



## December 2010

Welcome to the December 2010 edition of eNews, the electronic newsletter from Christian Reformed World Missions. With this monthly email we hope to keep you informed with stories and news about what World Missions' missionaries are doing worldwide. We hope you enjoy these stories of transformation from around the globe.

### **Beacon of Hope Celebrates Impact of HIV and AIDS Prevention Program**

*Featuring Chris Roos, Nigeria*

Recently, Beacon of Hope joined seven communities in celebrating the end of a five and half year project for promoting abstinence and faithfulness in each region. The project, Abstinence, Be Faithful, for Youth (ABY) touched thousands of lives over the years, raising awareness about HIV and AIDS, promoting abstinence and faithfulness as a way of prevention, and bringing families closer together.

Beacon of Hope is a joint CRWRC and CRWM ministry that works with 13 local church denominations to address HIV and AIDS. Chris Roos, a Christian Reformed World Missions' missionary who served as Beacon of Hope's coordinator until last year, is Beacon of Hope's Business Manager and Special Duties. The recent celebrations were a testament to the impact of HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention programs.

"The reason for celebrating was to recognize the youth and volunteers who participated in the project and to encourage them to continue it in their communities," says Chris. "We [also] gave them, as well as the churches and schools involved, additional training materials so they could continue the teaching on their own."

"Over the life of the project, we trained almost 15,000 youth peer educators who reached almost 186,000 youth with life skills promoting abstinence outside of marriage and faithfulness in marriage. We trained over 1,600 faithfulness facilitators who taught over 25,500 married people on faithfulness in marriage. In addition, just over 1,350 people were sensitized on sexual abuse and its prevention."

Judith is one of the young people who participated in the program on abstinence and faithfulness.

"I was a very shy person, so shy that talking to my parents about things disturbing me was an extremely difficult thing . . ." Judith says. "I also heard a lot of things about AIDS that really confused me and made me run away from and avoid those I suspected of having the disease."

"A few months ago, someone came and introduced himself as a staff [person] with Beacon of Hope and told us a little about the program he came to carry out in our school. I contemplated for some time, but reluctantly decided to join the program. I must say, I was very happy I made the decision to join."

"This program has helped me in several ways. First of all, it helped me develop confidence in being able to communicate my feelings with my parents at home and teachers in school, including asking them questions when I am confused about

### **Reasons for Thanksgiving**

Join us in praising God for the ways He has used your partnership with us to spread His message throughout the world this year:

**Evangelism** - Christian Reformed World Missions continues to reach the world with the power of the Gospel. The Spirit has moved more than 9,000 people to commit their lives to Christ and nearly 50 new worshipping communities were established.

**Leadership Training and Development** - Over 8,300 people participated in leadership development programs through Christian Reformed World Missions.

**Christian Education** - 84 partner teachers and administrators served in international schools, sharing the Gospel and a Christian world and life view.

**Join CRWM in the Ukraine or the Philippines:** Be part of a 2011 summer team to lead an evangelistic English camp for children and teens in the Ukraine or go to the Philippines to promote HIV prevention in schools, churches, and other settings. Share your faith and impact lives for God's Kingdom. Visit [www.crwmm.org/summer](http://www.crwmm.org/summer) for more information.

### **Project Giving Guide**

Christian Reformed World Missions' Project Giving Guide is a great way for an individual, family, or church to give a gift that has a larger, lasting impact. All projects focus on World Missions' involvement in evangelism and church planting, leadership training, theological education, transformation networks, Christian education and much more. Visit [www.crwmm.org/projects](http://www.crwmm.org/projects) to view available projects and/or to make a donation.

anything. Second, it also helped me to understand my sexuality and the importance of abstinence from sex. Furthermore it has enabled me to improve in my way of living.”

Young people are not the only ones who’ve been touched through Beacon of Hope’s programs; adults have also participated in the center’s programs on marital faithfulness.

One man shared his and his wife’s struggle to communicate with each other before connecting with Beacon of Hope. They had many disagreements and misunderstandings for several years after they married. Although they remained faithful, looking back the husband says, “if you had asked me the importance of being faithful to one’s partner, I would not have been able to say something meaningful.”

One of Beacon of Hope’s promoters encouraged him to attend a faithfulness training workshop. He did so and found it life changing. “I would say that the training was very timely,” he says. “There are some things that we learned in the training that are still helping our marriage up to this moment . . . the training I participated in has also opened a door of ministry to me. Through the “step-down” training I carried out, I had the opportunity to help and keep on helping couples who are having problems in their marriages.”

Through programs like abstinence and faithfulness training, Nigerian youth and adults alike are learning more about HIV and AIDS and how to pro-actively respond to it. The fight against HIV and AIDS is not won yet, but the response to prevention programs is a significant step in the right direction.

*Chris Roos has been involved with the Beacon of Hope ministry for almost 10 years. Recently, Beacon of Hope’s application to be registered as a corporate body was approved by the Nigerian government. This approval marks an important step in Beacon of Hope becoming an independent entity. Pray for wisdom for those involved in this process and for a successful beginning to establishing a local support base for Beacon of Hope.*

## **Hoping in the Lord**

*By Howard & Ruth Van Dam, Haiti*

A major earthquake, Hurricane Tomas, the cholera epidemic, presidential elections. A time of testing? A time of punishment? A need to turn to the Lord? The anger of God? An opportunity for the church to grow? An opportunity for the world to express their solidarity with Haiti?

How does a Christian make sense of the brokenness that surrounds him?

John 9:1-4a says,

“As he (Jesus) went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me.”

Simple and yet powerful words - I can see! The work of God was displayed in his life.

Immediately after the earthquake, people called out to God. They were hungry for the comfort and strength of a sovereign God. He heard their cries and brought comfort and help. There was revival.

Now, 11 months later, church attendance has leveled out. The spiritual fire has cooled down. Yet, the work of God is still being displayed in Haiti.

Three weeks ago, Sous Espwa [the CRCNA Haiti ministry team] met with our partners to talk about their life and ministry in Haiti post-earthquake. These are a few of the comments that were made:

- Our churches have grown. There is a great hunger to know God better.
- We have grown in our capacity as an organization.

- We have gained the respect of people in our communities and in other organizations.
- We are learning how to do ministry in communities and develop relationships with people in difficult situations.
- We have built new relationships with other Christian organizations and are working together toward common goals.
- The crisis has made our organization wiser in how we spend money.
- We were able to utilize the goodwill of people to start new, needed ministry.

Amidst the blur of a sinful cloud, we see the work of God displayed in Haiti. Sometimes we need to put on spiritual glasses of faith and hope. It is not easy. Along with the positive comments that were shared, there were many feelings of inadequacy, frustration, lack of funding, lack of training, etc. It has been a huge learning curve for Sous Espwa, all of our partners, and ourselves as individuals. Sometimes there is a heaviness that threatens to steal our joy.

A friend shared his thoughts with us shortly after the earthquake. He said, "I was reading in Jeremiah 32 how Jeremiah finds himself in a dungeon under the King's palace while Jerusalem is under siege. Being carried off to Babylon was imminent, and Jeremiah's prophecies were being fulfilled. What a hopeless situation it must have been — scarcity, panic, and desperation amongst the people."

"And yet," our friend continued, "God imparts hope on Jeremiah in an unusual way. He tells Jeremiah to buy a field as an investment in the future when the land will eventually be restored. What a sign that God's promises hold true, even in the toughest situations. Hang on to this hope."

Sometimes we can see the work of God with sharp clarity, and other times we need to put on our glasses of faith. Hebrews 11:1 reminds us that "faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Our hope comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth.

*Howard and Ruth Van Dam have served with Christian Reformed World Missions in Haiti since 1991. Although this year has been a difficult one, they say with confidence, "There is an old song that goes something like this: 'I don't know about tomorrow . . . but I know who holds my hand.' We have seen God working and moving and we continue to hope in Him."*

## **Reaching the Wider Community**

*Featuring Gary & Galya Timmerman, Russia*

For almost 20 years, Christian Reformed World Missions has helped ministry partners in Russia provide theological resources. Over a decade ago, CRWM began two public Christian libraries, one in St. Petersburg and one in Moscow, to expand access to available resources. Although the Moscow library has since closed, the Christian Library and Media Center in St. Petersburg continues to play an important role in the community.

"Russia is now going through a demographic cycle never experienced before," says Gary Timmerman, a CRWM staff member in Russia. "In the 1990s, many kindergarten buildings were sold by the dozens, one was even sold to the local Christian university. Few people wanted children in those turbulent years." But, faced with an aging population and a falling birthrate, the government hopes to reverse this trend by paying people to have children. However, as Gary notes, "in St. Petersburg, shopping centers are more valued developments these days than replacing kindergartens. Thousands of families cannot even get their children into kindergarten due to lack of space."

In response, the Christian Library and Media Center has begun the Center for Creative Development. By re-arranging the Library and Media Center's Reading Hall, space has been made for dance, art, and drawing classes for small children, teenagers, and adults. Each class has about five to six persons. Each day, two instructors run sessions in the mornings and evenings before and after library hours.

Just over a year ago, CRWM encouraged Alexander, the director of the Christian Library and Media Center, to find more local support for the center. Alexander wondered how local funds could be raised and who

could be found to support the ministry; the Center for Creative Development has answered this challenge, birthing new fruit in the process.

“Alexander is excited about the widening ministry at the Media Center,” said Gary. “It’s a realization of a holistic ministry reaching out to serve its community. The library collection, the weekly seminar events and an upcoming Christmas program expose newcomers to the richness of the Christian faith.”

“The Christian Media Center serves over 275 readers a month and hosts 250 other guests for fellowship and various events,” Gary shared. “Everyone on the Center’s team has a testimony to share of God’s blessings. Other than our full-time librarian, all these persons serve at the library voluntarily. Presenters at public lectures may receive a small honorarium, but the transformation of this ministry from a large team of hired workers in 2001 to this impressive gathering of volunteers shows tremendous growth toward a sustainable future for the spreading of the Gospel at the St. Petersburg Christian Media Center.”

*Recently, Gary and Galya Timmerman celebrated Gary’s tenth year of working with Christian Reformed World Missions in Russia. Over the years, he’s been involved in teacher training, publishing, Christian libraries, and connecting with local partners. He and Galya met each other several years ago and since their marriage have worked together to expand the reach of the Gospel in Russia.*