



THE LEAST OF THESE
MINISTRIES
MATTHEW 25:40



Sharing **HOPE**
amidst poverty.

December 2020

Pursued *by* God

CARMENCITA'S MOTHER was physically unable to attend the food distribution. So, for about eight years, Carmencita attended the weekly food distribution to pick up her mother's rice, beans, and eggs. Today, she attends the distribution to pick up food for her own family.

Carmencita is 33 years old and lives in Batey Altagracia. Her mom died of a heart attack several years ago. She recalls always listening carefully to the messages preached at the beginning of the distribution each week. As a

teenager and young adult, she was hearing the messages, but not putting the lessons into action.

Wilton Gomez, our Director of Evangelism and Social Action, recently met with Carmencita. She told Wilton about a visit last year from Marineida, a local church pastor, and a small group of visitors. They shared the gospel with Carmencita and prayed for her, and she came to know Jesus as her Savior! She told Wilton that she began to follow Jesus on that day and continues to follow in His steps today.

Some time before that visit, Carmencita's husband left her. She was left to care for five young children, with no job and no money. It was then that Pastor Marineida worked with Ricardo to have Carmencita and her children added to the weekly food distribution.

Carmencita told Wilton that she remembers days when she woke up with nothing to eat. "Now when I see the blue truck, I thank God!"



Carmencita with her children: Elinson (16), David (14), Ana Milanda (11), Joselin (8), and Camila (3).

Your gifts help ensure that we are able to meet the needs of families like Carmencita's. Please consider sending a donation today to support our Food Distribution Program!

Remembering Steve Hull

This is the fifth and final in a series of reflections on our founder, Steve Hull, who passed away on November 18, 2019.

I MET STEVE HULL after a Christian retreat weekend that our wives had just attended. Ann and Lisa were busily gathering their belongings while Steve and I waited in the parking lot. As we talked, he shared with me that he and Ann had recently started a feeding ministry in the Dominican Republic. I remember telling him that it must take a lot of courage to undertake such a significant project in another country.

For me, the idea of leaving your comfort zone—a successful long-term business in Steve's case—and taking on a new vocation in response to God's call was intimidating and overwhelming.



Steve enjoying conversation with mission team members in January 2015.

Steve went on to tell me how God had called him to start the ministry and how he was trusting God to put everything together. About that time, Ann & Lisa were finished and ready to go.

That was all I had heard about the ministry until, a few years later, Lisa and our daughter, Jessica, went on a mission trip with Steve. That mission trip began my family's journey with The Least of These Ministries, which has brought me to a leadership position within the organization.

Since becoming connected with the ministry, I had many occasions to work with Steve and get to know his heart for God. Whether leading (and serving) a mission team, participating in a Board meeting, giving a presentation at a church, or just having a one-on-one conversation, Steve's humble obedience to God's call on his life was apparent. Through every step of the ministry's development, Steve would tell of how God led him to move forward.

Anyone who has spent time with Steve or heard him speak knows he liked to tell stories of his visits to the Dominican Republic. He had quite the collection of stories, and I was impressed with how far back many of his stories went. He would recall details, physical descriptions of people, and sometimes even names, from the early days of the ministry! That gave me some idea of the level of care and love he had for the people whom God called him to feed.

Steve would often say that he did not know anything about running a ministry, and anything good that came out of the ministry was only the work of God. As I near the end of my fifth year in leadership with The Least of These Ministries, I think I understand what he meant and can totally relate. Book knowledge and life experience help me get the day-to-day administrative work done. But unless I am attentive to God's voice and obedient to it, the real work—the *important* work—would be difficult, and likely futile.

That is the primary lesson that will stay with me as we move forward. Steve was a role model for many people, and he will continue to be missed.

—Marty Hogan



Taking a break in the Santo Domingo Colonial Zone with mission team members Dale (Board member), Vicky, and Marty in January 2018.

Thank You!

Gifts come in many forms...

DURING THE JANUARY 2019 MISSION TEAM, Pastor Ramón requested Spanish-language copies of the classic devotional by Oswald Chambers, “My Utmost for His Highest,” to distribute to pastors in the bateys. Before this year’s trip in February, we put out a request on Facebook for 15 copies through our Amazon Smile Charity List (visit our website for a link). Within a couple of days, all 15 copies were purchased and we received them in plenty of time for the trip! These have been given to the pastors and will serve to encourage them day-to-day in the difficult work to which God has called them.

This is one example of how this ministry is supported in many ways. We are also blessed by several groups that sew children’s dresses and shorts and donate them for distribution in the bateys. These are received throughout the year, and taken down with mission teams. In a typical year—we know that 2020 has been anything but typical—we receive and take down between 100–200 dresses and pairs of shorts!

More recently, we asked for donations of face masks prior to our Director’s trip to Barahona in September. Our supporters answered the call, sending donations of 500 masks! These are being used for distribution to residents of the bateys and by our staff to keep them safe as they serve.

Of course, without financial support, we would be unable to serve as we are doing today. The weekly food distribution—which has been expanded as a result of the pandemic—is our largest expense. To support that and all the ministry’s activities, we have wages for our small staff, fuel and maintenance for the vehicles, and utilities and maintenance for the warehouse.

We know that God works through His people to accomplish His purposes. We are grateful for the generous gifts and prayers of so many of you who have made and continue to make our work possible! May God bless and protect you, continue to provide for all your needs, and give you peace in the coming year and beyond!



Tributes

Gifts given in Memory of:

Bertha Allen *by* William White

Evonne Brilhart *by* James & Shelby Wilhelm

Woody Hancock & Steve Hull *by* Cheryl Hancock

Steven G. (Steve) Hull

by Dr. Robert Dubel, Richard Glaser,

Morris & Gloria Hawkins, Robert Hope & Dawn Hope Hull,

Daniel & Carol LaFon, Paul Pearson, Alice Philp,

Art & Joyce Smith, Ellen Stickles,

Wanda & Dale Valentine, Bradford & Jean Yates

Tom Munch *by* Larry & Ronnie Bohn

Jean Myers *by* Robert Brenneman

George B. Reimer *by* Barbara Reimer Nye

Kathryn Riley *by* James & Shelby Wilhelm

Roger & Bessie Smith *by* Janet Yount

Robert & Dorcas White *by* William White

Gifts given in Honor of:

The Marriage of **Ricardo Beltre & Anny Marte**

by Westminster United Methodist Church

Dale & Margie Howard’s 50th Anniversary

by Marty & Lisa Hogan

Ann Hull *by* Paul Pearson

Lia Sideris *by* George Sideris

Etila Simmons *by* Vicky Logan

Mike & Marlene Young *by* Bill & Linda Warehime

If you would like to honor or remember a friend or loved one through a donation to The Least of These Ministries, simply provide the information on the enclosed form, or send a note with your gift!

ALL GLORY TO GOD! This has been a challenging year for most of us. Despite the challenges, we are grateful to God that giving to the ministry has remained fairly consistent throughout the year. This is so important in ensuring that our day-to-day work is able to continue.

However, the cancellation of our banquet this year did have a significant impact to our budget planning. At the same time, we are experiencing increased costs and greater needs. If you are able, will you please consider sending a year-end gift to help in one of the following ways?

Rice & Beans: We have experienced increased food costs this year, and have also expanded our distribution to include families who have been directly impacted by the health crisis.

Vehicle Purchase: The ministry's small white truck has been needing more mechanical repairs recently and replacement parts are becoming more difficult to find. We hope to replace the truck with a multi-passenger van that will help with our ministry in the bateys as well as with mission teams. You can find more details on our website. As of this writing, we have already raised about half of the \$20,000 needed for the vehicle!

Ministry Hub: The Covid-19 pandemic has prevented us from beginning any construction on the Ministry Hub project. The Board continues to explore options for moving forward in the most cost-effective way, including looking at alternative building designs and options for purchasing an existing property in place of new construction. To date, we have raised over \$20,000 for this project.

Tax Deductions Note: For 2020, the CARES Act makes two changes to the deductibility of charitable contributions. First, taxpayers who do not itemize may now deduct up to \$300 per year in charitable contributions to qualified 501(c)3 charities. Second, for 2020 only, the CARES Act allows taxpayers who itemize to deduct contributions up to 100% of their AGI. *Since we're neither accountants nor lawyers, please consult a tax professional to review your specific situation.*

Two more things... If your employer offers gift-matching, please take advantage of that benefit! We are listed on two major gift-matching platforms. Finally, if you are a member of Thrivent Financial, please consider directing Choice Dollars® to us. You can make a profound impact!

Sharing
HOPE

Annual Banquet

SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 2021

2:00–5:00 PM

MARTIN'S WESTMINSTER

Let's try this again!

Our Banquet has been rescheduled for March 21.
If you registered for the 2020 Banquet, you do not need to
take any action to sign up for the new date.

If you would like to join us, registration info is on our
website, or you may contact us directly at the number below.
Enjoy music and a delicious meal, participate in an
exciting silent auction, and share fellowship as we
provide updates on the ministry.

Call 443-918-7105 for information or to register!

Coming soon: Details on how you can
participate in the banquet online!

"Be joyful in hope...."

— Romans 12:12

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Jacki Stranathan, *Secretary* • Mel Arbaugh • Ted Forman • Tom Marenic

The Least of These Ministries, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization incorporated in the State of Maryland; FEIN 52-2220216. A copy of our current financial statement is available by writing us at the above address. Documents and information submitted under the Maryland Solicitations Act are also available, for the cost of postage and copies, from the Maryland Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis MD 21401, 410-974-5534.