

## CRC Collaborates in New Ministry

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May 2, 2008—A group of Christian construction specialists has linked with the Christian Reformed Church in North America to help congregations in countries such as Haiti and Honduras construct durable, hurricane-proof church buildings using local labor and donated materials.



The name of the new ministry is SON-BEAM International. Founded by members of Searchlight Ministries CRC in Jamestown, Mich., the group has helped to develop plans and provide materials for construction of a church building in Thomassique, Haiti. It is also involved in helping to build a church in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Those involved in the new ministry have a building trades or construction background.

“One of Son-Beam's unique contributions is that they have designed a hurricane-proof church building for areas that are prone to frequent damage to church structures from destructive storms,” says Joel Hogan, deputy director of Christian Reformed World Missions.

Also, one of the things Son-Beam does, as a result of consultation with CRWM, is to have the local community do the labor for construction. Son-Beam provides the building design, the steel roof beams, finances for some of the building materials, and the expertise they offer as construction specialists.

“This results in a high degree of local ownership, as church and community members invest, with their labor, in making their own church,” says Hogan.

Normally, Hogan says, CRWM would initiate a program and seek support from congregations, or churches would decide to create their own ministries. This is a more collaborative approach.

“This is their project. We are not running it. We essentially served as a consultant,” says Hogan. “We would like to develop the sense of awareness with other CRC congregations that we are willing to work with them in what they are doing around the world. We can add value to their work.”

Faith CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa, has a similar relationship in which members began a ministry in Laos, but used CRWM personnel for advice and support in making the necessary connections to offer training for church leaders in Laos, he says.

Ray Van Drie, executive director of SON-BEAM International, says he and others in the ministry have worked for many years in the building trades. Using their experience, they have come up with relatively inexpensive ways to re-enforce church structures to make them stand up better in storms.

“What we have is expertise that we can offer these groups,” says Van Drie. “We decided that we would be facilitators for Third World churches. We have become an independent, non-denominational ministry. We hope to be able to help anyone anywhere.”

The group formed after Van Drie and other members of Searchlight Ministries had built their own church. "At first we thought we would want to go somewhere and build something," says Van Drie.

They spoke with Luis Pellecer, CRWM's regional director for Latin America. His assessment was that Haiti had the greatest need, but that it was important to involve the local congregation in the project. He invited Van Drie and others to travel along with him and judge for themselves.

For years, says Van Drie, members of a church in Thomassique had been saving money and gathering materials to build an adequate facility. But for all their saving, planning and working, by the end of 2006 their dream remained out of reach.

As the result of the visit to Haiti, SON-BEAM decided to cover the cost of drilling a new well on the church site and to pay for many of the building materials. In addition, SON-BEAM helped to design the building and trouble-shoot problems during construction.

On Nov. 18, 2007 members of the Palmis Ba Christian Reformed Church in Thomassique dedicated their new church, built by church members in the span of about four months.

CRC missionaries in Haiti say the celebration at Thomassique was a celebration of hope for the entire Christian Reformed Church in Haiti.

SON-BEAM International is continuing to partner with Christian Reformed World Missions and others, sowing hope in Haiti and elsewhere. Learn more about SON-BEAM by visiting: [www.son-beam.com](http://www.son-beam.com) or by calling Van Drie at 616-875-7255.

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