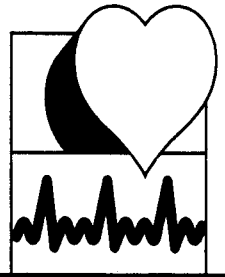


The Heartbeat

A Newsletter of the Heart-4-Haiti Lutheran Mission Society - Trinity Lutheran Church, Vallonia, IN

Volume 4, Number 3

September, 2008



HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN HAITI: A CALL FOR HELP

Haiti is reeling from four back-to-back hurricanes (Fay, Gustave, Hanna, and Ike) that have hit the island in less than a month. An estimated 800,000 people have been affected by dangerous flooding, lethal mudslides, and the destruction of roads and bridges. A recent report from UNICEF states that 300,000 of the people affected are children.

Over 700 people have been killed, many more are feared dead, and hundreds of thousands are in desperate need of food, clean water, and shelter. "What has happened here is unimaginable," said Pierre-Gerome Valcine, a member of Parliament from the town of Caberet, 22 miles north of the capital, Port-au-Prince. A UN envoy called the flooded streets of Gonaives as "close to hell on earth." And Paul Farmer, with PARTNERS IN HEALTH, wrote: "After 25 years spent working in Haiti, I can honestly say that I have never seen anything as painful as what I just witnessed."

Fortunately, Pastor Bernard's church and school, Good Shepherd in Port-au-Prince, has escaped with minimal damage. However, his church and school at Village of Peace lost a good portion of its roof and the church and school in Leogane has been completely destroyed.

The series of storms comes at a critical time, with Haiti having experienced food riots in April. The recent skyrocketing costs of basic staples such as rice and cooking oil (Already high prices have risen by 60% since the storms set in), coupled with the upheaval caused by the hurricanes have made the country even more vulnerable. "The situation has gone from impossible to catastrophic," said Anne Catherine Kennedy of the CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE. "About 80% of the food-growing area is affected, and the heartland of Haitian agriculture is wiped out."

The current crisis though is part of a longer-term problem that has made life in Haiti a misery for many of its 8.6 million people. Haitians' life expectancy of 53 is the lowest in the Western hemisphere and yearly earnings average no more than \$600 a year. Most of Haiti's trees have disappeared as destitute people cut them down to produce fuel. A massive reforestation program and public works projects in the cities are what is needed in the long term. But in the short term all we can do is help out with disaster relief. One relief worker declared, "In the wake of four destructive hurricanes, Haiti is facing another crippling humanitarian crisis, and America must stand with the people of Haiti."

Here's how you can stand with the people of Haiti and help our fellow Lutheran brothers and sisters:

(The Heart 4 Haiti Committee has set the following short term goals):

1. Food= \$5,000-\$10,000
2. Repair roof @ Village of Peace Church/School= \$5,000
3. Repair walls/complete classrooms @ Good Shepherd= \$5,000
4. Diesel fuel for vehicles/generators= \$2,000
5. Continued support of Good Shepherd Lutheran School (K-12 grades w/465 students)= \$10,000

(The Heart 4 Haiti Committee has set the following long term goals):

1. Food= \$5,000
2. Rebuilding Leogane Church & School= \$40,000
3. Continued Support of Good Shepherd School for 2008-09 School Year= \$5,000-\$10,000

(Please see the back of the newsletter to find out how and where to send your help)

A Letter from Rev. Thomas Bernard Regarding the Hurricanes

To all the Supporters of the Heart 4 Haiti Mission Society:

Grace and Peace to you from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I want to thank you for all your prayers and support. But the main purpose of this letter is to keep you informed about what is going on in Haiti right now. As you have probably heard and seen on TV and the Internet, the hurricanes Fay, Gustavo, Hanna and Ike have sunk the Haitian nation into great distress. Hundreds of people have been killed and thousands are left with empty hands. Even though the rain has stopped, the flooding is still there.

Hundreds of houses, schools, churches, and hospitals are really damaged and destroyed. Many families are left with nothing. They have even lost school books, uniforms, and shoes for their children. Because of this situation, the government is obliged to postpone school which was to begin on the 1st of September until October the 6th.

Knowing that all the crops are gone the starvation will be worse by the year 2009. Haiti has only experienced a similar hurricane once before and that happened in 1954 (Hazel) where thousands of people were killed.

The whole population has been hurt by these hurricanes. In the area of Port-au-Prince where I am serving 79 people have been killed and in Cabaret, a village that is 22 miles from PAP, 67 have been killed and most of them were children under the age of 9.

At Village of Peace, where we have our second congregation, a part of the roof is gone and all the rooms are flooded. Our small church and school in Leogane has been destroyed. **Our concerns now are not only to provide food for the needy but also to rebuild and repair churches and schools.** As far as my family is concerned, my wife and the children are fine. Our home has received no damage at all. However, the members of the congregations are of course in great need and starving, but thanks be to our God they are all alive.

As Jehoshaphat said in 2 Chronicles 20:12: "We do not know what to do, O Lord, but our eyes are upon you". We also say together with David in Psalm 121:1-2: "We lift up our eyes to the hills – where does our help come from? Our help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth".

Again, thank you so much for your prayers and support and especially at this time when the situation is really chaotic for our members.

In Christ's Care,

Pastor Thomas Bernard
Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church

Good News from Good Shepherd Lutheran School

Dear Supporters of the Heart 4 Haiti Mission Society,

Hearty greetings in the name of our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

This is to thank you all for the blessings you have been sharing with us during the past years. I want to extend our thankfulness to you for your continuing prayers and support. I want to thank you in a special way for the **student adoption program** that you continue to support. Without such a commitment from you we would be unable to serve all the 465 children/students attending our school.

Thanks be to God, in spite of the hardship and the chaotic situation that is going on in Haiti, our school is considered to be one of the best schools in the country. This year we were also very successful as far as the official exams organized by the Ministry of Education are concerned. We have received a lot of compliments by the Ministry and are respected by the members of the community.

This year we had three categories of students participating in the official exams:

- ❖ **In 6th grade 19 students were sent and 17 have passed**
- ❖ **In 9th grade 22 students were sent and 21 have passed**
- ❖ **In 12th grade 11 students were sent and 9 have passed**

This spring we had our first class graduate from our high school and many are heading off to the university. We are also planning to give some of the other students training in computers and accounting. By so doing we will one day decrease the percentage of poverty in our church, in the community, and even in the nation.

Again, thank you so much and may God continue to bless you and your ministry!

In Him, Pastor Thomas Bernard

Communication from Rev. Kessa, President of the Lutheran Church of Haiti

The following letter from Rev. S.T. Williams, Jr, pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Los Angeles, California, was sent after Hurricane Gustave on behalf of President Marky Kessa of the Lutheran Church in Haiti.

Greetings from President Marky Kessa in Haiti,

President Kessa was able to contact me by cell phone just moments ago and give a quick report of the impact of the hurricanes that have most recently impacted the country of Haiti. He asked me to inform you of the following:

He and his immediate family are doing fine. He is without many "life sustaining" goods. Therefore, he is asking for your prayers and support for him and for the members of the Lutheran Church of Haiti. The areas most devastated after the first couple hurricanes are Jacmel and LeCayes. He is not able to travel more than a half a mile from his home at this point. All roads are closed until further notice. He is waiting communication from the other cities and surrounding preaching stations and schools.

He reports extreme flooding, roofs are missing from members' houses, churches, schools, and preaching stations. There is limited drinking water, food supplies are getting low, and no communication is available via e-mail at this point. He cannot give a death total, but knows that there are many based upon radio reports.

He would like to take pictures, but it will take several days before he is able to travel and provide a detailed documentation for the partner churches. He says they need assistance immediately...

We pray and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance, Pastor S.T. Williams, Jr.