

In Haiti, Florida workers move into action

By Barbara Denman
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PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (FBC)—A four-member Florida Baptist Convention assessment team was awakened by the 6.1 magnitude temblor that added to the agonies of Haitians this morning (Jan. 20).

Craig Culbreth, director of partnership missions, reported that the team was staying in the Florida convention's mission house in Port-au-Prince when the latest quake struck. They safely ran outside when the building began to shake.

Upon his arrival in Haiti Jan. 19, Culbreth reported: "The people look desperate. Many have died. It looks like a war zone.

"There is a gripping fear on the faces and in the eyes of the Haitian people. They refuse to go indoors for fear of their lives," Culbreth continued in a series of text messages. "Thousands are sleeping in the streets."

On Wednesday, an Arkansas Baptist medical team of doctors, nurses and emergency medical technicians traveling with the Florida team was busy treating hurt and injured Haitians in a Port-au-Prince Baptist church, Culbreth said.

Upon their arrival on Tuesday, the team provided medical aid at a refugee area and treated several family members of Florida Baptist Convention's mission house employees injured during the earthquake.

On Wednesday, Florida Baptist and International Mission Board workers began distributing food near the El Shaddai orphanage in Bon Repos, located north of the Port-au-Prince airport. The orphanage, operated by Marie Prinvil, a former Florida Baptist Convention employee, will house the volunteers on Wednesday night.

Food being distributed was purchased in Haiti by funds from the Florida Baptist Convention's Haitian Earthquake Relief fund.

Cecil Seagle, director of the Florida convention's mission division, reported that Dennis Wilbanks of the partnership missions department who is part of the team now in Haiti, was able to purchase a limited supply of food from distributors there "because he has contacts and experience to know where to get food after doing mass feedings in the aftermath of five hurricanes."

But more food will be needed than what is available in Haiti, Seagle said.

Partnering with First Baptist Church in Stuttgart, Ark., the Florida convention is in the process of shipping 82 tons or 164,000 pounds of rice to Miami for delivery in Haiti.

The convention's Haitian missionary staff members have been "hard at work" doing assessment of needs and damage to churches in Port-au-Prince, Culbreth reported.

Repairs are being made to the convention's mission house which is not as badly damaged by the earthquake as initially feared, he said.

The mission house, located between the airport and downtown Port-au-Prince, will serve as the base of operations for Florida Baptist relief efforts.

This weekend, members of the Florida Baptist relief team are expected to leave Haiti and meet in Hialeah with IMB and North American Mission Board leaders to develop a comprehensive and detailed plan of how Southern Baptists "can address as many needs in Haiti and as soon as possible," said Seagle, who was meeting with NAMB officials in Alpharetta, Ga., on Wed.

The Florida Baptist Convention has established a Haiti earthquake relief fund. [Click here](#) to make donations by credit card online. Donations also may be sent to Florida Baptist Convention, 1230 Hendricks Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32257. Designate on check "Haitian Earthquake relief." For more information, call 800-226-8584, ext. 3135; or 904-596-3135.

All funds received for this purpose will go to relief efforts; none will be used for administrative costs.