

## **Mission to Haiti: A Physician's Calling.**

### **By Walter C Kerschl MD CMD**

If anyone told me a year ago that in 2008 I would be traveling on two missions, I would have said they were surely mistaken. However, last year I traveled to two third world countries. First I ventured on an exciting trip to Honduras where I gave, along with 13 other devoted fellow missionaries, a little of my time and skill delivering basic medical care to the needy people of Honduras.

In November of 2008, I was again afforded the opportunity to travel on another mission to the country of Haiti, specifically to St Patrick's twin parish in Fond-Pierre. Prior to our departure, my friend Josh Harvey and I had a vision of providing healthcare to this remote Haitian village and setting up a sustainable clinic. Through God's hand this vision became possible. Father Malherbe, the priest of St Peter's Catholic Church in Fond-Pierre, had a similar vision and with our arrival introduced us to Aline Mombayard, a Haitian nurse who was very interested in staffing a school clinic to provide basic health care where no health care existed. I cannot describe the joy we felt as God brought us together in the beginning stages of creating a clinic for this village in Haiti. We were all blessed to have been given this great opportunity, thanks be to God.

After returning to the States, Josh and I set out to create the Rockbridge-Haiti Medical Alliance whose mission is as follows: the Rockbridge-Haiti Medical Alliance is an ecumenical Christian partnership serving the health needs of the impoverished people of Fond-Pierre, Haiti and its neighboring villages. We wanted to create an organization to involve our entire community including multiple churches and individuals in solidarity with the Haitian people.

Our foundation seeks to embody the living presence of Christ as The Great Physician through bi-annual medical missions, ongoing wellness education, and fostering partnerships with Haitian-staffed school clinics. Although the primary focus is the village of Fond Pierre, RHMA will strive to expand joint ventures with other schools and churches around the Peligre Lake region.

So far we have provided, through donations from the Lexington Presbyterian Church, support for Father Malherbe to hire on a full time nurse for the school in Fond-Pierre. Additionally, through generous donations of medications from St Patrick's congregation, over one hundred pounds of medications and vitamins were sent to Fond-Pierre recently to treat pain, rashes and infection and to support healthy development. These were all sent down with Father Allen from Charlottesville during his recent visit to Fond-Pierre. We are grateful for all the support.

I have also seen great interest and devotion to this project through the St Patrick's Haiti Committee, which has graciously allowed me to participate in their monthly meetings and partner with them as we set out on this new medical project. The Outreach Committee and Pastor Bill Klein of the Lexington Presbyterian Church have shown their interest along with many individual members of Lex Pres. Individuals in the community including but not limited to Bruce and Jenny Young of St Pats have offered their time to help develop our web site as well as raise awareness of this important mission.

Our future plans are to raise \$10,000 dollars over this year through donations from multiple churches and organizations as well as individuals in Rockbridge County to purchase medications, supplies and equipment. These supplies will be shipped via a sea container to Haiti in May. Our first medical mission will be from November 5<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009, with subsequent missions occurring twice annually (March/April and October/November). We hope to take up to 12 people (including 4 medical professionals) starting in 2010 on each trip. Estimated cost will be \$1,600 per person and this includes a donation to purchase medical supplies for each trip.

Please join me in my calling to help these spiritually rich yet impoverished people of Fond-Pierre, Haiti. Your donations of prayer, interest and monies will help us to show God's love for us all.

RHMA has adopted the following prayer and I offer this to you for contemplation:

HOLY GOD, IN YOUR GREAT JUSTICE AND LOVING-KINDNESS, HEAR OUR PRAYER: FOR THE MISSION AND MINISTRY OF YOUR CHURCH, THAT GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST MAY BE PROCLAIMED IN ALL THE WORLD; FOR THE LEADERS AND PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS, THAT THEY MAY LIVE IN PEACE AND ABUNDANCE;  
FOR YOUR GOOD CREATION, THAT ITS ORDER AND BEAUTY MAY BE RESTORED; FOR THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING IN ANY WAY, THAT THEY MAY KNOW HEALING AND SUPPORT; FOR ALL WHO MINISTER IN YOUR NAME, THAT THEY MAY SERVE WITH CHRIST-LIKE HUMILITY, JUSTICE AND LOVE.

God Bless our community as we forge a stronger alliance with the Haitian people of Fond-Pierre. Please visit our web site: [Rockbridge-HaitiMedicalAlliance.org](http://Rockbridge-HaitiMedicalAlliance.org) beginning in March 2009. We welcome emails of prayers and interest at <[Rockbridge-Haiti@hughes.net](mailto:Rockbridge-Haiti@hughes.net)>.

As the RHMA is currently in organization with expected approval by June 2009, donations can be made through St. Patrick's Church and Lexington Presbyterian Church at the following addresses:

RHMA,  
c/o Lexington Presbyterian Church,  
120 S Main Street, Lexington, VA 24450

Or RHMA,  
c/o St Patrick's Catholic Church,  
221 W Nelson St, Lexington VA 24450