

# NMI Central

NAZARENE MISSIONS INTERNATIONAL

9 October 2024

## Mesoamerica Region



## Haiti

Haiti's history is a story of occupation, oppression, forced labour for the benefit of wealthier countries, and political unrest. Discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and held by the Spanish for several centuries, the indigenous people (known as Taino) of the island were obliterated in less than a generation. In the 17th century, France established a presence on Hispaniola (as the island was known), and in 1697, the western third of the island was declared French. In 1804, Haiti declared its independence, led by Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and became the first country in the world to be led by former slaves. For centuries, Haiti was one of the wealthiest natural resource providers in the Caribbean, particularly in regard to forestry and sugar-related industries. It is now considered the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. The Church of the Nazarene began its work in Haiti in 1950. Compassionate Ministries have laid the foundations for many of the congregations and churches that seek to be the presence of Christ in this country so impacted by earthquakes and hurricanes, civil unrest, displacement, and chaos. The need for trained clergy is critical, and when processes are interrupted by long periods of an unpredictable "Out of Order" reality, we must trust that Jesus, who is there, is bigger than the situation. Pastors are still loving their congregations and do all they can to help local communities. Earlier this year, NMI asked the Church around the world to pray for Haiti. Continue to pray for Haiti and that the hopeful light of Christ will break through the darkness there. The story that follows is just one story that demonstrates how God takes such tragedy and brings triumph—laying new foundations for a better future in Haiti.



147,182 Members



755 Fully Organized Churches; 22 Not Yet Organized Churches



197 District Licensed and 292 Ordained Ministers on 12 Districts

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## PRAYER



- Pray for peace. Since 2018, when there were many missionaries and much work being done, the escalating conflict has disrupted life and ministry every day and everywhere.
  - Pray for God to raise up leaders from the new generation. Overwhelmed with fear and uncertainty about the future, many are hesitant to make a long-term commitment.
  - Pray for the work of the Nazarene Seminary in Haiti, its administration, faculty, and students, who are having to adapt teaching and learning to the current situation.
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## PRAISE



- Praise God that “the church is still marching on.” There are new opportunities in the midst of the many challenges to bring Christ to the streets and neighbourhoods of Haiti.
- Praise God that within the compound of the seminary, built in 1950, located outside Port-au-Prince, there is safety, and it has become a refuge for many in these uncertain times.



Since 2018, life in Haiti has been marked by conflict, terror in the streets, collapsing infrastructures, and political and economic dysfunction. Many have had to flee Haiti for safer places until things calm down, and each story is filled with all the positives and negatives of making such a move in the midst of a crisis. One such story is that of the Principal of the Nazarene Bible College in Haiti, Pierre Ernst Jacques, and his wife, Tayler, who was expecting twins. They left Haiti and ended up in Eastern Kentucky, USA, where Tayler had been raised. Unfortunately, they lost the twins.

Due to visa status issues, they have been delayed in getting back to Haiti, but the timing in the USA has been blessed with a long-awaited dream fulfilled: ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. This ordination was quite unique; Jacques recounts: “No General Superintendent has been able to physically be in Haiti since 2018 due to Covid and safety due to all the political unrest. This made it impossible for ordinations to take place.” “I was looking for opportunities, wherever there was an ordination nearby, that I could go to and be ordained remotely.” The district superintendent of Eastern Kentucky, Rev. Doug Wyatt, heard of this and set about trying to make this happen during their upcoming district assembly.

The process, while a little ‘out of the ordinary,’ was completed by the collaborative work of Pierre’s home district in Haiti, the Mesoamerica Region, its regional director, Dr. Saenz, and the efforts of jurisdictional general superintendents for Mesoamerica, Dr. Sarmiento, and the East Central USA region, Dr. Chambo. On 11 June 2024, after six years of waiting, Pierre was ordained an elder in the Church of the Nazarene remotely during the Eastern Kentucky district assembly. His church family back in Haiti was able to watch and follow the service online.



“I know God has his purpose because we are his children,” Pierre said. “We don’t know the future, but we know that God can make something beautiful out of ashes. We didn’t know what it would be. But I feel like the ordination might be one of those things.”

The situation in Haiti continues to be dire. There are some 800 Churches of the Nazarene in Haiti that still gather for worship, though we know of at least 27 that have been shut down due to the unrest. Many still gather for worship but at great risk.

The Nazarene Theological Seminary in Haiti is still functioning, though primarily online. Many students are working on the completion of their ordination courses of study on their cell phones. Creative solutions must be sought, experimented with, and perfected to ensure quality of preparation, even in times of upheaval. Students hope to return to in-person classes in the coming months.

The campus has become a place of refuge for the displaced who have no safe place to go. In all that this story represents, God demonstrates His love to His children in the midst of cruel and unhappy times. Continued prayer is called for in this situation, and only the Prince of Peace can make the needed difference in Haiti.

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### Could You Serve?

Is God calling you to serve in the Mesoamerica Region?

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