



The Fond-des-Blancs Update

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Special Embargo Edition

*In the spirit of the embargo this is a whole
lot less for a whole lot more!*

Dear Friends,

Greetings from a very troubled Haiti. I have read that June 25 has been declared International Day to Change the World. Ironically, that is the date chosen when direct flights from Haiti to the U.S. and Canada or from the U.S. and Canada to Haiti will be stopped under the terms of a once again tightened embargo. It is said at least 10 million Christians will be making this a day of prayer. This letter will most likely arrive in your hands after June 25. If you weren't aware of our prayer needs that day, I hope this letter will help, and that you will continually pray for us as we do our part to change at least a small part of the world, Fond-des-Blancs.

We are writing this letter to let you know we plan to remain in Haiti after June 25 even though the U.S. consulate has advised all Americans to leave. We have much to do before this year is finished. We feel we are needed here now more than ever and do not have time to leave. God has put us here and it is He who will protect and keep us. Perhaps after 10 1/2 years this has become home for better or for worse.

Our U.S. office will still be able to receive contributions and deposit them in HCDF's U.S. account. It is too soon for us to know what all the ramifications of this further tightened embargo against Haiti will be. So far it has not been difficult for us to cash American checks. We want you to understand that we are committed to staying and doing the work the Lord has given us in helping the people of Fond-des-Blancs. To do all that is possible, we need a strong cash base now and an even stronger cash base when the embargo ends so we can catch up on all the work that we've had to put off because of the high cost of supplies.

By now you have probably had enough time to read a few articles in newspapers that tell how the embargo is hurting the poor far more than the military or the elite who are supposed to be its targets. We can vouch for the truthfulness of that. While the military stays in power and the rich get richer through the black market, the poor are struggling to pay for a bite to eat. In a May 2 Washington Post article I read the following two statements that sum up for me the meaning of this tightened embargo. The first statement is by a Haitian analyst. He says, and I agree, that "the misery index will certainly go up, but there is no certainty of achieving the political results." The other is a statement by Haitian citizens to the U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, William Swing. They warned, "he had better be aware of the fact that the army can hold out longer than anyone else. If the strategy is one of wearing them down, let it be known, some of us won't be here in the end." Even if you were the type to say the end justifies the means, you can not say it for this embargo. The means is slowly killing Haiti, and even those enforcing it do not see how it will get the desired end result of democracy.

But we are not without hope. We can see God's hand at work. In another article, this time in the New York Newsday, a writer by the name of J.P. Slavin gave what he believes to be three things that can be done to help Haiti. The first one concerns political policy which is out of our realm. The second and third concern roads and schools. Concerning roads this writer wrote, "Help fund the construction of national highways. Most Haitians live in rural areas. With modern roads, isolated agricultural areas could blossom and enjoy easier access to the capital's local and export markets." HCDF is doing this. Although there were many obstacles to getting the road project started, God led Jean through them all and now over 1,000 people have jobs to help them get through this crisis. It is a big job for Jean to keep all the workers organized and getting payroll out each week, but it is exciting to see the progress being made on the road. We are very grateful for your prayers concerning this and ask that you continue.

A third suggestion this writer made concerned schooling. He wrote, "Assist Haitian organizations with establishing a literacy campaign. Haiti will never become a modern nation as long as 65% of the country's nearly 7 million citizens remain illiterate." HCDF is doing this in Fond-des-Blancs. Our school started six years ago when our first son, Lemec, was ready to start pre-school. That year we had to recruit to get enough students to fill Lemec's class. The community was fast able to see our commitment to a strong education for their children, and every year since we've had to find ways to deal with more and more parents wanting to register their child in our school. Registration takes place on the first Wednesday of May from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. This year, in that short span of time, we registered 100 three year olds. We accepted them all by faith that God will enable us to deal with that many when October rolls around. We are facing many obstacles which are enlarged because of the embargo. We need both your prayers and financial assistance to enable us



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to get through these obstacles. We need to find several more qualified teachers. We need to find space to put all the new students, and we need to find creative ways to sponsor all the children. We are still looking for individual sponsors, but we are also hoping some of you can help us collectively sponsor several through small fund drives through your church, Sunday school class, or Bible study group. These could be through walks for Haiti or bake sales or whatever creative ideas you may have. The school provides a quality education, an education we feel is good enough for our own children, and it also provides the children with one good hot meal a day which is sorely needed by most of the students.

Those of you who are currently sponsoring a child will not be able to receive their end of year report until we can once again freely send mail out of Haiti. I know you can understand this unavoidable delay.

Until airline flights to and from Haiti are restored, all receipts will come from our office in Florida. We will do our best to fax a letter each month to be enclosed with them that will update you on our situation here.

Please also pray for our health and safety as a family. The other missionary families not too distant from us and several on our radio communication system have decided to leave. That will leave us somewhat isolated, but we know God will be with us because He is the one who put us here.

Before I close we want to thank you all for your friendship, encouragement, prayers and financial support. We thank those of you who have been with us for years and we thank those of you who are just now joining us in our work in Fond-des-Blancs. We thank our God upon every remembrance of you.

Yours in Christ,

Joy and Jean Thomas and Family