

**SMPC Mission Stories – Bob Cushman**  
Transcript for the August 2, 2026 Interview



**What prompted you to visit Haiti?**

Actionnel came to South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church and gave a sermon in 2008 where I was in the congregation. I felt the Lord tap me on the shoulder and say, “Hey, you know, this might be a really good opportunity for you at some point in the future.” Ten years later, I had the opportunity, working alongside the youth pastor and folks on Mission and Outreach to bring a group of kids to Bayonnais. At the end of 2017, the Haiti Relation Trip came to be — with a roster of eight children.

I was very hopeful that both the youth leaders as well as the children would really experience God's love. The other parents felt similarly: “Let's share the word of God with our brothers and sisters in Haiti. Let us share our resources, love, time and treasure with these people and see how that can evolve through our children, through their lifetime.”

There were so many opportunities for us to engage our children and allow them to see what real mission work looks like in an international environment.

Once we got to Bayonnais, it was really important for us to take our youth through different areas — visit the clinic, participate in worship, go on an agricultural tour, see the market. We had several youth that were sponsoring children. We felt it would be very important for them to actually meet somebody you've been writing to for years.

Many of the children that went along with us had the opportunity to see firsthand what SMPC provides and what [the] OFCB mission stands for. Many of the kids had not had any experience in a third world country — a very eye-opening experience!

One thing that the kids reflected about was that there weren't really any highways, not crosswalks, not stoplights, five people on a motorcycle, trucks with multiple people sitting on the roofs — just how different the transportation was!

**What did you discover about OFCB and Bayonnais?**

A lot of these children at ICB school, really took pride in having a very nice school uniform. Other things at the school were just the dedication. Many of the kids just loved the aspect of being able to go to school, being able to learn, having other children around in an instructional setting, and ... the free food.

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One of the activities that we did while we were there was to build food kits for new moms. So, we spent one afternoon negotiating with the vendors to buy grains, rice, and beans, and to get access to milk.

One of the most important things I learned being on site versus being here in the United States is the kindness and the love of the children of Bayonnais. You could do all the pre-planning you want, but being hugged and greeted and someone wanting to hold your hand every day is not something that you would have expected.

For the youth, one of their most favorite things was sitting on the front porch of the Helen Hunter Guest House. Our youth would just hang out on the front porch and kids would come over and just hug you and hold your hand and wanna comb your hair.

We got to experience the love and joy of seeing youth at SMPC participate in school exercises, sharing school supplies, going through mission activities. One personal thing that was very important was being able to share with a lot of the children that participated at the guest house front porch.

One afternoon we went on an agronomy tour. During the tour, we went by a market and were able to buy some bread. One of the personal moments that I keep with me tucked away, is my son Colin being able to buy a loaf of bread, negotiate the loaf of bread, bring it back to the porch, and then hand it out to everybody. I felt like, “You know, we're breaking bread here with another community!”

**How would you summarize the importance of this trip?**

This trip was a relation trip, building relationships between our youth and the youth in Bayonnais. It really reaffirmed my personal commitment to mission work here in Charlotte and abroad. It also allowed our youth participants to share how important the role OFCB plays here at South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church.

From a standpoint of mission and outreach, I think we have an obligation to continue to support and help the people of OFCB, sharing God's love and our resources with them, especially in this time of difficulty. These are our sisters and brothers. They just happen to be in another location.

I hoped that this generation of children, when we brought them down to Bayonnais, would just have the experience of understanding what we were doing as a church, as a congregation, as a community of faith. Hopefully they'll be able to take the lessons they learned, the things that we talked about while there — Actionel giving a sermon on the roof, the final night, which was really important. Just being able to remember and take those sorts of moments with them in their life.