



Summer 2023

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FLIGHTLINE

A PUBLICATION OF AGAPE FLIGHTS

Delivering LOVE & HOPE to the nations of the Caribbean



"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." –Jeremiah 29:11

If reality TV and TikTok videos have taught us anything, it's the capability of humans to endure all sorts of short-term hardships for as long as the camera is rolling. People can live weeks without food, days without water, and even several minutes without air – and they do it with alarming frequency when someone is filming.

Sadly, just a few hours' flight from our headquarters in Florida, being without is no short-term camera stunt. For millions of people on the island of Hispaniola – home to Haiti and the Dominican Republic – it's daily life. Seeing your child crying from hunger or wondering if the drinking water will sicken your family are daily events. Things have been that way as long as anyone can remember.

Earlier this summer, a group of Agape staff and volunteers served alongside one of our affiliate missionaries in the Dominican Republic, Project Mañana International. They saw the generational poverty that gripped entire communities. Paradoxically, though, children everywhere laughed and smiled and played. They have as much potential as the kids on your street or in your family

– but will they have a chance to make a better life for themselves and their children someday?

On a human scale, no person or organization can change all of Haiti or all the Dominican Republic. Though nothing is impossible with God, it's unlikely one of any one thing can alter the future of so many people living in such need. But what about lots of anythings – and what if those anythings are praying, giving, and serving people, called by God and powered by the Holy Spirit?

When the prophet proclaimed the words of Jeremiah 29:11, they weren't exactly the quick fix we often portray them today. Jeremiah told the Jewish people they'd be in Babylon for at least 70 years before the prosperity, hope, and future took shape. Understandably, not everyone embraced the notion of waiting seven decades.

In today's Haiti and D.R., quick fixes are just as hard to find. In some places, things are as bad as they've ever been. But a hot meal, safe water, and a solid education are excellent steps toward a hopeful future, even if prosperity seems decades away. ❤️



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FROM THE CEO

AN ENDURING COMMITMENT

My recent travels have taken me from Cuba to the Bahamas, with several stops in the Dominican Republic in between.

In the D.R., I was with the Venice High School baseball team and their coach, Craig Faulkner – an Agape Flights board member. I serve as the team's character coach, and I **could not have been more proud of the young people on this trip.**

They played double-headers with Dominican teams all week, in the blazing sun. It was great to see young men interact over what they have in common (baseball), rather than focus on the language and cultural barriers that might separate them. Every evening, **I had the opportunity to share the gospel with both teams.** One night, I had the great privilege of speaking at a local church's Noche de Caballeros ("Men's Night"). Thanks to our friends at **SCORE International** for coordinating this great week of ministry.

Elsewhere in this Flightline, you'll read about the rest of my time in the D.R. and an incredible day of worship in the Bahamas. **But it's something that happened in Cuba that I want to share now.**

I've been to Cuba more times than I can count, but **this was the first time I saw people looking for food in trash dumpsters. It seems like everyone is hungry.** I remember one elderly gentleman at the dumpster with all his possessions in an old shopping cart. We were able to make sure he had plenty of real food to eat – not just that day, but for the rest of the week. And during our time on the island, we were able to help get food to hundreds of families in serious need. **"It's just a band-aid," I told our team. "But we'll be back."**

We'll be back. Those three words represent Agape Flights' enduring commitment to every mission partner we serve. Considering the political turmoil, natural disasters, and the other uncertainties that come with serving developing island nations, we don't make that commitment lightly.

We'll be back. You are an essential part of helping us keep that commitment: your prayers, your service, your monthly donations. You help provide a vital connection, a dependable lifeline, a light in the darkness for our mission partners and the people they serve.

As you read through the pages of this Flightline, remember that **we couldn't do this without your help.** Thank you for helping us make – and keep – our promise.

A handwritten signature of Allen T. Speer in black ink.

FROM THE MISSION FIELD



DINNER IS SERVED IN THE NEW KID FEED COOK HOUSE

Mission Partners Nick and Hertha Troutt are passionate about their growing prison ministry and other major projects, but there's nothing closer to their hearts than improving the quality of life in the impoverished village of Sou Wòch, Haiti. That's why they were thrilled to oversee the first meal served at the new Kid Feed Cook House, their labor of love built through the Haiti Mason Project. Hundreds of children and their families will benefit from the new facility – and Agape Flights was honored to help deliver much of the equipment needed to operate the new kitchen. The inaugural menu included rice, beans, and marinated chicken that Nick described as “fall-off-the-bone-tender.” The Troutts have been feeding children in their old facility since 2020.



INNOVATIVE CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES AT LA CASA GRANDE

Longtime missionary to the Dominican Republic Tim Johnson, left, listens as his son, Darren, center, explains La Casa Grande Mission's latest construction project to Agape Flights' Allen Speer. A trained welder by vocation, Darren is demonstrating how reinforced Styrofoam makes great construction material in this soon-to-be apartment for transient missionaries. Darren once built a rocket that flew so high it got the attention of U.S. and Dominican military authorities. He's also built nearly 3-dozen churches and almost as many schools. “I'm so glad he started building churches,” his dad, Tim, told us, “Because that meant he stopped building rockets.”



THE 'CASE' OF THE COLORFUL CONTRIBUTION

Thanks to the secret seamstress who donated 45 pillowcase dresses recently. We were delighted to deliver them for our friends Michel and Louise Charbonneau at Haiti Ministries in Port-au-Prince. As you can see here, the colorful dresses brought instant smiles to the girls who wore them – and probably to anyone who has seen them since!

ON THE ROAD AGAIN, SAVING LIVES

When the community of Cayes, Haiti, began a much-needed emergency medical transport service, they knew one of their most needy ‘patients’ would be their aging ambulance. “Very seldom we can find parts for this vehicle here,” said Medic Transport's Yvens Forges. “You guys stand on our side; we thank you for every single thing that you bring for us down here. We also want to thank you on behalf of every single person we transport.”



PROJECT MAÑANA'S BRIAN BERMAN: CHANGING THE WORLD ONE TOMORROW AT A TIME



Brian Berman needed a miracle. Profoundly moved by his mother's death and inspired by her life of serving children, he left a thriving southern California career for missionary life in the Dominican Republic.

Miles from home in a Latin American country, he didn't speak Spanish. There was so much to do – hungry children to feed, schools to build, the gospel to be shared – but speaking through translators slowed everything. Even more troubling, it prevented the heart connection Berman so earnestly sought with the Dominican people.

One night, six weeks into life in the D.R., Brian Berman dropped to his knees and begged God to help. How could he minister to the Dominican people when he couldn't even speak their language?

"My tears became sobs," he would later write. "I ugly cried as I poured my heart out to God."

That night, through prayers and tears, Brian Berman asked God for a sign that he was truly called to serve the Dominican people.

The next day, Brian Berman awoke speaking Spanish – fluently. He'd asked for a sign – and he received a miracle.

Fifteen years later, Brian Berman and his Dominican wife, Nebraska (whom he married in 2009) oversee Project Mañana International (PMI), a growing ministry impacting thousands of Dominicans in life-changing ways. "Education is the only way to break the cycle of generational poverty," Berman recently told a group of visitors to the first PMI school. "But when we got here, we found starving kids and families with no resources to buy food."

Today, 360 children have a hot meal five days a week through PMI's Nutrition Project. And PMI's Education Project provides a private education through its school – rated #1 in the region for several years.

In a nation with the highest teen pregnancy rate in Latin America, PMI's Princess Project helps girls learn personal development and self-esteem through mentorship classes. A highlight of the project is a quinceañera celebration (15th birthday) where Project Mañana provides a beautiful dress and accessories, hair and makeup, and a family party.

PMI's Clean Water Project provides families with access to safe drinking water through in-home filtration systems, with a gospel message at the time of delivery. PMI's Prison Project (known as the Institute for Authentic Manhood/Womanhood) is the only evangelical ministry certified to operate in the nation's penitentiaries. Ten thousand inmates have graduated from the program in the past 12 years.

At the heart of everything is PMI's Timothy Project, sharing the gospel and discipling new believers touched by every PMI outreach.

Brian Berman knows he can't change the world, but through PMI's six projects, he hopes to change as many lives as possible. Today he's praying for the money to complete some key building projects, including a church, new classrooms, and a home for the local pastor. He's also praying for churches, individuals, and organizations to come and work alongside his team in the D.R.

"Our tagline – 'Working Together for an Eternal Tomorrow' – is what we want Project Mañana to be," Berman says, "a place where people of all ages, all stages of life, all stages of faith, all gifts and talents, can work together."

To find out more about Project Mañana or to contact Brian Berman, please visit ProjectManana.com



Brian Berman's quest to invest in people began at a memorial service for his mother, Ingrid Berman, a beloved schoolteacher who died from leukemia in 2003. She was 52, just eight years older than her son will turn this year. As he listened to Ingrid's former students speak about how profoundly she had impacted their lives, Brian Berman felt a call to step outside himself and serve others. Now, two decades later, he credits his mother's guidance for making that transition possible.

"She was our spiritual rock," he says, "always driving us back to the Bible, back to our relationship with Jesus."

AGAPE FLIGHTS MISSION TRIP 2023

For one week in June, a team of ten Agape Flights staff and volunteers served in the Dominican Republic alongside mission partner Project Mañana International. The group joined with locals in helping demolish an old building to make room for a pastor's home. They also taught VBS classes and helped deliver filters to families who had no access to safe drinking water.



Scan the code to see more images.



PRAISE AND PRAYERS



Something to Smile About: Congratulations to our cargo volunteer Paul Feit, who is now flying as a first officer on our twin turbine Cessna F406. An accomplished private pilot, Paul came to us as a member of the Friday volunteer cargo team with no intention of flying for Agape. Besides, he already had a fulltime job – as a dentist! After a while though, it became apparent that God had brought Paul to Agape Flights knowing he'd eventually sit in the right seat. Like all our volunteer pilots, Paul has a heart to serve and does so with excellence.



Happily Ever After: Join us in wishing the very best to our volunteer coordinator and front desk receptionist, Shae, following her recent marriage to George Amatore. Shae and George tied the knot over Memorial Day weekend in a sweet beachfront ceremony not far from Agape Flights headquarters. George is an IT professional originally from New England. In his spare time, he enjoys volunteering at Agape Flights!



Welcome Aboard, Rick! Help us welcome Rick Kelly, the newest member of the Agape Flights team. When we prayed for just the right pilot/mechanic to join our flight operations department, it turns out he was literally on the other side of the world. After most recently working for a regional airline on Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, Rick is happy to be close to his roots in Georgia. Rick and his wife, Jennifer, arrived in Florida just in time for the July 4 holiday.

Happy Birthday, 'Mother Zion'

Ebenezer Baptist Church on Sweeting's Cay, Bahamas, was overflowing with joy on the 111th anniversary of its founding. Sunday, June 11, also marked the rededication of the newly rebuilt church and the mission house, both of which had been nearly destroyed by Category 5 Hurricane Dorian in 2019.

Agape Flights teamed up with Sarasota-based Hope Fleet, as well as several friends of our ministry, to help rebuild what the locals call "Mother Zion Baptist."

PGT Windows and Doors provided windows, doors, and installation. Sunshine Electrical Services provided all the wiring and electrical services, including installation, and Tri County Air Conditioning donated and installed the air conditioning. These were not your ordinary service calls!



Ride with Agape
CEO Allen Speer
and Hope Fleet's
Danny Moroney on
a fast boat to church
on Sweeting's Cay.



GIVING UPDATE

AVOID TRANSACTION FEES AND DONATE ONLINE FROM YOUR CHECKING ACCOUNT

As part of our ongoing stewardship process, the Agape Flights team routinely seeks ways to save money on everything from jet fuel to postage stamps. This article outlines one way you can work with us to save on bank card processing fees when you donate.

It's hard to beat the convenience of making an online payment or donation with a credit card or debit card. No check to write, no envelope to address, no stamp to buy. But that convenience isn't free. Banks and credit card companies charge a small processing fee for each transaction, typically around 3%. Many of you kindly pay those fees when you give online.

Now there's a super-easy way you can donate to Agape Flights online using your checking account and avoid credit card fees entirely. It's called an ACH transaction and it's just as easy as using a credit card. ACH stands for Automated Clearing House – a network that connects banks and businesses. Chances are you're using the ACH system already; Direct Deposit and online bill-pay rely on the ACH network. If you signed up to have your mortgage or insurance payment deducted from your checking account each month, that is likely an ACH transaction.

Using the ACH network is easy. Rather than writing a paper check and presenting it for payment, you use your bank's routing number and your account number on a company's website or your banking app. In the case of donating to the ministry of Agape Flights, you can complete the entire process quickly on our secure website. And, just like when you make a credit card gift, your data is encrypted to keep it safe. The bottom line on using ACH to donate online is this: Instead of typing in your credit card number, you enter the routing number and account number from the bottom of your check. Otherwise, it looks and feels just like using a credit card. And it's safe, secure, and easy.

Thank you for supporting the mission and calling of Agape Flights. We're delighted to offer this new option for online donations, but we joyfully welcome your donation through whatever giving method makes you most comfortable.

To donate today, please visit [AgapeFlights.com/Donate](https://www.agapeflights.com/Donate). If you're enrolled in our automatic monthly giving program and would like to change from credit card to ACH, just give us a call at 941-488-0990.

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CHRISTIAN LIGHT SCHOOL: CONGRATULATIONS 2023 GRADUATES!



Congratulations to the Class of 2023 at Christian Light School in Port-au-Price, Haiti. Christian Light founder Sherrie Fausey, front row, center, exhorted the future leaders to "Go and DO BETTER for a BETTER HAITI!"

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