

A HAITI PROJECT
CONNECTING THE DOTS

A little boy and his two sisters found themselves, tossed here and there among foster parents and orphanages, running away from each in succession. Could any good ever come from this terrible experience? This little boy grew up to be a successful contributing person of society with much to give and much for which to be thankful. Another young man with six siblings, an ill father and a strong mother survived in a southern industrial society, on the margin of financial bleakness, has risen to meet success and helps the rest of us cope.

John Dickinson and Bill Harrison, both members of Cherry Log Christian Church, Cherry Log, Georgia, met and formed a close friendship.

Then, disaster struck thousands of children who were immediately thrown into utter chaos—the Jan. 12, 2010 earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. John’s heart became burdened with empathy for them in their plight. “Somebody needs to help them,” thought John Dickinson.

A Haitian Florida condominium maintenance man, Jean, shared with him the concerns of his heart and asked him to speak to his pastor, Henry Jules, regarding their ministry to Haitian refugees at Bethel Baptist Church (SBC), Jimani, Dominican Republic.

John began the process of following up on leads. One by one the dots began to appear. Follow the dots:

- John consulted with Francois LeConte, President/CEO, Minority Development and Empowerment, Inc., in Oakland Park, Florida regarding the Broward Haiti Relief, Task Force.
- John and his wife, Joan, met with Rev. Henry Jules, Pastor, Bethel Baptist Church (SBC), Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, who explained their ministry in the Baptist compound in Jimani, Dominican Republic.
- Bill and John “teamed up” with the Cherry Log Christian Church and community to offer and an opportunity to alter lives in Haiti.
- John spoke with Pastor Luke Harrigan, a Florida Haitian pastor whose brother served in Haiti.
- Bill and John flew to Dominican Republic and drove into Haiti to do a 10-day Haiti Project feasibility study of needed projects among the Haitian SBC churches at the request of the Ft. Lauderdale, FL, pastor, Henry Jules, with the blessing of their home church, Cherry Log Christian Church, Cherry Log, Georgia. They stayed at the Jimani compound just inside the Dominican Republic-Haiti border.
- John conferred with a host of international organizations: Caribbean Structural Systems, Inc. of APTEC Building Systems, Inc.; U.S. State Department, Haiti Travel Notes/U.S. Health Department; USAID, Dominican Republic; Church World Service; University National Evangelistic, Dominican Republic; and International Medical Alliance of Tennessee
- They met with pastors of Baptist churches in Haiti towns out from Port-au-Prince. They met with Pastor Paul Harrigan, Delmas #24, Baptist Church, who had an over-site of 22+ Baptist SBC affiliated Haitian churches; Pastor Lassene Joseph, 15 churches; Alasle Ruisse, Cantheir, 22 churches. Areas were avoided where most international help to the masses had been concentrated. The churches had established and organized tent cities for their members and had yet to receive international aid.

As a result of the feasibility study, they are putting together a Four Task Force to minister to Haitians:

Task One: Upgrade Jimani Compound.

Goal: To make this sanctuary for refugees more usable and people friendly—better conveniences and better hygienic.

1. Brackish water from the compound well and a limited supply of city water finished 1-½ hours per night, both need to be made usable for use by some type of filtration system.
2. The electrical system, composed of a small box, needs to be up-graded beginning with the installation of four 200 amp fuse boxes.
3. The plumbing in the compound is practically inoperable. It needs to be made usable by separating the two systems.
4. As funds become available, the unfinished classroom building needs to be completed.

Task Two: Home Inspection.

Goal: To move approximately 50 % of each tent city population back into their homes.

Provide a team of ten “home inspectors” to evaluate the homes of families living in tent villages. Homes that are determined to be safe and habitable can then be reoccupied by the owner family.

- a. Red: not habitable
- b. Yellow: needs repair but habitable
- c. Green: habitable

Task Three: Personal Hygiene Teams.

Goal: To reduce the probability of contracting health issues brought about by poor hygiene practices, exposure to contaminated environments and treat commonly expected issues that arise.

Ten individuals, along with accompanying Haitian interpreters, will teach personal hygiene to common groupings of classes in the tent cities as organized by tent city organizers. Those who are taught the basic principles of personal hygiene and receive supplies can themselves be teachers. Products essential for maintaining personal hygiene will be re-supplied from Jimani storage and U.S.A. (i.e. USAID, etc.).

Task Four: Crisis Counseling.

Goal: Gather local ministers so that they can be helped in processing their personal trauma and from that experience to encourage and train local tent city people to be “good active listeners” who also may practice active listening skills—yielding a healing function to their neighbors.

Crisis counseling is accomplished by allowing those who have experienced a traumatic event to “tell their story,” and in so doing, to process the tragedy they have experienced. In addition to having professional counselors as part of the ministry team, they can train or retrain local ministers and others in basic listening skills to help in bringing healing to traumatized individuals and families.

Who and what are the needs?

- Home inspectors (10)
- Plumbers and helpers (2)

- Electricians and helpers (2)
- Carpenters (2)
- Nurses and helpers (10)
- Psychologists for Crisis Counseling (3+)
- One or two leaders for each Task Team.

What's going on?

1. Distribution of Food and water
2. Over-the-counter medications are being collected.
3. Materials provided and being prepared for shelters
 - a. Tarps
 - b. Frames
 - c. Design suggestions
4. Water testing and filtration
5. Upgrading electrical system at compound being analyzed, supplies listed
6. Draft/Plan designs for the Jimani compound education building made with materials listings.
7. French language textbooks for grades pre-school through 7th grade, all subjects requested from Quebec, Canada.
8. Crisis counseling planning
9. Building inspector training is being planned.
10. Support beams for education building are being sent.
11. Reusable billboard tarps are being collected and pre-made temporary shelter framing kits are being designed and made.
12. Lumber seconds are being collected for framing kits.
13. Sports equipment to entertain children is collected and are being sent.

The Ft. Lauderdale church has routinely sent containers to its Jimani compound and is willing to ship containers of all that is collected to meet the Haitians' needs.

The dots have yet to be connected to bring much needed help to the Haitians. Whether you have skills to offer, resources or just referrals as God leads your thoughts and hearts, you can contribute. Persons with expertise in any of these task areas, who wish to become part of this Task Force of the Haiti Project, should contact John Dickinson, 954-426-3335 (johnnjoand@msn.com) or Bill Harrison, 706-632-4653 (billvelda@tds.net) for information as soon as possible. The concern is to get as much done as possible before the extensive rainy season affects them greatly.

We refer you to check out the suggested websites for planning a trip:
 Travel Arrangement deals: <http://www.spiritair.com/>
 Travel to Haiti CDC recommendations: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/content/vaccinations.aspx>
 Passport: www.USPassportNow.com/ApplyOnline or
http://travel.state.gov/passport/forms/forms_847.html

Are you supposed to be a part of connecting the dots?