

January 22, 2010

Dear Friends of Medical Benevolence Foundation,

This has been a full and anxious ten days since the Haiti earthquake, but has also been full of hope and reasons for gratitude. We would like you to know how and what we are doing.

We hope you have seen the letter we sent out shortly after the earthquake (it can be seen on our web-site www.mbfoundation.org; if you have not). As it notes we have established the Haiti Earthquake Response Fund.

The Haiti Earthquake Medical Response Fund #530-453 will support our partners as they respond both in the immediate and long-term to the devastating January 12 earthquake. Please send checks made out to the Medical Benevolence Foundation with a notation for this fund and send it to:

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

or donate online.

Your donation to the Haiti Earthquake Medical Response Fund will go 100% to that cause. MBF also needs money to support our ministry, to cover urgent work elsewhere in the world, and to respond quickly in the future when unforeseen needs like Haiti strike in another part of the world. Therefore, we hope you will consider also giving 'where most needed' to help cover some of these expenses.

After the news cameras and many groups have forgotten Haiti and moved on to the next international story, MBF will continue the work to support our partners in Haiti.

We are grateful for the donations we have already received online, for the checks that are now beginning to arrive and for the many individuals and churches that are collecting money to send for Haiti. Please note that we have set up a link on our home page to a special Haiti Earthquake report page www.mbfoundation.org/haiti-earthquake.htm; where we put stories about what is happening.

In the initial period we were close to being in a crisis mode as we tried to get basic information about our partner church, the institutions with which we relate, and the mission personnel serving in Haiti. The PC(USA) has Mark and Jenny Hare and daughter, Kaila, who were some distance from the epicenter and their area suffered little

damage. They are now facing the challenge of people coming away from the damaged areas who need food and assistance. Sharyn and Rodney Babe serve in Port-au-Prince (PaP). Sharyn lived through the collapse of her fourth story apartment and was pulled from the wreckage at street level. She got medical assistance from the U.S. Embassy and was flown to Cuba and then to Florida where she is getting treatment. Rodney, who now works for another organization, has stayed in Haiti to help since he has considerable language and contextual skills.

We became most concerned about John and Suzi Parker who were serving as coordinators of the guesthouse at Hospital Ste Croix (HSC). In that sense, and since John has supervised much of the MBF related construction work in the past, we considered them MBF-related personnel. Their family was in touch with us seeking help to determine their whereabouts. Initially, it was reported that the hospital had collapsed. Word was finally received that the Parkers were alright. When the guesthouse/administration building collapsed, John was trapped for four hours but only suffered minor scratches. The hospital, it turns out, is still standing. John's judgment, along with five other engineers who have visited Haiti, is that the hospital is stable even though there are cracks. John and Suzi have chosen to stay for the moment to help with the response effort. We have all been impressed with their sense of calm, call, and compassion and are grateful for the base they provide for future work.

We were also concerned about Dean Hilda Alcindor and the students at the FSIL nursing school in Leogane near the epicenter. Several students did die, but they were not at the nursing school. The school still stands, with cracks, and many of us have seen on television the Doctors Without Borders team at work with the nursing school students giving aid to the injured residents of Leogane. The students, along with Dean Alcindor and a visiting nurse, were amazing!!! They carried on for 5 days giving aid to the people of Leogane by themselves before outside medical help began to arrive.

Almost immediately we began to receive calls and emails from medical professionals and others offering to volunteer for mission service. Chip Lambert, our Director of Mission Service and an emergency room physician, began to coordinate the flow of offers and to see how we could be of help. It became apparent to us that the first step was not sending in a medical team but rather trying to get in someone or a team to help assess the situation and determine the priorities for response. In God's grace, the way became clear for Chip to fly into Port-au-Prince with about 3,000 pounds of medical supplies. On the tarmac in PaP, he was given another 1,000 pounds, and a nurse practitioner who was on that same flight volunteered to stay with him. (A longer story to be told another time). Because of the chaotic conditions on the ground, we contracted with a logistics firm that was able to securely deliver Chip, the nurse, and the supplies to FSIL Nursing School.

Jimmy Hite, a former MBF president and architect who designed the Nursing School in Haiti, is on his way today, along with a needed orthopedic surgeon. He will do structural assessments of the school and hospital. Besides, or perhaps because of his MBF connections, Jimmy also serves on both the FSIL Nursing School and the Hospital Ste Croix boards.

All of this means we are in a wonderful position to get an up-to-date and professional assessment of our partners' needs and how we can help.

We remain in touch with our partner, the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti, that has suffered devastating loss in the destruction of its beautiful Cathedral and school in Port-au-Prince. As they dig out and proceed in their ministries serving the people of Haiti, we will continue to do our best to accompany their efforts in sharing God's healing and comforting love in Jesus.

We have been in touch with the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Our work is narrowly limited to medical work and our long-term involvement on the ground in Haiti and our connections make us helpful in the earthquake response. We are not a traditional relief organization and support for that work can be given through PDA. PDA does not send medical teams and will refer people wishing to serve in that capacity to us. We will reciprocate by sending people wanting to work in non-medical response to them.

Since Chip is in Haiti and extremely busy, Shelley Ulrich (shelley@mbfoundation.org), is organizing our work with people wanting to go to Haiti to help out. If you are interested in giving service please contact her. However, at the moment the word from on the ground at least in Leogane is that we do not need more medical people at the moment and need to begin arranging for people to come in stages as the need is going to continue for a long, long time. There is a full Japanese emergency response team and several American teams at the nursing school. The Doctors Without Borders group from Switzerland has moved to the hospital along with 6 Haitian physicians connected with the hospital and some folk from the Cuban equivalent of the Peace Corps.

We thank God for such an array of partners, both Haitian and from around the world, who join with us in caring for people devastated by this earthquake.

Yours in Christ's service,

Will Browne, Executive Director
Medical Benevolence Foundation