

Celebrate Jesus of Haiti

March 2013

Dear Friends,

God called Abraham “friend” because of their closeness. We can’t just call you “partners” of this work in Haiti because you are so much more than that. You are true friends, people who love us and have compassion for those you know only through our stories. Each of our lives fits into God’s story, and your part in helping to open the Children’s Clinic on LaGonave is a piece of His story and your own. This is such a dream fulfilled that we can hardly talk about it without crying. The feeding stations, the church, the school, and now the free clinic spell HOPE for a community of people who had none a decade ago. We cannot change the government or the voodoo culture of Haiti. But God can build up a generation who can. These children need what we all need...food, shelter, clothing, health, acceptance, and a connection to the One who provides it all.

The gift of a daily meal



Jerry hit the ground running during our recent month-long stay. Faithful friends from our home church joined him to immediately begin ripping off the leaking roof of the clinic building to replace it with American-made roofing materials. They were joined by 5 Haitian men Jerry selected to work on construction projects. The men worked tirelessly day and night and had it completed in 3 days. On Sunday morning, Jerry announced he would be preaching from the rooftop as they worked, while the Celebrate Jesus of Haiti church held their normal services a few hundred yards away! Next came the construction of a new entry gate for clinic patients, building of benches for the waiting areas, and a thorough cleanup and sterilization of the clinic’s two floors.

Stage one of construction was completed just in time for the arrival of the Missionary Medical Team from United Methodist Church of South Dakota. This is their fourth trip here. The team of 5 doctors, 2 pharmacists, 3 nurses, and 3 helpers worked at an exhausting pace. There is no x-ray equipment, no modern technology. They sort through every manner of sickness using their collective skills to diagnose and treat. Sonja labors alongside all day every day. After a cold shower, a hot meal, and a few hours sleep, they begin again. In seven days, 957 people were seen. It is the only free clinic on the island of 150,000 people and only available 1-2 weeks per year. Some walk for days to come and patiently wait their turn. All day they sit, waiting and hoping that they can be seen. The most urgent are seen first. At the end of the day those who didn’t get in must leave. They return the next morning and wait all day again, hoping to get in to see a doctor. Sadly, at the end of the week many leave disappointed. Such is the way of life in Haiti. We praise God for this team and every life touched. We welcome medical and dental teams. Please contact us or pass this letter on to your friends in the medical community who might be willing to come and serve. God’s rewards are immeasurable.

Two days after they left, the Children's Clinic opened. Because we cannot serve the entire population of the island, we are constrained to make this available to only sick children newborn to age 12. We do not provide well care, but do immunize. Dr. Zacky is from the island. He is kind-hearted and personable. The doctor is assisted by Nurse Tete, Receptionist Mary Maude, Security Guard Elle, and a nightly cleaning crew. He sees 25 patients Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Intake begins with the Elle asking the



Dr. Zacky seeing patients on day one of the free Children's Clinic



Nurse Tete dispensing free prescription drugs and giving instructions to a grateful parent.

parent about the condition of the child and placing a priority on those with serious medical problems or injuries. Fifteen at a time they move to the outside waiting area, then to the inside waiting area, then to one of six medical stations. Each month six hundred children will receive care who otherwise would have suffered or even died with treatable illnesses. Tete dispenses prescription drugs at no charge and carefully reviews instructions with the parent. The requirement for



50% of Haitian children do not reach age 6. To this young mother, the Clinic spells hope.

working at the clinic is that they must be concerned for the people they treat. When they arrive and until they depart, each child and parent must experience the love of God towards them. None of this could happen without your generous financial support and prayer. This is a huge blessing to people who have not had much to celebrate in their lives.

God has prepared each person for their assignments in life. For the past several years, with no idea of its importance in Haiti, Sonja has volunteered one day each week at Volunteers in Medicine, helping the indigent in West St. Charles County receive medical care. This experience prepared her to set up the medical records and understand what would be needed to operate the Children's Clinic. Each life is precious to God. The One who gathers our tears and numbers the hairs on our head cares about details. He asked each of us to care for the poor, the orphans and the widows. That is what you are doing. All glory belongs to Him.

While all of this was happening, Jerry welcomed another group of volunteers from our home church, Faith Christian Family Church. The men set to work completing the construction of the new "store" where donated items shipped over from the States will be distributed to some of the poorest people on the earth. Last trip, we shared that the container had arrived carrying these blessings. Our friends sorted through all the crates of shoes, clothing, and food items, organizing and labeling. We waste nothing.



Girls from our school happily selecting a pair of free shoes from the new store

Jerry and his crew set off with the old roofing materials and replaced the roofs of two homes in the Saline Flats. One home is the location of one of the five feeding stations, and the other was for one of our cooks. They were elated to have new old roofs to keep some of the rain out!

This construction team moved over to the Promised Land. Using the skid loader you saw in our last letter, they cleared the shrubs and trees from 3500 feet of perimeter to prepare for the fence. They poured and formed concrete posts until there were no days left to work. Alongside them were the Haitian church members who wish to have gardens there. Their pay is the privilege of having a garden to feed their families. Dreams are realized step by step.



He was 7 years old and weighed 13 lbs. He had no name.

When our “store” was prepared, we distributed a ticket to each school child for a new pair of shoes. Then our teams set off for the Saline Flats, to feed children there and to distribute one ticket per family for them to come shop for a free needed item. In twenty years of laboring in Haiti, nothing prepared us for what we would experience while there.

One of the local boys was acting as our translator. He asked us to come with him to meet someone. We approached a mother, her seven other children, and her baby boy. He

looked to be about 2 or 3 years old with some type of wasting disease. His limbs were skin over bones. He could not speak. He was in a fetal position in a filthy babyseat that reeked of urine and feces. I (Sonja) scooped him up without requesting permission. He was as light as a newborn. I held him up to God and our team prayed for him. My heart was breaking. I embraced him and told his mother “I’m taking him.” We rushed him to Dr. Zacky at the clinic. After a quick examination he told us that the boy, *who had never been given a name*, was dying of malnutrition and he did not have the equipment to help him. We all made the quick trip to the hospital in Anse A Galet. By examining his teeth, the doctors determined that he was 7 years old. He weighed 13 pounds. He was near death. The mother was summoned. The doctors and nurses were speaking to her in Creole, and we could hear the anger rising in their voices but didn’t understand what they were saying. Finally someone told us. The mother had been deliberately starving this child since birth so that others would feel sympathy for him and give her money. She said “this one gives me money for food.” She had chosen him to die the agonizing death by starvation. Why? There are no answers. I know that right now you now feel the same anguish we felt at that moment. He is one of God’s children. We gave him a name. We call him Jonah.



We named him Jonah

We asked the hospital staff to try to restore Jonah. After several unsuccessful attempts to find a vein, they were able to get a tube down his nose and feed him that way. We will personally

cover the cost. Jonah needs a miracle to live. God is sovereign. We know only this....Jonah lived to be loved for the first time in his life.

His life has importance. In prayer for Jonah back home in the U.S., I (Sonja) heard the Lord say to me "When are you going to pray for his mother? When are you going to forgive her?" My response, "I don't want to." His response, "Are you God?" No! No! I need to show her the same mercy that God shows me as I walk day by day with Him. Lord, help us to love like You love and to forgive like you forgive.

We don't normally share stories about the tragedies, the shocking details. We prefer to share the good news...the cleaned-up school children, the filled church pews, the children with full bellies, the 13 people we baptized on this trip. We share Jonah's story so that you will join us in prayer, for him and for his mother.

May the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts,

Sonja and Jerry Dickherber