



He is able to save those

who draw near to God through Him



CHARIS

Newsletter | March 2024

Charis Family,

It's hard to believe that we have entered into a new year and 2 months has already gone by—time is truly fleeting! Joy and I pray that you all are doing well, enjoying good health, and growing closer to the Lord every day. At the time of writing of this newsletter, Joy has recently returned from a week in Tennessee spending time with Koa, our new grandson, and he is growing and developing perfectly under the Sovereign oversight of God.



You all know that I am always transparent with you concerning the ministry and our personal lives, and from a personal perspective I am humbly asking all of you for prayer. Joy and I want so badly to return to Haiti, but we continually and prayerfully cede our situation to the Sovereignty of our heavenly Father as we say, “yet not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 26:39).

Haiti is currently experiencing warlike conditions that I will more fully explain below, but this has resulted in very dangerous environments that have effectively paralyzed the country. Therefore, I cannot in good conscience ask those we work with to travel within Haiti or to the Dominican Republic to search out living and ministry opportunities for us right now. So, Joy and I are waiting on the Lord to open a door to returning, and until that time comes the ministry continues remotely.

The bulk of this newsletter will be used to give you all a detailed rundown of the ministry on the ground in Haiti as it now stands. Joy and I are also asking for additional prayer concerning our family situation. Our time of living in the Wheaton missionary furlough homes is coming to an end as there is a maximum time allowance. We have been SO thankful for our time in Wheaton as it has truly been a time of peace and blessing, and we greatly thank the generous individuals who make these furlough homes available to missionaries. By May we need to find somewhere to live, and we are torn as we are prayerfully trying to discern what God wants us to do and where He wants us to go until Haiti's situation improves. So please pray for God's guidance and revelation to us concerning these things—and we thank you all in advance for your prayers which have always been and continue to be a vital component of this ministry.



Current events in Haiti

I know that there is an abundance of information concerning Haiti that can get overwhelming and confusing, and since you are all intimately involved in Haiti through this ministry, I would like to make you all aware of specifics according to the information we are receiving directly from the ground in Haiti and from Haitian/Caribbean news sources that we have access to.

- Haiti has been listed as a “Level 4: Do Not Travel” destination for the past 4 years.
- In July of 2021 the President of Haiti, Jovnel Moise, was assassinated in his home.
- Shortly after the assassination, gangs began to grow and take over the country. Gang control of ports, food prices, gas prices, and society in general have resulted in extreme hunger and starvation, disease (especially typhoid and cholera), and violence that now ravages the country. Countless people in Haiti have become victims of gang rape, torture, kidnapping, and murder. The inflation rate has soared to 40%. Also, free and fair elections have been blocked for over 3 years with no hope of being reinstated in the near future.
- In response to the chaos and violence, the United States offered to support a Kenyan military force to come to Haiti with intentions of disempowering the gangs and restoring peace in the process. The U.S. has paid 200 million dollars to support this effort made up of 1,000 Kenyan military/police personnel, and 2,000 more military/police from various Caribbean islands and West African countries. The plan is to fly these soldiers/fighters to a central American country for training in the type of urban warfare occurring in Haiti and then entering Haiti directly to battle the gangs and secure peace over the next ten years.
- The UN rules state that the country receiving military help (in this case Haiti), must agree and approve the entry of a foreign power into their country.
- The interim Prime Minister, Ariel Henry, stated that he would approve entry of the foreign soldiers only if he controls them and gives the orders. However, Ariel has been exposed working with the gangs behind the scenes and therefore his demands are being denounced and rejected by the people of Haiti who highly disapprove of him and his lacking leadership.
- On February 29, 2024, Ariel flew to Kenya to make plans with the Kenyan military units and leaders and push for deployment. As he was flying out of Haiti there was a large amount of gun violence at the airport due to angry citizens wanting to prevent Ariel from leaving. He did however make it out of Haiti and arrived in Kenya the next day.
- On March 4th, Ariel was scheduled to return to Haiti on a chartered flight, but the flight was cancelled due to the reports of countless citizens congregating at the airport in Haiti to try and prevent Ariel’s return. We now know that Ariel is being guarded and protected in Puerto Rico where he is now staying. It will be extremely difficult for him to return to the country since the angry mobs of citizens are waiting at every airport to prevent his re-entry. In response to this, all airports in Haiti have been shut down with no flights currently entering or leaving.
- On March 2nd, the gangs, with the help of camera drones, breached the walls of the national prison in Port au Prince and located and killed a majority of the guards who were tasked with guarding the 11,000 dangerous criminals imprisoned there. The gangs secured the escape of the former national palace head of security, the former security coordinator, and additional highly dangerous and brutal gang leaders who were awaiting trial for their crimes. The 18 Columbian nationals accused of assassinating the Haitian President in 2021 were also freed by the gangs after being held in prison for 3 years. An additional 4,000 inmates escaped and are now free, roaming the streets of the capital while the other 6,000 inmates stayed in the prison feeling that it was safer to be in the prison than being out in the streets where violence reigns at the hands of the gangs.
- On March 4th, a state of emergency was declared in the nation. For 72 hours there were communications between the United States and Haitian diplomatic officials asking the U.S. to deploy U.S. special forces to help tame the escalating crisis, however the U.S. administration refused to deploy any U.S. troops in Haiti.
- On the evening of March 11th Haiti’s Acting Prime Minister, Ariel Henry, announced his resignation. CARICOM (a group made up of 15 Caribbean nations) is offering to install a ruling council that could step in and lead the country until a new Haitian leader can be elected, but to date there has push back from inside Haiti.

Status of Current Ministries in Haiti

Our physical absence in Haiti has allowed God to show us just how powerful the training of leaders can be when the missionaries commit to teaching and modeling God's Word to the local people. The goal of any missionary should be to leave the ministries in the capable hands of God-fearing individuals who have been saved by the power of God's grace through the missionary's faithful preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Of course, the missionary should continue to be available for any disputes and questions regarding Biblical truth, Christian living, and life application of Scriptural truths.

This is such an overwhelming blessing of grace to us as Joy and I experience great happiness when we get the honor of observing the Haitian leaders and church thrive, grow, and remain committed to the Lord. Now I want to make you aware of how each of Charis' ministries are operating to let you all know how your prayers and financial donations are supporting the growth and maturation of the church in Haiti along with the humanitarian needs of the Haitians that are being met.

We currently oversee 31 communities in the department of SudEst. These include mountain communities, coastal villages, city outskirts, and urban areas. Within these 31 locations, Charis is holding weekly church meetings in 21 physical churches, weekly Bible studies in 8 communities, weekly widows' meetings in 7 communities, monthly

meetings for our blind and handicapped community, and providing food and medical services for those in need via our food bank and clinics respectively.

We now have 65 Haitian men and women on our monthly payroll. Of the 65 Haitians: 24 are pastors leading the 21 churches (in physical buildings) as well as the 8 communities in open Bible studies (under trees and in open outside areas) for locals who desire to know more about Jesus. These open Bible studies result in salvations that create a local church and when funding becomes available, we will construct a physical building to help avoid heat and rain exposures. Furthermore, 30 support staff function to assist our pastors in church meetings, Bible studies, food bank distribution, and widow/handicapped/blind meetings.

In addition to our 24 pastors and our 30-support staff, we have: 3 translators who are translating the studies we write for the Haitian church. These writings include bi-weekly Whatsapp Bible Study posts, and monthly Whatsapp Voice of Martyrs/Missions posts which are disseminated to all our pastors and leaders who then teach them to their respective church/Bible study groups. Also, we pay 2 doctors, 5 nurses, and 1 dental student, who all help manage and run our Bethesda clinic, mobile clinics, and satellite pharmacy/clinic.

Here are the 7 ministry categories that we are currently overseeing/ supporting in Haiti and brief overviews of their status.



Translator: Destine Mavoy



Translator: Patrick



Translator: Simeon and his wife Jerline



Inside Berry church



Marigot church



Weekly village bible study



Marigot church prayer meeting



Berry church



Weekly village bible study



Weekly village bible study



Jacmel church



Weekly village bible study

Evangelism

We currently have two teams of evangelists that travel weekly to bring the gospel to individuals and villages within our geographic area of ministry. Our two evangelism teams differ in their target audience. One group focuses on vodou priests, priestesses, and their camps. The second team focuses on the general population.

Vodou Evangelism Team

Our vodou evangelism team consists of men and women who God has saved out of vodou and they have now committed their lives to rescuing others out of vodou through the proclamation of the Gospel.



Andreli, who was saved out of vodou and has worked closely with us for the last 10 years, leads this evangelism team. He reports that the current situation in Haiti, with the violence, fear, sickness, and high prices of food and gas, has created an environment conducive to the

expansion of vodou. Due to gang violence hospitals have shut down. The price increases in food and gas have made these two necessities nearly impossible to obtain for the poorest people, and the violence has made people fear for their lives and families.

With nowhere to turn in the physical world, the poor turn to the devil and his promises to provide for, heal, and protect those who worship and submit themselves to him through vodou rituals and ceremonies. This situation makes things incredibly difficult for Andreli and his team. People who are hungry, sick, and desperate are understandably focused on immediate relief, and they aren't interested in hearing a gospel presentation. So, while this team still does go out in search of those who haven't heard the gospel, a majority of their current time is spent going around to recent converts to check on the endurance of their commitment to Christ and Christianity. They pray with these individuals and families, encourage them, study Scripture with them, and obtain any information that Joy and I need to know concerning any immediate needs that we can possibly help with.

Please pray for Andreli and the vodou evangelism team—pray that God will open doors of opportunity and success in their sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ with those serving the devil as there is great demonic opposition to the work that they are doing. The words of the Apostle Paul come to mind here as he was travelling to Ephesus that was steeped in demonic worship and wickedness.

“But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.” –1 Corinthians 16:8-9



Tibab

Maxime

Rene

The vodou evangelism team consists of: Molene Charles, Elisad Latigue, Richard Dupree ('TiBab'), Occanyel Maxime, Kettlie Charles, Brisson Remarque, and Sano. We also have one convert out of vodou who fled to the Dominican Republic two years ago and he reports successful evangelization of a small Haitian community where he lives amongst there. Please keep Rene in your prayers.

The vodou priests and priestesses who have been saved secondary to the work of this evangelism team are staying strong in their faith despite these times of unprecedented suffering and hardship in Haiti. This is a powerful encouragement to Andreli and his vodou evangelism team to continue to do the work of an evangelist and to surround those who represent the fruit of this ministry plus continue to raise up these “babes in the faith” with the goal of spiritual maturity and eventual witness to other vodouists in their areas of influence. Within the last twelve months, the following vodou priests and priestesses have been saved by the mercy of our Father in heaven: Mona (out of Marigot), Wilner (out of Peredo), Dieupison Enest (out of LaMontay), and Solomon (out of Morija). Wilner is now witnessing to his wife with hopes of her salvation; Dieupison is now attending weekly Bible studies and growing in the Lord, and Solomon most recently burned all his vodou paraphernalia and has committed his life to knowing the Lord. Please join us in praying for these new believers in Christ and their sanctification!

“He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always makes intercession for them.” –Hebrews 7:25



General Evangelism Team

The majority of Haitians will never be able to procure a visa or passport to visit another country for the purpose of engaging in international missions. However, we are all called to missions whether that be local, regional, national, or international mission work. Knowing this, and having a missionary's heart, our lead pastor and his team of various leaders have had a strong desire to make our congregations of believers more mission minded.

Therefore, this past year Pastor Abony and his team have embarked upon 5-10 day 'in country' mission trips into the high mountain communities that are isolated from outsiders. This is VERY difficult work...not at all like mission trips that we, as Americans, are familiar with (where we can come back home to a soft bed, a personal shower, and a good meal at the end of each day). Their trips entail long strenuous hikes in the high heat with only the food they have carried on their backs to support them throughout the week. If the local people offer them a place to sleep in their homes they will do so, but if no home is opened to them Pastor Abony and his team find an open area outside and sleep on the ground. As a result of this work, many are hearing the truth of Jesus Christ for the first time and are turning to Him.

Since January Pastor Abony has led 6 of these trips. The areas they have visited are: Savann Lay, Marasa, Bel Fontaine, Nouvelle Tourraine, Lamak, and Segen.

The team has come across small local churches that are led by pastors with no training and who, as a result, are teaching false gospels and a false Christ. Pastor Abony has approached these men, in love, to expose their errors. By the grace of God, these 'pastors' acknowledge their faults and are receptive to Pastor Abony's recommendations that they come under our umbrella.

Due to these interactions, these 12 new churches (previously in theological error) have willingly agreed to come under Charis and Pastor Abony's teaching and leadership. This is an exciting opportunity to lead these pastors and their congregants into truth. We praise God for bringing these churches into our fold.



Pastor Abony



New pastors



New church leaders



Our Jacmel Church Leadership Team



Pastor Gary

Churches and Church Leadership

Churches are continually being planted in Haiti through the Sovereignly guided efforts of Charis on the ground in our geographical area. Secondary to the tireless and passionate efforts of the evangelism teams and the continual daily prayers of the leaders, laity, and widow/handicapped groups, God has blessed the people and given them hearts capable of receiving the good news of the gospel and receiving salvation.

As mentioned earlier, we currently have 24 pastors leading and functioning in various ways. They are overseeing and preaching at our 21 churches (that are meeting in physical buildings) on every Lord's Day. They are also leading and teaching local Bible studies in 8 communities. These 8 communities consist of both newer believers

and others who are curious about the Bible and Christ. These faith communities are smaller but growing, and they are the fruit of evangelism to the respective areas. The pastors lead Bible studies in these areas once a week where they meet under trees or in open fields if the weather permits. Continued interest and attendance will result in the future construction of a church building.

Our 30 support staff are tasked with assisting our pastors in their various ministry duties (that are many). This includes assisting our pastors with church services, Bible studies during the week, leading the meetings of the widows, handicapped, and blind, and helping with food bank distribution and travel to various locations where ministries are active.

Over the course of the past year (2023) we expanded the assignments of 5 of our pastors, secondary to the growth and expansion of the Charis ministry.

Pastor Jameson Bienamie: Continues to shepherd the two mountain locations in Cap Rouge (Ma Lajen and Morija) and has now received the additional assignment as Senior Pastor of our Jacmel church that currently has 60 members and is growing.

Pastor Gary Perique: Continues as Senior Pastor over our church (in Pierre Louis) in an area beyond Macary called Mondezi, and has now been assigned to oversee and lead the teaching for Latigue's weekly Bible study group. The group meets every Friday afternoon in Latigue's back yard that he has transformed into a church meeting area. Recall that Latigue was a feared vodou priest that was radically regenerated by the saving grace of God upon his hearing of the gospel—Praise God!

Pastor Richard Wichly and Pastor Alfree Richard Pierre have been leaders under Pastor Abony helping him with his numerous church oversight responsibilities. They now have been promoted to shepherd the 3 communities in Lamontay that include: Corail, Ka Serin, and Te Rouj.



Widows

Our widow ministry is near and dear to our heart. The widow in Haiti is alone and forgotten by society. Rarely do we find family members who will help these women. More often we find these elderly women alone, uncared for, and hungry. This ministry aims to create community amongst the widows and provide them with Biblical instruction and guidance as we help them in any way we can. When we receive food, gifts, or clothing we are sure to bless the widows first.

To be able to minister to and befriend them can only be described as an honor that God has richly blessed us with. The widows are the

prayer warriors of Charis, and to witness them praying on their knees at the end of every widow's meeting is truly a humbling thing to experience as they inspire us to pray more and love more. Charis holds and supports weekly meetings with the widows of 7 individual communities. These communities are as follows: Bwa Thomas in Marigot, LaMontay, Mondezi in Pierre Louis, Nan Café in Macary, Berry, Lakobat and Kadouje in Jacmel.



Madam Abony caring for those in need



Handicapped

As many of you know, Joy's parents are both blind, and therefore this ministry is very special to her. There are many handicapped and blind people in Haiti. The sad part about this (that honestly angers me) is that a majority of the blindness we see is treatable and curable. Untreated cataracts result in eventual blindness, and this almost never leads to blindness in the US because of cataract surgery that is accessible and relatively easy to perform (the entire procedure takes less than 30 minutes). We also see blindness due to bacterial disease that is treatable and avoidable with proper hygiene and education initiatives. Lack of access to proper health care can turn a treatable, curable illness into suffering, pain, disability, and even death.

We weep for this population of people in Haiti, and when we come across anyone blind or handicapped, we ask them to join our handicapped/blind group who we minister to on a monthly basis. We would minister to this population more frequently, but they have extreme difficulties and limitations that they must overcome to travel to and attend the meetings. Beyond continual Bible studies and gospel proclamation we have provided walking canes (from the United States) for all the blind, audio Bibles (solar powered audio Bibles in the Creole language), and food/provisions as they become available to us via donation. The monthly meeting is held in a village named Raymond, and there are currently 72 members.



Walking canes and audio Bibles for our handicapped ministry



Medical

Our Bethesda Clinic offers full general medical care, dental referrals, surgical referrals, and a full pharmacy to the communities that we serve. The clinic has remained open and is actively serving the sick and suffering in our various locations. Our clinic is located in Savon de Bois, which serves the local area and the mountain villages that surround it. Another group of villages that we serve can access the clinic, but with difficulty due to the distance and terrain. Therefore, a need exists to expand clinic services to this area.

In response to this need we are currently expanding our clinic to another location that will better serve the needs and accessibility of the areas surrounding Jacmel. The village that we are constructing this second clinic in is named 'Kafou Penguin.' Establishing this clinic will provide this locale with access to medical care that is more convenient in terms of proximity. People who reside in this area had to walk 3-4 hours to get to our Bethesda clinic, but this new clinic will be in their own backyard. We are having Dr. Evania come from the Bethesda clinic to help train and start up this new clinic that will eventually be left in the hands of one of our nurses that lives in Kafou Penguin named Rita. Please pray for this new clinic and for Rita to be a great blessing to the people in this area.

Humanitarian Relief

As you all well know hunger is one of the greatest problems our people face in Haiti. Being devoid of basic food necessities presents difficulties and sufferings (especially for the babies and children) that we can't even begin to imagine. To witness hunger and starvation, as we have, is an absolutely horrible thing, and Joy and I are passionate about getting people fed which leads to improved physical and mental health.

To the best of our ability we have been stocking our food bank in Haiti with rice, spaghetti, oil, spices, sardines, and more. This food bank serves those in the greatest need of food in our 31 locations. Our leaders in each location communicate the needs within their communities to Madam Abony to let her know when a family, or

individual, is in dire need of food. In response to the need, Madam Abony and her team make up 'food kits' that provide 1-2 weeks' worth of food to the family or individual in need.

This compassion ministry has been a great blessing to all involved, but honestly it is the most difficult ministry to provide on a continual basis. If God places it on your heart to give to this ministry, we implore you to please heed to what you hear. Joy and I have personally poured money into this ministry to the point of deep sacrifice. Despite the hardship we experience, we feel that it pales in comparison to what these precious people are enduring in terms of hunger. It's hard to make sense of this when we, in the United States, who make up 4% of the world's population, have one sixth of the world's food. Of that one sixth, we throw away 40% of it! We thank all of you for making this food bank possible, and we humbly ask that you continue to help us keep the food bank full so that people can eat—we greatly thank you in advance!

Note on Group Weddings

The performance of group weddings has been paused until the gangs no longer control the ports and borders resume normal functioning. The port takeover by the gangs has prevented us from being able to send more wedding dresses, men's suits, and supplies to Haiti. In the interim our churches have still been able to support single couple weddings as there are still a number of wedding dresses and suits remaining from our original shipment a few years ago.

Overall, the Haitian people are suffering to a degree that I can't explain in a printed letter. This is worse than any hurricane or earthquake as this suffering extends to the entirety of the island. They are in desperate need of food, gasoline, charcoal, and medicine. Receiving dozens of messages every day that contain the saddest and most desperate pleas for help that you've ever heard just breaks out hearts. We can all make a difference for our Haitian brothers and sisters who are praying for God to touch all our hearts to help in any way that we can. Please prayerfully consider giving a financial gift to help relieve these horrible trials and hardships that the Haitian people find themselves in.

We must keep the food bank full, and we must keep the pharmacy fully stocked. A little money goes a long way in Haiti, so we reach out to all of you on behalf of the Haitians who the world has turned their backs on. Please join us and let's help our brothers and sisters eat and receive medical assistance. Joy and I thank you so much for your love and commitment to this small island. Let God move our hearts to be the answer to their prayers!

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.

