



PRACTICAL COMPASSION i n c o r p o r a t e d

providing food, education, housing, medical care and jobs

If not us, then who?

If not now, then when?

October 30, 2008

Dear Co-laborers,

Well, we went to Haiti as we said we would in September. What an adventure it was! Getting into the Artibonite Valley was a little adventure all by itself as we had to drive across the river just outside Montrouis (pronounced "Mo-wee" locally) since the bridge had been washed away. Someone told us we were fortunate to have come just when we did because the river was receding just a bit and we could cross it. (I don't think "fortune" had anything to do with it.)

Still, we pressed on and found that as we neared the center of the stream, which was moving quite swiftly, our vehicle began to move more sideways than forward. At one point we were bobbing in the water like a cork - all four wheels off the ground. Gerard, our Haitian interpreter and guide, sat in the shotgun seat and kept saying, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus." Eventually our wheels touched ground near the opposite shore and we drove up onto dry ground after spinning our wheels for awhile in the mud. Who said this was going to be hard?



This picture (right) was taken a week later on our way out of country. There was no one to take the picture when we were going in country as everyone was hanging on to some part of the car.

We saw during the entire trip that the Lord was opening doors and arranging things for us. Things were simply falling into place at the right time day by day. Even our energy level was at its peak for the entire trip up to the part when we had completed the last task on our list. And then, we both collapsed into the plastic chairs and crashed.

All the way to Pont Sonde we were seeing the terrible aftermath of the four hurricanes which passed through/over Haiti. Entire villages were devastated and many, many homes were simply collapsed. It was heartbreaking to travel that road and seeing all the destruction. The roads, such as they are, didn't fare very well either. We saw areas of roadway completely washed away. In some cases we weren't sure if the water holes through which we had to travel or around which we had to travel were large enough and deep enough to swallow our small SUV or not. Some holes weren't worth the risk to find out, and we simply off-roaded around them.

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When we did finally arrive at Pont Sonde, we were delighted to see that the new school was all but finished and was undamaged by the storms. The school sits far enough up the hill to be out of the flood waters and low enough on the hill to be somewhat sheltered from the winds which seemed to have ripped everything else apart. We met with the contractor who was finishing the school at Pont Sonde and went over the few problems we saw during our inspection of the building. He agreed to address them and thus finish the job. School was scheduled to open the following week with 156 new students and the same number of hungry mouths to feed.

We began praying for the Lord's increase immediately. Why? We found that a bag of rice

which cost \$10 just three weeks earlier was now selling for \$48. By the time we left that same \$10 bag was selling for \$56. Since all the land routes were cut off by the flood waters, goods could not be transported to Gonaives or Montrouis or, indeed, any of the small villages along the only land route through the Artibonite. Even the route north to Cap Haitien was not traversable. Water was at a premium, and many did not have access to clean water at all. Food was financially out of reach for most. Local gardens were totally destroyed and the local merchants who had been vendors in the makeshift markets had no goods to sell. Gasoline was unavailable because the tank trucks could not get through.

Life in Haiti is so terribly hard. And yet, every time we go there we are struck by the indomitable spirit of these people. They are a noble people, full of life and love and faith. In the face of extreme privation they remain gracious and hospitable. A friendlier people I have never met. But in spite of their humbling demeanor, they carry the horror of their circumstances always with them. The pain is there. It's always there -- just below the surface. We were met with laughs, hugs and blessings. There was even a little dancing for joy. Haitian people are so appreciative of the help they get and the people who send it. They know that they have brothers and sisters in the Lord who care about them and their children -- and it shows.

Almost immediately the work began. There were supplies to purchase and chores to be done. We needed to find some children to get their tuition paid and provide some food money for them. Sponsored children had to be found and given some support money from their sponsors. We had teachers to find as well. Since the floods had closed down the schools, the teachers had to be notified that we were in country and wanted to meet with them. The word went out by foot messengers and people were located and informed within a few short hours.

There may be no electricity, no phones, no decent roads and no public media, but the information network is alive and well in Haiti. For example, Jan Bowman had carried some funds from Aaron, a young man who had traveled to Haiti with us this past summer. As is true for most who see this place, Aaron was moved by the excessive poverty and need. He had sent some money for one of the young men, Macintosh, whom he had met while in country. We walked to where Macintosh and his ailing mother had been living for some years, only to find that they had left. When we inquired about their location, no one knew where they had gone or where they were currently living.

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The home they had been renting (right) was no longer affordable for them. It had been fixed up and was awaiting a new tenant. Meanwhile, the only door to this 7'x8' palace was padlocked. I waited while Jan (who had been improving his Haitian Creole by leaps and bounds) was communicating with some of the local kids. Jan asked them to get the word out to see whether Macintosh or his mother could be located. No message was included, just that Jan wanted to see him and renew acquaintances. Within thirty minutes we left for the Pierre-Louis home where we were staying. Not one half hour after our return to "base camp" Jan looked up to see Macintosh's mother walking towards us. Not only had they found her, but she had hiked up to see Jan. Macintosh was out looking for work and wouldn't return until later that night. As I said, there may be no amenities, but the communication network is functioning well.



The same thing happened when we sent word out that we wanted to meet with the teachers at the Bon Berger School in Borel. We sent the message that we would be at the school on the following day at 10:00 A.M. Sure enough, when we arrived at 9:30 all the teachers were there! The word had gotten out to them. We had a small time for reunion and fellowship which was delightful. (I wish my Creole was improving as rapidly as their English.) Nevertheless, with Gerard's help we were able to communicate very clearly. We paid them their wages and that brought large smiles and much rejoicing. It meant that their families would eat that night!

We spent some time with the Pont Sonde group arranging for meals for the students and bringing the cash to get that job done. Wow, has that price gone up over the last few months! Feeding the school children one hot meal each school day is going to be very expensive this year. Tuitions have been paid and the money has been provided to carry the school and the kids through December of this year. Our friend and guide, interpreter and companion, Gerard Morency (pictured right) was again invaluable to us. This gentle giant saves us a lot of money by doing our negotiating for us. He invariably gains us a 30%-40% lower price than we are able to negotiate for ourselves. He also knows where to find whatever we need to get. He's a little like a human GPS unit for the well-intentioned "blancs" (white people) with whom he travels so well. We are thankful for him every minute of the day. Standing with him is Jan Bowman, one of the Board members who has also gotten hooked on the Haitian people and this effort to relieve some of their plight.



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We want to thank you for your generosity and your faithfulness, because without you, none of this would be happening. We were so encouraged by the outpouring of support after our last appeal. Your benevolences toward this people and to us has been nothing short of inspirational. Thank you so much for all you do.

I am going to end this update now, because we have been getting things kicked back to us for being too large for some people's mailboxes / servers. I am going to write another update (with pictures) all about the school in Pont Sonde in a week or so. You will get that in a matter of a few short days. The idea is to produce several short updates rather than one huge one. So, expect to hear from us in about a week.

In the meantime, please continue to remember the work, the need, the people and us in your prayers. If you are so inclined, please pass this e-update along to your contacts -- perhaps they will want to join us in this fight against privation, ignorance, suffering and death. It might help to remind them that 100% of all contributions from our donors goes to the work in Haiti. We keep nothing for ourselves, we have no paid employees, and one local donor pays all of our overhead expenses.

There are still child sponsorships available, and special needs which need sponsoring as well. Check out our website at www.PracticalCompassion.org for more details as it will be updated very soon. There you will find some of these ongoing needs:

- Teacher sponsorships: pays a teacher's salary for one year. Cost: \$700 to \$1,000 / yr.
- Student sponsorships: pays for education, books, uniform and one meal each school day. Cost: \$300 / yr.
- Dig a well to provide clean water for an entire community. Cost: \$5,000.
- Add a room to the school: Cost: \$8,000.
- Sponsor a cook for the school feeding program. Cost: \$ 450 / yr.
- Furnish a classroom with desks, chalkboards, etc. Cost: \$1,200
- School supporter: helps to pay for plates, utensils, cups, petrol for generator, classroom supplies. Cost: ~ \$1,000 / yr.
- Medical Clinic (semi-annual): pays for worm medication for the children and medical care for a community (medicine) by a stateside physician. Cost: ~ \$1,000 / yr.
- Of course, undesignated contributions are very welcome indeed!
- And on, and on, and on, and on . . .

By the way, does your employer have a matching gifts program? We will likely be eligible to participate as we are recognized by the IRS as tax exempt under the heading of a charitable / humanitarian / educational organization. Questions? Contact us at info@PracticalCompassion.org.

Anyway, until next time, please remember that you are appreciated and your service to the people of Haiti is nothing less than life-giving. Thank you for caring, for giving and for demonstrating your very practical compassion.

Your servant,



george zimmerman, founder

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