

February 2009
Report on the Lutheran Church of Haiti
By Pastor Revenel Benoit

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, greetings to all of you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I want to begin this newsletter by saying “thank you” to all of you who have been praying for my 18 year old daughter Melissa. Melissa was vomiting blood due to a stomach virus and a severe allergy she developed to dust after the extensive flooding last September which left two feet of mud in the streets and homes all over town. She is currently in Florida receiving medical treatment, and is doing a lot better. She will return to Haiti in about a week.

Please keep Melissa, my wife Marie, and me in your prayers, because in July we’ll have to make a BIG decision on whether she should live in Haiti or the U.S. The doctor in Florida said she must leave the dusty environment of the City of Gonaives. Our plan at the moment is to have her complete the current school year in Gonaives while monitoring her health. Hopefully the allergy medicines prescribed by the doctor in Florida will keep her allergy under control, but if not, she will need to move to the U.S.

The Lutheran Church of Haiti has experienced great blessings from the Lord since the flooding last September. The Lord doesn’t see things as we do. After the flood, I and some LCH leaders thought: It is over. There is no way we can recover from all of this damage to the orphanage, the computer school, the bakery, the quarry, the concrete block making facility, the medical clinic, the home for the elderly home, the FM radio and TV ministries, etc. We agreed we should leave the City of Gonaives, which is so prone to flooding, and start over somewhere else. We didn’t know where to begin in helping to strengthen the faith of thousands of believers who felt there was no hope for them anymore. The local leaders of other Christian denominations were similarly dispirited. When a leader gets discouraged, it is very hard for him to encourage his followers.

It was not without reason that the Lord gave the Great Commission to the whole Christian Church. He knew that besides making disciples of all nations so that people get saved, that we would sometimes need to minister to one another in difficult situations, and assure our brothers and sisters that they are indeed valuable members of God’s kingdom, and that He loves them.

While we were so discouraged, the Lord rose up an army of Christians in the U.S. and Canada to strengthen our faith as well as to help us rebuild our various ministries and facilities. Between September and now, we have had five groups of people who came to Haiti to serve in various capacities - people who left their families and jobs in North America for a week or two to help us rebuild, and to encourage us and to minister to us spiritually in the midst of the mud and dust. What a caring God we serve! He will never leave us nor forsake us in the midst of trials, because the plan he has for us is about hope, joy and peace. This reminds me about Elijah’s story. He was so discouraged that he didn’t want to continue his ministry. But the Lord still had an important job for him to do. He was to face down the prophets of Baal and demonstrate to the people of Israel that there is only one God with the power to save and bless his people. All 450 prophets of Baal were slaughtered, and the people returned to the Lord. Only after this did God raise up Elisha to replace Elijah, and Elijah was then taken up into heaven alive. That is an example of why it is important to wait for the Lord’s answer to our spiritual and our physical needs in the midst of tragedy.

Five months after that severe flood, the Lutheran churches in the Gonaives area have recovered about 85% of their various ministries through the help of those five groups of people who came to serve in Haiti, and the generous financial and prayer support of other Christians in the U.S. and Canada. The LCH has been so blessed that God has used us to be a conduit through which he has also blessed other Christian denominations. We have been able to provide both spiritual and humanitarian assistance to over 50,000 people with the distribution of food and clothing, as well as medical attention for many who became sick as a result of the contaminated flood

waters. In addition, we initiated inter-denominational pastoral conferences, street worship, crusades and school ministry.

Through your help, prayers and financial assistance, the following ministries are again and running again:

- Computer School. We have 350 people currently enrolled
- The quarry is back to work and doing well; the whole city is under reconstruction
- Our Credit Union has made loans totaling \$20,000 U.S. to about 50 families
- Our FM and TV stations are up running again, 10 hours a day
- The orphanage is operational
- The home for the elderly is operational
- The medical clinic will re-open March 1st
- The thrift store is again open for business

The only church social ministry/business that is not in operation is the bakery. It will take an investment of \$20,000 to get the bakery running again as a new oven and all new equipment needs to be purchased in Dominican Republic.

As we rejoice that we are back on our feet and that the Lord has richly blessed the LCH, I just want to thank the following five groups of people that came to Haiti to assist the Lutheran Church of Haiti rebuilding his Ministry:

1. Reverend Jim Glynn
2. A team from Cross International who visited and encouraged us. Cross was the organization that provided lots of food to Christians in Gonaives through the LCH
3. A team of two people from Lutheran Church of the Master in Omaha, NE
4. A medical team from Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
5. Another team from Gloria Lutheran Church

I also want to say a word of thanks to Haiti Lutheran Mission Society of Canada for sending a 40 foot container to the people of Gonaives. Thanks to Mike Mueller, Hope Seeds, Inc. who sent over 16 pallets of clothes, shoes and seeds for farmers. If today we are back on our feet in the city of Gonaives, it is because the Lord has used you to bless us.

So, thanks to all of you who, one way or another, have sent support to the LCH through the HLMCC Treasurer, Paul Klenner. (www.haitimissions.org) You have blessed us to get back doing the Lord's work.

In this Newsletter I want to share with you that I was recently in the Philippines for a short term mission. I was invited to be an observer of a successful evangelism and church planting movement in the Philippines called the CMC (Coalition for Church Multiplication). I was blessed by this experience in seeing an evangelism and church planting model that can indeed work in Haiti with some adjustments for the Haitian culture. Also, I had the opportunity to see another part of the world which is so different from my little country Haiti, having also the privilege to meet some wonderful people and church workers.

As you already know the LCH focus is winning souls for the kingdom and also equipping believers for the work of various church ministries. One of our goals is to provide opportunities for local church members to take responsibility for providing financial support for their church leaders and church facilities. They don't need to wait for North America to send them money to pay their pastors and school teachers. We aim also to develop small and big business systems that will generate income to the local churches so that members can meet their family and church responsibilities. That's the direction we will continue going in as we focus heavily on evangelism and church planting.

Up coming events: Until September 2009 we'll have mission teams coming from the U.S. every month. They will work in the LCH various ministries such as

- Church construction
- Pastoral meeting
- Pastoral teaching
- Street evangelism and crusades
- Vacation Bible school
- FM radio and T.V. stations
- Spiritual warfare

I want to end to this letter in asking you to pray for a very important meeting that will be held in Davie, Florida April 14-15, 2009 between two Lutheran Haitian church bodies: The ELCH (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti) and the LCH (Lutheran Church of Haiti). The meeting will be hosted by LCMS Florida-Georgia District President Gehardt Michael. The goal of this meeting will be to explore the possibility that these two Lutheran Church bodies working together in the area of joint theological seminary training for pastors and church workers. I anticipate that this will not be an easy meeting as the evil one is working hard to keep Christians separated so they remain weak and isolated.

Also, please keep praying for my family, especially my daughter Melissa.

Thanks to all of you for your prayers and support.

God bless you all.

Reverend Revenel Benoit
President, the Lutheran Church of Haiti