



## Volunteers in Medical Missions

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Volume 19 Issue 1

# V I S I O N



Dr. Michael Watson sees a Haitian family of seven at a Dominican Republic clinic during the January trip.

## God's Presence and Purpose In the Dominican Republic

by Barbara Freese, RN

God's presence and purpose were clearly evident to every member of the Dominican Republic team in January. Dr. Keith Hannay served as leader, providing all of us with outstanding practical and spiritual leadership.

The team met at the Atlanta airport on New Year's Day, with 12 members from 6 states. We stayed at the Solid Rock Mission House in San Juan de la Maguana. Our meals were prepared by a Dominican cook and allowed us to sample typical Dominican dishes.

We owe special thanks to our hosts, Shannon and Joe Zimmerman in San Juan for outstanding attention to our needs, to Pastor Juan Ernesto for arranging our clinics and working with us, to Ohio nurse Nicole Eby for her help with managing the pharmacy, and to the Bienvenida Church and all of the Dominican support with translation, transportation and travel details.

**Language Barriers:** Spanish is the official language of Dominica. We had Spanish translators and several of us spoke enough Spanish to work with patients with simple problems. However, as we got closer to the Haitian border, we encountered many patients who spoke Creole and not Spanish. Since we didn't have a Creole translator, we had to rely on a friend or relative on site who could speak both Creole and Spanish; the information was then translated Creole-Spanish-English and back again English-Spanish-Creole.

**Clinic in Pilon de Guaroa:** Our most remote site was Pilon, located 2 ½ hours from San Juan. On the way we learned we had been scheduled there for the wrong day, but we wanted to reach the very needy people of that area with the medicine and

*(continued on page 2)*

*(God's Presence --continued from page 1)*


food we had brought. Over half of the drive was over gravel and dirt roads, with views of both breathtaking scenery and one-room houses built from mud and sticks. We were reminded of the beauty of God's creation and of the reason for traveling so far to reach this site. As we got close to Pilon, Pastor Juan and the translators called out from the bus to announce that we were coming to help them. Children started running after the bus, and were SO excited to see us! We set up clinic in a private home with dirt floors, no electricity, and no running water. That day we treated over 100 patients, and distributed worm medicine or glasses to an additional 105.

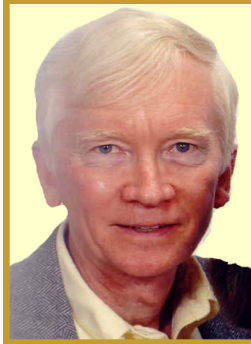
Our clinic was situated on a hill above a shallow river, with Haiti on the other side. At lunch several of us walked down the hill and were tempted to wade across the river into Haiti (just to say we'd done it). However, time was short and we all walked back to the clinic without crossing the river. Later we learned from a Peace Corps volunteer that several of his friends had waded across and walked into Haiti. Half of the group were kidnapped and held for ransom! Needless to say, we're REALLY glad we stayed on the Dominican side.

**Food Ministry:** Our team bought 66 bags of food (beans, rice, noodles, oil, sausage, and onions) through donations raised by team members. We distributed the food bags to the neediest families at our clinic sites. Several of them told us "We weren't going to cook tonight because there's no food in the house." And we were reminded again of how very fortunate we are!

**What We Accomplished:** During the week we held clinics in four sites—El Cercado, Sabanna de Chen, Macasia, and Pilon de Guaroa. Our patients included both Dominicans and Haitians who ranged in age from two weeks to over 80 years. We treated about 650 medical patients, dispensed about 85 pairs of glasses, assessed blood pressure on an additional 20+ adults, and provided worming and vitamins for an additional 400 children who did not need to see a doctor. Our total patient count was 1,049.

Pastor Juan Ernesto taught 380 adults and children about salvation through Jesus Christ. As the result, 130 of these accepted Christ. Pastor Juan will return to the villages to be sure that the local pastors enfold these new Christians into their congregations.

As we returned home, we reflected on how much we have grown spiritually and emotionally from our experiences. God's presence and purpose enabled us to reach out to many people in the Dominican Republic, and to better understand His purpose in our lives. 



## From the Director's Desk


by Larry Secrest

Since 1986 Volunteers in Medical missions has been able to treat more than 410,000 patients in thirty-one different countries. From the North American perspective with our modern medical facilities and large drug store chains this might not seem significant - but from the perspective of the world's population some of whom do not have access to health care or cannot afford it, such intervention means a great deal.

It is easy for us to take a cup of cold water for granted. However, a cup of cold water to an individual suffering from a high fever or the pains of dehydration is all that matters. This analogy seems to illustrate very simply the ministry of VIMM.

In Psalm 142 we see an honest expression of desperation. David composed the psalm during a time of weakness and vulnerability and the first four verses convey a spirit of helplessness; this is what our mission teams find in many parts of the world. In fact, the psalm could well represent the cries of so many in Japan, Haiti, and other areas that have been ravaged by natural disasters. "I cry aloud with my voice to the Lord...I pour out my complaint before Him...my spirit was overwhelmed within me...for there is no one who regards me; there is no escape for me; no one cares for my soul." (Psalm 142:1-4)

Yet, there is hope. David expresses it in the final verses of this Psalm as he turns and begins to focus on his God. "I cried out to you, O Lord; I said, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living' (vs.5), and again in the final verse (vs.7) he expresses the hope that "the righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me."

A short-term medical team can only accomplish so much medically. Our teams have limited time and resources, but even so there have been some lives that have been saved and our interventions have alleviated some physical suffering. However, the fact that we go, care and listen makes the most difference and allows us to point our patients to one who cares for them, more than they could ever imagine. The ultimate goal is that they might come to the point of having their hope placed in the Savior who will deal bountifully with them. "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward." (Matthew 10:42) 

# Haiti is being restored.

by Kristin Gore, MD

*“Back in Haiti by the grace of God. Landed without a problem – so much less chaotic this time. People are too scared to come down here because of the cholera outbreak.”* That was an excerpt from my journal on my last trip to Haiti with VIMM in August 2010 after the earthquake. In January 2011, after the cholera outbreak, I was hesitant to go back. During the August trip, the country seemed so disorganized and beyond repair in so many ways: debri-filled streets, unrest in the streets, crushed buildings, and broken families.

The recent elections and protests had just cleared days prior to our arrival and the country is making its first strides towards a sense of normalcy. As we landed in the airport, we prepped the team for the expected chaos that would meet us in the airport, but it wasn't there. On the drive to the Pentecostal campground where our team would stay, I expected to see the massive tent cities in the public parks and streets full of ruined buildings, but they weren't there. As we drove to our location I could visibly see how the prayers of God's people are restoring Haiti. The tent cities are now more consolidated in the outskirts to clear the cities for

restoration, and massive cleanup efforts are in place. It is still a large work in progress, but the country of Haiti is far from a lost cause. In Ephesians, we are reminded that God is “able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...” That verse became so alive to me.

Our team held five days of clinic at schools, churches, and remote mountain side villages. In a village called Tapio, I took care of two small children and a one month old who lost their mother to cholera eight days prior. An aunt, who also had a young child, was taking the girls in and brought them to the doctor for cholera symptoms. We were able to provide IV rehydration and prayer to this family in their time of need. We saw many similar cases of dehydration, infection, and despair in our short trip.

Though many wounds are healing, the people of Haiti are a resilient people, and God's work is so evident in testimonies that people were so excited to share! At the church services we attended, the spotlight wasn't on the aftermath of the earthquake or the countless number of deaths from the spreading cholera epidemic. Rather, the people were focused on how much they are blessed. We heard testimonies from a boy who nearly died from malaria, a lady who survived the earthquake, a former witch doctor who

is now a saved child of God, and I could go on! When I close my eyes, I can hear the beautiful people of Haiti singing at the top of their lungs how in love with Jesus they are. It is an awesome, yet humbling, inspiration.

My father, James Gore MD, and I will be returning to Haiti co-leading a team in July 2011 with Dr. Stoney Abercrombie. Please pray for the continued blessing and restoration of these wonderful people. ‘Merci, Segne’ which means thank you, Jesus. 🙏



The team to Haiti in January heard stories of blessings the church members had received, not complaints of their dire conditions.

# Chairman's Report


**Samuel Lindsey Clarke, MD, FAAFP**  
Chairman, 2011-2012



The Lord has accomplished much through Volunteers in Medical Missions during the past 25 years. It is an honor to participate in the Lord's ministry and to serve the Board of Directors as chairman. I am grateful to the Lord for the strong leadership demonstrated by VIMM's Executive Director Larry Secrest, preceding

Chairman of the Board, Gen. Joe Lax, former Treasurer Bill Lasher, and founder Dr. Stoney Abercrombie.

The Lord brought me to faith in Jesus Christ as a young teenager, and I knew that missions would play an important role in my future when He later directed me into a medical career. I have participated in nine VIMM trips and will lead an additional team this year. God also has given me a ministry to my wife Kelley, four sons and a daughter two to ten years of age, and to numerous resident physicians and students where I teach family medicine and practice in Greenwood, South Carolina.

VIMM finished 2010 in good shape with respect to finances, personnel, and accomplishments. I believe that VIMM is well positioned for fruitful ministry. However, this will not happen without prayer and support. I look forward to working closely with the Executive Director, the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, and the VIMM staff to reach VIMM's goals and to accomplish our mission. 

## Upcoming Trips

Bolivia	May 5-14	\$2,375*
Peru	May 28-Jun. 4	2,150*
Honduras	Jul. 10-17	1,600*
Peru	Jul. 11-20	2,450*
Nicaragua	Jul. 30-Aug. 6	1,700*
Haiti	Jul. 31-Aug. 6	1,500*
Ecuador	Sep. 9-18	1,800*
Peru	Sep. 24-Oct. 1	2,200*
Panama	Oct. 16-23	1,800*
Kenya	Dec. 7-17	3,000*
Dom Republic	Dec. 31-Jan. 7	1,700*

\*Estimated Cost

*Cost is generally based on departure from Atlanta, Georgia.*

View the current Trip Schedule on our web site, <http://www.vimm.org/>. You may complete a trip application online. To apply for a trip you must turn off your "Pop Up Blocker" or list the VIMM web address as an allowed site under Internet Tools. Complete all pages of the application and then click Submit. If you submitted an application after January 1, 2008, you do NOT need to submit another one. Just email us indicating the trip in which you are interested and any changes that need to be made to your application. E-mail Maryann at [maryann@vimm.org](mailto:maryann@vimm.org).

**PLEASE RECYCLE & PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ALONG TO SOMEONE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED IN THE MINISTRY OF VIMM.**

**Funds are needed for several areas. Please mark your donation for one of the following:**

1. Daily operating expenses
2. Medicine for trips
3. Scholarship to assist a team member

(Please clip and mail today. All donations to VIMM are tax deductible.)

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# VIMM's Outstanding Team Leaders

*This second article of the series is written by Dr. Dave Sealy, a long time team leader and past board member.*

## The Lord impressed on me the need to be open to all calls.

by David Sealy, MD, CAQSM



**Dr. Dave Sealy, far left, performs minor surgery during a recent trip to Peru.**

The Lord brought me to Himself at age 16 in the midst of deep personal and profound rebellion. Quickly thereafter the desire for a career in medicine grew as a means to tangibly be involved with “the least of these”. I was challenged by physician colleagues to consider overseas medical work in the name of Christ while in medical school at Duke. Hence, after graduating early I was able to spend four months in Rwanda and the hook was set! After that I started absorbing many of the biographies written by past and current missionaries. Due to circumstances and debt, immediate return overseas was not an option after residency at MUSC. Although longing to return to Africa, the Lord impressed upon me the need to be open to all calls.

After a mission visit to the Ukraine, a certain young, vivacious and handsome physician named Stoney Abercrombie lured my family to SC after ten years of practice in Colorado Springs. He directed me to join him in teaching family medicine residents and establish the sports medicine program at Greenwood. Without a doubt, the opportunity to work with VIMM leading medical teams to faraway places was a huge attraction.

Stoney's selfless commitment to role modeling to residents was too much to resist and he hustled me off to a rustic adventure on the Coco River starting at Rus Rus. What a phenomenal time to see the hand of God in spite of our marginal clinical preparation and my minimal leadership skills!

Twenty VIMM trips later and hundreds of blessed new-found friends on these trips have created memories and spiritual blessings beyond count. The opportunity to see the face of Christ in thousands, to form new friends in Central and South America and bring residents to fantastic places, vistas and challenges has been life changing for me. Although my heart was desiring fulltime overseas work, the Lord wanted me to teach and disciple young doctors and face the constant challenge of their unending inquisitiveness. One trip to Honduras, one to Nicaragua, three to Guatemala, ten to Ecuador and five to Peru are where I stand now.

The trips to Peru have been especially precious to me as I have seen the Lord create fledgling new churches there as a result of the medical work and the teaming up with Peruvians who boldly serve and present Christ to all our patients. Additionally, after being challenged by Dr. Mark Van Swol to winsomely affiliate with the local medical community in Peru, we have seen physicians there partner with us as we come alongside them and support their practice by submitting to their direction. Working with Larry Secrest as our co-leader in Peru has shown me how the Lord can use godly men like him as ambassadors with compassion and humility. His servant's heart afforded the opportunity to present the gospel to mayors, physicians and other governing officials!

However, my most exciting trip came many years earlier in Guatemala when the bus in which we were riding lost brakes on a steep and narrow downhill. The driver, through the protection of angels, made the reflex decision to steer the bus into the steep hillside away from the 200 foot canyon on the other side. He did this knowing well that it would likely flip the bus at 30+ mph with 30+ passengers and no seatbelts. The only alternative would be to drive over the cliff to the right with unquestionable lethal consequences. As the bus hit the hillside and rolled to a 45 degree angle, the Lord placed a large rectangular boulder under the right front wheel that not only stopped the bus but righted it to level! A few cuts and bruises later, all were safely off the bus and giving glory to the Lord! Thirty minutes later, after some had already hitched rides to the nearest city, two unsavory characters showed up and held a gun on our Guatemalan leader demanding whatever was available. However, the Lord opened our leader's eyes and he noticed that the pistol was plastic and challenged them! Upon being challenged and noticing approximately ten rather large Americans (one 6-3, one 6-5

*(continued on page 6)*

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*(VIMM's Outstanding Team Leaders--continued from page 5)*

and one 6-8) with him, the bandidos decided that other prey would serve their interests better and ran away! It was tempting to pursue but we decided that it was time to "turn the other cheek" and give thanks to the Lord. The remainder of the trip was filled with outstanding ministry, miracles and great surgical opportunities.

I have been married to Ann for twenty-eight years and we have six children, five of whom have traveled on VIMM trips. The sixth will likely go this year. Ann will eventually go with me once all kids have left for college. She has home-schooled all of our children and truly "trained them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord". Three are out of college and the fourth is almost done. All have had a taste of overseas mission life with much thanks to VIMM for those opportunities.

Currently I am the director of the Primary Care Sports Medicine Fellowship at Self Regional Healthcare Family Medicine Residency Program, led by long-time VIMM trip leader, Gary Goforth, MD. He has faithfully served in far more countries than I have with VIMM and provides much freedom for his faculty to take residents on these trips to experience incredible medical training and spiritual refreshment and challenge. Each year, I am accompanied by our sports medicine fellow who performs ultrasounds and approximately one hundred injections as part of his/her training. One of the benefits of the VIMM trips is the fantastic combination of extensive community and clinical medical training with the deepening fellowship that we develop with the residents and other medical professionals who join us. It is amazing how much seven to ten days can change lives when the Holy Spirit is in the process! Hence, I thank the Lord for His grace in allowing me to lead these trips and I thank Him for the role models He has given me in Stoney Abercrombie, Gary Goforth and Larry Secrest as encouragement to continue to seek "the least of these" on the VIMM trips and get out of my comfort zone. 

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- God's Presence and Purpose in Dominican Republic-Page 1
- From the Director's Desk-Page 2
- Haiti is being restored-Page 3
- Chairman's Report-Page 4
- Upcoming Trips-Page 4
- VIMM's Outstanding Team Leaders-Page 5