

Baptists respond to needs in Haiti after killer quake devastates capital

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PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—More than 3 million Haitians were left standing in rubble after a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the capital city of Haiti Jan. 12. As thousands were left without clean water and proper food, Texas Baptists launched efforts to bring aid to the Haitians.

Texas Baptists are helping relief efforts by supporting the work of Texas Baptist Men disaster response, as well as the relief work that will take place in the future by other institutions affiliated with Texas Baptists to bring spiritual and physical restoration to Port-au-Prince.

TBM provided 5,000 water purification systems that were to be loaded on a C-130 military transport plane and flown from Carswell Air Base to Haiti Jan. 14, according to Mickey Lenamon, TBM associate executive director.



Destruction lines the streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, after an earthquake rocked the island nation. (Photo: AFP / Getty Images / Daniel Morel)

To support TBM disaster relief efforts financially, visit texasbaptistmen.org or mail a check directly to Texas Baptist Men, 5352 Catron, Dallas 75227.

Texas Baptist Men received a \$10,000 Texas Hope 2010 care grant for disaster relief. The money comes from gifts to the Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger.

“We’re trying to respond along with the rest of the world to the earthquake in Haiti,” said Joe Haag, who helps coordinate the offering for the [Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission](#). “Texas Baptist Men in their usual way have a role to play in terms of quick response. We’re trying to be a part of helping them fund their response.”

World hunger care grants help support more immediate action for acute needs around the globe. For more information about the hunger offering, visit www.bgct.org/worldhunger. To give to the offering, visit www.bgct.org/give .

The Baptist General Convention of Texas also is collecting funds it will distribute through its partners, including Texas Baptist Men and institutions affiliated with Texas Baptists. The gifts will provide long-term disaster relief. To give, visit www.texasbaptists.org/haitiearthquake and click on “give now” or send a check marked for disaster relief to the Texas Baptist Mission Foundation at 333 N. Washington, Dallas 75246-1798.

“At this time, we are gathering donations to be used by Texas Baptist disaster relief to meet the needs of the people who are suffering in Haiti,” said Bill Arnold, president of the Texas Baptists Missions Foundation and BGCT disaster response coordinator.

“These funds will be used to buy food, provide water filters and eventually assist volunteer teams to go to Haiti at the proper time.”

Although Texas Baptists do not anticipate sending relief teams to Haiti in the immediate future due to travel conditions, volunteers may be needed as Baptist missionaries in the country make requests for aid.

Individuals and churches interested in assisting needs can list their skills, resources and desired method of service through Church2Church partnerships by visiting www.texasbaptists.org/haitiearthquake and clicking on “register now” under the partner label.



A man calls for help after being trapped at the Port-au-Prince University after a major earthquake struck on January 13th. (Photo Reuters/Reuters TV courtesy www.alertnet.org)

“This is an opportunity for Texas Baptists to minister in the name of Jesus to people who are suffering and who do not have the hope of Christ in their lives,” Arnold said.

“We hope that in addition to meeting human needs that everything done will bring glory to God. In the end, we hope to see that more Haitians have come to know the love of Christ.”

Other groups with Texas ties also are involved in relief work or efforts to raise money for it.

The State of Texas has placed [Baptist Child & Family Services](#) on stand-by to support federal response efforts in Haiti. The San Antonio-based agency's resources, which include 300 emergency management and medical personnel in addition to an extensive cache of medical equipment, are prepared to be deployed within 48 hours should BCFS be activated.

The BCFS role in response efforts would include establishing two 500-bed hospital alternate care facilities in Haiti. These facilities will be completely self-contained and self-sufficient, operating off generator power and manned by a team of medical professionals that include physicians, nurses, pharmacists and paramedics.

An Oklahoma congregation affiliated with the BGCT, NorthHaven Church in Norman, launched efforts to raise relief funds to be distributed through

Baptist World Aid. The group primarily is doing this through a Facebook group and the church website, www.northaven-church.net.

[Baptist World Aid](#) has pledged \$20,000 in emergency funds for Haiti. BWAid director Paul Montacute said grants of \$10,000 each were committed to the Baptist Convention of Haiti, a group of 110 churches and 82,000 members established in 1964, and the Haiti Baptist Mission, a network of 330 churches and schools founded in 1943.

Montacute reported Baptist relief agencies from North America and around the world are considering how best to help. Two representatives of BWAid's Rescue 24 team of first responders were en route to Haiti from Hungary, where they planned to link up with North Carolina Baptist Men, he said.

Buckner and its international adoption affiliate, Dillon International, are collecting funds to bring medical relief.

Deniese Dillon, executive director of [Dillon International](#), said donations were being sent to Dillon and Buckner to be forwarded to Gladys Thomas' Hope Hospital, which has received many casualties from the quakes.

"We've worked with Gladys for 25 years," Dillon said. "Our background has been placing orphan children from her Hope Hospital and Haiti Home for Children with adoptive families."

Gladys Thomas also serves as director for Dillon's Haitian adoption programs.

The funds will be used to offset the needs Hope Hospital will meet over the next several weeks.

"Gladys will be bringing people to her hospital, and she'll be overflowing with victims," Dillon said. "We're collecting funds to purchase gasoline for the generators, food and additional medical supplies."

Officials estimate tens of thousands were killed in the Jan. 12 earthquake.

Dillon noted she had spoken to Thomas Jan. 13 and “learned that the Children’s Village and Hope Hospital are OK. There has been some flooding, and one of the walls on a building collapsed, and many people are gathering in this location, but otherwise all is well. The Village (orphanage) has food, but the children are scared. There will be many people throughout the Haitian community that will continue to come to Hope Hospital looking for care. ... It is already very full with earthquake victims.”

To give to Buckner, visit www.buckner.org.

Lance Wallace, director of communications for the Atlanta-based Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, said that group’s response to the earthquake would be long-term recovery and not search and rescue.

Volunteers looking to serve through CBF will receive assignments after the initial emergency phase has passed. Wallace said the quickest way to help is to give money designated Haiti relief.

A Southern Baptist assessment team was working out logistics for a trip into Haiti early the week of Jan. 18, to connect with Haitian Baptist leaders and craft plans for disaster relief efforts.

Serious security concerns could emerge as people become more desperate for food and water in areas where police and military control have not been established, said Jim Brown, U.S. director for [Baptist Global Response](#).

The capital's main prison also collapsed in the earthquake, raising the prospect of criminals escaping into the city. As a result, near-term attempts to travel to the country would be ill-advised, he said.

The five-member assessment team will evaluate ministry needs like rescue operations, medical services and shelter, as well as logistical concerns like transportation and security, Brown said.

A Florida Baptist disaster relief team is planning its own assessment trip for the weekend, and the two teams will collaborate in their reporting to the national Southern Baptist disaster relief network.

The teams also will report back on long-term strategies to help Haitians rebuild their lives.

"There are two Baptist conventions in Haiti, and the [Florida Baptist Convention](#) has historically partnered with one convention, while the International Mission Board has partnered with the other," Brown said. "We will combine our findings to draft the overall strategy."

The Southern Baptist assessment team will be composed of representatives from Baptist Global Response, North American Mission Board and disaster relief specialists from Kentucky, Mississippi and South Carolina, Brown said.

Initial funding for the relief effort is coming from the International Mission Board's disaster relief fund. New contributions toward the relief effort can be made at the Baptist Global Response website, gobgr.org.

Money donated to the relief effort will be used 100 percent for ministry in Haiti, Brown said.

Apart from donating to the disaster relief fund, concerned individuals can help greatly by joining in focused prayer for Haiti's 9 million people, more

than 80 percent of whom live below the poverty line, said David Brown, who with his wife, Jo, directs Baptist Global Response work in the Americas.

Compiled from reports by Texas Baptist Communications, Texas Baptist Men, Associated Baptist Press and Baptist Global Response