



Project Help Celebrates 50 Years of Ministry - Part I

April 21, 2017—Vol. 11, No. 16

I am writing this in the guesthouse of the Project Help compound in Borel, Haiti. There will be celebrations held on Saturday and Sunday at Pierre Payen and Borel, respectively, to mark the 50th anniversary of Project Help Haiti.

Author

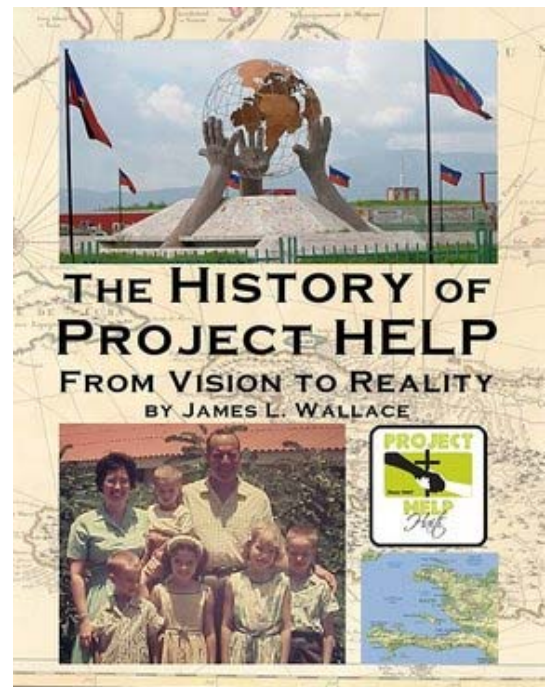
The weekly eNews is provided by CGGC Executive Director Lance Finley



I've been reading *The History of Project Help: From Vision to Reality* by James Wallace over the past several days (it's available through CGGC Publications for \$6.99, contact Kris Cupp at publications@cggc.org to order your copy). I highly recommend this wonderful history put together by the founder of Project Help. It's a wonderful read. I marvel at God's goodness when I think about all the ways He has used Project Help over the past fifty years.

Pastor James and Leone Wallace responded to God's call to the mission field in 1960 while they were serving the Home Acres Church of God in Toledo, OH (now Pathway Community Church). This led to an application with the Oriental Missionary Society (O.M.S.) and an assignment to begin service near the northern Haiti city of Cap Haitian in March of 1961. The Wallaces and their five children served in Haiti until 1965, when they returned to the U.S. for a year of furlough. It was during this furlough that the Wallaces were asked to consider starting a CGGC mission work in Haiti. While they agreed to do so, there was very little clarity about what that might look like or how it might be developed.

After the Wallace family returned to Haiti in 1966, a series of providential relationships led to the rather quick



establishment of the Project Help mission station in Borel in the spring of 1967 (with the Haitian government providing the 6-acre property rent-free for the first 25 years). What started in Borel fifty years ago has resulted in the establishment of 40 congregations, many schools, as well as a hospital and medical clinic in Pierre Payen. There have been thousands of lives impacted and transformed by Jesus through the work of Project Help Haiti. I had the opportunity to spend time with some of our Haitian church leaders this morning and was so encouraged to hear them looking forward to the next 50 years, not content to only celebrate the accomplishments of the past. There is a sense that there is much, much more that God wants to accomplish through the ministry of Project Help here in Haiti.

Here are a few observations that have stood out to me in the story of the ministry of Project Help Haiti.

Patient Persistence: I have always lived in a microwave culture. I don't like to wait. I expect instant results. I want what I want and I want it now! Nothing happens quickly in Haiti. Those of you who have been here know that there's something we westerners call "Haitian time." Living on Haitian time requires a patient persistence. I was struck by the Wallaces' story and their willingness to patiently wait on the Lord as they worked in Haiti. Nothing is wasted. Their early years with O.M.S. allowed them the time to learn the language and the culture which enabled them to launch a thriving ministry six years later in Borel.

What am I willing to patiently persist in for the sake of God's kingdom? What is it that God is calling me to show a patient persistence now that may not bear fruit for several more years, but is necessary to see fruitfulness down the road?

A willingness to take risks: It's no secret that missionary families take risks. They leave the comfort and familiarity of home and move into situations that are often far less comfortable or familiar. In reading about the history of Project Help, I was struck by the Wallaces' willingness to take risks and trust in God's unfailing love and provision. I was also struck by the General Eldership's (this was before the days of a General Conference) willingness to take the risk to start a work in Haiti. The CGGC (or Churches of God in North America as we were known in those days) had mission work in India and Bangladesh (East Pakistan at that time), but it had been over 60 years since those works were started.

One of our core values as a denomination is that we are willing to take risks and trust that God will surprise us. If we're honest, this value is probably more aspirational than descriptive for most of us. I want to trust God and take risks, but I often seek comfort and safety. We may aspire to live this way but a quick review of the way we spend our time, money and effort probably tells a very different story.

What are the risks that God is asking me to take to faithfully serve Christ and His kingdom? Collectively, what risk is Jesus asking the CGGC to take so that we could continue to bear fruit, expand the kingdom of God and bring glory to God?

A "full-orbed" Gospel: It's clear that from day one, Project Help Haiti preached a "full-orbed" Gospel. A "full-orbed" Gospel is Good News for the here and now and for eternity. A "full-orbed" Gospel addresses the physical/material needs of a person as well as their spiritual/eternal needs. From the very beginning, Project Help was formed to help Haitian people find new life in Christ: to experience eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ and to experience the full and abundant life that Jesus delivered with the reality of His unfolding kingdom. Project Help established churches to preach the Good News of Jesus and established schools to teach reading and writing. Project Help preached Jesus as the Bread of Life and helped address issues of hunger and nutrition. Project Help preached the spiritual cure that only comes through Jesus Christ and established medical works to bring physical healing and restoration. Project Help proclaimed the work of Christ on the cross and helped train and equip Haitians for work as mechanics, tradesmen and seamstresses. Project Help has worked faithfully for fifty years to eradicate spiritual poverty and material poverty.

Too often God's people fail to present the full Gospel resulting in either a Gospel that is only concerned about a person's eternity or a Gospel that is only concerned about the here and now. Jesus preached a "full-orbed" Gospel that sought to address everything that was lost at the fall: the physical/material and the spiritual/eternal.

To do the work God is calling us to, we must faithfully demonstrate and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. What is the Gospel that you're presenting to your own circle of influence? Are you preaching Good News for both today and eternity? Is your ministry addressing the here and now as well as eternity?

I'm grateful for the great work God has done here in Haiti and how He's graciously allowed us to be a part of that work. I'm grateful for the many faithful brothers and sisters like the Wallace family who have responded to God's great commission to take the Gospel into the world and make disciples.

May we learn from our brothers and sisters here: persisting patiently, taking risks for the sake of the Kingdom, and demonstrating and proclaiming the full Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Christ's Peace,

Lance