

Living Hope Mission Ministries, Inc.



Wilbert and Meg Merzilus

"Offering Haiti Living Hope in Christ, the Hope of the World"

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Greetings from Haiti!

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At this very difficult time we feel blessed to have you as our partners. We thank those who have contacted us with compassion and concern for us all. The earthquake that hit Port au Prince January 12 has had devastating effects on the entire country. Every day, people are coming into the Cap-Haitien area, some with nothing more than the shirts on their backs. Local churches are reaching out and many are being taken in by friends and family. These are the ways God has enabled LHM to help.

1. We are providing funds to family members from Cap-Haitien who have gone to Port au Prince to seek medical care for those injured in the quake. LHM also provided funds to a group of Haitian doctors who traveled from the DR to Port au Prince, underwriting the cost of medical supplies used on their trip.
2. We provided funds to help with burial of loved ones.
3. We are providing fuel for buses to evacuate refugees from PAP to the North.
4. Wilbert has spent many hours at the airport providing logistical support to private planes that have come in with relief supplies. We are thankful for his experience in navigating through the red tape at the airport, which he gained working with Mission Aviation Fellowship.
5. Meg has spent time helping a friend who is working to procure medical supplies for a hospital in the Northwest of the country.
6. Hope Center's staff has been busy providing housing and meals to many people passing through--some medical volunteers working at local hospitals, and some mission teams that were stranded in Haiti after the Earthquake.
7. Both of us have spent many hours visiting with friends and acquaintances, listening to them share of their harrowing experiences escaping the quake. Others have come to share their grief--some losing as many as five family members. In these cases we are only able to share their sadness and pray with them for comfort. One young woman spent the night with us after traveling from Port au Prince, where she buried five family members. To add to her grief, she was upset that she would have to stop her medical studies in the Dominican Republic after losing her financial support from her grandparents. Because of your generosity in providing for our scholarship fund, we were able to relieve her anxiety with a promise to help.



Even though the crisis phase has not passed, LHM is working to make plans for long term help to the earthquake victims. We are grateful for the good contacts we have through fellow Christians in Port au Prince. Our strategy will be to work through local churches to provide funds to help with the needs that are expressed. We expect to help provide funds for reconstruction of houses, churches and schools. We will also work to provide help for people to start up their small businesses again.

As we look at the monumental task of rebuilding after this disaster, we take comfort in knowing that God uses small and broken vessels to do his work. We thank you that you have been a part of LHM's ministry and we ask that you pray with us as we minister in this very needy land that God would be glorified in all we do.

Wilbert and Meg

A First Hand Account of the Earthquake

Many of you know Belton Merzilus, our nephew, who has been studying computer science at Canado Technical Institute in Port au Prince. Below is Belton's account of the earthquake with some of the photographs he took.

Late in the afternoon of January 12, my sisters, Evena, Shela and I, along with my two cousins, Dania and Bertrand, had just finished eating. I was irritated at my sister Evena, because she had played hooky from school that day. After talking with her about it, I decided to go to my Cousin Bertrand's house to work on my assignment for school the next day.

Bertrand and I left our apartment and had walked about 5 minutes down the street when all of a sudden everything started shaking. At first I thought it was caused by a big piece of earth moving equipment that had been parked down the street from us. I thought some kids may have been playing on it and had gotten it rolling. Then I saw that all the walls around the houses on the street were shaking. The cement blocks from the walls and houses right next to the street came pouring down into the street.



My first thought was for my sisters, so we turned to run back to the apartment. When we got there, we found that the walls to the entrance way had collapsed! My younger sister Shela was in the street holding her head where she had been bumped by falling debris and crying. She said that my other sister and cousin had left the apartment right after me and were in the street going the opposite direction. They soon appeared and began wailing and crying. Shela stopped crying when she saw how badly hurt some other people were. We could hear people yelling and crying and most of our neighbors had run out into the street.

We all huddled together but Enso, my cousin, was anxious

to get back to his apartment and check on his brother and our other cousins. I was uncertain what to do. Should I stay with the girls, who were distraught and scared, or should I go with him to look for the others? The ground kept shaking and the girls were really scared, so I decided to stay.



Miraculously, our phones were still working so he left and I kept contact with him by phone. Meanwhile I called my Mom in Gros Morne to let her know we were OK and then tried to call my uncle Wilbert, but couldn't get through. Instead I called the driver for Hope Center, Jocelyn, to ask him to give my Uncle Wilbert the message that we were OK.

As the ground continued to shake, I finally got a call from my cousin that the other cousins were OK, but that they were coming back because their entire neighborhood was destroyed and people were looting there.

As the sun set all our neighbors came together. One brought a small rug and blanket that he had been able to get out of his house to share with us. We all huddled together and prayed. One neighbor had a very small baby that had already been killed when the house collapsed. The baby's grandfather was still alive, but had a broken back. They were able to pull him out and tried to comfort him there in the street. All the neighbors stayed close together and tried to sleep, but it was hard because the ground kept shaking all night.

In the morning, we were all hungry. We had some rice in our apartment, and even though the entrance way had collapsed, I found a way in through the back and was able to get some of our stuff out. We had no way to cook the rice, but one neighbor, a lady who had always kept to herself, offered her charcoal cook stove and a big pot. We cooked rice and shared it with the neighbors. Later, a group of nurses came through the neighborhood offering to dress wounds of anyone who was injured. During that day we heard again that there was looting in their neighborhood, so Bertrand, Enso and I decided to try to go and get their things out of their apartment.



We hiked together on foot through the city, down towards the palace. We saw the cathedral destroyed, and also the palace had caved in. Many neighborhoods were just rubble. Dead bodies were piled on the street. We felt sick.

That night, some thieves tried to get into the neighbors' houses, but we all started yelling and they ran away. We were able to buy some drinking water, but the price kept going up hour by hour. I was lucky to have some money in my pocket because I had just been to the bank--some people, like my cousin Enso, had no money on them at all. But people were sharing with each other. A man who sells cookies came down the street sharing cookies freely with everyone.



That night I was able to talk to my Uncle Wilbert. He urged us to try to get out of the city as soon as possible. I had heard that there were buses, and also rumors of people with private trucks getting out, but also heard that the vehicles were very expensive. I didn't have enough money for me and all my cousins to go, and I certainly couldn't leave them.

Late that night I heard that a man from our hometown was sending his bus to pick up people from Gros Morne for free, but the pickup point was so far that we'd never be

able to make it there in time to catch it. Finally, late in the night, Uncle Wilbert called and told us to get ready, in the morning, he was sending a truck to get us all and take us to Gros Morne.



The next morning, (day three), I got up very early. I still had two cousins who we didn't know about, Fifi and Sonya. They lived far away, a two hour walk. Enso and I started very early, hoping that we could find them and bring them back so they could come on the truck to Gros Morne. When we finally got to their place, we found out that they had moved. Still we felt reassured that the area they lived in didn't have much damage. We didn't have time to keep looking before the truck was coming to get us, so we rushed back to town. We had done the best we could to find them.



I still had to walk again, very far, close to Cite Soleil, to meet Doudou and the truck and bring him to our apartment. Then we all piled in and slowly made our way back to the main road. On the way, near the bus station, I saw some of my classmates who were trying to get a bus to Gros Morne. We picked them up along with a family with a baby who was trying to get out of Port.

As we came to the outskirts of the city, I felt my heart lifting and the fear slowly going away a little bit. On the long trip home, the girls sang praise songs and we all felt happy to be out of Port au Prince.

When we came into our home town after driving seven hours, we stopped singing. We heard lots of wailing and crying. Many of our friends from school, we found out as we came into town, had been lost in the Earthquake. They too were in Port au Prince for college.

We spent the night in Gros Morne where my sisters are staying with my mom. Doudou and I left for Cap-Haitien early the next morning. All along the road we saw people trying to get rides to the North, some trying to get to the border for medical care. We picked up 18 people, suffering with various injuries and took them to the station where they continued on to the border.

Now I am in Cap-Haitien with my uncle and aunt. I still have trouble sleeping. I don't know why I survived, but I am happy to be alive.

Living Hope Mission Sends Team to PAP

Wilbert's nephew, Emile Accilus, who is completing his residency in the Dominican Republic, was part of a team of medical professionals LHM sent to Port au Prince. LHM supplied transportation, funds for medications and relief supplies for these volunteers. Following are some of Dr. Emile's pictures. Can you tell they were taken under a blue tarp?



Attending a woman with an injured leg



Dr. Emile attending some of the affected babies



Joanna, a med student, giving medication instructions



Dr. Emile, Joanna, Dr. Magnus, and Giselle before starting their work in Port au Prince – Delmas 3

To print your own copy of the LHM newspaper and to see additional photos of the earthquake damage visit our web site at livinghopemission.org.