



“Education is the Foundation of Development”

ICCM has been working in Haiti for 49 years! Nowhere in the world has our program made more of an impact on the development of individuals, churches and communities. As the Free Methodist Church in Haiti takes the final step toward becoming a full General Conference this June, no longer under the authority of the “mother church,” it is universally recognized that the support of ICCM for holistic ministry

across Haiti has been an enormous benefit and a major player in the expansion of the kingdom of God here. Many churches were planted by first starting a school where none existed. Thousands of church members are able to read, write, and take leadership roles because ICCM offered them an education. Most Free Methodist pastors were sponsored as children. Professionals in medicine, business, law, and education got their start as sponsored children. We thank God for the impact of almost a half a century of shared ministry.

Regional Coordinator for Haiti Rex Bullock and I have just completed a round of meetings with ICCM staff, the ICCM National Committee, and about 50 school directors. Although we sponsor about 6500 children here now, that number is down from about 8000 a few years ago. We spent long hours examining reasons for this trend and explaining changes to our program that will improve communication between sponsors and children and set us all up for renewed strategic growth. Haiti still desperately needs the benefits our schools provide. Our future is full of promise as we each do our part.



*Only fools and God don't change.
—Haitian proverb*



“We aren’t fools and we aren’t God—we can change.” So declared one of the school directors as we proposed sweeping changes to policies and procedures to increase our efficiency and improve both the quality and quantity of letters and photos for sponsors. We met in three regional gatherings (Gonaives pictured here) for excellent days of “meeting of the minds” for our entire shared operation.

A few of the changes: Separate “thank-you” letters for each extra gift from a sponsor will be discontinued; children’s expressions of thanks will be incorporated into the “trimester letters.” Three days a year, students will write to their sponsors as part of the teachers’ regular instruction in writing; unsponsored children in class will write to other people. Photographers will come to the schools less often but take pictures of all the sponsored children, not just those that are due for updated photos.

Perhaps the most far-reaching policy change is that the upper age limit will be lowered to 21; an exception for the transition year is that students who are 22-24 now may stay in school if they are entering 13th grade

(“Philo”) in 2015. As more Haitian children enter primary school at a normal age, it is more reasonable to graduate by 21 than it used to be. (With three years of kindergarten and 13 grades, it does still take 16 years.)

Another major change is that since secondary school has become more expensive in some schools than our sponsorship dollars can cover, secondary students may apply for scholarship funds to supplement their sponsorship in order to stay in school and not be a drain on the schools’ budgets.

Feeding the students is monumental. Donors to the Haiti Food Fund support the lunch program very faithfully and generously, but our goal of providing lunch every day for all students (sponsored and unsponsored children total 22,000) is no longer achievable. School directors are informing children and parents of the limits to the lunch program; since most children attend school from 7 AM to 1 PM, they may be given a snack on the days there will be no lunch, and most will be able to eat lunch when they arrive home. Haitian pastors are encouraged to use their creativity and resources to offer garden produce, crops, local donations, and other gifts—and they fully and rightfully accept this responsibility. We are grateful that economic changes in the country allow many families to provide more meals for their children than they used to.

Challenges are many! For instance, the internet for our Haiti ICCM office has been down for two weeks. Today there is a transportation strike so nobody can get to the office. Nothing is easy here! But our devoted partners here take hardship in stride and give their best for the sake of the children, and we are proud.

