



*This mid-March update edition of our Soaring E-News is to share immediate concerns regarding the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Haiti and her Caribbean neighbors, how travel restrictions are affecting Soaring, and our responses.*

### *Haiti, the D.R., and Travel Concerns from COVID19 and New Outbreaks of Unrest*

At this writing, there are no reported cases of the COVID19 Coronavirus in Haiti, although there are a number of cases in the Dominican Republic which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, and cases on several other neighboring Caribbean islands. The border between Haiti and the D.R. has been closed in order to help control the spread of the virus and hopefully prevent it from coming to Haiti where the country and its health and medical systems would be extremely ill-equipped to handle it. Haiti has also severely restricted travel into the country for the time being, and—combined with associated potential travel and health issues within the U.S. as well—Soaring Director Pastor Laura currently remains in the U.S. but is staying in close communication with agency staff on the ground in-country.

Additionally, Soaring Board members and scheduled teams will not be able to visit as planned in the month of April. Along with the uncertainty around commercial air flight, as of this week, Mission Flights International will suspend both passenger and cargo flights for at least a few weeks. Concerns are also heightened around new outbreaks of violence and crime in-country, and U.S. State Dept. has recently raised their travel warning back to the highest Level 4.

### *Soaring Clinic and Medical Response to Coronavirus*

The focus of our response as it was last fall, is to empower our outstanding Soaring medical staff in Haiti (pictured at left w/ the visiting mission team from Central United Methodist, Traverse City, in Jan.). With input and advice from medical

professionals on Soaring’s Board, Pastor Laura has shipped in items they need for our Clinic to be prepared if the novel Coronavirus does come to Haiti. These essentials include masks and gloves, antibacterial soap and wipes. Soaring is also working with partners in the local medical community through the Haitian Health Ministry and Cap Haitian Health Network to ensure proper medical protocols are communicated and followed, that areas for isolation are set up, and we are acquiring and shipping medications to potentially treat and mitigate symptoms.

### *Programs and Services Updates from Pastor Laura*

Schools reopened in Haiti before Christmas and the new semester in January got off to a good start. When I was in Haiti in January and February, I participated in the visitation to schools to pay students’ tuition. The photograph (at right) shows a number of our Soaring-sponsored young people at school, along with Asst. Dir. Hanania Orelus (far right) and her Education Programs Asst. Madeline Etienne (far left). And so proud of Soaring’s Saturday Night Leadership Group whose members have stepped up to keep things going when I’m not in Haiti, by leading the weekly class in a rotational format (Recent photo of group below ~ Thanks to Staton Lorenz & Central UMC Team for assisting w/ this initiative).



**A Lenten Reflection** ~ During the current Lenten Season, and as we all deal with the disruption being caused by Coronavirus, perhaps you might include in your prayer and meditation time, the opportunity to reflect upon the lives of our Haitian sisters and brothers, which are routinely limited in the ways we are now experiencing. In our faith tradition, Lent offers the prospect of forgoing your daily latte, espresso, soda, etc., and with restaurant closures these may not be an option right now anyway. One way to make a difference by things you’re “giving up,” is to collect the savings and make a donation ~ perhaps toward Soaring’s Nutrition Program or to Sponsor a Student’s Schooling. **To donate, send a check made out to Soaring to P.O. Box 631, Holt, MI 48842, or logon to [soaringunlimited.org](http://soaringunlimited.org).** Thank you for caring about Haiti!