

# FORMING Community TOGETHER

by Jennifer Huffman



Dr. Jennifer Dilts, a pediatrician from Missouri, served on a recent medical mission team with CBF field personnel Jenny Jenkins.

Christ is healing Haiti's wounds through the holistic ministry of CBF field personnel Jenny Jenkins.

Will you join CBF Heartland churches and mission teams in forming a community of support and action around Jenkins' life-changing work?



**Located** a bumpy 40-miles southwest of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, lies a village of roughly 10,000 people in the heart of Grand Goave commune, a division of the island 90 percent destroyed by the 2010 earthquake. In the heart of that heart, a concrete structure stands tall over the other buildings, offering shade to the people it shelters every Sunday.

Siloe Baptist Church is more than this building; it is a community so vibrant and loyal to Jesus and each other their faith is contagious and awe-inspiring and life-changing and all of the other words I grasp for because these are not large enough to describe what happens to your heart once you visit.

On one sunny Sunday in May, a Kansas City-based pediatrician named Jennifer Dilts and I found ourselves sitting in a pew of this special church, awed by the enthusiasm with which its congregation sang a Creole version of Precious Lord Take My Hand: heads back, eyes closed, multiple harmonies so powerful they hit the rafters and fell around us like grace itself. When it was over, we smiled at the kiddos who peered over the pews at us, and thanked God for bringing us to Haiti.

We traveled there at the invitation of Jenny Jenkins, a CBF medical missionary whose very presence conjures up word combinations like *gentle firecracker*. A self-described “ragamuffin who just tries to be obedient” when she’s called to action, Jenny felt Jesus leading her from New York City — where she worked as an oncology nurse — to Grand Goave, where she has lived for the past five years, listening and responding to how Jesus calls her to love these people. As a result, Jesus is giving new eyes and bigger hearts not only to those of us who serve alongside her but also to the people there living in extreme poverty in the most remote villages of the Haitian mountains.



Jenny Jenkins, of CBF’s field personnel, provides medical care to villages near Grand Goave, Haiti.

This is how their work included us: Jenny assembled a team consisting of a tender-hearted chaplain, a comedian pastor, two sassy and vibrant young missionary interns with hearts so big you believe the future of the world is in good hands, the thoughtful, compassionate Dr. Jen, and me. Our mission was to provide medical care to communities without access to doctors, in the name of Jesus.

Each morning, we packed up donated medical supplies from the supply closet behind Siloe Baptist Church, greeted the adorable, curious school children there, and prayed with our Haitian translators. Then, we ventured out into the surrounding communities to set up medical clinics, sometimes driving then walking straight up mountains to reach a humble church, or into the livestock-filled yards of someone’s home. The pastors in these communities worked with Jenny and her Haitian team to round up those most in need of medical attention: children, new mothers, the elderly. The medical mission team collected patient histories and vital signs, and set up a pharmacy while Dr. Jen and Paramedic Scott examined patients.

Sometimes, the patients were very sick and received donated medicine for malaria or an infection. Starving children were given canned milk for a nutritional boost. One little boy was gravely ill, and I still say Dr. Jen and Jenny saved his life. Paralysis had set into his face, arms and legs; he couldn’t swallow. Through translators, Dr. Jen and Jenny urged his mother to take him to the hospital in Port-au-Prince for further testing. (Currently, Mike is holding his own, thank you, God! — but may have a long road to recovery.) Other times, the patients were suffering from exhaustion. Struggling to survive takes its toll on the body, but oh, the power of a compassionate face and kind word! They

nearly skipped away after these exams, clutching paper bags with a 30-day supply of Tylenol in their hands.

At the end of every exam, Dr. Jen and Scott prayed with their patients.

These were quiet, sacred moments to witness these bowed heads, the hot Haitian sunlight swimming around them like the Holy Spirit. One time, an elderly patient began to pray for Dr. Jen while Dr. Jen prayed for her. The two prayed together, in separate languages for a few moments, said “amen” then lifted their heads to exchange brilliant, wide smiles.

So this is what God looks like, I remember thinking.

Jenny oversaw all of this, though, as one emergency room doctor who served with her in the past remarked, she could run these clinics all by herself. Instead, she took a step back to allow us to connect with the people she loves, the people we served who, it struck me, in some ways are more faithful to God than I have ever been, despite their daily struggles to find enough to eat, to drink clean water, to stay dry when it rains.

This trip gave me time to consider what God says to us in Isaiah, that true worship is serving the poor and oppressed. I have never felt closer to God than I did that week in Haiti. This faithful community served me as much as I served them, and I am so thankful to Jenny (and to Jesus) for inviting me to worship God alongside of them, not just in their beautiful church, but in their homes and streets and school.

The people of Siloe Baptist Church, Mount Sinai, Mount Tabor, Norgaisse and Nantiso showed me how to be grateful with exactly what God has given you to hold in that moment, whether that be a hungry child, a watermelon, a doctor’s hand, a piece of candy. This is what I bring back with me, this gift of being able to see God in small blessings, and I am forever grateful.

Haiti is not so far as we think it is, and on Sundays, I smile, thinking about how my Haitian brothers and sisters are filling their beautiful church with songs of love and faith and hope like they were the first day I met them. I’m so blessed to have been a part of this amazing effort, and look forward to figuring out how I can help next.



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