

UCC Earthquake Responses in Haiti and Chile

United Church of Christ members and congregations have responded with overwhelming support after earthquakes in Haiti on January 12 and Chile on February 27. For example, more than \$650,000 has been donated for Haiti Earthquake Relief with more than \$250,000 donated in the first six days.

The UCC is supporting Church World Service (CWS) in providing basic supplies for quake survivors. Among the supplies provided by CWS' partnership with the Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance are blankets, medical supplies, food and water. Other ACT Alliance efforts are helping to construct temporary water systems and providing water purification materials, tents and food packages.

The UCC also is supporting IMA (Interchurch Medical Assistance) World Health in providing 60 medicine boxes to Port-au-Prince. In addition, Global Ministries of the UCC/Disciples of Christ is supporting longtime partner, the National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti (CONASPEH) in relief efforts among member congregations.

It is anticipated that the UCC will be responding to the Haitian disaster for 5 to 8 years.

In Chile, CWS is working with two Chilean agencies, FASIC (Fundacion de Ayuda Social de las Iglesia Cristianas) and IMECH, the Methodist Church of Chile. As part of the international ACT Alliance network, CWS is providing emergency assistance such as food, water and shelter

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) solidarity grants have also been sent to three Global Ministries partners in Chile and CWS to support response initiatives.

For the latest updates, visit:
www.ucc.org/disaster/
www.globalministries.org



A young Haitian boy cradles a Church World Service blanket and hygiene kit. [Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance photo]

HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Pray for the people of Haiti and Chile, their leaders and emergency and humanitarian aid workers.

2. Please help the people of Haiti and Chile by sending gifts payable to your congregation marked for OGHS "Haiti Earthquake Relief" or "Chile Earthquake Relief" with the request they be sent through your Conference office on to Wider Church Ministries.

OR
Send gifts, made out to Wider Church Ministries and marked in the memo portion OGHS "Haiti Earthquake Relief" or "Chile Earthquake Relief" to Wider Church Ministries; 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115.

OR
Make a secure online donation at:
www.ucc.org/make-a-gift.

Hygiene and Baby Kits are urgently needed for survivors in Haiti. This is one very concrete and "hands-on" thing that church groups can do.

Church World Service has issued an urgent call for **Gifts of the Heart Kits**.

For more information, go to:
www.churchworldservice.org and click on **KITS**.

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Federated Church of East Arlington Aids Haiti Relief



Rev. Marshall, left, receives check from John Davies, right. [Photo by Russ Record]

Funds for Haiti Relief were presented to Rev. Bert Marshall, Director, Church World Service (CWS) New England, during the Sunday worship service of The Federated Church of East Arlington on February 7th. At the church's annual meeting on January 24th the congregation voted to withdraw \$25,000 from its investment funds for Haiti relief. After a moving sermon on his experiences with CWS in Haiti, John Davies, Federated Church Moderator made the presentation to Rev. Marshall.

Upon receiving this gift, Marshall responded, "I am overwhelmed by the magnitude of this gift. The generosity displayed by the East Arlington church is exceptional and beyond anything I've experienced in response to this earthquake in Haiti, which in New England has been exceptional."

In addition, a check for \$2,641 was presented to Rev. Marshall by Kathie Van Benschoten and Kate Coss, members of the Federated Church Mission Committee. This check represents gifts from individual church members with a match from the Church Mission Committee. 100% of both checks will support relief activities in Haiti. Bert Marshall, in describing how these gifts will be put to work said, "The monies contributed will be used not only to continue material aid in Haiti but also working with persons with disabilities in Port-au-Prince, beginning to rebuild the buildings that house our children's programs at House of Hope and to continue to provide psycho-social assistance and trauma counseling."



Rev. Marshall, center, receives check from Kathie VanBenschoten, right. Kate Coss, far left. [Photo by Russ Record]

Changing Lives: Fearless Discipleship in Action - 2010 Annual Meeting – June 3-5 – Lyndon State College



The churches of the Vermont Conference, United Church of Christ are called to gather in faith, hope, prayer,

action and celebration for the 215th Annual Meeting of the Conference, June 3 – June 5 at Lyndon State College in Lyndonville, Vermont.

“**Changing Lives: Fearless Discipleship in Action**” - Our theme for this year’s Annual Meeting has grown out of the two previous meetings. We have considered what it means **to be the Church in the 21st century** ... we have heard the challenge to **divine in to life in Christ** ... and now we consider through prayer, worship and workshops, fellowship and plenaries how our relationship with God, Jesus Christ, and the church **changes lives** -- ours and those around us.

Our special guests for the weekend will be Rev. Dr. Matthew Boulton, and

Rev. Elizabeth Boulton. Matt, a professor at Harvard Divinity School, will be our keynote speaker. He is a dynamic speaker whose perspective has helped to open clergy and laypeople to new understanding and fearless discipleship. Liz currently serves Old South Church (UCC) in Boston as the Minister of Discipleship. She will be our primary worship leader. Liz and Matt will bring their band, *Butterflyfish*, whose music is “a rootsy blend of American folk, gospel, blues, country, and bluegrass, cooked down and spiced up into fresh takes on the spiritual themes so characteristic of old American music.”

In addition to contribution of the Boultons, Annual Meeting 2010 will be enriched by Spirit-filled worship, Conference business, Peacemakers’ Breakfasts, wonderful displays, and many occasions for reflection, renewal, fellowship, and celebration.

It may seem bold, but we are confident that some of the **life changing** possibilities that life in Christ offers will actually happen during our time together. [More info: www.vtcucc.org/annual_meeting.html]

When I Was In Prison

By Jeanne Zammataro

Since late October Bill Cooley has been helping to lead a weekly Bible study at the Springfield Prison, and it has been a positive, rewarding and educational experience for him. He hopes to lead his own study at the prison, but in the meantime he has been assisting John and Betty Nunnikhoven of Chester, who have led a strong prison ministry for many years.

Bill describes his experience as follows: “When I began I did not know what to expect from the inmates, thinking that they might attend merely as a way to get out of their cells for a time but with little interest in the topic. What I found were men (typically 10-12) who had turned seriously to Christianity in their confinement as a source of focus, comfort and redemption. I can not help but think of the apostle Paul who wrote many of his New Testament letters in chains in Roman prisons. Sure, some inmates are more committed than others, but they all contribute sincerely to our discussions. Some are taking theology correspondence courses, earning degrees, and many can cite chapter and verse as they offer their comments. Each week as our two-hour lesson ends, every participant comes up to us volunteers to say, ‘Thank you so much for coming in. It means more than you can know.’ Who would need more than that to keep coming back?”

“As we discuss Biblical issues in the security of our small group, individuals open up to candidly express their fears, anguish, loneliness but also their hopes for when they might be free again. One inmate told passionately about how cruel his father had been and that he could now see that he had become just like him. He pledged to be a kinder person when he ‘got out.’ Many talk about how they had

violated ‘man’s laws’ but how they now want to follow God’s laws.

“For the past two months we have been studying the Ten Commandments in Exodus. Let’s just say that a few Commandments have been violated by class members, but discussing a single commandment for two hours has led to a greater appreciation by all of us of the real meaning and importance of each one.

“Since there are just under 400 inmates at Springfield our dozen is a small percentage of the whole, but the Christian sincerity of those we meet with has made me feel that our efforts are worth coming back for each week.”

Those of us who have cooked at Dismas House or have led worship at the Springfield facility have had the same reaction as Bill has: the effort involved is worth coming back for. Both Dismas House residents and prison worshippers have thanked us profusely.

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--Jeanne Zammataro and Bill Cooley are members of the 2nd Congregational Church of Londonderry, UCC. Jeanne is also a member of the Vermont Conference, Dept. of Mission, Prison Justice Committee



Southern State Correctional Facility
Springfield, VT
[Photo by Vermont Dept. of Buildings & General Services]

Vermont News

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Send them to: information@vtcucc.org.

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