

April 10, 2010

## Haiti Earthquake Relief Update

Our family traveled to the U.S. just over a week ago. It was a hard trip in some ways and it was harder to leave Haiti for me personally than it ever has been in the past 17 years. We left our community of Pignon by Missionary Aviation Fellowship which was a blessing. Caleb has made over 70



trips back and forth to Port au Prince since the January 12<sup>th</sup> earthquake. He had just returned the day before from a road trip so we were glad to spare him the rough roads again. Pictured here are my daughters and my foster son, Joe, who is currently doing an internship with MAF at the airport there in Port au Prince. It was good to check in with him as we left and to know he was doing well. Since we didn't have a vehicle with us, Caleb had a driver from a transport service we usually use for teams meet us and drive us to the

hotel we were staying in. We had hoped to have more time to explore Port au Prince for the kids and I as this was our first entrance there since the earthquake. However, since it was approaching evening we just had about thirty minutes.

Since I've been following all the imagery on the media as well, I didn't expect to be too surprised. In many ways I wasn't. I was encouraged to see signs of people going on just through small businesses and markets that had sprung up even in front of the destroyed buildings. People have begun to try to eke out a living again as they can. The next big step will be to get schools reopened. That will be an enormous boost to the mindset of families and students—they will feel like they are moving forward. Sadly, while 80% of the schools in Port au Prince were destroyed, I'm told barely 10% are now ready to re-open. Even as we traveled, we brought along a very large tarp to serve as a covering for classrooms as requested by one contact who desperately needed one.



As we drove through the city streets headed toward the downtown area where there is a secure hotel, I saw lots of signs of life, people sitting outside of their homes or taking evening walks. One thing that struck me was even the buildings which were standing, had tents and tarps on the streets in front of them. Residents throughout the city are still too afraid to sleep within their homes and choose the tents in front for a peaceful rest.



See the blue tarps creating sleeping quarters for families whose homes are still standing. It reminded me of how long term the emotional damage is. We see it every day at HIM's school. Anytime the students hear loud noises, they will run out of the classrooms in a visceral reaction of fear that the walls are collapsing. It is that kind of tension that remains palpable throughout Haiti.

We proceeded on our drive downtown and passed by the destroyed National Palace (Haiti's White House) and saw all the

government buildings demolished. On the equivalent to the national mall (park ground before the palace), there is a tent city where several thousand currently live. Some organizations have set up some port-a-potties. There remains no running water but organizations like Wyclef's Yele Haiti is providing drinking water throughout the city. Most of the other major organizations are still in planning meetings. I was saddened to hear that since the earthquake, many Haitian leaders working for major NGO's (you would recognize the names if I listed them) have been pushed aside from supervisory roles. It seems that since some have received \$100's of millions for Haiti, the foreign leaders need to manage it. What is sad about that is that since they are removing the leaders that speak the real language and networking of Haiti, the relief efforts in those situations will be stymied and slowed. It's about what I expected though in the business of development work. We hand delivered a shipment of tents that had just arrived from Trinity Presbyterian in Columbia, MO to a pastor whose church was destroyed. He was so excited to be able to get them to his congregants that evening. This photo is of the tent city in front of the palace. Our hotel was right across the street. I am used to the intense poverty that



exists in Haiti, but the widespread disaster was still hard for me to take. As we spent the night in a hotel full of relief workers, it was hard to enjoy the air conditioning and Wi-Fi and hot showers-even though I hadn't had a hot shower in months. My heart just ached for those across the street with no solid plans for the future. Still, we had to leave to be able to come back.

We spent the week as a family in Little Rock, Arkansas in a condo graciously provided by Fellowship Bible Church for visiting missionaries. We've seen doctors and dentists thus far and shared with those

who have asked to hear what conditions are like. Caleb got a clean bill of health and has already returned to Haiti. He met a team today which arrived from Indiana to come and help us build a second level for housing at the camp. They will get the roof up this week and then work on whatever other work Caleb designates. One project he's undertaken is to build school desks for the destroyed schools throughout the country. Different teams coming in the next month will be working alongside our camp residents who want a job to build these and then we'll ship them throughout the earthquake affected areas.

Plans are also proceeding to build a village of homes near Leogane (the epicenter) from donated property there. It is going to be an exciting few months as we see that come together. This past week a semi-trailer truck was donated and is currently being loaded with supplies in Florida and will be on a boat this week for Haiti. Finally, we have received a donation to build a rehab clinic in Pignon for all the amputees and injured. Caleb believes it will be operational by June 2010 and plans to put it at the camp facility so the injured can come and stay at the camp while being assisted. It looks like an exciting summer is in store for us.

The girls and I are still stateside until May 2<sup>nd</sup>, after which we'll re-join Caleb. We had the opportunity to share an update with the Lonoke Presbyterian Church here in Arkansas and I captured the talk and have posted it on YouTube. For those who are interested in this 30 minute presentation in 3 parts, you can check out the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s47o8UK075k>

Or check out our channel on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/HoseanHaiti?feature=mhw5>

Sorry this has been a longer update than normal. I also hope I haven't offended anyone by my mention of the posturing going on in so much of the relief work in Haiti. Please do be discouraged to help and give. I'm just encouraging everyone to really get to know those to whom you are donating and make sure they is working alongside leaders there in Haiti. We deeply appreciate your interest and desire to help. The needs remain intense and will be there for several years to come. However, we are committed to doing everything in our power to help all we can with what we can.

Blessings, Debbie Lucien

[www.hosean.org](http://www.hosean.org)

Views of a neighborhood on the afternoon of April 1, 2010 (see below)

