

Excerpt from

**"The Pioneers of Light
Stories of the Baptist Witness in Haiti: 1823 - 1998"**

Hopital le Bon Samaritain
(Good Samaritan Hospital)

The little clinic begun under the mango trees at the Seminary by Ivah Heneise and Nevart Yeghoyan was soon overwhelmed by crowds of seriously ill people. They came from all around, sometimes alone, sometimes carried by friends or families down the steep mountain slopes of the upper Limbe valley. Yaws, malaria, tuberculosis, dysenteries of various sorts, intestinal parasites, tetanus—all gave evidence of the desperate health needs of a neglected people. In the town of Limbe, Ludovic St. Phard, pastor of the Baptist Church, faced similar problems. Under his dynamic initiative a committee was formed which united his own clinic with that of the Baptist Seminary and planned for the construction of a dispensary. The committee purchased a *carreau* (100 square meters) of land on the Linnbe-Plaisance road, just above the town of Limbe. Baptists of the area carried rocks from the river to build its foundations. The cornerstone was laid on April 9, 1953. In July of that year the ABHMS sent Miss Millicent Engel, former missionary nurse to China, to direct the dispensary's work. It was formally opened in January, 1954, and dedicated to the spread of the Christian gospel and the demonstration of Christian concern through caring for the sick of the Limbe area. Paul Magioire, president of Haiti, attended the dedication service.

In addition to the dispensary, Miss Engel opened a maternity ward, where she taught scientific midwifery to "wise women" of the valley. After her departure in 1957, the committee found help in Mme. Victor Fontus, a Haitian Baptist nurse from Hinche.

Dr. William Hodges and his wife, Joanna, with their four children, arrived in 1958 to develop this work. The following year Miss Nancy Yeghoyan, a registered nurse and the daughter of Zenas and Nevart Yeghoyan, joined the staff. She was followed shortly by Miss Dorothy Lincoln, who later assumed the responsibility for the maternity ward. A pediatrics wing and a laboratory were added in quick succession. To provide essential electricity for the X-ray and sterilization equipment. Dr. Hodges installed a diesel-powered generator. A new maternity ward was built in 1962; the following year, a vaccination program for the people of the Limbe valley was also begun. Pharmacy services, new consultation rooms, a new laboratory and X-ray room were added. A surgery unit was built in 1986. In 1964, consultations averaged 2,000 outpatients per month; by the end of the century the average was approximately 19,000 monthly. Two other nurses were added in 1965, Miss Belle Williams and Mme. Elie Dumeny, the latter leaving in 1970. Herbert Rogers, a laboratory technician, came in 1974. Haitian physicians included Dr. Arnold Jules, son of Rev. Thomas Jules, a prominent Baptist leader.

Dr. Hollis Clark, sent by the ABHMS, served at the Good Samaritan Hospital from 1970 to 1973, when he went to St. Michel to head the staff of a new Baptist hospital built by Rev. Abraham Lubin, one of many enterprising graduates of the Baptist Seminary. Dr. Clark eventually went to Cap Haitien, where he developed the Cap Haitien Eye Center. Under his dynamic leadership this became a complete eye hospital, serving all the north of Haiti.

In 1983 Dr. Stephen James and family were sent by the American Baptist Board of International Ministries to assist at the Good Samaritan. Later, other missionary physicians

joined him for short terms. The hospital also benefitted by the services of numerous volunteer nurses, physicians and office workers. Members of the Hodges family have made valuable contributions to the ongoing program of medical care.

In 1967, a deep well was drilled in Limbe by Dr. Hodges to provide safe drinking water for hospital use. More land was purchased, and Hodges was able to begin a project which he had long felt to be of urgent need for the country's future: the development of a tree nursery, in view of replenishing fast-dwindling stocks of trees. Seedlings of native mahogany and Caribbean oak were soon ready for planting and distribution. In 1968, Hodges distributed 4,000 seedlings to the area population, planting a large number on hospital land. The following year, with the help of Ronald Smith, who was serving a two-year term in Haiti, Hodges began an extensive reforestation project. To this end, Smith created an experimental forestry farm on a northeastern promontory of Acul Bay, where more than 60,000 mahogany, oak, and other hardwood and fruit trees were planted. Young trees were supplied to neighboring peasants, who were encouraged to replant the denuded mountainsides.

In 1969, Dr. Hodges began work on a hydro-electric project for the Limbe Valley. This work was financed principally by the Baptist World Alliance and directed by volunteer engineers. A diversion dam and canal were built, a turbine installed, and poles and wires were put into place. The project was completed in 1972, and for the first time the hospital was provided with electricity twenty-four hours a day. Electrical service was extended in 1973 to the town of Limbe, and a small company formed to administer services. Eventually, electricity was provided by the Cap Haitien Power Company, but the hospital had frequently to depend on its own large generator.

A new deep well was drilled in 1973 by Dr. Hodges' staff, at the edge of the public marketplace in Limbe. A water tower with a 5,000 gallon reservoir was built, and pipelines were installed in order to provide clean drinking water for the town. Concerning this development, Dr. Hodges wrote in September, 1973:

"We have been some fifteen years in the valley of Limbe, treating and cataloging the fearsome water-borne diseases which afflict the Haitian people. Viruses, bacteria, and various intestinal parasites frequently gain access to the human digestive tract via the drinking water. . . . Various remedies have been attempted in providing drinking water to the population of Haiti. . . . The town of Limbe, being on a river bottom, has numerous dug wells, usually with masonry sides, affording water at depths of three to fifteen feet. The large numbers of small servant children clustered around these wells all day long, throwing their dirty buckets down into the murky waters, make these wells a serious hazard are no sanitary facilities. Human excrement is either thrown on the ground or in shallow latrines which are often within a few yards of the very wells which provide the water.... Using a simple apparatus...we have just finished drilling a four-inch well to a depth of seventy-six feet. ...We tested the well, and it delivers twenty gallons a minute. The water will be used by a substantial number of Limbe citizens. Hopefully, it will measurably decrease the number of intestinal diseases in the local area....Christians have always been interested in providing for the material wants of their less fortunate brethren.

The Hodges family believes that the phenomenon of underdevelopment is a manifestation of cultural and religious outlook and can only be changed by the catalytic action of the Christian gospel. We constantly seek more ways in which Le Bon Samaritan can become this catalytic agent, adding a dimension of love and compassion to the Haitian scene which will dramatize the biblical themes of human dignity, responsibility, and redemption."

In addition to his dedicated and fruitful efforts toward the improvement of the health of the Haitian people, particularly those of the Limbe Valley, Dr. Hodges brought a new dimension into the lives of the basically peasant population. He established a significant cultural

museum depicting the history of the area and of the country through artifacts discovered and described in the course of extensive archeological and historical research. His favorite recreational pastime was conducting archeological "digs" throughout the north of Haiti. His search for the location of **La Navidad**, the first colony established in the New World by Christopher CoTumbus has been recognized in several issues of **National Geographic Magazine**.

In 1995 a rupture occurred between Dr. Hodges and his sponsoring mission, the American Baptist Board of International Ministries (successor of the ABHMS), following a series of differences concerning mission philosophy as it pertained to the Good Samaritan Hospital. After the rupture, the hospital continued to function independently Dr. Hodges' death later that year brought a time of severe stress to the staff, but with Dr. Stephen James as new medical director, and David Hodges as hospital administrator, the crisis was weathered.

During the dark days of political embargoes and aggravated economic distress which characterized the on-going revolution the Good Samaritan Hospital was the only functioning medical facility serving the immense population of the area. The truth of the Baptist witness was powerfully demonstrated in concrete acts of mercy under the most stressful of circumstances. As the end of the century approaches, the hospital continues to spread the message of the love of Jesus Christ for the people of Haiti.

Indigenous Work Related to the ABHMS and ABPMS

In 1964 the indigenous movement among Baptists of this mission found expression in the formation of the Convention Baptiste d'Haiti (Haitian Baptist Convention). In addition to this convention, creative mission work of various kinds was initiated in different parts of the island by several outstanding Haitian Baptist leaders. Many of these had been related to the work of the ABHMS. Notable among them was Ruben Marc of Port-au-Prince. Others have followed suit.

Convention Baptiste d'Haiti (Haitian Baptist Convention)

The Baptist Union of Haiti which was organized by Lariviere and Paultre flourished for a number of years as a meeting ground.