



**THE REVERENDS** — The Revs. Herb Codington of Bethany Presbyterian in Clinton and the Rev. Herve Pierre of Haiti listen in as the Rev. Moise Sam, Dominican Republic, speaks with the Rev. George Mahida, counselor with AMI Kids, formerly Piedmont Wilderness. The pastors from the Caribbean island of Hispaniola will be workshop leaders in a Linking for Ministry conference, which gives tools to small membership churches who desire to work together for ministry, held on the campus of Thornwell Home for Children.

## Conference to show what clusters of small churches can accomplish

By Judith Brown  
Staff Writer

Almost two dozen pastors from the region, along with officials with Mission Possible, an agency which has worked for many years in Haiti and Dominican Republic, were on hand to hear stories of the widespread effects of the devastating earthquake in Haiti earlier this year.

But the pastors from the Caribbean island of Hispaniola are also in Clinton this week to present workshops regarding their experiences of partnering cross-culturally, which is one of several workshops being presented by church and mission leaders from across the country at a national level conference being held in Clinton.

Scheduled to begin Wednesday night in Thornwell Dining Hall, the Linking for Ministry Conference is hosted by the Laurens County Cluster of Smaller Membership Churches, according to Bethany Presbyterian Church member Ann Felton, one of the organizers of the event.

"We decided to host it because we were having requests to go all over the state and elsewhere to share with other groups how to do this," Felton said, referring to the networking for mission opportunities regularly done by the long-standing cluster of churches in the greater Laurens County area. Bethany's pastor, Rev. Herb Codington, one of the early organizers of the cluster, has made

recent trips at the request of churches and groups in Massachusetts, North Dakota and North Carolina, in addition to numerous trips that cluster members have made within the region.

"It was going to be just a conference for this Presbytery," Felton said, referring to the upstate western region of PCUSA Churches. "But it's now become this much larger event, with more than 40 registrants who are outside the Presbytery, and a couple of hundred who are closer."

The Thornwell campus was willing to provide housing for some of the speakers. The Hartness-Thornwell Presbyterian Church will provide space for the plenary sessions and workshops.

As to the need for clustering and the draw of the conference, Felton said, there are many small churches that don't think they can accomplish much, and the LC Cluster has demonstrated that real mission

work and ministry can be accomplished by the churches linking together for specific ministries.

The cluster has partnered for numerous mission trips to Haiti and the D.R., an annual service-oriented youth camp, Operation Inasmuch, and a massive one-day clean-up alongside churches of many denominations in the Lydia community last year. Other ministry opportunities occur all year long.

"There are a lot of other clusters out there but they tend to be only for fellowship," Felton said. "We've got almost 20 years of history doing this, so a lot of churches have been asking us how."

The conference will be held from Wednesday evening through noon on Friday, and anyone interested in participating in all or part may come by the registration table in the foyer of the Hartness-Thornwell Presbyterian Church on Thornwell's campus.

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