



April 2007

Dear Friends,

CRWRC

Living Justice, Loving Mercy

CRWRC is all about transforming communities. We want to see change in the lives of real people but we believe that this change is best accomplished when communities themselves take charge. We also believe that the church has a vital role to play in this transformation process. The story that follows is an example of how this is happening:

Change in Barrio “Pigeon Peas” (Los Guandules)

“San Pedro de Macorís is best known for the Major League baseball players it has produced. More big leaguers have come out of this city and its surroundings than any other place in the world. What you may *not* have heard is that the Christian Reformed Church in Los Guandules is beginning to transform its community. How is this happening?

DesCo, a partner program here in the DR, first did a whole lot of Bible studies and training on why the church needs to be involved in its community through its program called “Church, Community & Change.” Water is a scarce commodity in the community. DesCo helped the church drill a well that provides water to the church, the near-by Christian school (also funded by the country team), and for 50 families in the community.

15 people from the church and the community have received loans from DesCo’s microcredit program. Each person, besides making monthly payments, is saving a small amount so that she can build up a capital base and at some future date become independent. The pastor insisted that non-Christian community members be included in the group, even though there were more than enough church members eager for a loan. Doing this took great courage on the pastor’s part!

Right next door to the church is a thriving Christian school operated by COCREF, a Dominican country team partner. The school benefits from having the church close by, just as the church benefits from having the school next door.

Transforming how a church views its community is a long term proposition. Getting that church to join together with well intentioned neighbors who want to work for change is even harder. But that is the direction this congregation is headed.

About the Family

The Zwier family is doing well, scattered around the globe. Elisabeth plans to stay one more year in Honduras teaching. James enjoys his internship with CRWRC in Laos. Sarah is about done with her junior year at Goshen College. Patti, David and I hold down the home front.

Joel Zwier
CRWRC Dominican Republic