



Church of the Brethren

May 2011

Re: Brethren Disaster Ministries Report to District Conferences

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As a new well was being drilled in Haiti by Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) after the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010, an unexpected surge of water gushed up from underground. This remarkable fountain of water – known as an artesian well – provided the proverbial “cup of cold water” just as the cholera epidemic started, not only saving lives, but bringing hope when desperately needed. The new freshwater well, along with a supply of 200 water filtration buckets, each providing safe water for three families, can be credited with largely sparing Haitian Brethren and their neighbors from the deadly cholera outbreak.

The Haiti earthquake response has transitioned from emergency relief to long-term sustainable recovery, including reconstruction and agricultural production. Brethren Disaster Ministries has as one of its goals the construction of 50 homes for earthquake survivors during 2011. Many of these 3-room, earthquake-resistant, cement block homes have already been completed. Construction of the future ministry center and Haiti Church of the Brethren headquarters is nearing completion.

Workcamps organized by BDM are nourishing the valuable relationship between U.S. and Haitian Brethren. BDM has collaborated with Eglise des Freres Haitiens (the Haitian Church of the Brethren), Global Mission Partnerships, Church World Service and IMA World Health throughout the earthquake response.

In the US, one of the most violent spring storm seasons in decades claims hundreds of lives and caused billions of dollars in damage. In the tornado-stricken South, BDM is supporting long-term recovery planning in North Carolina, and collaborating with the Virginia and Shenandoah District response in Pulaski, Virginia. These areas may develop into BDM rebuilding sites.

Children's Disaster Services (CDS) care givers responded in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, one of the hardest hit areas, providing a safe and comforting setting for the young children of families impacted by the storms.

Teams of Brethren Disaster Ministries volunteers are currently putting their faith into action in response to massive flooding in Tennessee. New rebuilding projects were opened in Ashland City in January and in Brentwood in June of this year. BDM completed its Hurricane Katrina reconstruction project in the St. Bernard and Orleans Parishes of Louisiana in early June, nearly six years after the storm devastated the Gulf Coast. A long-term rebuilding project along the Tippecanoe River in Indiana was completed in January.

(continued)

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.

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A unique opportunity arose after a tornado struck a Sioux Reservation near Dupree, South Dakota last fall. BDM joined other voluntary agencies and FEMA in securing and winterizing temporary housing prior to the cold winter for Native Americans living in impoverished conditions. Also, following a devastating tsunami in the US territory of American Samoa, BDM led an ecumenical effort to rebuild homes.

All together in 2010, 141 homes in the US were restored by 1,531 volunteers who gave more than 9,852 workdays at an estimated value of \$1,646,858.

In February, Children's Disaster Services volunteers in California organized a Rapid Response to a large apartment fire in San Bernardino that displaced approximately 200 people. The CDS team of 8 cared for 30 children in a safe setting that allowed them to play and express their feelings.

Five CDS workshops trained 107 volunteers in 2010, and so far this year 103 have been trained. Seventy-two of these were trained in workshops sponsored by the Hawaii VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster). CDS staff worked with the National Commission for Children and Disaster subcommittee on sheltering, resulting in a document that is congruent with our work and will shape the work of all organizations working with children in shelters.

The Emergency Disaster Fund enables the Church of the Brethren to bring relief, hope and healing to the most vulnerable survivors caught in emergency situations and disasters at home and around the world. EDF allocations totaling \$1,360,000 supported this work in 2010. In the United States, this included the disaster recovery programs of BDM and faith-based partners, covering 20 states and American Samoa. Internationally, in addition to the Haiti Earthquake Response, the EDF supported efforts following floods in Pakistan and Guatemala; the earthquake and tsunami in Chile; food crisis in southern Sudan and Niger; violence and unrest in Kyrgyzstan; and a mudslide that engulfed several villages in Uganda.

This year, the EDF has provided grants for emergency relief and recovery following the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami in Japan, civil unrest in Libya, the US severe spring storms, Tennessee flood recovery, and additional grants for Brethren Disaster Ministries' comprehensive Haiti Earthquake Response.

It is the supporters of Brethren Disaster Ministries who make it possible for this ministry to be a fountain of hope – just like the artesian well in Haiti – to many people around the world. We thank God as we celebrate the faithful dedication of all our volunteers, the financial support, and the prayers of many.

In Christ's Service,

Roy Winter

Roy Winter, Executive Director

On behalf of BDM Staff - Judy Bezon, LethaJoy Martin, Betsy Mullich, Jane Yount, and Zachary Wolgemuth