

Esther – The lady in the last pew



Esther was born in Haiti. She married Leonel (Lee) Dieujuste in 1990. Esther studied business administration and for seven years worked at a school that her Uncle Claudy Massenat and her brother Edris Massenat founded in Haiti. In 1998 she moved from Haiti to the United States. Lee went to school in Boston so that is where they settled. It was a terrifying time for Esther, leaving her family and friends and moving to a new country with new culture... where she knew no one.

In 1999 Esther gave birth to her daughter, Hadassah Syntyche Dieujuste. She was born with a heart defect, complicated by heart valve damage during surgery. Esther was determined to provide the very best care and home schooling. She is proud that her daughter was able to have a happy, fulfilling life as a young child.

Lee studied photography at the New England School of Photography in Boston Massachusetts. He attended Burdett College also in Boston Massachusetts and graduated with a degree in fashion design and merchandising. But Lee says his spirituality has always

been his strongest attribute. Lee had been studying the Bible since he was twelve years old.

While living in Boston, Lee had a dream that God had a mission for him, directing Lee to spread the teachings of the Bible and to make a difference in the lives of others. Lee believed he could make a greater impact in South Florida, so he and Esther moved first to Homestead, and then shortly after that to Tavernier. More about Lee's dream later.

Burton Memorial United Methodist Church was walking distance from where the Dieujustes lived, so Esther began attending church services with her daughter every Sunday. They had only been in Tavernier a few months in 2009 when tragedy struck. Esther and Lee awoke one night to the sound of their 9 year old daughter struggling to breathe. That night they lost their beautiful little girl. They were given a ride home from the emergency room by a woman concerned that they would need support. She asked if they had family or friends nearby that she could contact for them. They had none. "How about someone from church?" Esther explained that she had been attending the Methodist Church but she really didn't know anyone. She always sat in the last pew and hadn't made friends there yet.

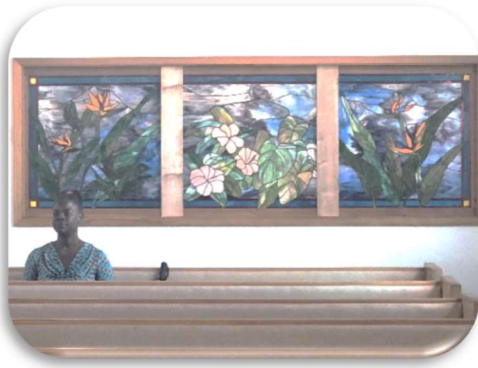
Within hours, the members of the church began showing up, providing the love and support that made the grieving just a little easier. For several months, church members regularly brought food, prayers and spent time with the Dieujustes. ... virtual strangers.

Growing up in Haiti, Esther's brother Edris was the most influential person in her life. When she was just a child, he told her repeatedly "you reap what you sow... your blessings will be based on the blessings you provide to others." And now Esther knew exactly what he meant. She had been blessed to have total strangers help her through the worst time of her life. She had been taught the benefits of true Christianity.

In January 2010, Haiti was devastated by a massive earthquake. She had experienced Christianity at its best at Burton Memorial. Esther knew she had reaped such crucial blessings and now it was her turn to sow!

The Marc Thrift Shop had a special sale every Saturday - Esther took \$5 she saved and was able to select any ten items of clothing. She walked 2 miles each way every week so she could accumulate clothes to send to the unfortunate in Haiti. One Saturday a church member saw her lugging bags of clothes home and stopped to offer a ride. When he learned what she was doing, he contributed \$40 a month to her cause. And this was just the beginning of her efforts for **Saints in Practice Ministry**.

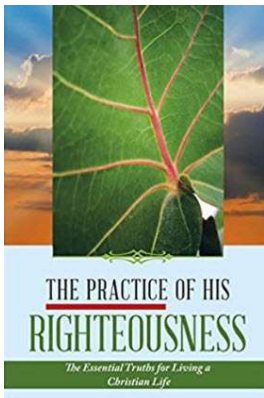




Lee got a job cooking at Cheeca and the Dieujustes moved to Islamorada. Esther walked down the Old Highway from their new home to see where it was that Lee went by bicycle to work each day. She noticed the church right near the entrance to Cheeca. The next morning, she attended the 11 a.m. church service at Matecumbe United Methodist Church for the first time – sitting in the last pew.

Esther soon learned that while she could no longer walk to the Marc Thrift Shop on Saturdays, she could walk to the Baptist Church on Tuesdays where they would allow her to take some of their excess clothes for her Haitian mission, free of charge. Soon she got to know the people of the Matecumbe United Methodist Church and they often contributed to her **Saints in Practice Ministry**. The Dieujustes rent a shipping container that is stored in Homestead and collect clothes and other needed items. Once filled completely, it is shipped to Haiti and they rent another one to continue their mission.

When Hurricane Irma hit the Keys in 2017, Esther and Lee did not evacuate. They stayed in their home. They worried about the people that stayed in the nearby mobile homes and a homeless man who lived in the woods nearby. Those folks lost everything. Esther walked down to the Baptist Church to see if she could get them some clothes. The pantry ministry there was closed... no one back to help yet after the storm. But they unlocked the church so she could get some clothes for her neighbors. Before she knew it, she was helping locals in need, distributing clothes every Tuesday at the Baptist Church....sowing more of her blessings. Everyone at the Matecumbe United Methodist Church loves to see Esther, all dressed up and beautiful, sitting in that back pew on Sundays.



Now, back to Leonel: Lee dreamed that God had a plan for him to write stories of the good that people can do if they follow the lessons taught in the Bible. After meeting with five different total strangers and listening to their struggles, Lee wrote personalized booklets for each one, often 30 – 50 pages long, explaining how, through the Bible, they could find peace and a better life. This approach seemed to work as the people loved the booklets and thought they should be shared.



Encouraged that he was fulfilling God's plan that he dreamed back in Boston, Lee went on to write a complete book "[The Practice of His Righteousness](#)" describing how we can use the Bible to discover how to achieve a prosperous, fulfilling Christian life. Lee wrote the messages much like those in his five personalized booklets, and Esther often helped him by documenting the passages in the Bible where the lessons were first taught. The book is available at Amazon.



When they came to Florida back in 2008, Lee was interested in culinary arts. Working alongside many fantastic chefs, in more than five restaurants, working his way up over the next ten years. He became a Certified Food Service Manager, earning great respect in the kitchen and obtaining the title as a chef. When Esther and Lee moved to Islamorada, Lee worked at Cheeca, until the resort was closed after suffering significant damage from Hurricane Irma. Now Lee cooks for the Children's Shelter and the Crystal Health and Rehab Center on Plantation Key. This twosome of Esther and Lee certainly share a spirit of compassion and generosity in all they do. Now Esther's mother is living with them ... one exceptional family.

Both are truly dedicated to helping Haiti through the **Saints in Practice Ministry**. [Click here](#) if you'd like to see a video demonstrating what their efforts are accomplishing in Haiti.