

Your apportionment giving at work " in Haiti

Friday, 29 January 2010

A 7.0-magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti at 4:53 p.m. EST Jan. 12, left the Caribbean nation in shambles and rescuers and disaster teams scrambling to save lives. The death toll is expected to be more than 200,000.

Your United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) filed on the Internet Jan. 12, the day the earthquake hit: "UMCOR is assessing the needs and responding. 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) You can also safely donate through the Web here.

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.

United Methodists, it is said, are among the first on the ground and the last to leave. (They are still going to the Gulf Coast, and they were in Florida years after major hurricanes there.) In the case of the Haiti earthquake, they were already there; volunteers from at least six different UM conferences and UMCOR leaders were in Haiti. In fact, at least three lost their lives while in ministry there. UMCOR executive director, the Rev. Sam Dixon of Raleigh, N.C., and New York, was found alive in the Hotel Montana rubble on the third day, but he, UMCOR staffer Clint Rabb and Jean Arnwine, a member of a Dallas UMC mission team providing eye care to Haitians, died of injuries. UMCOR is providing emergency grants to the Methodist Church in Haiti and others to provide clean drinking water, treatment for severe diarrhea, and medical attention to those in need.

First checks in from churches and individuals to the S.C. Conference treasurer's office by Jan. 20 totaled \$17,622. With 239,000 S.C. United Methodists, \$10 each could mean \$2.39 million, the Rev. Michael Henderson said.

S.C. churches are responding without being asked. For example, Goose Creek UMC has put out the word it is a drop-off site for health kits.*

The Crosswell ophthalmology and dental clinic in Jérémie was to be the destination for Shandon UMC members Dr. Hal Crosswell and five others Jan.13. Jérémie, about 200 miles west of Port-au-Prince, was not damaged, he said.

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 is safe.

S.C. UMC's contact working in the circuit of Jérémie, the Rev. John Dorcelly, is OK.

"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, in 1972. Health kits should contain:

1 hand towel (15" x 25" up to 17" x 27"); 1 washcloth; 1 comb (large and sturdy, not pocket-sized); 1 nail file or fingernail clippers (no emery boards or toenail clippers); 1 bath-size bar of soap (3 oz. and up); 1 toothbrush (single brushes only in original wrapper, No child-size brushes); 1 large tube of toothpaste (4.5 oz or larger, expiration date of 6 months or longer in advance of shipment to UMCOR); 6 adhesive plastic strip sterile bandages; Place these items inside a sealed one-gallon plastic bag and send \$1 to help with shipping. IMPORTANT: Do not include religious, political or patriotic notes or emblems in any kit.

The Conference Board of Global Ministries took action to help United Methodists in South Carolina help those in need in Haiti Jan. 16.

Its leaders are asking all United Methodists to do three things immediately:

- Pray for the people of Haiti and all who are working to help them;
- Donate for Haiti Relief through UMCOR; and
- Make and collect health kits* to be sent to Haiti.

The Rev. George Olive, Conference Disaster Response coordinator, is working with District Mission secretaries, to locate a central spot in each district to receive health kits. There, they will be taken to Columbia and shipped to UMCOR.

The Rev. Tony Rowell, UMC's chair, will be helping churches organize UMC teams later in the year when it will be possible for volunteer teams to go to Haiti. Rowell asks everyone to join in prayerful waiting in terms of serving on an

UMVIM team, and hopes churches will support teams when the go.

Susan Brooks, chair of the CBGM's Hunger Ministries Committee, urges churches to continue to take special offerings for the people of Haiti. Eighty percent of the Lenten Hungrief offering will go to Haiti this year. Board chair Michael Henderson, Olive and Rowell will continue to work on a coordinated plan to help.

Henderson encourages clergy to make use of their media contacts to promote UMCOR and work of the S.C. Conference.