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Evolving Thinking

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Dear Ministry Partners,

As strange as it may sound, it is becoming clear that we're having as much long-term impact on Villa Road Baptist Church while filling in for the Harmons in Kingston as we did when on site in Mandeville. Pastor Karl calls us every week, or so, just for fellowship and to give us a brief update on the work giving me the opportunity to do a little informal ministerial coaching.

Most encouraging is that it seems that each time he calls he has a story to tell about having made application of the counsel he has been receiving. He does so as if he has simply been moved to do so without influence from us, but we are totally satisfied with the result whether, or not, Karl acknowledges our part in it.

The attendance numbers haven't changed much yet, but the demographic of the church is changing because Pastor Karl is now consciously attempting to accommodate children and seeking out adults, not who can help him, but in whose lives he can invest. In other words, he is teaching the church, by his example, to minister to, rather than to use, people. That evolution in his thinking really is a big deal and somewhat unique in Jamaica.

I shared with Karl before we hung up this morning (Saturday) that there is virtually never a time when I talk to God, even as I go about my daily business, when I don't ask the Lord to give him the wisdom necessary to lead the church and success for his efforts.

We ask that you would join us in praying specifically that way yourselves. We would also ask that you pray that God would use us during this brief window of time we're spending with the Baptist Church at Trenchtown. It is our goal to encourage the people to give themselves to ministering alongside the Harmons, that is, to really take ownership of the responsibility to reach their community and to educate themselves in God's Word rather than depending on the missionary to do it all for them.

Their doing so would, of course, represent a monumental challenge given the degree of violence all around them and the hostility toward any message that calls the local corruption out for what it is. It is a challenge they must embrace if they are ever to be the testimony they need to be because the Gospel is never effective where responding to it is not provoked by sin being confronted and exposed. There is simply nothing to be saved from if sin has no consequences.

Thank you for praying with us that God will give Pastor Karl the wisdom and the support of his congregation to build a consistently growing, fruitful, maturing, and influential church in Mandeville and that God would use us to motivate the folks in Trenchtown to raise their level of commitment to the work to that of the missionaries who have already invested so much in them.

John & Tammy Cooley, Jamaica