

Presbytery of Boston

E-Connection

January 20, 2010

A Visible Witness of Christ

Greetings to members of the General Assembly Mission Council, Middle Governing Body executives and friends,

We have watched with horror the devastation in Haiti. Our colleagues in Presbyterian Disaster Assistance have been engaged in assessment and response by contacting partners on the ground and ecumenical partners in disaster relief since Tuesday night, January 12, immediately after the earthquake struck. We are grateful for the incredible outpouring of prayer and support shown thus far by Presbyterians toward their sisters and brothers in such great need. PDA is making a special appeal, so that we can continue to respond to the enormous needs.

In a joint statement issued by Gradye Parsons, Bruce Reyes-Chow and myself, we have called upon all Presbyterians to give, act, and pray for Haiti.

Give – Financial support for relief efforts can be made online and designated to DR000064. Gifts can also be made by phone at (800) 872-3283 weekdays between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. (EST) and checks can be mailed to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, P.O. Box 643700, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700. Your gifts, combined with those of others, provide a visible and tangible demonstration of God's care in the midst of this tragedy. Recovery will be a difficult and long process, but Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has time and time again modeled a faithful response over the long haul.

Act – Congregations and individuals can put together hygiene kits and baby kits to be distributed through Church World Service. For information, visit the PDA Web site:
<http://www.pcusa.org/pda/>

Pray – Join with others in lifting up the people of Haiti and those seeking to provide aid in this critical time.

I hope that in the wake of this tragedy, you will find great hope and inspiration in the message below from my colleague, Hunter Farrell, director of Presbyterian World Mission, who has provided an update on the safety and status of our Presbyterian mission workers and speaks of

the seeds of hope being planted in the name of Jesus Christ both in Haiti and elsewhere throughout the world. [If you would like to read Hunter Farrell's message, please contact the Presbytery of Boston and we will forward a copy to you.]

Faithfully yours,

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Linda Valetine
Executive Director

Haiti: God Is Suffering With Those Who Are Suffering

by Jim Wallis, *Sojourners* magazine

There are times when events make everything else pale in comparison. I'm in Los Angeles today on my book tour, but the news of Tuesday's 7.0-magnitude earthquake hitting Haiti is one of those times. Over the past few hours, I haven't been able to take my eyes off CNN. The tragedy in Haiti is unbelievable -- the pictures of the pain and destruction are haunting. My heart breaks for the families and the victims of this tragedy.

Information continues to develop, but what we already know staggers the imagination. Both the Haitian prime minister and the consul general to the U.N. have said that as many as 100,000 people are likely to have died. The International Red Cross estimates that one-third of Haitians -- about 3 million people -- were affected by the earthquake. The Catholic archbishop of Port-au-Prince is known to be dead, and the chief of the U.N. mission in Haiti remains missing.

In a heart-rending story, the *The New York Times* reported on the scene in Port-au-Prince:

The tiny bodies of children lay in piles next to the ruins of their collapsed school. People with faces covered by white dust and the blood of open wounds roamed the streets. Frantic doctors wrapped heads and stitched up sliced limbs in a hotel parking lot. The poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, still struggling to recover from the relentless strikes of four catastrophic storms in 2008, was a picture of heartbreaking devastation Wednesday after a magnitude-7 earthquake.

In response, the world is mobilizing. President Obama, in a statement, said:

I have directed my administration to respond with a swift, coordinated, and aggressive effort to save lives. The people of Haiti will have the full support of the United States in the urgent effort to rescue those trapped beneath the rubble, and to deliver the humanitarian relief -- the food, water and medicine -- that Haitians will need in the coming days. In that effort, our government, especially USAID and the Departments of State and Defense are working closely together and with our partners in Haiti, the region, and around the world.

The U.S. has sent Agency for International Development helicopter search-and-rescue teams, a U.S. Navy amphibious ship with medical capabilities, and is sending the USNS Comfort hospital ship. Other military and civilian aid teams are also on the way. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has canceled the remainder of her trip in Asia to return to Washington to help direct the relief efforts. Canada, European nations, and countries across Latin America have mobilized supplies and aid.

In this kind of natural disaster, it is almost always the poorest who suffer the most -- those who have the least to lose are often those who lose the most. Life is always hard for poor people -- living on the edge is insecure and full of risk. Natural disasters make it worse. Yet even in normal times, poverty is hidden and not reported by the media. In times of disaster, there continues to be little coverage of the excessive impact on the poor.

Tragic moments like this bring out the best in global citizens, as we put aside our differences and unite in support of the victims and their families. Haiti is no stranger to hardship, poverty, or sorrow. As Katrina revealed in New Orleans, this earthquake will once again unmask the unbelievable poverty that exists in countries like Haiti. Nearly 80 percent of Haiti's population lives in abject poverty. I pray that this is not simply another tragic event we see on TV as we channel surf, but I hope it reminds us of our brothers and sisters around the world and down the street, who suffer not only from tragic events -- but who suffer every day.

I also want to say a word about God and evil. Pat Robertson said that Haiti's earthquake was caused because of the country's "pact with the devil." I don't even know what he means, nor do I care. But I want to say this: My God does not cause evil. God is not a vengeful and retributive being, waiting to strike us down; instead, God is in the very midst of this tragedy, suffering with those who are suffering. When evil strikes, it's easy to ask, where is God? The answer is simple: God is suffering with those who are suffering.

Let us all keep the people of Haiti in our prayers. And let us all give what we can to help in the relief efforts.

Presbyterian Global Fellowship: 3 Opportunities to Help

Medical Benevolence Foundation

The Haiti Earthquake Medical Response Fund #503-453 will support our partners as they respond both in the immediate and long-term to the devastating January 12 earthquake. Please send checks noted for this fund to:

The Medical Benevolence Foundation
3100 S Gessner, Ste 210
Houston, TX 77063

The Medical Benevolence Foundation has great resources on their website, www.mbfoundation.org. Updates from mission partners are regularly posted.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

The immediate One Great Hour of Sharing and general designated funds are being used to help with basic humanitarian relief in providing temporary shelter, food and health assistance. Funds are also being used to provide water and sanitation engineers, and equipment to construct water purification systems. Resources for building latrines are also being provided, as the sanitation situation is critical. PDA will be supporting communities in the long struggle to rebuild from this disaster — the worst earthquake to strike Haiti in 200 years.

Download a bulletin insert and images for use in your congregation free from their website. The site also includes helpful information on how your congregation can help in addition to giving financial gifts: <http://www.pcusa.org/pda/>

The Outreach Foundation

Join with us to reach out and support the work of Haiti Outreach Ministries, The Outreach Foundation's Haiti partner. HOM is based in Port-au-Prince and works with people in several of the poorest districts, Cite Soleil, Blanchard, Repatriote and nearby Ibo Beach. Through its congregations, primary schools, feeding programs and clinics, HOM shares God's love in word and deed. Updates about the work of **HOM** are posted and will be updated regularly (<http://www.theoutreachfoundation.org/>). At some point, we cannot be sure when, HOM will be able to receive teams to assist with recovery and rebuilding.

We will channel 100% of the resources that we receive to our partner for their work in addressing the immediate and longer-term needs of those whom they are serving. Please pray for the people of Haiti. Please reach out, through The Outreach Foundation or another trusted partner, to bless the people of Haiti in Jesus' name.

Gifts through The Outreach Foundation may be marked "Haiti Earthquake" and sent to:
The Outreach Foundation
318 Seaboard Lane, Suite 205
Franklin, TN 37067.

Gifts may also be made on-line, but those gifts are subject to a 5% bank transaction fee.

Thank you for your prayers and support.

The Outreach Foundation
(800)791-5023 toll-free
info@theoutreachfoundation.org

Center for Faith-based & Neighborhood Partnerships

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your displays of compassion and generosity toward the Haitian people. If you are looking for specific ways to help during this crisis, the two most effective ways right now are through cash donations and through support in locating family members. Additionally, many Haitian Americans have lost loved ones. Reaching out to the Haitian American community in your area to offer assistance is another way to contribute during this time.

Please consider forwarding this information to your local members or congregations; however, please note that any outreach is 100% voluntary.

Locating Family Members

The State Department Operations Center has set up the following number for Americans seeking information about family members in Haiti: 1-888-407-4747.

Monetary Donations

There are relief organizations accepting contributions for this effort. For those interesting in helping immediately, simply text "HAITI" to "90999" and a donation of \$10 will be given automatically to the Red Cross to help with relief efforts, charged to your cell phone bill. Or you can go online to identify some relief organizations accepting donations for the disaster relief efforts.

You may also prefer to work with a trusted relief organization associated with your faith tradition or your community.

Monetary donations are the most effective form of assistance because they allow humanitarian organizations to purchase (often within the affected region itself) the exact type and quantity of items needed by those affected by the crisis. Read about the advantages of monetary donations.

Commodity Contributions

While monetary donations are preferred to commodity contributions, there may be rare instances when a commodity contribution would be of value to relief operations.

§ See a list of conditions which are necessary to ensure that a commodity contribution is appropriate.

§ Read about handling appropriate commodity contributions.

§ If a commodity collection has already been made, but there are problems identifying a need in the affected region for the commodities or an organization to accept them, read about some alternate ideas.

Volunteering

Volunteer opportunities in disaster settings are extremely rare, and are usually limited to people with prior disaster experience and technical skills (such as health, engineering, etc). To register your skills and experience for a possible volunteer opportunity, go to the Center for International Disaster Information's registration page. For opportunities to volunteer overseas in non-disaster settings, visit Serve.gov. Or read about Volunteers for Prosperity, a volunteer program managed by USAID.

Stay Updated

As more information becomes available on the best ways to help in Haiti going forward, we will distribute it through our listserv for faith and community-based organizations. You are welcome to sign up for our weekly email updates to receive future updates on Haiti response and US health and human services information relevant to community and faith based groups.

This email is from the HHS Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Our Center serves as a resource for faith and community based organizations and groups seeking to increase their impact in their communities; respond to public health emergencies and disasters; share public health information, and understand federal grant opportunities and programs. Since we have received many inquiries on the ongoing situation in Haiti, we wanted to use this email to provide you with the latest information on how your organizations can assist with the disaster in Haiti.

Sincerely,

Alexia Kelley

Director, Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW, Washington D.C. 20201 | (202) 358-3595 | partnerships@hhs.gov

A Call to Service: Haiti Emergency Response Event on January 26

City Mission Society is working with Church World Service to make and collect Hygiene Kits and Baby Care Kits to send the displaced families in Haiti. Join CMS volunteers to donate kit items and assemble the kits on Tuesday, January 26, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Mark Congregational Church, 200 Townsend Street, Dorchester, MA 02121-1222. All ages are welcome! Rev. Bert Marshall, NE Regional Director of Church World Service, will attend the event and give us an update on CWS' relief efforts in Haiti. Kit items can be dropped off in advance at City Mission Society or Hope Church, 85 Seaverns Avenue, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. For more information call 617-742-6830 or go to: www.cmsboston.org

Find Answers to Questions and Stay Informed

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

- Learn about the response to Haiti and find resources
- Get answers to your questions about Haiti
- What volunteers need to know

Go to: <http://www.pcusa.org/pda/>

Presbyterian News Service

- Up-to-date news on the PCUSA's response to the earthquake in Haiti

Go to: www.pcusa.org/pcnews/

Presbyterian Church (USA)

- Links for online giving, worship resources, and other help

Go to: <http://www.pcusa.org/>

Pray for Haiti

As the eyes of the world turn to Haiti, let us join our hearts in prayer:

“God of compassion, please watch over the people of Haiti, and weave out of these terrible events wonders of goodness and grace. Surround those who have been affected by tragedy with a sense of your present love, and hold them in faith. Though they are lost in grief, may they find you and be comforted; guide us as a church to find ways of providing assistance that heals wounds and gives hope. Help us to remember that when one of your children suffers we all suffer. Through Jesus Christ who was dead, but lives and rules this world with you. Amen.”

Bruce Reyes-Chow, Moderator of the 218th General Assembly (2008), Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Linda Valentine, Executive Director, General Assembly Mission Council, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)