

Haitians seek shelter near church in Port-au-Prince

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PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (BP)—A blue tarp tied to what is left of Shiloh Baptist Church in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, serves as a safe haven for some members who survived the Jan. 12 earthquake.



Members of Shiloh Baptist Church in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which lost four key leaders in the Jan. 12 earthquake, gather outside what's left of their church building. As church members recount stories of that horrific day, they ask for prayer that God will raise up new leaders to guide their church. (IMB PHOTO/Baptist Press)

A few dozen families who lost their homes are living outside the church under the tarp. The earthquake damaged the building, collapsed the church's school and took the lives of Pastor Bienne Lamerique and three other church leaders.

One member said that, of the 2,000-member congregation, only 100 have

been accounted for since the 7.0 magnitude quake that is believed to have killed hundreds of thousands of people in Haiti.

[International Mission Board](#) missionaries Dawn Goodwin and Carlos Llambes, Baptists from the Dominican Republic and a missionary from another organization visited Shiloh Baptist and other churches in the area to review damage and encourage members.

Many pews at Shiloh Baptist remain overturned and support beams appear to be damaged. Metal rods in the beams were bent from the shifting weight of the roof during the earthquake. The church building was under construction, so the congregation had been meeting in an open-air auditorium.

Twenty-five-year-old Pierre Anderson and several other church members were in the auditorium when the earthquake hit. A few members were injured, but none seriously, Anderson said. He and the others later learned their pastor and three other church leaders had died in the disaster; Lamericque died of injuries sustained when his house collapsed.

Anderson and a handful of other church members shared their stories with IMB missionary Mark Rutledge Jan. 18. Rutledge, currently on stateside assignment, is in Haiti to help translate for a media team as they report on the damage.



Although some of the walls remain standing, a collapsed roof has made Shiloh Baptist Church in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, too unsafe to use. Instead, church members gather for daily worship services in a small open lot on the side of the property. (IMB PHOTO/Baptist Press)

"We don't know where our future leaders will come from," Anderson told the missionary.

Rutledge paused while translating for Anderson, who speaks French Creole, the heart language of Haitians. He turned and cried for a moment while members of the congregation watched.

"One of their remaining leaders told them that they just need to hold on a little longer," said Rutledge, who served in Haiti for 26 years.

When Rutledge and his wife, Peggy, began serving as career missionaries in 1987, the couple attended Lamerique's first church start, which met in a small house in a Port-au-Prince slum. The Rutledges became close friends and prayer partners with Lamerique and his wife.

Anderson also told Rutledge he lost his two sisters in the earthquake. One of the bodies has yet to be pulled from a collapsed building.

His faith is what is getting him through the crisis, Anderson said.

"It's been the church's encouragement that has helped give me strength," Anderson said. The church has been holding services every day outside the building since the quake.

"No matter what happens in life, the only thing that matters is Jesus Christ," Anderson continued. "If you have faith, he will sustain you."

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**Message from IMB Haiti
missionary Mark Rutledge.**

"The same God that allowed this to happen can rebuild it," added Roseman Louis, who lost a cousin and a sister.

For now, the church continues to move forward, but Anderson admits they are struggling for direction and to meet physical needs since water, food and other supplies are limited.

Thousands of displaced people—like members of Shiloh Baptist Church—are living on the streets, in parks and just about anywhere there is open space. Bodies still can be seen lying on the street or partially exposed in the remains of collapsed buildings.

Amid the dire situation, "a revival could happen..." Rutledge said. "... If the focus is on Jesus, that kind of change can happen ... a change that is more than skin deep.

"I think there is huge potential for revival," Rutledge added. "I believe there is hope."