars for physical therapy. This once very productive space is now silent, waiting for creative hands to be there once again, making their mechanical miracles for Haiti's disabled.



*the former dental clinic*

Outside the building, under a set of stairs, was a pile of rubble. Centered atop a heap of casters was a classic black-corded ophthalmoscope lying in the debris, one of the few indicators of the eye clinic that no longer existed. We imagined that this clinic was just as impressive as the brace shop and dental clinic.

The former surgical suite was inaccessible. It was explained that a door had yet to be cut into the side of the building that would allow access to the surgery area. *(Maybe during our March trip we will be able to see this area.)*

It was through this brief visit that we were given some bit of perspective as to how much was lost in the quake. Years and years had been spent building and furnishing these rooms that housed the medical professionals who would work so hard to for the health and well-being of the children of St. Vincent's. This same area housed the school and the girl's dormitory as well. And, in less than one minute, everything was lost.

This is why The Red Thread Promise, St. Paul's and the Dioceses of Louisiana and Olympia (WA state) are here: **to help rebuild lives.**

In order to do so, we rely on your generous spirits and are grateful for the funds you entrust us with to complete our projects, all for the sake of the children.