

Madame Andrea, a Haitian Light for many

Think about your childhood- What was “normal” in your life? You had parents, maybe some siblings...a home with running water and bedrooms and a bathroom...a stove, refrigerator stocked with food...you had clothes and shoes...you had a car or several cars..and you got in them and went on vacations...you had a swing on a tree or a swing set and a slide in your back yard...if you got sick you went to the doctor or he came to see you...you had medicine...you had electricity day and night...you went to school and learned about history and math and science...you had books and records and crayons...Santa brought you lots of toys and fruit at Christmas...you had a bed with sheets and a pillow, a doll or stuffed animal...you did not go to bed hungry or thirsty...maybe you never even thought about people who went to bed hungry...

Madame Andrea was born in Haiti. She probably had siblings. They lived from day to day in a meager dwelling of some sort on a dirt floor. Their food was rice and beans. They had no clean water. If they got sick, they suffered through the disease or died. She grew up, married at a young age-15 or so. She had children. Perhaps she learned to read and write. And, somewhere along the way someone told her Jesus loved her. She believed.

Then, she became friends with Americans from Clayton, NC through their mission work in Haiti. She helped start a church and then a school. Her whole life was spent making her community a better place for her family and neighbors. For many years she worked tirelessly at the church and school.

Jump to present day....Our trip to Haiti November 2009.

We had a “to do” list. One of the things Helen wanted us to do was to meet Madame Andrea. We didn’t know what that meant, but we said OK.

Here is my story:

Yvon parks the van on the side of the street. We walk into a narrow alley walled on both sides. There is trash and liter in our way and the ally is wet from the rain last night. We pass several doors and then turn a corner into another smaller passageway. At the end of the alley, on the right, is a door...into Madame Andrea’s home...only a small room, maybe 12x12 or less.

A table, a chair, a mattress on the floor is all we see in the dimly lit room. Madame A is propped up on the floor, leaning against the mattress. Her family tells us she is sick, but they can’t take her to the hospital. I kneel down beside her. I ask her to squeeze my hand with her right hand and she does...not so with the left hand. She is paralyzed on the left side...She has had a stroke and the family does not understand what that means. There is no help for her.

They do their best to keep her comfortable. She tries to eat as a family member offers a spoonful of food. They say she has had little to eat or drink. She is on the floor because her bladder isn’t under control. An old mop is outside the door. She talks as a family member interprets and we stand there for 5 minutes or so, I don’t remember how long. We are heartbroken. Helen gives her a hug and so do we. As we leave she speaks a sentence in Creole. “What is she saying?” Helen

asks. Her grandson says she wants to know did you bring any candles? “No, I didn’t have room, I will bring them in January,” Helen responds.

We make our way back through the alleys and to the van. Why does she want candles? She wants light at night. They have no electricity for lights. The room has no windows. Only the cracks of space between the top of the walls and the old roof give any sun light. It is pitch dark from sundown to dawn. The candles are their only source of light. Deanna, another missionary, immediately announces, “take us to the store.” There she buys a big candle and Yvon takes it back before night falls on Madame Andrea.

Madame Andrea will always be in my memory. A beautiful example of a daughter, a wife, a mother, and grandmother . She spent her life making her small world a better place for her family. Now her family is caring for her. She is a lover of God, and now, may God hold her close.

Sadness envelops as – since as of Jan. 30, 2010, we still do not know if she and her family survived the earthquake.

Lynn Rouse
Missionary to Haiti
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SUMC