



MINUTE FOR MISSION

June 1, 2008

Serving the Homeless in Mauritius



Doug Tilton

Members of St. Jean's Presbyterian Church prepare a Saturday evening meal for scores of people, many of whom are living on the streets of Port Louis.

About two-thirds the size of Rhode Island, the tropical island of Mauritius lies 800 miles east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. Mauritius consistently ranks as one of Africa's most prosperous and egalitarian nations. Fewer than 10 percent of its 1.2 million people live below the poverty line—compared with 12 percent in the United States. However, recent trade liberalizations have created new challenges for the island's two main productive industries, sugar and textiles, and have led to rising inflation and unemployment. Mauritius' natural beauty has made it a popular tourist destination, prompting rapid growth in the hospitality industry. Geographically, it is ideally placed for customer call centers that service North America, Europe, and Asia. These new industries operate seven days a week, making it difficult for many employees to attend traditional Sunday church services. The Presbyterian



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Church of Mauritius has responded by establishing house churches that provide new opportunities for worship and fellowship in a changing society.

Despite Mauritius' relative affluence, the capital city of Port Louis is beset by many of the same problems as any urban area. People flock to the city from outlying areas in search of employment and economic opportunity, but some encounter only hardship and homelessness. St. Jean's Presbyterian Church, one of five Presbyterian congregations on the island, provides a hot meal each week for scores of homeless and undernourished people in the capital. Several nights of the week young people in the congregation visit many of the places where homeless people sleep, where they share food and friendship. These acts of love and compassion are leading the church into a more inclusive and holistic ministry.

Prayer: O God of boundless creativity who makes all things new, enable us to be co-creators with you. Give us the vision to see hope in change and the courage to make that hope real in the lives of all your people. We ask this in the name of the One who died that we might live. Amen.

Doug Tilton
Regional Liaison for Southern Africa

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For more information on the Witness Season mission education emphasis contact Billie Healy, Associate for Mission Education Resources (888) 728-7228, ext. 5689, or Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org.

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