

March 2010
Report on the Lutheran Church of Haiti
By Pastor Revenel Benoit

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, greetings in the name of our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Never in my life have I seen the whole Christian church of Haiti in agreement like they were that there should be three days of prayers after the devastating earthquake last January. All over Haiti there has been a sense of a need for repentance. The Haitian people started coming to church like crazy. A week after the quake, hundreds of thousands of new believers filled churches of all denominations. And still today our Lutheran churches continue to experience numerical growth. All our leaders are busy taking spiritual care of the new converts.

This is a new opportunity for Christianity in Haiti. There is a spiritual hunger; the Haitian people are tired of voodoo. It is clear that the Lord wants His Church to wake up and raise the flag of the Gospel. There is an evangelism revival all over the country. About 85% of Churches in Haiti are doing street evangelism to offer an alternative to the people. This has been well received as thousands are coming to the Lord. Haiti is experiencing a great harvest of souls and most denominations feel the need to work together to achieve the common goal of bearing witness to the Good News to those who live in the darkness of voodoo and superstition.

Seeing so many spiritual and physical needs across the country of Haiti, our two Lutheran Churches, the Lutheran Church of Haiti (LCH) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti (ELCH) have agreed to work together to bring spiritual and physical relief to Lutherans and non-Lutherans. I have had three to four meetings with President Marky Kessa of the ELCH. We came to the conclusion that we need to put aside our philosophical differences regarding ministry and focus on assisting those still suffering from the effects of the earthquake, and at the same time get the Gospel message out.

In furtherance of those goals, we have jointly requested a grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care that would finance the removal of rubble from church, school and home sites. The grant request was recently approved, and our two Lutheran churches bodies will begin clearing rubble in about six weeks, beginning in Leogane, Port-au-Prince and Jacmel. Yesterday President Marky and I met with Rev. Glenn Merritt at the Port-au-Prince Airport to sign the final LCMS World Relief grant documents.

There will be other opportunities for the two church bodies to work together – in joint theological training of pastors and lay leaders, as well as evangelism programs to bring the Good News of the Gospel to the lost.

Our two Lutheran church bodies have been very busy assisting victims of the big earthquake. In the LCH we have provided relief supplies to about 31,000 people and medical care to about 7000, most of whom were injured. So far we have made 13 missions trips to bring relief supplies to Lutherans and non-Lutherans in the areas of Port-au-Prince, Leogane, Cabaret, Gonaives, Poto, and Passereine. Some people are asking why these Gonaives Lutherans (Gonaives is my hometown) care so much about helping earthquake victims. One of the reasons is that here in Gonaives we have experienced two devastating floods in the last few years that left us with nothing. So we know what it means for families to lose their homes and everything in them. Besides, the people in Port-au-Prince sent us lots of relief supplies in the aftermath of those floods, so we feel it's our time to return their love and concern and show our gratitude.

Through funding we received from Haiti Lutheran Mission Society in Canada (HLMS), we distributed 60 tents: 35 in La Saline, Port-au-Prince and 25 in Leogane a couple of weeks ago. In about two weeks the LCH will begin distributing more tents, the purchase of which is being funded by Lutheran Church of Canada World Relief. We expect to provide tents to 100 families; each of these tents can each shelter a family of up to 8.

Clothes, shoes, and kitchen supplies have also been donated to the quake victims in Port-au-Prince and Leogane. A 40-foot container that was sent by HLMS has finally been released by Haitian Customs, right on time to allow us to bless about three thousands more people with clothes, shoes, sleeping mats, etc.

We thank HLMS, LCC World Relief, Haiti Lutheran Ministry and Mission:Haiti for their funding contributions as well as for bringing mission teams to help thousands of earthquake victims. God bless them all.

We recently had two mission teams from the United States. The first one was from Lutheran Church of the Master in Omaha, NE. They assisted Faith Lutheran Church in constructing our new sanctuary facility in Gonaives. Also our T.V. guy, John Gebhur, did lots of work to put our T.V. station in stereo mode while laying some groundwork for the soon-to-be-received two transmitters donated by Channel 6 in Indianapolis, IN. The second team was from Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Davie, FL and Faith Lutheran Church of Eustis, FL. For about a week that 13-person team was busy serving in three areas. 1) medical clinic, 2) carpentry work at the orphanage, and 3) pastors' theological training.

About 1500 people were seen at the clinic; most of them were refugees from the Port-au-Prince earthquake area. 68 pastors attended the three days of theological training led by three LCMS Pastors from Florida: Reverends Eric, Thony and Ross - three excellent teachers. They taught two courses - Law and Gospel, and Creation. At the end of each course there was a written test for credit. The LCH is working with them to set up a teaching curriculum for two years of theological training leading to ordination. Please pray for this program as we need more workers in the harvest.

On May 2 we'll have a mission team from Ohio that will spend a few days in Gonaives setting up a Christian music recording studio for the LCH. That studio will bless the Christian community in Haiti as most of the recording studios in Port-au-Prince were destroyed in the quake. We already have half of the needed equipment; the team will bring the remaining equipment we need. We hope to have the official dedication of the studio on May 6th. This will be a BIG event. Lots of pastors and church leaders will be invited, as well as government officials. The recording studio will generate income for the LCH.

Please pray for me as I will do some traveling the next two months to attend meetings. I will attend a pastoral conference in Florida next week. In the middle of May I will go to Canada to attend the Haiti Lutheran Mission Society annual mission festival.

Thanks to all of you for your prayers and support for the needy people of Haiti. With your help we have been making a difference! - winning souls for the kingdom and providing for physical needs.

God bless you all.

Rev. Revenel Benoit
President, Lutheran Church of Haiti