



May 2023

Called to Serve the Community

This is the seventh in a series of profiles on Pastors and church leaders in the bateys served by The Least of These Ministries.

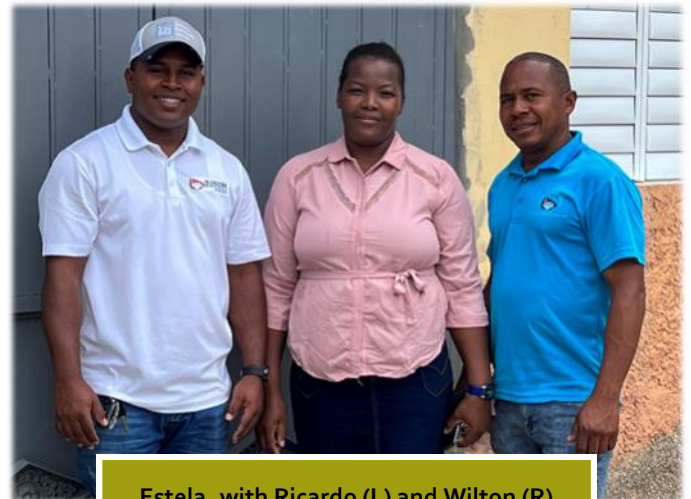
BATEY 2 IS ONE OF THE LARGEST BATEYS served by our Food Distribution program. Just over 500 people, representing over 80 families, participate in the program in Batey 2. This community is also one of the farthest from our Ministry Hub in Barahona—nearly a one-hour drive.

Our ministry partner in Batey 2 is Casa de Gracia Iglesia Cristiana (House of Grace Christian Church), led by Pastor Estela since September, 2013. Estela started out just helping her Pastor with work at the church. Over time, people in the community started addressing her as a Pastor. “I’m not a Pastor; I don’t want to be a Pastor,” she recalls telling people. “But my Pastor always told me, ‘Don’t say no to God’s call; when God calls, we have to respond.’ I helped him where I could until the day he died. It was then that I felt the call to be a Pastor.”

One of the difficulties Estela faces in her ministry is opposition from some community members to evangelism or other activities conducted by the church. While the opposition is discouraging, it doesn’t stop Estela and her church because they know the Holy Spirit is with them and “we know that our fight is not against flesh and blood, it is against darkness.”

Estela and her husband have four children: one girl and three boys. She’s grateful to God for how her children are maturing. Estela does not receive a salary from her church, which receives offerings equating to about one or two dollars a month. Those limited funds are typically used for cleaning supplies or similar needs. Her family relies on the wages from her husband’s employment.

“I feel that God is calling me not only to be a Pastor of the church, but also of the entire community.” Estela believes that God is calling her and the church to do more to serve the children and adolescents in the community. She explains that negative things, like drugs and smoking, are harming young people today. “My vision is to have a place where we can work with the youth, where they can develop their skills,” and be more prepared for the future.



Estela, with Ricardo (L) and Wilton (R)

The church is grateful for the Food Distribution Program, as it has helped them to reach out to many families in the community with needs. Estela explains that this removes some of the burden of such an important outreach, allowing them to use their limited resources in other ways. It has also helped to bring new people into church, where they can experience Christian fellowship and hear the gospel, which is most important of all!

INSIDE: Learn how you can support Pastors, like Estela, and their churches through our new sponsorship program!

New Sponsorship Program

WE BELIEVE THE LOCAL CHURCH is central to leading people into a life-saving, life-changing relationship with Jesus, which is necessary to bring about long-term positive changes in the communities we serve. And we believe that devoted, well-supported Pastors are the foundation of the local churches.

Our organization has solid relationships with at least one Christian church in each of the 14 communities we serve. In 2021, we launched a long-term training program to build up the Pastors of these churches, many of whom had never received any formal ministry training.

In addition to their limited training, many of these Pastors lack sufficient resources to serve their churches well or, in some cases, provide adequately for their families.

After much prayer and planning, we are excited to introduce a new program that seeks to address the resource needs of Pastors and their churches in these communities. For a donation commitment of \$200 per month, an individual, a group, or a church can sponsor one of the Pastors. Most of those funds will be given to the Pastor as a stipend, while the balance will be used to help churches with other resource needs.

Partial sponsorships are also available. For example, if an individual wants to commit to \$100/month, we will pair their sponsorship with another \$100 monthly sponsor. Sponsors will know which Pastor and church they are supporting, and will eventually have the opportunity to send encouraging notes to the Pastor and receive updates and prayer requests from them. One-time gifts designated for the sponsorship program will be set aside for the general church needs.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, you may use the enclosed gift form to sign up and send in your first gift. You may also sign up and give on our website, including the option to set up automatic monthly giving.

Please pray for these Godly women and men who have a passion for sharing the gospel and have willingly answered the call to serve!



Sharing Hope through Tributes

Gifts given in Memory of:

Virginia Ensor *by* Mark & Roxanne Wood

Jean Myers *by* Howard Myers

Becky Erdeljac *by* Ann Hull

Mary Norman *by* John & Jean Norman

Merle & Margaret Gladhill *by* Paul & Kathy Jenkins

Steve Hull *by* Mark & Kimberly MacLean Blevins,
Ralf Nies, Vernon & Holly Yaider, and Jean Yates

Terri Small *by* Stephen Small

Gifts given in Honor of:

Stanley Arnold *by* an anonymous donor

Ann Hull *by* Richard Glaser and Cynthia Stewart

Jan Halman-Miller on her Birthday
by Rev. Dr. Sue Shorb-Sterling

Scott Hull at NASA *by* Ann Hull

Conni Highfield on her Birthday *by* Friends
and Rev. Dr. Sue Shorb-Sterling

Alice Phelps *by* Robert & Traci Goodfellow

Arora White *by* Bill White

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!

Annual Banquet

IT WAS A FESTIVE AFTERNOON as a group of 150 gathered on April 16 for our Banquet to celebrate 25 years of answering God's call to serve families in the Dominican Republic! We enjoyed meeting new friends and visiting with long-time friends, remembering past mission teams and looking ahead to new opportunities for service.

Bill Warehime, VP of our Board of Directors, updated the group on our Ministry Hub project. He reported that progress has slowed to ensure we maintain focus on our core mission of providing food for the hungry and sharing the hope of the gospel in partnership with the local churches. Work will continue on the project as time and resources allow. In January, our mission team put some finishing touches on an upgrade to the building's exterior. The team installed exterior LED lighting and poured a concrete sidewalk around the full perimeter of the building.

Ricardo Beltre (pictured), Manager of Ministry Operations in Barahona, shared how the ministry is taking a new step in the direction of encouraging Pastors and churches in the communities served by the Least of These Ministries. The presentation included a video of two Pastors, Jack in Batey Algodón, and Estela in Batey 2, sharing how they were called to serve as Pastors and some of the joys and challenges they have experienced in their service.



The event also included a delicious meal, a live auction, and a silent auction featuring almost 25 wonderful items! Videos of the presentations will soon be available on our website, so watch for details on how you can view them.

Thanks to our special guest, Galen Roop, who led the live auction! Special thanks to Kathy Bare and Jo Fleck, who helped to plan and organize the event, and to Lisa Hogan and Beth Stitely for their help at the event!



Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

—1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

Sharing HOPE VISION TRIP

ARE YOU INTERESTED in seeing & experiencing our ministry in person, but haven't felt the call to serve on a traditional mission team? Would you like to learn more about our work in the DR and meet our staff and others connected to our ministry? A Sharing Hope Vision Trip may be just what you are looking for!

We are planning another Vision Trip for October 17-21, 2023. Participants will meet with our local leadership team, learning about the important elements of our ongoing ministries and our vision for serving communities in the future. You will visit our

Ministry Hub, work alongside our staff in food distributions, share in a local worship service, and maybe even have a little fun!

If this sounds like an opportunity for you, contact us at info@leastofthesemin.org or 443-918-7105 for more details.

Thank you!

25 YEARS
1998
2023



A HUGE 'THANK YOU' to the following businesses that contributed to the success of our "Called to Serve" Banquet by donating items for the event:

- ◆ Cousins Ace Hardware—*Thurmont, MD*
- ◆ The Cutting Garden—*Westminster, MD*
- ◆ Magic Mountain Chimney Sweeps, Fireplaces & Grills—*Westminster, MD*
- ◆ Minuteman Press—*Hanover, PA*
- ◆ Ole Mink Farm Recreation Resort—*Thurmont, MD*
- ◆ Sight & Sound Theatres—*Lancaster, PA*
- ◆ The Vine on Main—*Sykesville, MD*
- ◆ Wait, What? Sauce Co.—*Thurmont, MD*

Please support these businesses in appreciation of their generosity!

Registration Now Open for January 2024 Mission Team!

Register now for our Mission Trip to the Dominican Republic on January 13–20, 2024.

Teams are open to anyone 16 and older (13-15 with parent/guardian), and no experience or specific skills are required!

Information and registration is available on our website (leastofthesemin.org). Contact us if you have any questions!



Registration
Opening Soon!



11th Annual
GOLF TOURNAMENT
Friday, September 22, 2023

The Least of These Ministries, Inc.
PO Box 2824, Westminster MD 21158

443-918-7105 (voice or text)

info@leastofthesemin.org

Founded by Steve and Ann Hull
www.leastofthesemin.org

Marty Hogan, *Executive Director / Board President*, marty@leastofthesemin.org

Board of Directors: Rev. Bill Warehime, Jr., *Vice-President* • Ted Forman, *Treasurer*
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