

1/19/10

Lisa Rothenberger, ABC/USA World Relief Officer, answers questions about giving to the Haiti Relief effort through One Great Hour of Sharing.

Q: People want to know how they can help. Tell me how people can help today.

A: At this time there are 3 primary ways that people can help.

1. **PRAY** for the people of Haiti---and I mean all of the people of Haiti. With the loss of life so great and destruction so vast it is hard to imagine any Haitian not being affected by this tragedy.
2. **GIVE** to One Great Hour of Sharing. 100% of the gifts given for “Haiti Relief” will go to the relief and rehabilitation of those affected. You can give through your local church or online at www.internationalministries.org
Many people have asked me if there are supplies or material goods that they can gather. I would encourage people who want to do something in addition to giving money to make hygiene or baby kits that are distributed by Church World Service. You can find the details on what are in these kits at http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=kits_main
For those who want to provide medicines, I encourage supporting IMA World Health. They specialize in the IMA Medicine Box which provides 2-3 months worth of medicines for approximately 1,000 people. Their website is www.imaworldhealth.org.
3. **PLAN TO GO** in future weeks or months. Right now there is need for people with specialized training—doctors, nurses, and search and rescue professionals. We need to wait until the situation stabilizes to send teams to assist with the rebuilding. This time will come, but it’s not in the first weeks after a disaster of this magnitude. Contact Angela Sudermann at angela.sudermann@abc-usa.org for information on how to volunteer.

Q: How will the money given to One Great Hour of Sharing “Haiti Relief” be spent?

A: Well first, I want people to know that their gifts will save lives and rebuild lives. We are in this for the long haul, and by that I mean at least the next 3-5 years. What is critical is that we have a sustained response---one that addresses immediate needs but then also addresses the long-term need to rebuild homes, schools, clinics, and communities. We will accomplish that by providing funds to our long-term partner in Haiti, the Haitian Baptist Convention, our missionaries, and our ecumenical partners including Church World Service and Baptist World Aid. We will work through existing networks that already had ministry in Haiti because they know the people and the needs best. Our partners “on the ground” are who will determine the needs of “what” and “where”---I believe this is ministry at its best and honors the intention of our donors.

Q: How much will be needed?

A: It’s impossible to know right now how much is needed, but I can say that the scope of this disaster could be compared to the Asian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina. American Baptists gave \$6 million to those 2 relief efforts within the scope of just 12 months. That’s incredible! It’s my prayer that even in these economically difficult times for us here in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, that the response will be as generous.

Q: How do you get a handle on the needs when they are this great?

A: This becomes more manageable with each passing day. At first we were faced with the challenge of a lack of communication. But as our partners and our missionaries have been able to make their way to Port-au-Prince, we learn more with each day. It’s natural to focus on the epicenter of the earthquake, but the needs spread much wider than Port-au-Prince. For example just yesterday we learned from Madeline Flores, IM missionary in the Dominican Republic, of needs for injured Haitians who made their way to the Dominican Republic and need medical care, food, water, and shelter. We will also send IM missionaries

into the affected area shortly to assist partners in completing a mid-term and long-term assessment so we can channel our funds to meet the greatest needs.

Q: We've released \$65,000 so far. How quickly will donations flow to Haiti?

A: We released the initial \$65,000 in response to requests from our partners. Online gifts that have already been received will enable us to respond to requests as they come in during the coming week. As churches receive offerings and send their funds we will continue to provide assistance---in both the short and long-term. The strong response to this crisis from the U.S. and other governments, the United Nations, corporations and other relief organizations will allow for the short-term needs of the people to be addressed, not in as timely a manner as we would like, but as timely as is possible given the circumstances and infrastructure of the country.

Q: What is the unique role of the Church in crisis such as this?

A: That's a great question. There is a very unique role for the Church, including American Baptists, in the aftermath of any natural disaster. And that's to look at the immediate needs in Haiti but also look with an eye towards the future. We will walk with the people over the long-term---we'll save lives and we'll rebuild lives---that's what the Church does. American Baptists have been engaged in ministry in Haiti since 1823---and we will be engaged for years to come. We know and love the people of Haiti. We know the context and the culture. This makes us uniquely positioned to rebuild lives.
Thanks for the opportunity to chat today.