

## **A Pastoral Letter from the Rt. Rev. Pierre W. Whalon Candlemas, 2 February 2010**

Dear laypeople and clergy of the Convocation,

On January 31, Episcopalians gathered in Port au Prince on the ruins of their former Cathedral of La Sainte Trinité to celebrate their first Eucharist since earthquakes devastated the island. The Episcopal Diocese of Haiti, largest diocese of the so-called “American” church, has lost most of its infrastructure - including its diocesan cathedral complex, most of its 169 churches, some 253 schools that previously served 80,000 students, from pre-school to university level, a nursing school, a music school, and its network of hospitals and health clinics. Despite this devastation, the Church in Haiti is committed to continuing its ministries to the Haitian people. In an interview with the Episcopal News Service, Bishop Jean Zaché Duracin describes the work of the church as practicing “a gospel of wholeness.” Church leaders continue this philosophy in the midst of the crisis; they have already found ways to serve the broader community in Haiti. The diocese is now caring for some 30,000 people living in 23 camps in and around Port au Prince and Léogane.

For those of us in the Convocation in Europe, our task will be to support the work of the Diocese of Haiti, first with emergency funds dedicated to serving the immediate needs of the Haitian people, and later, as partners dedicated to the task of rebuilding the Haitian infrastructure, and of course, our network of Episcopal schools, hospitals, and churches. To ensure that our efforts are maximized, I have called on my Council of Advice to coordinate with the Mission and Outreach Committees in each of your parishes to create a “Partners with Haiti” project.

Last Saturday, January 30, the Council and I heard from Ms. Anne Swardson, the chair of the Cathedral’s Mission & Outreach Committee. She noted that long-term help will require coordination among all out congregations’ outreach committees. She mentioned that several members of the Cathedral have suggested that since our Cathedral and the Haitian Cathedral share the same name, “Holy Trinity”, we might mount an effort around the Episcopal Church to rebuild the cathedral in Port au Prince. Whatever our final long-term project turns out to be, we will need to devise a structure to share ideas, coordinate with one another, and interact and communicate information coming from our sisters and brothers in Haiti. I have told the Bishop of Haiti that I will be traveling to visit them as soon as practicable. Working in partnership with the Diocese of Haiti, we will listen carefully to the Haitian people as they determine their own needs, and then, we will act together, as companions called to serve God’s mission.

I believe that the churches in Europe are uniquely called to the mission of supporting the work of the Church in Haiti. We have strong ties to this community through our leadership of the the Francophone Network of the Anglican Communion. I currently serve as President and the Rev. Mary Ellen Dolan as Secretary to this network

connecting four million francophone Anglicans around the world. Furthermore, Bishop Duracin is well known among us, having addressed us at the 204 convention in Wiesbaden. There are also other good friends such as the Rev. Canon Ogé Beauvoir, formerly grants director at Trinity Church, Wall Street, New York, who is currently the dean of Haiti's seminary, the diocesan Development Officer, the Rev. Frantz Cole, and the Rev. Lauren Stanley, an Episcopal missionary to Haiti who was visiting her home in Virginia when the earthquake occurred. Bishop Duracin has tapped her to coordinate relief efforts on his behalf. Canon Beauvoir is the past president of the Francophone Network as well.

We have all been profoundly moved by the death of the daughter of Samuel and Helena Mbele-Mbong, members of Emmanuel Church, Geneva. Lisa Mbele-Mbong's colleagues at the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), where she was a Human Rights Officer, describe her as someone who believed a situation could change, no matter how difficult or challenging. She dreamed of a better life for the Haitian people - people who were already, before the earthquake, among the poorest in the world. She dedicated her life defending their rights, devising solutions to their problems, and creating new models to improve the efficacy of international development aid to ensure the wellbeing and dignity of all. Lisa's 10-year old son, Nady, observed that while his mom did not go to church every Sunday, she lived God's mission every day through her work. She perished along with dozens of colleagues attending a meeting at their headquarters when the quake hit, and will be buried from Emmanuel Church on February 11. We dedicate this project to her selfless contribution to the Haitian people and to her tireless work to heal the Body of Christ.

When one part of the Body of Christ is suffering, we all suffer (1 Cor. 12:26). As we prepare for the season of Lent on February 17, I call on each of you to make your Lenten discipline of self-denial especially in solidarity with the suffering Body of Christ in Haiti. I am asking that you consider studying the Bible together along with the *Companions in Transformation* Report & Study guide, easily available at the Episcopal Church website, so that we might sharpen our sense of what God's will is in our particular mission here in Europe.

I am very proud that many of you have already reached out very generously to the Haitian people, supporting the efforts of Episcopal Relief and Development and other relief organizations. Bishop Duracin has told me already how grateful he, the Diocese of Haiti and the Haitian people are for your help in their earliest days of need. I invite you to join us in our efforts to become genuine long-term Partners With Haiti in the rebuilding of our church there and their nation.

In Christ,  
The Rt. Rev. Pierre W. Whalon