

Future Ambulance for Higgins Brothers Surgicenter for Hope



BY TED HIGGINS, MD

International medical work is a family legacy. My father and uncle were both surgeons, and both served four years in World War II as physicians. So perhaps it's not surprising that I spent three months of my general surgery rotation in DesChapelles, Haiti. The way that Haiti would touch my heart and others, however, has been a beautiful surprise.

My first surprise was the lack of surgical access I witnessed in Haiti during my residency. Many patients traveled for days for merely a consultation. The second surprise was how life-changing that trip was for me: starting as annual trips through my church to Haiti's neighbor on Hispaniola, the Dominican Republic, and then later to Haiti. The third surprise is the generous and ongoing response of my church, Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas, and of Presbyterian Women.

After decades of operating in borrowed clinics or wherever I could help in Haiti, the need for additional permanent surgical capacity became apparent. In 2015, the construction began on Higgins Brothers Surgicenter for Hope—named in honor of my father and uncle. The dedication and official opening of the Surgicenter in Fond Parisien (a rural region near the Haitian-Dominican border) was in December 2016.

The Surgicenter was designed to initially provide opportunities for surgical mission teams to serve. Later surgical colleagues and I teamed with surgical residents from the General Hospital in Port Au Prince. During quarterly visits to Haiti, we began a teaching program

whereby Haitian chief surgical residents and operating room nurses worked directly with our U.S. mission surgeons and operating room teams.

Since then, the facility has expanded to cover trauma and emergency surgery, as well as general, vascular, obstetric, gynecological, urological and dental surgeries. A medical staff of 72 doctors, nurses, technicians and employees now manage and operate the facility.

Village Presbyterian Church, including Presbyterian Women there, has consistently supported the mission of offering surgical and medical support in Haiti from the initial efforts. Receiving additional support from Presbyterian Women through the 2024 Thank Offering also means a great deal. That grant enabled us to purchase an ambulance to transport rural patients to the Surgicenter for life-saving emergency care, and to safely move stabilized patients to major medical centers. Additionally, the ambulance enables medical practitioners to visit distant villages where they can treat children, pregnant women and people with chronic conditions or acute illnesses.



courtesy of Higgins Brothers Surgicenter for Hope

Currently, the main roads in Haiti around the area of Port Au Prince are controlled by gangs. We are storing the vehicle until the roads hopefully become safe for travel, and look forward to dedicating this vehicle to Presbyterian Women.

In 2024, we became the only medical facility in our region of Haiti providing 24/7 surgical and medical care. Even with the main road closed to Port Au Prince we performed 456 surgeries, provided 12,582 clinical visits, saw more than 2,300 ER/ trauma and 1,000 dental visits. We delivered 493 babies and handled 1,634 HIV patient visits. Many patients crossed the mountains on foot to receive care from us, and avoid the gangs. We continue to see roughly 1300 patients monthly in our clinics! The dedicated medical staff and employees at Higgins Brothers Surgicenter are committed to ensuring the best care possible.

Ted Higgins, MD, FACS, is founder of Higgins Brothers Surgicenter for Hope in Fonds Parisien, Haiti.