

*The following letter from Rev. Gesner Paul, President, Eglise Méthodiste d'Haiti, has been received and is recommended for sharing with all of the member churches of the World Methodist Council. The earthquake that devastated Haiti continues to be a prayer concern for the entire world. Opportunities to serve as volunteers in mission will exist for many years. I commend this letter to you.*

**George Freeman, General Secretary  
World Methodist Council**

**Jan. 28, 2010**

On behalf of the Methodist Church in Haiti and the Haitian people, we thank you. Thank you all for your outpouring of love, support and Christian brotherhood in our great hour of need. Haiti has suffered a great tragedy, and to rebuild, recover and strengthen, it will take us all. You have kept us in your prayers and we are grateful. You have sent donations through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). We thank you for your generosity. You have expressed your selfless interest in volunteering your time to come to Haiti to help with the recovery effort and we look forward to welcoming you.

In the coming days and weeks, the Methodist Church in Haiti will complete an assessment of the damage and communities impacted by the earthquake, and will prioritize areas for relief and rehabilitation in partnership with UMCOR. Teams of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission will be integral in the long-term recovery of the church and communities in Haiti, and opportunities will soon be available to come and help in meaningful ways.

In the short-term, the immediate needs of providing emergency aid of food, water, shelter and medical care are being addressed by UMCOR and a host of national and international relief organizations and technical specialists. Soon, the work of clearing debris in preparation for rebuilding will be done by teams of locals in cash-for-work programs led by these same aid groups and local community groups, including the Methodist Church in Haiti. The participation of international volunteers is welcome after this initial emergency phase is complete, at which time the Methodist Church in Haiti will work closely with UMCOR and UMVIM to identify rehabilitation projects which match the needs prioritized in the country.

With great appreciation for the outpouring of support and offers to come in person to help volunteer in Haiti as quickly as possible, the Methodist Church in Haiti, in partnership with UMCOR, requests that volunteer teams consider delaying their arrival into Haiti in light of the following:

- The Methodist Church in Haiti and UMCOR are still undertaking assessments and evaluations in the 6 circuits most impacted by the earthquake, to determine the extent of the damage in church communities and beyond. Suitable projects and assignments for volunteer teams wishing to contribute to the recovery effort will not be identified until this process is complete.
- The Methodist Guest House is currently being assessed for structural integrity, and will undergo some rehabilitation and reconstruction of the security wall before being brought to full capacity and security to host teams of volunteers.
- Commercial flights into Haiti are currently suspended and all travel into Haiti must be done via the neighboring Dominican Republic. Once in Haiti, transportation and logistics are further complicated due to the influx of international aid groups and the reality of debris and closed roads.
- The emergency relief and debris removal phase may last at least another one or two months, depending on the severity of the impact to the communities. Volunteers wishing to work on the programs identified as priority by the Methodist Church in Haiti and UMCOR can begin to schedule trips for late March and April, once this initial emergency response and recovery phase is completed.
- Volunteer teams with pre-existing travel plans to Haiti are urged to reconsider the timing and nature of their trip, in order to allow for re-assessment and prioritization of earthquake recovery programs.

Please continue to communicate with us your interest in volunteering for the recovery effort, and we will connect you with recovery projects and rehabilitation programs as soon as possible.

We thank you again for standing by us in this time of great need, and look forward to working in Christian partnership to build a better Haiti.

Blessings,

Rev. Gesner Paul

President, Eglise Méthodiste d'Haiti