

# Arkansas church partners with Florida Baptists to send rice to Haiti

**\$20 for 100 pounds of rice feeds family of four for 'a long time'**

By Barbara Denman  
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STUTT GART, ARK (FBC)—Twenty dollars is all it takes to buy a 100-pound bag of rice to feed a family of four for “a long time in Haiti,” according to John Sullivan, executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, who is spearheading the Convention’s efforts to get food to the earthquake-damaged nation.

He should know. Immediately after the disaster hit the impoverished nation, Sullivan purchased 21 tons of rice from a distributor in Stuttgart, Ark., and made plans to ship the rice to Miami in preparation for delivery to Haiti. Striking a deal to purchase 42,000 pounds of rice in 100-pound bags for \$20 apiece, Sullivan arranged to send a disaster relief semi-truck to take delivery of the rice.

But as he continued to be moved by the unfolding tragedy in Haiti, this week Sullivan doubled his order with an additional 21 tons of rice for shipment.

Meanwhile, in Stuttgart—the self-proclaimed “Rice Capital of the World”—First Baptist Church Pastor Sam Roberts was looking for a way for his church to respond to the crisis in Haiti.

After a little research, Roberts said he was convinced to partner with Florida Baptists because of their long-standing commitment to Haiti and the number of churches that had been started over the past 15 years.

The congregation, many of whom are employed in the rice industry, determined that they, too, could transport rice to Miami with the final destination of Haiti.

With a commitment to ship two truckloads, totaling 80,000 pounds of rice, church leaders called the Florida Baptist Convention with their news.

It was only after a conversation with Sullivan that they learned the source of rice purchased for Haiti. “We had no idea that Florida Baptists were coming into Stuttgart to get rice,” said the pastor.

Sullivan said the experience was much like a modern-day twist on the Biblical miracle of the fishes and loaves. The Arkansas church essentially matched the commitment of Florida Baptists. Between the church’s efforts and those of Florida Baptists, 82 tons or 164,000 pounds of rice will arrive soon in Haiti.

Roberts said the congregation is excited about this direct connection with Haitian Baptists.

“I believe this is one way we can become involved in the partnership and continue to provide resources in the days to come. Helping Haiti will be a long-term effort,” Robert said.

Once the grain is delivered in Haiti, distribution of the rice will occur from the many Haitian Baptist churches in and around Port-au-Prince.

Florida Baptists' 15 years of partnership and assistance to Haitian Baptists has resulted in a model effort to distribute food without the chaos experienced at government controlled food distribution points, Sullivan said. "There is a respect shown when entering a church for food."

Noting that the average Haitian exists on a quarter cup of rice each day, Sullivan said every Baptist can be a part of the relief effort by sending \$20 to buy a one hundred pound bag of rice. "That will feed a family of four for a long time in Haiti," he explained.

But Sullivan was quick to note that other than food, Florida Baptists intend to bring something more to Haiti.

"We are going to stay there and help them rebuild their houses, help them rebuild their churches and help them rebuild their lives. Once the military is gone, the churches will still be there," he said.

"We really care about the people of Haiti and it's not just their physical being we care about. We are going to tell the story of Jesus to the Haitian people as we have been doing for the past 15 years."

Gifts can be sent to the Florida Baptist Convention at 1230 Hendricks Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32207, designated disaster relief. [Click here](#) to make contributions by credit card through the Convention's website.