

On an island steeped in witchcraft and stricken with poverty, missionaries are working to bring the light of the Gospel to ...

Story by Christmas McGaughey
Photos by Geraldine Wilkins

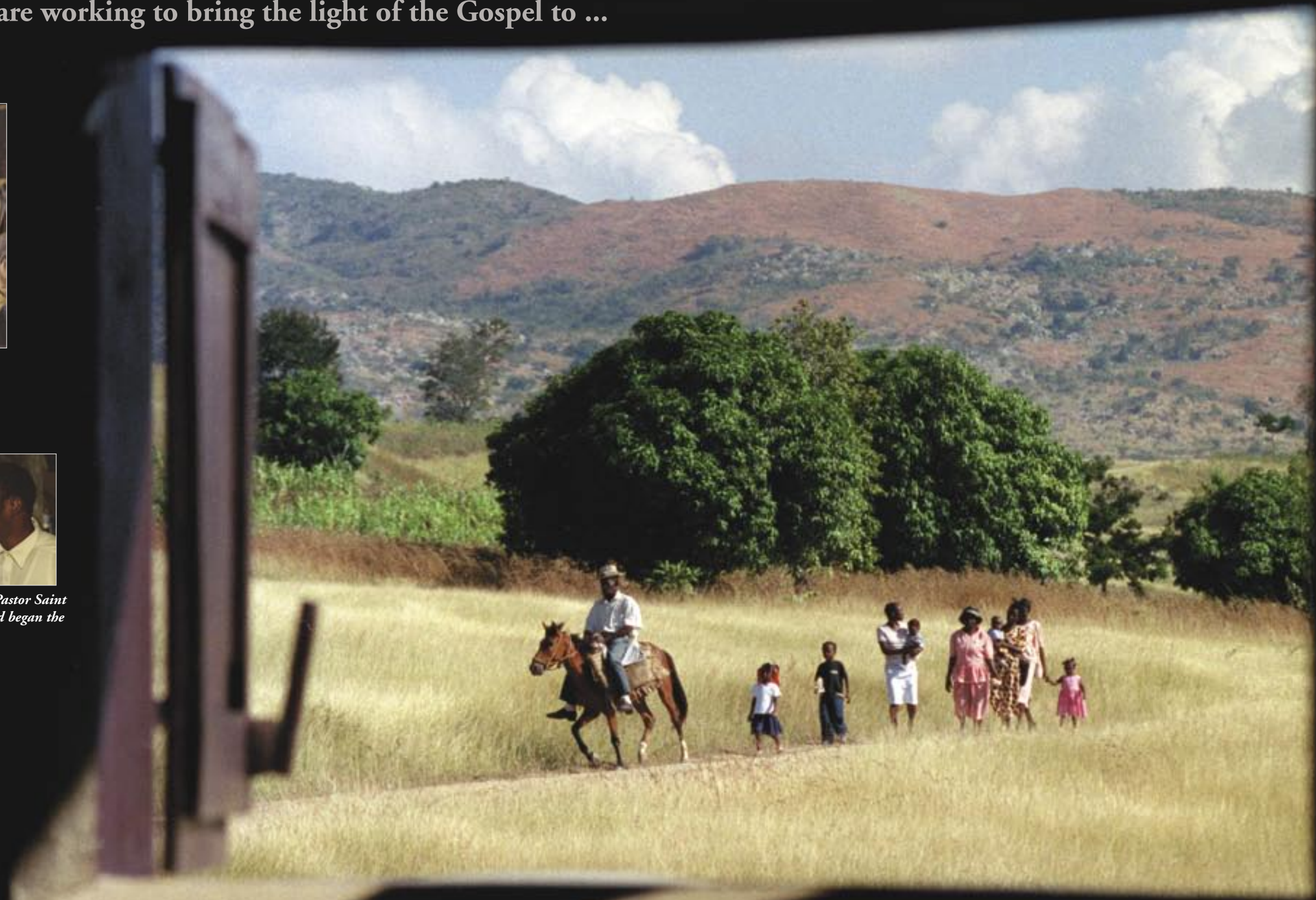


A member of the girl's choir sings during the dedication service at Rincon.



Harold Bither and Rincon Pastor Saint Luc greet each other. Harold began the work in Haiti 20 years ago.

Villagers walk and ride to church for medical assistance. CC Murrieta sent a medical mission team to serve people in several villages surrounding the city of Hinche. Hundreds of women, children, and men were seen.



Brothers in the Lord join hands in prayer as the medical compound opens.

Haiti

HAITI



A team from CC Murrieta was blessed to be a part of the dedication service at CC La Boc.

Giving sight to the blind

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Romans 8: 35

With a new pair of thick glasses perched on his nose, the 8-year-old Haitian boy walked unsteadily outside, grasping the hand of a volunteer. Blinking and looking at the ground, he muttered in amazement.

“He said it’s the first time he’s ever seen grass,” said the woman holding his hand.

The boy had been legally blind since infancy, but this past November he could see the land and people around him clearly for the first time. He grinned, shifting his gaze slowly, viewing his homeland. Optometrist Patrick Utnehmer noted that the boy’s gaze, which before had been focused in different directions, was already beginning to straighten out.

Inside the medical building on the conference center grounds other missionaries from CC Murrieta were pulling teeth, bandaging wounds, and handing out medication.



Dr. Walt Combs cares for patients with compassion. He has been to Haiti for numerous medical missions.



Optometrist Patrick Utnehmer checks the reaction of a boy's eyes to light, concluding that surgery could restore the lad's sight.

A Continuing Work

That day, the team was working in Hinche in the medical building that a previous team from CC Murrieta had helped to build. Groups from the Southern California Calvary have been visiting Haiti regularly for the past seven years, sometimes making

as many as five trips a year. Pastor Brian Bell, CC Murrieta, goes on most of the trips and said this was the first year the team had gone into the bush to set up medical clinics. Each clinic was held in a Calvary Chapel-affiliated church, which helped acquaint members of the community with the local fellowship.

“Our purpose in going there really isn’t for us to plant a church, but for us to go and equip the Haitian pastors who are over there,” Pastor Brian said. “We run everything through Pastor Iliobert Berson. It enhances what they’re doing. We’re just lifting up their arms.”

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Men and boys at the church in La Boc lead the service in worship.

“Holding the clinics in each community makes it easier for the very sick to come,” said Pastor Brian. He remembers a girl who was seriously ill that rode a donkey for eight hours to Hinche. On the long trip to the clinic, she was injured. When the missionaries heard this, they started praying about a way to be more accessible in the remote areas.

They want to treat the physical needs of each person, but also direct them to Jesus Christ, giving God the glory for the work. Each patient receives prayer and hears these words spoken in their native Creole: “Nou swaye, Jezi geri,” which means, “We treat, but Jesus heals.”

Caring for thousands in one week

Dr. Walt Combs, a Temecula resident, has been going to Haiti with CC Murrieta for seven years. People ask him what can be accomplished in just a week. During their eight-day trip, the team of nearly a dozen people gave medical care to nearly 1,500 Haitian people.

“That’s just amazing,” said Dr. Walt. “I see maybe 500 people a month at my clinic back home.” He was blessed to see the number of people touched through the ministry. It had blossomed from seeds planted there nearly two decades ago by an older American couple that now attend CC Murrieta.

Pastor Harold and Natalie Bither, both 75, first went to Haiti 20 years ago and have been going back regularly ever since. For a time they lived in a rented house in Hinche and have led many teams back to Haiti. Seeing the Lord open doors for ministry in Haiti has been a great encouragement to them.



Girls adorned in their Sunday best.

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Pastor Iliobert Berson translates Pastor Brian

Bell's dedication message at the church in Rincon.

“A decade ago the Haitian people would not listen to the Gospel because of the strong influence of voodoo and superstition,” said Pastor Harold. Now, he sees the enemy’s grip on Haiti beginning to loosen.

He believes Haiti is about to witness a revival of the Holy Spirit after 200 years of spiritual darkness. According to island folklore, the country’s leader, a witch doctor, proposed a 200-year contract with Satan in exchange for political freedom. On January 1, 1804, Haiti became the first independent black nation, which some believe was the beginning of the 200-year contract.

“If you want to see the results of a people given over to Satan, just go to Haiti: starvation, poverty, and little children with no homes sleeping under trees,” Pastor Harold said. “But now, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are preaching in villages formerly closed to the Gospel. He is opening up the hearts of the people.”

When the team went to the village of La Boc, they dedicated the new church and held a medical clinic. They also went door-to-door, sharing the Gospel. “We led 17 people to the Lord in two days,” Pastor Harold said. “Ten years ago, we wouldn’t have seen that.”



Haitians and their American guests join hands in a dedication prayer for the new church.



The mission team from CC Murrieta joins together for a group shot.

Glenn Bither, Harold and Natalie's son, attends CC Chino Valley and coordinates the Murrieta medical teams that travel to Haiti. Glenn said he has been amazed at how God has used his parents.

"God has allowed me in some small way to continue my parents' vision." He quoted Colossians 4:17, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

Although he has no medical training, Glenn has been able to help gather and organize the medical staff. "God has a way of bringing together all the right people to accomplish His goals," he said.

Hut-to-Hut Evangelism

Pastor Brian said he was moved by how the team members treated each Haitian as a special person whom God loves.

"Patrick, the eye doctor, brought 500 to 600 pairs of glasses. Not only would he try to calculate the best lens for each person, but he really took the time to get what looked the best on their faces—the right size and to complement their coloring."

In what Brian calls hut-to-hut evangelism, team members load their backpacks with rice and beans and share the Gospel in remote villages. They have also gone to the government hospital nearby, praying with the sick and elderly. The vacation Bible schools they have offered in the villages have drawn up to 500 children.

Pastor Brian said he was moved by how the team members treated each Haitian as a special person whom God loves.

Haiti Endowment Program

Through the Haiti Endowment program CC Murrieta has 'adopted' nearly a dozen Haitian churches. This program offers resources such as financial support, training to the native pastors, as well as encouragement. The Haiti Endowment supports at least five Christian schools.

Pastor Iliobert and CC Murrieta also coordinate regular pastors' conferences, a women's ministry, vacation Bible schools, youth outreaches, as well as construction and



The team makes its way down one of many hills to the church at Rincon.

medical teams from America throughout the year. ☞

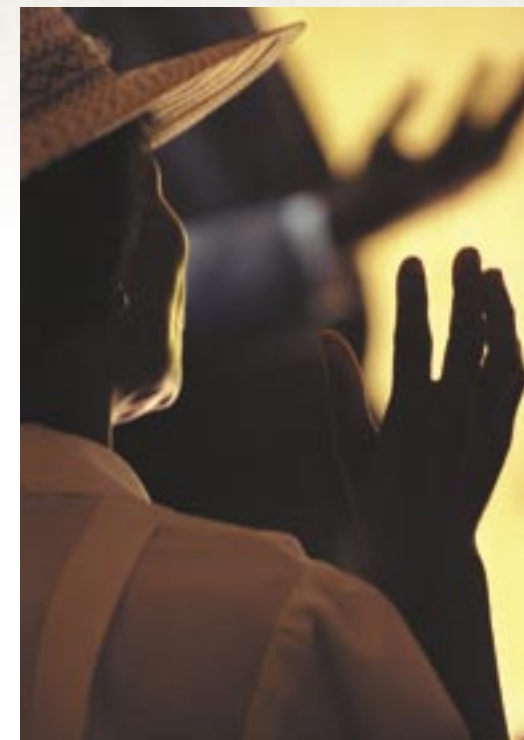
Haiti

The overwhelming level of poverty in Haiti makes it imperative that Americans channel their inquiries and interests through the leadership already established by the Calvary Chapels. CC Murrieta, CA, CC Tallahassee, FL, and CC Appleton, WI, have all gained experience there and understand how to best serve the impoverished nation with the Gospel.

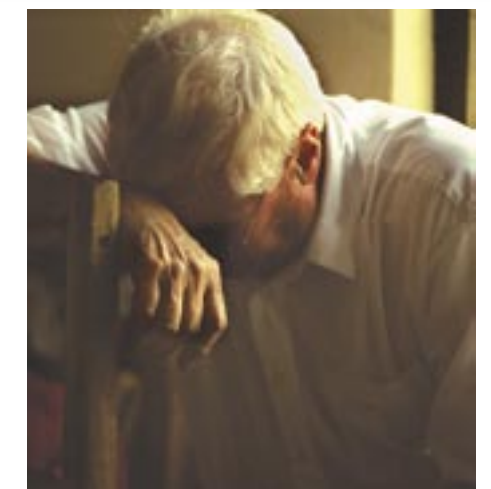


Irv Cohen and Tony DiEugenio lead a stubborn donkey loaded with medical supplies across a creek during their 2-hour journey to Rincon.

Rincon.



Worshipping at the dedication service.



Harold Bither finds a quiet moment to pray despite the pace of the medical clinic.

Contact Info:

To support the Haiti Endowment, or for information on how you can help or get involved, call:

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Evangelism through Education in Hinche, Haiti

story by Christmas McGaughey, photos by Kevin Smith and Lane Gibson

Lavaud Cheristin left his native Haiti to attend technical school in Wisconsin in 1988. His dream was to return and bring the power of the Gospel to his people.

That dream has become a reality. CC Appleton in Wisconsin helped build a three-story school in Haiti. They also established CC Hinche in Lavaud's hometown, where 200 Haitians attend and reach out to the impoverished community.

Soon after he came to Wisconsin, Lavaud met Pastor Dwight Douville of Calvary Chapel Appleton and shared with him his vision for Haiti.

"It was obvious he had a heart for his people and for evangelism," Pastor Dwight said. "I told him he needed to join us at our men's prayer meeting and see what the Lord does." For the next two years, Lavaud did not miss a Saturday meeting, and his prayer was always the same: "Lord, please plant a Calvary Chapel and school in Hinche."

After sitting under verse-by-verse teaching, Lavaud was convinced that this was what Haiti needed. The country is steeped in voodoo, witchcraft, and superstition.

When Lavaud returned to Haiti, Pastor Dwight and other leaders from CC Appleton followed. Now a team from the church journeys twice a year to share the Gospel through crusades and other outreaches. They encourage believers, work at the school, and improve the quality of life for those living in the Hinche area.



Pastors Dwight and Lavaud dedicate a baby at CC Hinche.

After sitting under verse-by-verse teaching, Lavaud was convinced that this was what Haiti needed. The country is steeped in voodoo, witchcraft, and superstition.

"Haiti is becoming our heart here at CC Appleton; it's our main outreach. Our vision is evangelism through education," Pastor Dwight said. "This is the tool we use to get the Gospel out."

The tool of education seems to have proven effective, since most of the 200 Haitians attending CC Hinche came from that educational facility. The second largest school in the Hinche area, there are nearly 37 teachers and 1,400 students attending.

Pastor Dwight felt that the Lord spoke to him through Matthew 25:40: "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you

did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'"

"Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. As far as poverty goes, they are the 'least of these,'" Pastor Dwight said.

Despite the prevalence of voodoo in the country, there is a real innocence among the people of Hinche. They lead simple lives, many farming or raising livestock in the rural areas.

One of the urgent needs in Hinche is clean water. CC Appleton is in the process of working on a water filtration system and drilling the wells. "We want to get as many of these systems as we can into Hinche. The people of Haiti usually drink the same water they bathe, do laundry, or water their livestock in," Pastor Dwight said.

A youth team recently hosted an outreach with music and worship in an area east of Hinche, and now 25 to 30 people are meeting there each month. CC Appleton is buying land there to plant another Calvary.

Medical teams from Appleton visit Haiti regularly.

A medical team from Appleton ministered in another community near Hinche and is starting a clinic in the rural area.

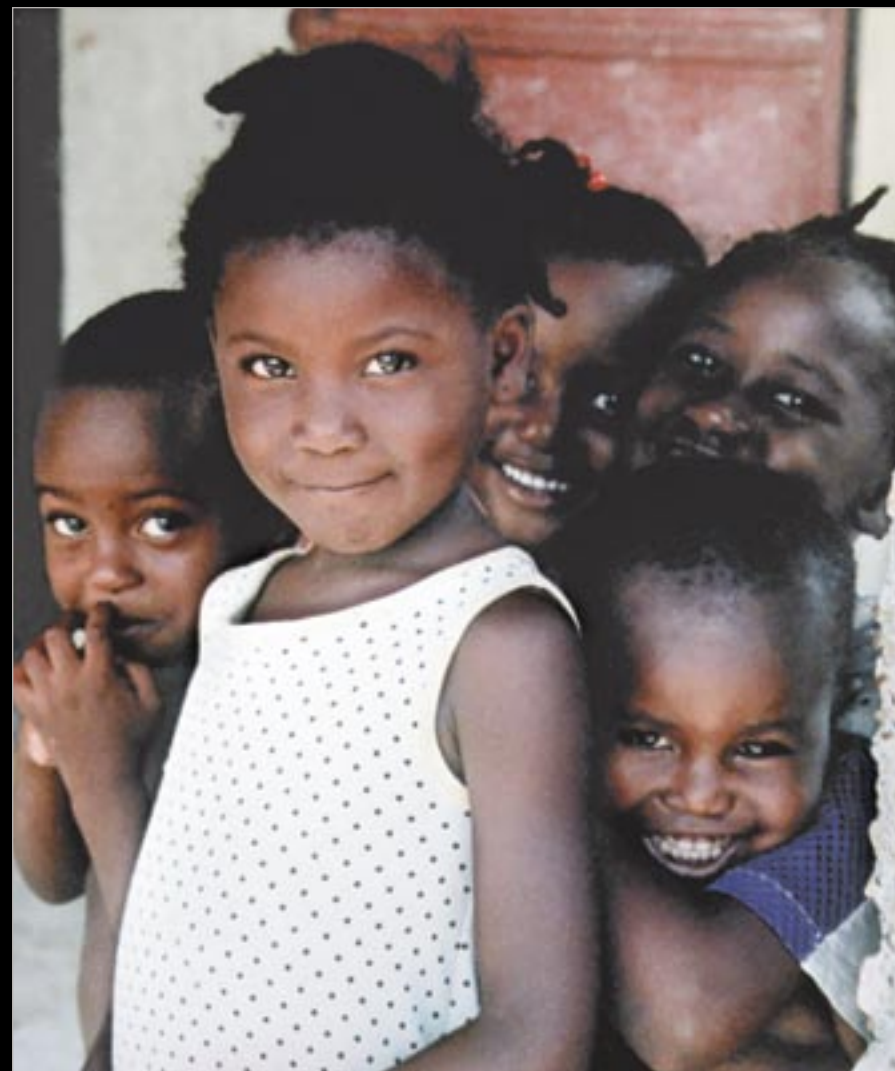
The area is part of the territory of a female witch doctor. Pastor Dwight said, "The doctors have been instrumental in breaking through to her. The witch doctor actually comes to the Sunday morning services now and is listening to the Word."

Medical teams from Appleton visit Haiti regularly. On a recent trip, care was provided for 1,200 people in five days. Each patient is prayed with, either by a native Christian or an American missionary.

Lane Gibson, assistant pastor at CC Appleton, has traveled to Haiti seven times since his first trip in 1995. He enjoys participating in outreaches, encouraging believers, and attending baptisms.

Because of his previous experience in civil engineering, Lane helps oversee construction and engineering design. "I have been blessed to see the Lord provide for the physical growth of the outreach and the ministry there—the buildings, land, and equipment needs."

"We have found indigenous missionaries are the most effective. They know the culture and the language," Lane said, "but this doesn't lessen the need for us to answer God's call to go and spread the Gospel to these uttermost parts of the world." ✍



Hinche children at Sunday services.



Women balance goods on their heads as they walk through a corn field.



Pastor Dwight teaches after the "Jesus" film is shown in Creole.

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