

South Florida Haiti Project Dedicates Episcopal Church in Bondeau, Haiti

More than 1,000 people expected to attend the dedication of the largest Episcopal church in Haiti

South Florida Haiti Project, a nonprofit outreach ministry based in South Florida, will join in the dedication of a newly built Episcopal church in Bondeau, Haiti, on July 12, 2015. Formerly known as St. Marie Madeleine, the new Bon Samaritan Episcopal Church will hold approximately 800 congregants and will be the largest Episcopal Church in Haiti.

The day-long dedication celebration, expected to draw 1,000 people, will include a worship service, music, food and fellowship. Clergy and laypeople from across Haiti will attend, including Rt. Rev. Jean Zache Duracin, bishop of Haiti. Also in attendance will be Linda Turner, widow of Jim Turner, the first American supporter of South Florida Haiti Project's outreach to Bondeau.

"The dedication of the new church is an historic moment for the Bondeau community," said Rev. Andrew Sherman, president of South Florida Haiti Project and rector of St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in Boca Raton, where the nonprofit was founded. "It represents a long-standing partnership between South Florida Haiti Project and Bondeau, a relationship that has helped relieve poverty and lift up a community in the name of God."

In addition to the new church, South Florida Haiti Project's ministries in Bondeau include a pre-school and primary school with more than 300 students, a developing secondary school, 40 housing units, a children's home called Kay Timoun that houses 14 children ages 5 to 15, food assistance, sustainable solar power, clean water, a guest house and medical missions. Together, these ministries meet daily and long-term needs for people of all ages.

The need for a new church, however, became increasingly clear. Services were held in a primary school classroom big enough for about 75 people; however, more than 350 attend each Sunday, meaning congregants would stand or sit outside. "It's easy to see how, along with clean water, the church is their number one priority," said David Gury, treasurer of South Florida Haiti Project. "Having the new building will be like going from a one-bedroom apartment to a 5,000-square foot house. It will be an amazing transformation and a better home for the congregation."

Building a house of worship was a logical next step that the people of Bondeau deeply desired, Fr. Sherman said. "The congregation provided the first \$2,300 for the church, a testament to their vision for a church to anchor the thriving community we have created together," Fr. Sherman said. "Many of the congregants live on less than a dollar a day. Their contribution represents a significant sacrifice in relation to their resources, and it is proof of their profound faith."

Leadership in the fundraising for and development of Bon Samaritan church came primarily from Rev. Sam Owen and his wife, Rev. Jenny Owen. Fr. Owen is the priest in charge of New York City's only Haitian Episcopal congregation, the Haitian Congregation of the Good Samaritan. He said the new church represents not only a religious commitment to Bondeau, but also a humanitarian one. "This church will further strengthen the community spiritually and materially," Fr. Owen said. "It will provide tangible help for the poor and spiritual guidance for all."



The children of Bondeau will provide special music for the dedication with instruments gifted by South Florida Haiti Project through a United Thanks Offering Grant from the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church. The grant, which covered the purchase of 55 refurbished instruments, will launch a new music program at the Bon Samaritan School and provide a salary for a music teacher for one year.

St. Gregory's Episcopal Church began its outreach program to Bondeau in 2003. In 2010, the South Florida Haiti Project was formed to advance St. Gregory's work in Bondeau and today includes the following South Florida partners: St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Delray Beach, The Chapel of St. Andrew in Boca Raton, St. Andrew's Schools in Boca Raton, The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Tequesta, The Episcopal Church of the Advent in Palm City, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Palmetto Bay and many others.

Significant support also comes from private donors in South Florida and other regions of the U.S. "South Florida Haiti Project would like to thank its partners and donors for helping us complete Bon Samaritan Episcopal Church," Fr. Sherman said. "We hope this church will stand as a symbol of the partnership between us and the people of Bondeau for generations to come."

For more information, contact David Gury, treasurer of South Florida Haiti Project, at 561-212-8104 or dgury@att.net or the Rev. Kathleen Gannon, vice president of South Florida Haiti Project, at 561-445-5440 or revkathleen@stpaulsdelray.org.

About South Florida Haiti Project

South Florida Haiti Project is an adjunct organization of St. Gregory's Episcopal Church based in Boca Raton, FL. The mission of South Florida Haiti Project is to improve the living conditions of the people of Bondeau, Haiti, by raising funds, providing in-kind gifts, sending volunteers for programs focused on creating a culture of brotherhood and spirituality in the Episcopal tradition, and providing clean water, basic education, health care, nutrition and shelter.



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