

What follows is a letter from Terri Swope who just returned from a memorable trip to Haiti.

As we start the season with the change of weather and a time of Thanksgiving, I would like to share some reflections of my recent trip from Haiti. One of my favorite songs is “Beautiful Things” by Gungor. The chorus words go; “You make beautiful things out of the dust, You make beautiful things out of us.” When people ask me how Haiti is, I want to answer **BEAUTIFUL**, not because the country has had a massive turn around, but **beautiful** in the context that God is there and working in people’s lives, transforming them into something **beautiful** that others are drawn to.

I was blessed to be a witness at the wedding of one of our house parents, Fresnel and his new wife Amislene, two strong believers coming together as one. I was so touched by the preparation and ceremony, simple yet **beautiful**. I also loved how each of the parents gave their children’s hands to each other, a symbol of how they shall leave their parents and become one. As the “godmother”, I had a front row seat to this unique exchange and kept thinking that amidst this dark, poor country that believes there is no hope, there is **beauty** and a time for rejoicing with two believers making a vow before God to love and cherish each other. What an impact to others to save themselves for marriage in a country where having children without commitment is the norm. There is **beauty** and hope that only comes from our faith in God. It made me realize how important our work in Haiti is to share God’s plan for hope in their lives. Fresnel will continue to be a house parent, relieving Didi three days a week; we are blessed that he desires to continue his work with us. We also welcome Amislene into our CrossRoads family.



The next **beautiful** moment came when distributing musical instruments to our boys at Emmanuel House. Donna Soders, wife of board member Randy, and a great friend, found an organization that donates new instruments to children who would never be able to afford them. Our boys were asking for a soprano sax and we just didn’t have the means to buy this expensive instrument. We just wanted one soprano sax and they not only donated a Kenny G signed sax, but also two alto saxes, a flute, a trumpet and a trombone: talk about the goodness of our God sometimes going above and beyond what we even

ask. The boys were so happy and had them assembled and were playing them as soon as they could. Bidson was playing *How Great Thou Art* on the alto saxophone. It was so **beautiful** to see their excitement over musical instruments. All the boys are taking lessons and together they are going to be our praise band in our new church.

I always love going to church in Haiti, where they have taught me to “freely” worship our Lord and Savior. It always amazes me how those with so few possessions, can worship the Lord with such great thanksgiving. That is just a **beauty** in itself! As we left Emmanuel House for church, we had a packed load from the community in the back of our truck. What a blessing to see others joining us for church. It was **beautiful** watching our eight boys worship the Lord, Bidson playing the saxophone and James Paul singing a duet with one of our visitors, Rebecca in front of the church. Tears were rolling down my face as they sang *I Will Rise* with conviction and power. That was a Mary moment for me, one in which I will ‘treasure up and ponder.’



When God was tugging at our hearts to take these boys in, I struggled mightily. How do you show orphan boys, let alone teenage orphan boys, who Jesus is and that He loves them? God kept bringing



to mind the scripture of his talk with Peter. God asked Peter if he loved him and Peter replied “Yes Lord.” God then said “Feed my sheep.” This went on three times until Peter finally got it. We are so blessed that many of our family and friends have embraced these boys and showered them with love so that they see

what Christ is all about. Now we watch as these boys take that same love out into the community to help Didi with his Sunday afternoon Bible program, teaching the songs, helping with games, offering prayers and feeding meals to the children in the program. We were blessed to celebrate the third anniversary of this program while we were in Haiti. About 80 of these children were shuttled to a nearby house on the beach for a day filled with fun and laughter. The children put on a small program with singing and dancing and then it was time for swimming. What a **beautiful** time we had fellowshiping with the children all day and getting to know some of the mothers who came along to assist with keeping the children “inline.”



A lot of these children go to our CrossRoads school, so it was a blessing to really get to know them and their families. Our enrollment has grown from 80 to 120 students and we were blessed to find a vacant school building nearby. Now the children have a yard to play in and each grade has their own room. I was impressed with the good behavior of these children, although I did witness several kids going to the director's office for a little "switch" time so they would straighten up.

One of the concerns that our school director has expressed to me, is that some of the parents cannot read nor write and therefore cannot help their children with their schoolwork. These children do not have anyone to help review the day's lesson and memorize the material for the next day. That is a really important factor to ensure that these children learn and continue to pass each grade. I believe this will be one of the first programs we start in our community center: teaching parents to read and write and offering tutoring programs for children who need help. We need to equip and enable the parents to help their children learn. This in turn will provide us with an opportunity to present the gospel to them, even to the point where we may be able to start an adult bible study in the community.

We were also blessed to break ground for our community center during this trip. God has provided the funds, through all of you who have supported this endeavor. Over 100 children, gathered with us in a huge circle, holding hands around the perimeter of the ground that will house the community center. We sang songs and prayed, dedicating this ground and the building to be used for God's glory and that all who enter would be shown who God is and come to know and serve Him. We have an opportunity to make an impact for the Lord in this community.



While we were praying, many people from the nearby villages came out to see

what we were doing. They asked what is going to happen here and we explained that the building



would be God's house and used for many activities for their children and for themselves. They were so happy and welcomed CrossRoads to their community. As we dug our first shovel of dirt, it was just an overwhelming, **beautiful** emotional moment, one like I have never experienced before. My prayer is for this center to be a light in this community, where weary souls can find rest.



So as you can see there is **beauty** in Haiti and I left this trip with such a sense of peace that God is working and will continue to work in the lives of these people. We pray that as we touch the lives of children, they will share with their parents and their lives will also be transformed. We wish to thank each and every one of you for your prayers, encouragement and most importantly for your giving. Over the past year, you have helped us support a school, provide a larger home for our boys, fund bible programs and raise our target financial goal to begin construction on our community center. Please continue to keep us in your heart and prayers to enable us to keep God alive in Haiti by supporting our mission work there.

Many blessings and love from your CrossRoads family!

Terri

Year End Contributions

As we approach the end of another year, many of you will plan to make year-end contributions to various charities. We ask that you consider *CrossRoads* in your giving plans.

1. *Crossroads School* has grown to 120 students. Annual sponsorships are \$75 per child.
2. Operating costs for *Emmanuel House* and clothing, tuition and staff salaries.
3. Building fund for our new *Community Center*.

And as always, we ask for your continued prayer support for all of the projects we have in Haiti as God continues to guide us in the direction He would have us go.

Upcoming Construction Trips

January 7–15, 2014 to lay block

February 4–12, 2014 to mix and pour concrete pillars and beams

March 2014 (dates pending) welding trip

How to Make a Donation to CrossRoads

Checks may be made payable to: CrossRoads Mission HAITI
569 Buck Road
Quarryville, PA 17566

Online at: www.crossroadshaiti.org/how-can-you-help/
Contact us at: crossroadsmissionhaiti@gmail.com

CrossRoads Mission HAITI is a not-for-profit organization.