



CHRISTIAN REFORMED
WORLD RELIEF COMMITTEE

Living Justice, Loving Mercy

Dear Friends,

During lent I read this well-known passage in John 12 about Mary who anointed Jesus with an expensive perfume. One of the disciples who didn't (want to) understand what happened talked about taking care of the poor instead of wasting money to perfume. Jesus, who knew that Mary had done this out of love defended her with the words, "*You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.*"

Now some people use these words to discourage us from working to reduce poverty. We all know that poverty is a reality in nearly every country in the world, and it is hard to change it. However the Bible calls us through the Old, and the New Testament to care for the poor, and the vulnerable in society. Both the prophet Micah and the Apostle James challenge us to show our faith in our actions towards the poor. Living and working in Haiti where 55% of the population live on less than USD\$1 per day (which is the definition of extreme poverty) gives poverty a completely other dimension.

Poverty reduction has been a theme for CRWRC for many years. We have learned that short-term relief doesn't really change the situation of the poor. CRWRC has focused more on solutions that help the poor improve their situation today and tomorrow. This week I visited a program of PWOFOOD, one of our partners in Haiti. Normally PWOFOOD starts working in a community by training the deacons of the different protestant churches. These deacons become the base of the transformation of their community. Often churches are focused

on the poor in their midst, but PWOFOOD is teaching deacons to include the needs of the people outside their churches. Through literacy and micro-credit programs PWOFOOD tries to help alleviate poverty.

For three years CRWRC has been engaged in a program to help orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). These are children that are most often the victims of AIDS, and are taken care of by another family member. In Haiti it is not always clear if the cause is AIDS, because people don't speak easily about this disease. I visited an old grandmother in the village of Bas-Vaudreuil, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) east of Port-au-Prince. She is taking care of five grandchildren, including Kevens Lovens Wladimir, the little boy in the picture. His father died while working in a factory in the city, and now Kevens' mother spends most of her time in the city trying to earn a living for her family. PWOFOOD came along and is helping this family. The promoter negotiated that the school would allow these children to attend school without paying, while PWOFOOD funded the building of a water reservoir for the school. At the same time the OVC program purchased a goat for the grandmother to increase her income. The grandmother takes care of the children and the goat. The goat has a kid now too, so together they are making progress. This is a simple way of helping families in rural communities to improve their income.



Grandmother with Kevens Lovens Wladimir and the goat with her kid.

This summer 216 people will be biking 3,750 miles (6,000 kilometers) from Seattle to

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Jersey City. Besides 104 American-, and 111 Canadian bikers there is 1 international biker, and that is me (Ad). So what has this tour to do with a poor grandmother in Haiti? Of course, it is a physical challenge to bike through the United States from one ocean to the other. But this Sea-to-Sea tour is about raising awareness of poverty in this world, and to help raise funds to support CRC projects in different countries, including Haiti.

“Funds generated through the tour will be used to support new or ongoing CRC initiatives in three areas of development (business, community and leadership)—each one ending the cycle of poverty for individuals, families and communities in places all over the world.”

For those of you interested in supporting me in this big adventure I am looking for sponsors. 100% of these funds will help CRWRC Haiti continue the work of helping people like Granny and Kevens, and others in the same situation.



Looking for sponsors of the Sea-to-Sea tour....

You can find more information on the website of the tour www.seatosea.org including a picture of me, and my bike on the beach in Jacmel (Haiti). If you would like to sponsor me and donate for the good cause continue on that website, click on the “216 cyclists”, and find my name in the list. Click on my name and you find everything necessary to become part of this adventure.

In the meantime I will continue to bike regularly on my old mountain bike. The roads here have many holes, and so this is the right bike for Haiti. I hope to get a better bike for the real tour.

Our family is doing well. During our Christmas vacation we were able to visit Hanneke and Jim in Kuwait, along with all our other children and grandson. This was a rare event for us – it had been more than 4 years since we were all together. It was a special blessing to be present at the baptism of Rebecca, Hanneke and Jim’s third daughter, who was born only two weeks before our arrival.

In the mean time Jisca moved back from Cape Town to the Netherlands, where she graduated from the International Hotel school in The Hague. She is waiting for a work visa for South Africa, because she was hired by the Cape Grace Hotel in Cape Town. Mirjam and Pierre are still in Montreal, and they are expecting their second child in June. Leon and Crystal are doing well, working hard in their jobs and Leon is enjoying making improvements on their house.

Ardjan is doing well in high school here in Haiti; he is currently finishing 11th grade. Next year will be his last year in Haiti. He would like to study aeronautical engineering in the Netherlands, and combine it with getting a pilot license. Coby continues to teach pre-K, this year with the challenge of having a deaf child in her class. Therefore, she is taking an on-line course in sign language. God has been faithful to our family, and we thank Him for his blessings.

Greetings from Haiti,

Ad & Coby, and Ardjan de Blaeij

Please, keep us and Haiti in your prayers:

- Thanking God for the work of the partners who were involved in the flooding relief projects. They gave hope to hundreds of families after tropical storm Noel.
- Praying for God’s blessings on the work in Haiti in order that poverty really may be reduced in these coming years.
- Praying for strength and protection for me in the Sea-to-Sea tour, but also during the training in Haiti.

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