

Haiti Earthquake Relief Update

OFCB Ministries

Rev. Katie Crowe, First Presbyterian Church, Charlotte

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Thank you for your heart and prayers for Haiti. It has been a difficult and heartbreaking week for our Haitian brothers and sisters. Here is an update on what is happening on the ground and in the first leg of our churches' response that will undoubtedly evolve over time.

While there are dire needs within the city of Port au Prince, the disaster has already had and will continue to have a far reaching impact on the entire country. Displaced survivors with many needs have been ordered to "go north" to already severely depleted homes and outlying villages with no aid following them, and the price of food and fuel have skyrocketed as the city that served as the hub of domestic food distribution has been destroyed.

Rev. Actionnel Fleurisma, pastor and Director of the church and school at OFCB Ministries, estimates that just over a thousand survivors with many and varied needs have begun to flood into Gonaives (the city at the base of the mountain from Bayonnais) and an already stretched thin Bayonnais has to date welcomed three hundred displaced family members and survivors from Port au Prince with more almost certainly soon to come. Gonaives is still recovering from the hurricane of '08, and does not have the resources or infrastructure to deal with the influx of evacuees who arrive with only the shirt on their backs, while international aid remains focused on the needs in Port au Prince and immediately surrounding areas.

The OFCB Steering Committee, comprised of representatives of the 20+ churches that work together in partnership around the ministry in Bayonnais, has been working around the clock to discern the most effective way to get both money and supplies on the ground and in the hands of Actionnel. Options for getting the money into the country have been very limited, but thanks be to God the U.S. Treasury has begun to partner with Haitian banks, enabling them to open their doors once again. We have a wire in process to Actionnel who will translate the funds into lifesaving rice, beans, and badly needed supplies on the ground for the people of Gonaives and Bayonnais. Every dollar donated through gifts from other churches and the Presbytery of Charlotte will be converted into direct aid.

Please continue sending up prayers for our friends at OFCB as they grieve the now confirmed deaths of the two college students, as well as the deaths of dozens, if not hundreds, of friends and family members who lived and worked in the city. Pray for those who escaped the disaster but are now suffering from the effects of post-traumatic stress in addition to struggling to survive. And, finally, please continue to

pray for Haiti as the consequences of this disaster will be significant, long term, and far reaching, and keep our congregations in your prayers as we seek to bear faithful witness to the gospel in the way that we come along side our brothers and sisters in love.