

Haiti Emergency:

Thursday, 14 January 2010

A 7.0-magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti at approximately 4:53 p.m. EST Jan. 12, left the Caribbean nation in shambles and rescuers scrambling to save lives. The death toll could reach hundreds of thousands. Gifts to support UMCOR's Haiti Relief efforts can be made to Haiti Emergency, UMCOR Advance #418325. Checks can be made to UMCOR with Advance #418325 Put "Haiti Emergency" in the memo line. Checks can be put in the church's offering plate or mailed to UMCOR, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087. One hundred percent of gifts made to this advance will go to help the people of Haiti.

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Your apportionment giving at work – in Haiti

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Your United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) posted the following on the Internet Jan. 12, the day the earthquake hit:

"UMCOR is assessing the needs and respond. UMCOR asks for prayers for all who are affected by the disaster. Support for relief efforts can be made to Haiti Emergency, UMCOR Advance # 418325." (General Board of Global Ministries, "The United Methodist Church," 475 Riverside Drive - New York, New York 10115)

The wonderful thing is, according to Conference Secretary Tim Rogers, church members pay their apportionments each year so that when a disaster such as this strikes, the administration is in place and can have messages out about where to give the very day of the earthquake; thus a hundred percent of the money given to UMCOR Advance 418325 goes directly for hands-on mission work.

The United Methodist relief agency, UMCOR, is also making plans to send resources and funding to Haiti. "UMCOR has always had a strong presence in Haiti," said Rev. Tom Hazelwood, an UMCOR executive. "With this tragedy, we'll just be redoubling our efforts, and we'll be calling on people across the country to help us." UMCOR is channeling its resources to respond effectively to the people most in need.

Volunteers from at least six different United Methodist annual (regional) conferences are in Haiti on mission trips. An email from two Kansas East volunteers reports they are safe in the guest house and, "We have a bunch of refugees in the front had have been giving first aid to those who were hurt, but we cannot get them anywhere at this time. There will be many deaths but it happened right before dark so rescue efforts are hampered. Some phone service and no police or UN radios working."

Volunteers in Mission (VIM) executive, Clint Rabb, consultant, Jim Gulley and Sam Dixon, the top executive for UMCOR are in Haiti. Says UMCOR executive, Tom Hazelwood, "We have conflicting reports that say they were in a car on the way to the airport and another that they were in the Montana Hotel. We don't have any absolute confirmation at this time and have not heard from them, but will be sure to communicate any news. Please continue praying."

Wade McQuinn of Union UMC, Columbia, reports that the orphanage he and his wife founded, Haiti Children Project, is about 140 miles west of the epicenter and in good shape.

S.C. UMC's contact working in the circuit of Jérémie, the Rev. John Dorcely, is OK. The Methodist guest house is reported to be standing where the UM superintendent, the Rev. Gesner Paul, is also believed to be well.

Dr. Hal Crosswell, his wife and five others were scheduled to fly out of Charlotte the morning after the earthquake hit. Three teams from Bethany UMC in Summerville were also going to build facilities. Of course, all flights to Haiti were cancelled, although officials had opened an emergency air strip for relief efforts before the end of Jan. 13. Wiped-out infrastructure is slowing relief efforts, Crosswell said, and would keep them from reaching Jérémie if they went.

The Crosswell ophthalmology and dental clinic in Jérémie was to be the destination for Shandon UMC members Crosswell, a nationally recognized ophthalmologist, and his wife Kathy, an ophthalmic nurse; for two other ophthalmologists, an optician, a bio-medical engineer and another nurse. Jérémie, about 200 miles west of Port-au-Prince, was not damaged, Crosswell said. However, wiped-out infrastructure is slowing relief efforts, Crosswell said, and would keep them from reaching Jérémie if they went.

“On the best of days, these people have the most difficult of lives,” said Crosswell who began going to Haiti with UM Volunteers in Mission founder, Dr. Michael Watson of Bamberg, in 1972. This might bring that attention that’s needed there, Crosswell said.

Haiti, he said, is a small country, a third the size of South Carolina, with 9 million people and high unemployment. The country produces 43 percent of its food needs.

The Haitians “are wonderful people. They bear these things with dignity,” Crosswell told the Advocate last year. “They have a high illiteracy rate and no jobs even if they can get through school.”

There have been political upheavals and the terrorist dictatorships in the past, leaving an unstable government that has driven tourism away. People, who eat mud pies for nourishment, sometimes have threatened rebellion for food. U.N. Peacekeepers are there and being supported with additional staff during this crisis.