



If not you, then who?

If not now, then when?

Dear fellow laborers,

14 Jan 2010

It has been both humbling and encouraging to see the outpouring of concern for the people of Haiti. Our phone has not stopped ringing, nor has e-mail stopped filling our inbox since the tragedy in Haiti struck just a few days ago.

As is still the case, you know almost as much as we do about the situation on the ground, except to report that we received a message indicating Luc Deratus was not in Port when the earthquake hit. It is almost certain that his home was destroyed, but he is safe and well. That news was so very welcome to all who know him for the tireless worker he is.

We also heard from Gerard, our translator from Liancourt (pronounced Lee-ahn-coo) who told us that the schools we support -- all of them outside Port and the surrounding areas were undamaged. All of our kids are alive and unharmed and the buildings we built are standing strong.

Still, we have no news of the orphanage we built in Leurbourg (pronounced le-boo) where news is slow to get out. It is literally in the immediate zone of Port / Cite Soleil where the damage has been the worst. The news media is reporting total devastation in that region. Because of those reports, we are concerned that the orphanage has been lost or damaged. We assume that the school in Cite Soleil is also destroyed. That school boasts a student population of around 450 students. However, until we can speak to someone in Leurbourg or Cite Soleil, we cannot confirm any of our hopes or fears.

Many have asked whether we are going as planned in about two weeks. The answer is simply that we do not know. Who will be allowed in country and who will be allowed to keep reserved seats on planes remains to be seen. Will there be transportation available? Will the roads be unblocked by then? So many questions cannot be answered now. We must wait for more information before we can make intelligent decisions.

Many of you have asked us about donations. If you have been following the news closely, you have heard that the only effective way to help is financially. Donation of goods is being discouraged. Right now, the full focus of the international community is on rescue and emergency medical care. Heavy equipment and construction engineering teams will be hard at it for weeks. Right now, additional civilian help is not being sought, nor encouraged.

We will be carrying funds into Haiti for recovery and sustenance purposes. Some of you have already sent us your donations to this end. Those funds will be used for much needed medical supplies (antibiotics) and food. Thank you.

However, you have also been asking for Suzie's and my recommendations regarding where to send your cash donations apart from Practical Compassion. It has been our experience and observation that government handled donations are frequently squandered, mismanaged and lost

in large quantities to corruption on the ground.

In my opinion, you will get the "most bang for the buck" with organizations like Doctors Without Borders. Their people are almost all volunteer, and the volunteers (physicians included) pay their own way. See their website at www.doctorswithoutborders.org. Their operation is lean, efficient, non-partisan and vital. I strongly encourage you to consider donating directly to them. While our work is also important, the greatest need right now is for immediate emergency intervention and Doctors Without Borders is getting the job done. Donations which come to us for emergency relief will be used for recovery care, but the greatest need this week is not recovery care, it is survival care. Practical Compassion welcomes your support and needs it, but we are not the most important outlet this week. We will come into our own direct ministry in a few weeks. Again, my recommendation is www.Doctorswithoutborders.org if you want to make an immediate impact.

Rest assured, every dime we receive for this disaster relief WILL get into the hands of the people who need it -- every dime.

Again, thank you for caring, and for doing something about it.

Your servants,

George and Suzie Zimmerman