

Meet Semadoine Merolis



Semadoine Merolis and his wife Saintany

Venelson Vitelus¹ and his sister Jesulene are trying to help some old people in the village of Fond Doux by doing errands for them. In the process, Venelson decided to bring the plight of Semadoine Merolis to the attention of the Fond Doux Foundation. Semadoine and his wife are one of the oldest, if not the oldest couple in Fond Doux. They have been together between 75 and 80 years. The exact length is not actually known. They knew each other as children. They have no family and he has become frail and needs help. When Venelson visited him and talked with him, he said that at one-point Semadoine's whole body began to shake and he was unable to continue the conversation. The Foundation provided Semadoine and his wife with some food and requested the community nurse assess his situation. They live near Haitian Fond Doux Foundation Committee members Wesley and Sonise Paulo, who try to help and along with some other neighbors sometimes bring food when they cook. Here is his story:

My name is Semadoine Merolis. I'm an old man. I am more than 100 years old. I have been with my wife, Saintany Coulange, since childhood (between 75 and 80 years). She is not quite 96 years old yet. We have lived in "Fond-Doux" about fifty-five (55) years.

I grow up in "Lacul", which is in Petit-Goâve. Because I had a bad quality of life, I came to Fond- Doux. I came to get a better quality of life. I had no job there. But I found work here with some people in Fond Doux cleaning their yard. They gave me a place to live. I shared the produce with them² that I grew. That was 55 years ago when I came here.

¹ The conversation with Semadoine was translated by Venelson Vitelus and edited by the Rev. John Clausing.

I had two (2) sisters and no brothers. My first sister was named Ariane Merolis and second one was named Osana Merolis. They are both deceased. My father was named Gabriel Merolis and my mother was named Seane Ponpied. My father was a farmer, and my mother was a business person. They used to plant corn, beans. They liked raising poultry, animals like hens etc. We lived in an Alms-house, that is a poorhouse. It was owned by a man named Direlan. We used to obtain water in a source without a pump, then in a river sometimes.



Nearby Country Well Without a Pump

Because I lived in a poor family, I did not go to school. Having a family is a support; but unfortunately, I don't have a family to help me.

(As an adult) I was a fisherman (until it became unprofitable).

(As an old man) I was affected by the earthquake, which happened in 2010, because some of my family, people who used to help us, died.

Now that I'm old, I have problems walking, obtaining water, getting food and working.

My plan for the future is that I have asked God to put someone into my way to help me. I would like my situation in life to be changed.

I was not and am not a member of a church, but I used to visit the Methodist church sometimes.

I would like the community to have a place for people to relieve themselves. . . I myself cannot work but I can be a counselor.

I never participated in any "Fond-Doux Foundation" program that it organized, but every time Sonise, my

² He became a tenant farmer.

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neighbor, gets something, she shares something with me.

Venelson: Thank you for sharing with us. You have been very helpful. Thank you.



Semadoine and Saintany with Food from FDF

Meet Felicy Lutervil



Felicy Lutervil

The interview with Felicy was conducted and translated by Emile Maceus in September 2021 and edited by the Rev. John Clausung. Here is what she said:

I am Felicy Lutervil. I am 85 years of age. I was born at Cuperlier, but I was raised at Fond Doux. I had three children but they have since died. However, I have a lot of grandkids. I have only one sister, no brothers. I am Christian. I got baptized after the 2010 earthquake. I go to church at Pastor Andrew's.

When my children were alive, they used to take care of me. They sent their kids home to spend some time with me. Since my children lived in Port-au-Prince, I raised their children for them. Most all my grandkids have grown up until their adulthood in my hands. There was one they brought him to me when he was two months old. There was another called Gregory. His father, who lived in Port-au-Prince, brought disorder because he was a very disordered person. There were two other of my grandkids that I took to raise -- one when he was three months, another at five years of age.

I do gardening. As I am very old now, I cannot work the way I used to work in the past. I just keep a little part of the garden that I used to work in so that I can have food for my family and me. Each time I see someone planting, sowing or harvesting, I offer my help. After harvesting, that person, the owner, will give me a little bit of the harvest, a ration.

However, my real job is cutting rush to make mats. I have been doing this job since 1964. I cut rush and make mats and take them to the public market at Violet to sell.

Every Thursday and every Saturday, I go to the market to sell my mats. I go cutting rush most days. If you find me today, it's due to pain. I have bone pain. (This has restricted her movements and doing all she wants to do.)



Bull Rush Growing by the Lake

Nowadays, you can buy a mat for 125 gourdes or more. Due to the fact that I am suffering from high blood pressure, I cannot stay for a long time in the sun. When

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I go to the market, I just give them to a client for 100 gourdes. With that money, I buy some provisions and go home.

I used to sow tropical green peas, chickpeas, corn, watermelon. Now, I plant plantain. As you know the land that I used to work on is not mine. I seed and plant. But then when it's time to harvest, after the harvest, I give the owner a part and I take a part.

I can only say the community of Fond Doux is progressing in some ways. More people go to school and church. However, we have the problem of insecurity. We are afraid to walk in the darkness because there is no electricity. We cannot wake up early to go to the market for fear of thieves or robbers.

I did not go to school. But one of the reasons why I don't know how to read and write is because I have a sight problem. I remember there was a school for elderly persons in the Wesleyenne School led by Mr. Blanc. I went to that school. But I encountered a problem that each time I tried to read tears would come to my eyes. Because of that, I definitely don't know how to read and write.

Nowadays, I cannot go very early to cut rush. I go when the sun rises, when the water is warm. If I go when the water is cold, I will have to leave when it's still cold. It's for that reason that I go when it's warm.

When you arrive at the rush, it's very tiring because I have to cut grass and branches to make a pathway to put my feet. When I finish cutting the rush, I lay them down in order to dry.



Dried Bull Rush for Mats

Thinking about that, I have been working in the rush since 1964. I never had pain before. But you can see; right now, I have pain (apparently arthritis).



Felicity in Front of her House

The one thing that I would like to add is that my house has broken down. I was wondering if I would be able to find some assistance. I would be very happy if I could find help in rebuilding my house.

Emile: In the name of Fond-Doux foundation and its partners, we thank you for answering our questions and I hope this interview will help other people know more about our community. . .

Meet Jeanol Vertus



Jeanol Vertus was chosen by the Wesleyenne Church to be a representative on the Clinic Committee Here is what he told Director Emile Maceus about himself:

I am Jeanol Vertus. It is an honor for me to talk to you today in order to tell a little bit about myself.

I am 43 years of age. I am married. I have three children. More precisely, I will soon have four children

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because my wife is eight months pregnant. I have six brothers and four sisters. They are all living. On my mother's side, I am the first child in the family but on my father's side, I am not.

Although I was not born here at Fond-Doux, I have lived here in this community since I was nineteen years old. I was born and raised in a locality called Source Pineau. My father is Jeanau Vertus. He is from Fond-Doux. My mother left Source Pineau to come and live here with my father. Of course, that is why I left Source Pineau to come and live here.

What do I do for a living? Since 2002, I have worked as a supervisor in the Wesleyenne School. I encourage student ethics. I work with the students to follow the rules and the policies established by the school.

From what I have learned about the Wesleyenne Church, it is said that this church was started in 1943. The founding father was Deumier Settis. He has since passed away. After his death, he was followed by Pastor Christian Demerau. The place was smaller at that time than it is today. Because of the January twelfth earthquake (2010), our church building was cracked.

During that time, there were some missionaries that came to visit us and they saw our situation and they decided to help us with the construction of the basement. After that, we, the local members of the church, gathered hands together to finish the construction of the church. As you can see now, we have just covered the church with concrete. It is thanks to a store that has given us all the building materials on credit. With an installment plan, we are paying off this debt over time. It's thanks to the participation of each of our members that we are here today and have a building to serve the Lord.

About the number of members, you know, there are a number of ways to count membership in the church. Several of our young members have left the church to go to learn somewhere else, to continue with their careers, or to go to college, university. By my last estimate, I think we have about 280 members. I became a member of the church in 1997, I accepted Christ and was baptized. After this, I worked with the youth program in the church for more than 10 years. Right now. I am an administrator of the dominical lessons.

How did we obtain the clinic building? I think it is thanks to the relationship that we had with an organization called Samaritan Purse. At the beginning, Samaritan Purse used to train, to educate some young people for

us concerning "Violence on people": that was one of the ways they started to help us. After many meetings and much talk, they saw the importance of a clinic in the community and we had a place that could accommodate a clinic building in the way that they wanted to build it. So, they planned with us, the Wesleyenne staff, and gave us the clinic.

After its construction, they then gave us all the equipment needed to assure the good working of the clinic. They worked with us to get it up and working. When they left, they gave us the clinic totally. But for a lack of money to buy meds and pay nurses, we were unable to keep the clinic open.



Clinic Building

When I became aware of the coalition (Wesleyenne Church and Fond Doux Foundation), I was elated to see a plan to reopen the clinic. I think there is a time for everything. Surely, now it's time for the people of this community to have access to basic medical care, to have first aid. This clinic was a gift by an organization, but we were unable to keep it working. Since the Fond Doux Foundation saw the clinic was not working, they approached us to understand the reason and we explained the situation that we were encountering with the clinic.

And, then, they decide to come to help us. I think the reopening of the clinic will be of benefit for the people in the community because each time they have a medical emergency, they have to go far away to find help, like Fond des Blanc. For example, we have some young ladies that are pregnant but they do not have money for a follow-up in a hospital. I think it will be great to have a working clinic in the community.

I had already heard about the Fond Doux Foundation because I used to talk to some members of its committee and also, I used to see this organization operate in the community, help people. However, I did

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not have any occasion to approach anyone or develop a relationship with them. Surely, I don't know all the programs that the Foundation is involved with, the areas which it touches.

However, I can say that the Wesleyenne institution is about to lose a partnership with an organization called COMPASSION. They used to help students with tuition fees, give them medical assistances, and help them with nutrition, etc. But it is looking like that relationship is coming to an end. Well, if we can find another organization that can continue providing help for the students, help with tuition fees, assist them with college or university, I think that will help the church continue to have a positive impact in the community.

The needs of the community are extremely large, I don't know where to start. Unfortunately, humanitarian assistance and cooperation are unable to touch all the problems in the community. For example, I think we need a hospital because we don't have any good hospitals in the city for the people that have severe injuries. Then the community needs a professional center for our young people to learn something to provide for their daily basic necessities.

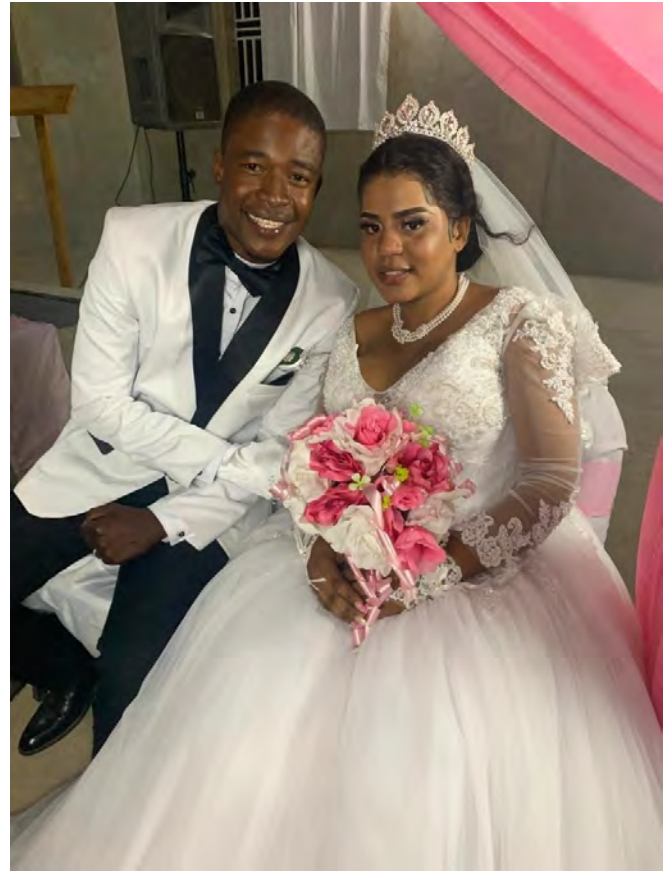
Of course, the political situation has a huge impact on the community. For example, in the past when there was a demonstration or road blocks, students used to go to school normally and everyone went to their activities in the turn zone. But nowadays, when there are demonstrations, all activities stop working. Students cannot go to school. People cannot go to their activities to find daily bread. That is to say, the political situation of the country is impacting the development of the community of Fond Doux.



Demonstration in Port-au-Prince¹

¹ Photo taken by Voice of America – in public domain

Wedding of Executive Director



Emile and Nadine Maceus

On Christmas Day 2021 Emile Maceus, our Executive Director, was united in marriage with Nadine Toussaint. The wedding was a very big social event. Many friends were present. Board members of the Foundation contributed some personal funds to give them a nice cash gift. Other contributions are WELCOME. If you would like to share in giving him a gift or support a Foundation project, send your contributions to the Foundation either online through the website or by US mail, clearly marking its purpose:

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The **Fond Doux Foundation** engages friend-to-friend with people in and around the village of Fond Doux, Haiti, helping to provide better access to medical care and health education, improved nutrition through agriculture and animal husbandry, educational scholarships, and intercultural faith-based activities. FDF is a 501(c)3 organization based in Durham, North Carolina, USA, whose Christian community outreach began in 2011.