

Rural 60 Member Congregation Makes a Real Difference Thirst for the Gospel Pours Water into Village

By: Fred Powell, Mission Consultant

Did Ellis Jenkins and Rev. Bob Gant think that a rural church of 60 people could restore a community 900 miles away? “When you recognize a need, you have to do something about it.” said Elder and Sunday School teacher Ellis Jenkins.

Back in the Spring of 2010, the pastor of Cane Creek Presbyterian church, a small rural congregation in Santuc (Union county) stumbled upon a book, The Hole in Our

Gospel written by Richard Stearns, the President of World Vision International. In this book Stearns described his experience as a self proclaimed “committed Christian” who was reluctant to put his faith on the line to address the desperate need of the majority

of the earth’s population. The faith that he was brought up in held that evangelization was the key to making the world a better place, but what he discovered was that without food, water and the most basic necessities of life, evangelization seemed hollow to the world’s poorest people.

When Bob Gant read this, is resonated so strongly that he began to share the book with others at Cane Creek. Soon after, the adult Sunday school class led by Ellis Jenkins began to take the message to heart. “He (Stearns) described the suffering, poverty and hopelessness he saw and asked, ‘How can we as a Christian church let this happen?’” Jenkins said.

Long before the last page was turned the Sunday School class began talking about how they might help. Ellis, who has long been involved with hunger issues in the presbytery, began to realize that water was just as pressing an issue.

- Roughly 12 percent of the world’s population, or 884 million people, do not have access to safe water.

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- Nearly 90 percent of water-related diseases are due to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene; most victims are children in developing countries.
- The average person in the developing world uses a little more than two and a half gallons of water each day for drinking, washing and cooking. Whereas the average person in the developed world uses 13 gallons per day just for toilet flushing.

After prayer and much discussion, it became apparent that if they could raise \$25,000, they could provide clean, safe and abundant water for an entire village in Haiti. A non profit engineering company in Charleston, Water Missions for the World, specializes in this kind of work. It would be an act of partnership in mission because the Haitian community would be involved from the very beginning in all aspects of the project. They would be trained to maintain the inexpensive and renewable water system themselves.

Though \$25,000 seemed an incredible sum of money to raise with just sixty people, they began by holding a small golf tournament, that turned out to be a big success. Then they envisioned a much more ambitious project...*a Water Walk*. They were inspired by the fact that in many third world families there is one designated member, usually a woman, who does little else each day but carry this precious substance from the nearest stream or well back to her home. Often the walk is at least two miles, and in times of drought it can be a walk of six miles each way, with 40 to 60 pounds of water balanced on her head or hip. During the Water Walk, walkers in Union county were encouraged to make the trek carrying a bucket of water, to further represent the incredible need.

In early November the walk took place . Within several days the response from the wider community was enormous. Not only had the \$25,000 been completely raised, but the Cane Creek Congregation is well on the way to its SECOND \$25,000.

Out of Cane Creek Presbyterian's commitment to "make the Gospel live" came a water treatment system that provides as much as ten thousand gallons of water each day. This system provides enough water to support a community of about 3,000 people. Now that is literally as delightful as a cold glass of water on a hot July day.

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