

It is no longer I who live but

# CHRIST

who lives in me.



**CHARIS**

Newsletter | June 2020



Charis Family,

We pray that this newsletter finds you, your families and loved ones healthy and provided for as we live through this unprecedented time in our country's history. Despite the obvious inconveniences and difficulties associated with isolation, distancing, and closed businesses, I cannot think of a time in my life that has offered more opportunities for Christians to share their faith! At a time when people are afraid and uncertain, existential pondering will become prevalent. People, including teens and young adults, are suddenly confronted with considerations of their own mortality and the inescapable certainty of their eventual physical death.

For non-believers, death is a precarious and puzzling subject that presents many questions: should we fear death or look forward to it? Do our souls continue to exist eternally after death or are we completely annihilated, ceasing to exist? If our soul lives on will we go to a paradise or to a hell? A global health crisis effectively exposes the uncertainty and fragility of life, and these questions about existence and the afterlife are being pondered and scrutinized by those who otherwise would never have entertained these thoughts outside of this life-threatening situation. So if you are a believer then do not waste this opportunity. When the world is afraid and uncertain with no hope, it is our joy, confidence, and unwavering hope that attracts our lost world, and people will be open to hearing about the hope that is in you—Jesus Christ!

## God's provision amidst crisis

I know that what I am saying is based on idealism rather than realism, and so I am aware that many of us, as Christians, are still having a difficult time with isolation, idleness, being at home, and not being able to meet together with our brothers and sisters in Christ. I also know that if you are receiving this newsletter you are involved with this ministry in some form. So, since we all share a love for the Haitian people and care about their souls and physical well-being, this newsletter will hopefully bless you and lift your spirits as you read the good things that are occurring in Haiti and how God continues to care for His Haitian children even in the midst of a global crisis!

As many of you know, we had to return home to the States secondary to Haiti closing its borders. In addition to closing its borders Haiti's government also closed all of the country's ports, schools, markets, churches, and many businesses, and issued stay at

home/social distancing orders in response to the coronavirus pandemic. All of these closures and social orders would have made it impossible for us to perform any evangelism or ministry, so we are confident that God made it possible for us to leave when we did.

Since our return, we have still been performing the ministry but it has been much more difficult and very time consuming. We are in daily communication with all of our leaders, pastors, and friends which means fielding anywhere from 30-60 WhatsApp messages a day. Based on what we hear, we make prayerful decisions about how to respond.

Responses range from prayer to wiring money to setting up voice calls to make determinations about various situations. Allow me to now share with you the good occurring on the field in Haiti, followed by prayer requests and opportunities for you to positively share this ministry with us!



## Latigue's servant and compassionate heart

To begin I would like to share good news concerning our brother Latigue. Many of you probably recall earlier newsletters that made mention of this man who was a malefactor (very evil vodou priest who practices vodou only to harm people), before God radically regenerated his heart upon hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Since his radical conversion he has done everything within his power to tell others about Jesus as he passionately shares his testimony with everyone he passes. Latigue even volunteered his land, and by himself erected a small meeting place on his property by cutting down his own trees and using the wood to construct several benches and a table that enables a group to sit and hear a weekly Bible study taught by a church leader. These Bible studies function as discipleship meetings and serve Latigue's community plus those who have been saved as a result of his evangelism. To put it plainly, Latigue is a real, living example of Galatians 2:20.

*"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

–Galatians 2:20

It is a great honor to know Latigue as he inspires me to be a better, more faithful follower of Christ. He has also taught me one of the great differences between American and Haitian Christianity. In America we read Galatians 2:20 and think, 'I have to become like that'. Latigue, without reading and without trying, just became a living example of the verse!

When Paul wrote this verse he was just recording what had naturally occurred within him following his conversion. It wasn't written as a homework assignment for Christians, but rather a statement of occurrence with conversion. We should ask ourselves why this verse doesn't just naturally manifest in our lives after our conversions; but that is a different discussion for another day.

What has impressed Joy and I most about Latigue is that he has never asked us for anything big. He lets us know if something occurs that he absolutely needs help with, such as sickness in himself, his daughters, or his wife, but compared to everyone else he asks very little despite his poverty. We know though that God, secondary to the

life of obedience that Latigue has chosen to live, has made sure he is provided for.

Several years ago, God sent a man to Haiti to meet Latigue, and afterward placed it on this man's heart to send Latigue monthly support (this man will remain anonymous at his request). This support adequately provides for the daily needs of Latigue and his family and has been a great blessing for them. The one thing that has always been difficult for Joy and I to accept is Latigue's home. Most of us in America, honestly wouldn't let our pets live in his home. Dilapidated with mold covered walls, holes in the roof that allows rain to enter the house at night, no bathroom, no tables, and a single bed, is a partial picture of the desperate conditions that Latigue's family lives in. Latigue's two small daughters have dealt with frequent bites from insects and rodents as they sleep on the ground. Rain also enters the home and falls on all of them as they are trying to sleep, and this has resulted in frequent sickness and respiratory ailments.

The donor that supports Latigue monthly sent additional money last year for an outhouse style toilet to be constructed behind his house which greatly helped the family. We have prayed for a long time that God would provide a home for them, and our prayers were answered over these last two months. Another donor (who also requested anonymity), came to Haiti on a mission trip and met Latigue. He had the opportunity to sit with Latigue, his wife, and his two daughters to talk with him in an effort to better understand what the day to day reality looked like for Latigue.

Following his return home this man said that the Lord instructed him, through a dream, to give an exact amount of money to Charis to support the work that he had witnessed while in Haiti. This man obeyed God and made a substantial donation to Charis, the exact amount that God had told him to give. As soon as we received it we knew immediately what God wanted us to do with a portion of the donation, and that was to build Latigue a home. I am overjoyed to report that on Thursday, May 21 Latigue's home was completed and he and his family now have a proper place to call home!

I would like to thank the donor who provided the funds for this blessing, and I would like to additionally thank the donor who has been supporting Latigue for the past few years. Without you both this could not have been accomplished, and I hope you realize that you are the answer to Latigue's countless prayers for provision and a home—God sent you as an answer to his prayers—what an absolute honor it is to serve the true 'least of these'. Thank you!



Latigue and his wife with their two daughters in front of their old house.



Their proud new home!

## God's provision for Deba's new home

In addition to Latigue receiving the gift of a new home we also want to inform all of you that Deba has also received a new home. Deba, whom I am sure you all are familiar with by now, was living on her family's property following her conversion 3 years ago. This was a bad situation as her family continued to practice vodou with nightly rituals and ceremonies occurring on the property. This was very unsettling for Deba and her daughters.

She expressed her dilemma to us and we rented a small home for her to move into so that she could have peace at night and prevent her young twin daughters from being exposed to demonic activity. We have been renting a home for her for almost two years, and the whole time Deba told us that she had a small piece of land that her mother had left to her when she died prematurely. This land has been sitting dormant secondary to Deba not having the financial capability to build a home on it.



Many people who have had the opportunity to come to Haiti as part of a mission trip have both met and befriended Deba. Two families who frequently come to Haiti have become especially close to Deba and saw her dilemma with housing. While in Haiti they discussed amongst each other the potential of donating funds purposed to build Deba a home that she could call her own on her property. To make a long story short, these two wonderful families sent the money and informed us of what they wanted done with it. So all material has been purchased, the foundation is laid, and the walls are going up for Deba's new home!! The completion date should be around the second week of June, at which point we will send out pictures so that you can share in Deba's blessing and thank God with us for this great gift. Once again, God answered Deba's many prayers for a home through Christians who don't consider their money as their own, but rather see it as God's money. Thank you—you know who you are—and I applaud all you for loving your poor brother and sister as yourself and considering God's Kingdom first!



## The pandemic is devastating Haiti

I wanted to specifically focus on Latigue and Deba due to the fact that so many of you either know of them, or know them personally as they have been instrumental in augmenting the evangelism efforts of this ministry and are also greatly loved by both Joy and I. Now I will continue, in a more generalized sense, to reveal further blessings that God is bestowing upon Haiti through His Charis ministry. This is all being reported to you in the hope that your hearts will be lifted with ours at witnessing God express His love for His sons and daughters in Haiti through using all of us to meet their needs!

The worldwide panic surrounding this virus has created a global recession that has crushed the world's economy. While wealthy

developed countries such as ours are being negatively affected, developing countries like Haiti are being essentially destroyed as Haiti has seen their currency drop in value to historically low rates.

This has caused the prices of food and medicine to spike to levels that are entirely unaffordable to a great majority of Haitians. To give you a window into the extent of the food crisis—in 2018-2019 one could purchase a 25 kg sack of rice (55 pounds) for around \$30 USD. Today that same 25kg sack of rice is close to \$70 USD! As a result of this, the biggest problem currently effecting the Haitian people is hunger, with untreated illness a close second. Charis has therefore targeted these two areas with efforts that are being made to alleviate the suffering and desperation that are currently being experienced by our brothers and sisters in Haiti.





## Hunger is a major threat

Genuine hunger is something that very few Americans, including myself, have ever truly experienced. Having a great deal of experience with true, sometimes fatal, hunger amongst the rural Haitian people, I will tell you that it is something that you never want to see. Marasmus, (the general medical term for starvation) is a horrible thing to witness as the body literally starts to consume itself to survive. Seeing children crying of hunger pain as they turn into living skeletons with bodies that are entirely incapable of responding to even the simplest of infections, is something you won't quickly forget and it changes you forever as you will do everything in your power to ensure that people have food to eat.

Newborns and infant babies are especially vulnerable as their mothers lack the nutrition to produce breast milk and the alternative formulas and milk powders are VERY expensive, making our goal to better nourish the mothers so they can naturally nurse their infants. So we take hunger in Haiti very seriously.

I have mentioned before that my uncle donates containers of food to Charis to help alleviate hunger amongst our communities. He has generously done

so for many years now and his food donations bless hundreds of our Haitian families and schools. Before the start of the COVID response, my uncle had shipped a container of beans to Haiti for us to receive and distribute. When we returned home just before the Haitian borders closed, we had not yet received the food shipment. This was worrisome because at the same time the borders closed, all of the ports closed also. We thought that because of this we would lose the container of food. Miraculously, we received a call a couple weeks after we arrived back in the States telling us that the container had cleared customs and is in country ready to be picked up!

We couldn't believe our ears, and to this day we still have no idea how this container entered through a closed port. But when you are doing mission work you learn not to ask questions when the question involves something seemingly impossible. Impossible is a human word that exists secondary to human limitations, but no such limitations exist with God and if He desires to do something that we see as impossible, He simply does it. So thanks be to God that the food entered Haiti (30,000 pounds of beans in 750 boxes), was picked up and received by our leaders, and successfully distributed to over 2000 people!! What an incredible, and miraculous blessing!



## Miraculous donations

Following the bean distribution we were still receiving word that people were without food. Hearing this discouraging news prompted Joy to write to all of our 13 village leaders asking them to each send her a list consisting of those who are the most hungry and without food in their respective communities. We received the lists that collectively contained hundreds of people. Many of those on the list we knew from personal experience to be the poorest of the poor in their villages, but there were many others that we didn't.

While this seems overwhelming, it must again be remembered that it isn't overwhelming for God. When performing ministries that are difficult and frustratingly bleak, we must put complete faith in God to see His people, hear their cries, and respond. As we prayed about this we rapidly began to see God respond, and do you want to know how He responded? By speaking to all of you and putting this burden on your hearts too. The volume of

donations that began to come in were nothing short of a miracle. We had not even made a plea for help or money, but despite that you still gave out of love and concern for Haiti.

Joy and I want to applaud you for not only discerning God's voice but more importantly responding in obedience to answer the cries of hunger of your brothers and sisters in Haiti. As I write this newsletter we are still in the process of wiring money to different leaders every several days, and to date **over 1000 people have had their homes stocked with rice, beans, spices, oil, spaghetti, cans of sardines, and water, and more will be helped as we prepare to send money again.** So thank you to every one of you who gave and continue to give—in no way could this ministry endure without you and your generous open hearts. Please continue to discern God's voice, and if He prompts you to give you can know that He is speaking to you and asking if you would be willing to be an answer to the prayers of His children in Haiti—our brothers and sisters!



## Health concerns continue to grow

On the health front we have many sick in Haiti with a variety of different illnesses. While there are always sick people in Haiti, the volume of serious, life-threatening illnesses has increased as those who had their chronic diseases under control with medication can no longer afford their meds and this is creating many problems. We are receiving reports and pictures of severe congestive heart failure, uncontrolled hypertension, parasitic disease ranging from worms in the intestinal tract to worms under the skin of the foot and lower leg. One of our nurses, whom many of you know, had an incomplete miscarriage most likely secondary to the stress she and the rest of her community is living in. So with your donations we are rallying our Haitian nurses and our Haitian doctor asking them to identify the sicknesses they are dealing with specifically and generally.

We are sending money to purchase medications to aid those with chronic illnesses that have become uncontrolled, and those with acute illnesses who can't afford the medication to treat themselves. We also sent money for our nurse to have surgery to remove the retained fetal/placental components (a D&C). We have sent additional money for emergency surgeries for incarcerated hernias, plus we have supported a very young girl's eye surgery to remove tissue that was spreading over her eyeball.

The nurses and doctor are doing a fantastic job caring for our communities as they are meeting the physical demands of traveling to many locations to bring meds to those suffering. So please keep them in your prayers as they need God to sustain them physically and keep them from becoming sick themselves. Also, we want to thank all of you who have made these purchases of medication and surgical procedures possible!



## Financial hardship leading to homelessness

Lastly, we are seeing an unfortunate increase in homelessness secondary to the worsening financial situation in Haiti. Just to give you an idea of the degree of aberration in the currency—1 year ago the US Dollar to Haitian Gourdes ratio was around 1:68. Today, as I am writing this, the ratio stands at 1:106.04!! You can imagine what this has done to the costs involved with food, construction materials (such as cement, sand, block, and wood), medicine, and even filtered drinking water.

In short, the Haitian people are suffering unlike any time we have witnessed since we arrived in Haiti. In the last few weeks we have received reports of 6 members of the church becoming newly homeless. The reasoning for this includes: not being able to afford rent because of increased food costs, and being kicked out of their homes as they are told by their family that “the church can help you, we can't afford to feed you anymore.”



Bean distribution in Laroka.



Clarissia Pierre and her 4 children no longer have to live on the streets.



Feeding those in need.



Food delivered to a local community.





Children's group in the village of Raymond receive bags of groceries for their families.



Deba attends to a blind and handicap group.



Bean distribution went to almost 1,000 in need.



Emmanuel Floriant was sleeping in the streets.

In response to this, we utilized the funds coming in to purchase rooms for all 6 individuals for a year. Here is a brief summary of each of them. Two of the six are individuals, one man and one woman. Both of them were kicked out by their families and the man was found sleeping in the gutter on the side of the street, and the woman came and told the church leaders what had happened. The remaining four are all mothers of children who were left by their children's fathers and couldn't afford both food and rent any longer. So they chose to feed their children and thus it was just a matter of time before the landlords came and put them out onto the street. One is a mother with two small boys. Another is a mother with 4 children all under 10 years old. The next mother has one child who is just over 12 months old and still nursing (so we have sent money for powdered formula). Lastly, we helped a woman who has 3 children. This last woman some of you may know—her name is Roselie and she has a 30 pound tumor on her lower leg from a disease called neurofibromatosis which she suffers with. Her landlord was tired of housing a 'handicapped' person and forcibly removed her from her home at the end of her lease. Thank God and thank all of you for making it possible to put all of these people in homes within a week of their homelessness.

We also want to report that Deba, despite the COVID situation, has continued with her commitment to daily evangelize her community. In the process of doing this, God led her to the home of a blind person. This encounter led Deba into awareness of a new community of blind people. This community is made up of 12 individuals with a two additional people who are handicapped. These individuals have now heard the gospel, been given Bibles for their sighted neighbors or family members to read with them, and they are receiving a minimum of one weekly discipleship visit. Deba is absolutely passionate about this newfound ministry and she can't tell us enough about the joy she is experiencing through discipling these people who have been discarded and ignored by society.

## You are someone's answer to prayer

There is more to tell, but I believe that you all can now appreciate how God is providing for Haiti even in their darkest and most desperate hours. I hope to accomplish two things through this newsletter.

First, I want to encourage you! I know how difficult things are for all of us right now. This is not how we are used to living and being isolated and uncertain are not fun realities to live with. But as you hear what the Haitian people and the Haitian church is dealing with, hopefully you all can appreciate the relative diminutiveness of our problems compared to theirs. Even in their horrible situations, God is providing for them through you and this is something to celebrate. We hope that you share our joy in this ministry as we see the least of these being provided for in a Christ-like way!

Secondly, I hope that this report reveals the power of your giving. You are truly impacting and improving lives of the poorest people in our hemisphere, and in doing this we are doing it for Christ (see Matthew 25). So please continue to give as the Holy Spirit leads you because in doing so you are a living, breathing answer to their prayers and nothing we spend money on can be more glorifying to God than when we use it to help those who can't possibly help themselves.

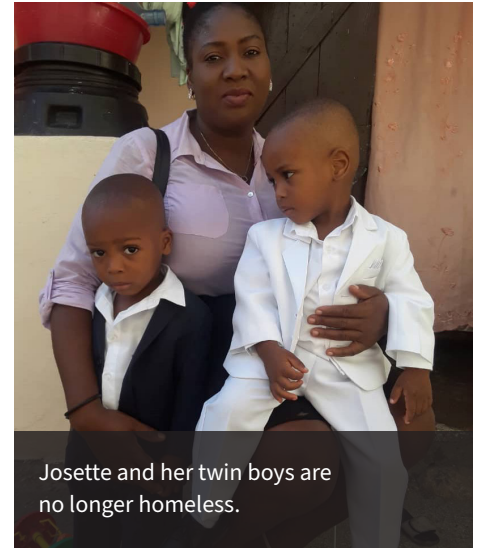
Thank you God for putting us in the position of being able to help the poor. When your generosity meets their faithful praying then we have something truly powerful occurring in the Kingdom of God on earth. Thank you! Thank you on behalf of Joy and I, and thank you on behalf of the thousands of Haitian brothers and sisters who are the direct recipients of your love. God bless you all and please continue to pray for Haiti during this trying time!



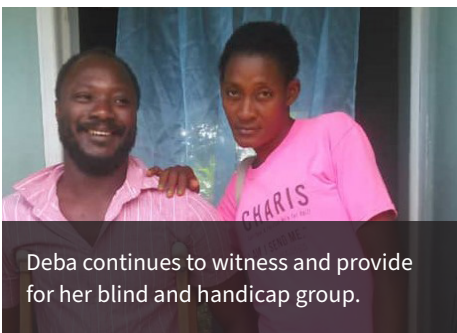
## Praise God for His faithfulness



Katanna Joseph and her baby boy now have a place to stay off the streets.



Josette and her twin boys are no longer homeless.



Deba continues to witness and provide for her blind and handicap group.



## Mission Statement

Charis (Greek for God's Grace) operates in complete obedience to God, giving Him His rightful place in determining the path and goals of His ministry that He has, by grace, allowed us to perform. Charis primarily focuses on the unseen spiritual needs in Haiti, and secondarily on the seen physical needs, always remembering that our success is completely dependent on the will of God, the gospel of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit working effectively through us, His willing servants.