

Pastor Visits from Haiti

Rev. Thomas Bernard depicts reality of
homeland, has Indiana connections

By Amanda Wray & Richard Gootee



After a Sunday baptism, four
men kidnapped the Rev. Thomas
Bernard.

They took Bernard into his own
neighborhood. He knew they were
headed to a place where kidnapers
killed their accused of working for the
government. Bernard explained he was
a pastor, not a government worker.

“I’m just a pastor, a humble
teacher,” Bernard said to his kidnapers.

Minutes later he was free, a case
of mistaken identity.

On September 11, Bernard came
to Franklin and spoke about experiences
such as his own kidnapping and general
life in Haiti. He talked about how the
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and
School, which he is pastor of, in the
capital city of Port-au-Prince is bettering
lives there.

With a population of eight
million people, Bernard said Haiti is the
third poorest country in the world.
Eighty percent of the population in Haiti
is unemployed, causing it’s inhabitants
to live in poverty like conditions.

Some Haitians live without
electricity, running water, floors in

houses, windows, garbage services, cars
or air conditioning.

“If you visited Haiti (and saw the
conditions), you would cry” Bernard
said.

Children in Haiti also lack
another opportunity – education.

Bernard said parents are too poor
to pay for schooling, so their children
stand on the streets, begging for bread
and water. He also said only 50 percent
of children make it past their fourth
birthdays.

Bernard said that they put great
emphasis on children becoming self-
sufficient. He said that without
education available for its children, there
is no possibility for Haiti to remain a
nation. He said that most students
cannot afford the \$200 yearly tuition, but
the school still accepts children to teach
them the gospel. Tuition pays for books,
uniforms, some food and money to pay
the teachers.



Senior Jennifer Redicker
introduced Bernard. Redicker and her
family met Bernard five years ago
through her church in Vallonia in
Jackson County. Their pastor was
adopting two children from Haiti, and
Bernard baptized the children.

Redicker's parents, Ray and Jeannie Redicker also attended the lecture. They said Bernard impresses them because of his dedication to his homeland.

"Even with all his despair and poverty, he is very joyful for the blessing that he has." Jeannie Redicker said.

Bernard said Haiti needs him to stay in the country to help the country progress.

"No matter how the situation is I am bound to be in Haiti, Bernard said.

Bernard has additional ties to Indiana. He graduated from the Concordia Seminary in Fort Wayne in 1988.

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Photo by Lex Roach