

# MECA

*The Newsletter of the Massachusetts Episcopal Clergy Association*

## Bringing Hope to Haiti

By The Rev. Zenetta Armstrong

*This issue of the MECA newsletter features reports on ways that clergy and congregations are responding to the devastating earthquake that destroyed much of the infrastructure of Haiti. Our hearts and prayers are with the Sisters of St. Margaret and their ministries in Haiti that were crippled by the earthquake. To find out how to help the Sisters of St. Margaret and others who are rebuilding Haiti, please go to:*

*www.smbos.com/Pages/Haiti.html. We invite further reports on efforts to respond to this crisis; please send your articles to the MECA Editor at [rectord@allsaintsbrookline.org](mailto:rectord@allsaintsbrookline.org)*

**O**n Tuesday, January 12, 2010 we heard the shocking news that Haiti had been devastated by one of the worst earthquakes in the western world. Church of the Holy Spirit is located in Mattapan which has one of the largest Haitian populations in the city of Boston. Approximately one third of the church's members are Haitian.

Consequently, CHS has several outreach ministries that include a significant amount of Haitians who are not members of the church. The church's outreach efforts to Haitian residents include the Mattapan Senior Center, a program sponsored by Ethos and Kit Clark, ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) Program sponsored by the Mattapan Adult Education Partnership (MAELP) and the Youth With A Choice Tutoring Program. The church also has ties to two elderly housing apartment buildings, of which approximately 75% its residents are Haitian. Our overseas mission includes partners in Port-au-Prince (Holy Trinity School, St. Vincent School and Foyer Notre Dame, a home for homeless

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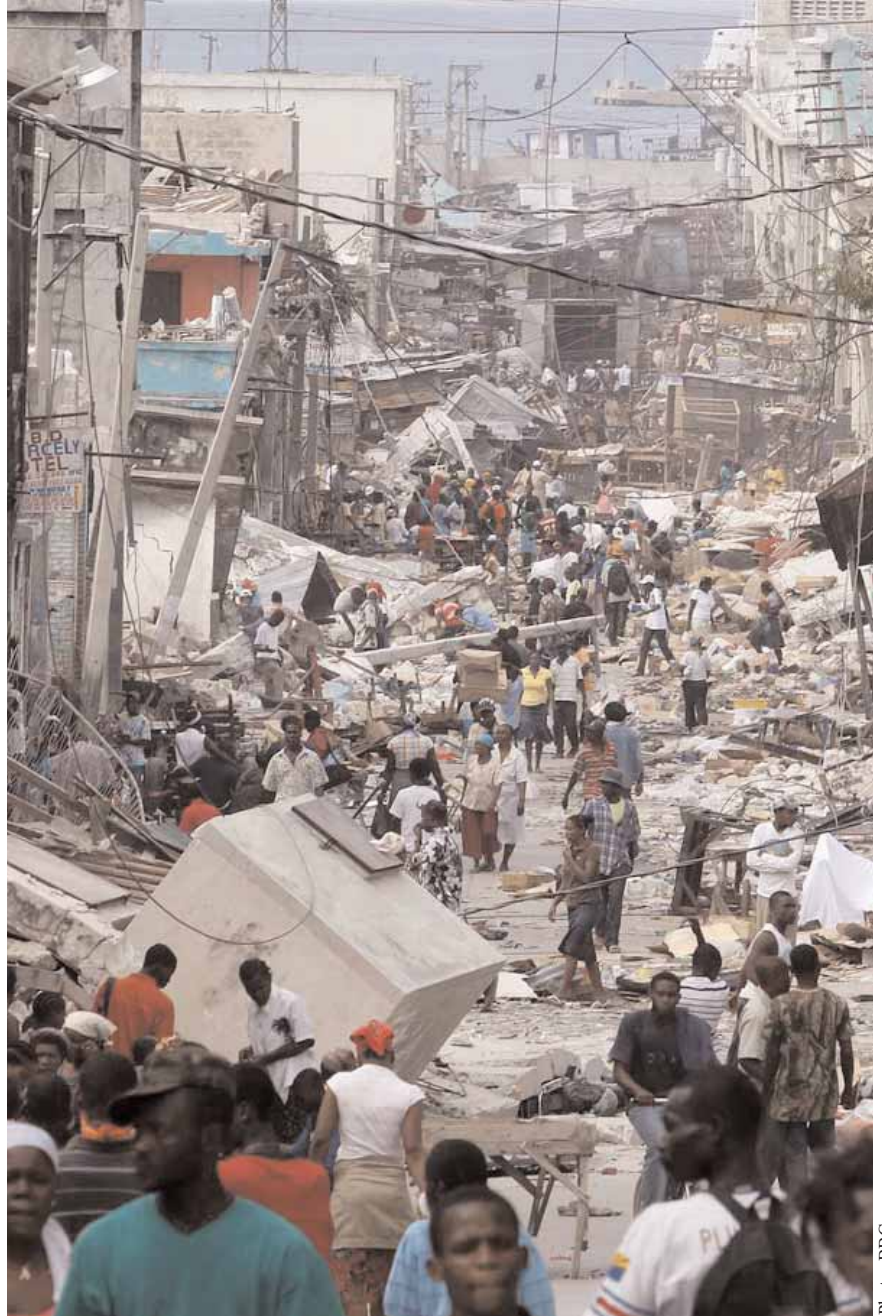


Photo: BBC

*Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent ministers of a new covenant.*

2 Corinthians 3: 5-6

## Bringing Hope to Haiti

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elders sponsored by the Sisters of St. Margaret), all destroyed by the earthquake. We also support St. Peter's Church and school in Mirabalais.

The strong Haitian presence in our community resulted in a desire to respond to the families of members of CHS and the outreach programs connected to the church who live in Haiti. After listening to the painful stories of those represented above and the helplessness and despair that many felt and shared, the church has responded in the following ways.

1. Church of the Holy Spirit launched "The Haiti Relief-Partners in Hope Campaign" The goal is to raise funds and send directly to family members in Haiti who have suffered the loss of loved ones, who are hurt or homeless.



2. We had two healing Services that allowed the community to gather for spiritual and emotional support. The first on January 15, and the second on January 31, 2010. We were filled with gratitude by the presence of Bishop Roy "Bud" Cederholm Jr. and the Very Rev. Jep Sreit, Jr., Dean of the Cathedral who joined us on Sunday January 31, at 3:00 PM. Those who attended were encouraged by their presence and felt supported.
3. The members of the Haitian Choir participated in "Singing in the Aftermath" held at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul on February 26, 2010; a benefit for Partners in Health and local Haitian ministries of greater Boston.
4. Fund-raising appeals - letters of appeal and other forms of communication are being used to get the word out. We are grateful for the members of CHS, friends, and all who have supported this effort, especially our partners from St. John's, Westwood.



We have several fund-raising efforts such as Tag's for Haiti and a benefit Concert that will be held on Sunday, April 18 at 5 PM at Church of the Holy Spirit.

At the writing of this communication, we have received requests for financial support from over 100 families. We have responded to 40 families thus far. The process implemented ensures that the recipients receive 100% of the funds directly. Members of CHS are also in touch with the families here and overseas to keep the link of support on going. One of the recipients, Marie Michelle Loiseau a student in our ESOL class, shares her pain and struggle as she writes: "Since then I feel like I am in a dense night without sleep. Troubled in my dreams. I have lost many members of my family, but those close to



me are 14. My remaining family in Haiti is my sister and her husband, brother and his wife and children who are all sleeping on the streets. I also have a niece who was found after 12 days and due to the help of my English teacher, Leonie Drummond and Church of the Holy Spirit who sent \$500.00 to buy food and medicine, now she is better. I thank God that I am in Boston, myself and my husband and three children. I have spent 1 year and 3 months without working. My husband works just to pay the rent

because he is not earning much. I have a great need to go to Haiti myself in person so I can find relief for my family but I need financial help in order to go.”

Marie’s story is the story of so many in our community. Our support is small but we are saving lives along with so many efforts from all over the state and country. If having read about our efforts you are moved to help, we

ask that you send your donation to Church of the Holy Spirit and indicate in a memo Haiti-Relief Partners in Hope. We are grateful for whatever you can do. Please continue to keep the people of Haiti in your prayers.

*The Rev. Zenetta Armstrong is Rector of Church of the Holy Spirit in Mattapan. You may contact her at: mattapanchs@aol.com*

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## Responding to Haiti

By The Rev. Dorsey McConnell

I pray we will grieve a while longer for Haiti.

This may sound like a strange hope, even a cruel one. But I am quite serious. The reason is that I think something fundamental may have happened to our hearts over the last several years. We are bombarded by ever-increasing, ever-intensifying waves of news, information and images, flooding our mental space with the banal, the silly, the sensuous, the rageful, and occasionally the genuinely and horrifically sad moments in the life of our increasingly connected global family. They sweep over us, we respond instantly, and then they are gone, and a new set appears crashing upon our consciousness. We do not have time to recover. We cannot feel deeply what we have seen and heard, at least not more than a few seconds, before we are swept up into the next wave of stimuli.

Warning: I am out of my field of expertise in what I am about to say. I am neither an evolutionary biologist nor a psychiatrist. However, it does seem to me that we have adapted to this habitual flood by drastically shortening the time we are able to "sit with" emotion of all kinds. We are told that our brains are supremely adaptive computers. If that is true, then isn't it possible we have actually made some sort of shift to handle the constant stream of emotionally demanding words and images simply by limiting the time we allow ourselves to be affected by them? I have no data, here. I am just wondering. But it would help explain why, as a culture, we seem less invested in things, why we are prone to move on, why everything that used to invite, and require, a steadfast and sustained commitment of the heart—from love to grief—has been reduced to something that must be dealt with quickly. We are provoked. We respond. We cool off. We move on. Only the most personal of our losses seem immune to this foreshortened sense of time.

The potential for this is obviously embedded in our nature. The great medieval rabbi and scholar Maimonides (a.k.a. Rambam), in one of his commentaries, considered the Jewish custom of marking grief for a loved one over a



year of observance, still the practice for Jews today. He noted that the human heart could not be so easily regulated. On the one hand, some grieve so fiercely that they threaten to burn themselves out. On the other hand, some respond more coldly, unable to find any emotion at all. The first case, he considered easier, recommending that the community gather around the person as a sort of emotional "container", reminding the mourner that loss is simply the way of the world. The second case, however, needed a different approach. Rambam saw in the mandate of the laws of mourning, in the length of time they required, an opportunity to heal the heart that does not feel deeply enough. He asked such a mourner to imagine that, in the first week of grief, it was as though a sword hung over his head, in the first month, that a sword was pointed at him in every room, in the first year, that a sword followed him in the street.

This may seem to us like a curious prescription, but it conveys a brilliant insight—namely, that grief isn't just a reaction to loss; it is an acknowledgment of our own mortality. The death of others should be like a sword that follows us in the street. We should be conscious, aware of our share in their lives, not because we love them, or even

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## Responding to Haiti

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because we know them, but because we share the same frailty and might dare hope for the same glory. That is the insight behind John Donne's famous observations that, "No man is an island, entire to himself," and that "every man's death diminishes me." As hard as it is, mourning is a reinforcement of the fact that we belong to the human race, and that our very life depends on the lives of others far beyond those we know. It deepens that knowledge in our souls and, as a result, plays a key role in growing us up. This is not a truth that can sink into us in the space of a New York second, or in the amount of time a "news cycle" gives us to digest its reported events. For if we allow ourselves to "sit with" the images that horrify, shock, and (hopefully) move us, there is a likelihood that we will be able to feel genuine grief for the loss of people we did not know until we heard of their deaths.

Something very precious happens when we get to that point. We receive a charism, an anointing that allows us to see the sufferings of others from their own point of view. We are no longer standing outside, looking in. We become a neighbor to them in the Valley of the Shadow. We experience compassion.

If there is any quality that supremely marks the ministry of Jesus, it is this. We read that, unlike the other teachers of his day, He taught with authority. And if we ask, what were the signs of His authority, at the top of the list would be his compassion. Unlike even his own disciples, He wades into crowds of the needy, because "he had compassion on them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34). Indeed, the letter to the Hebrews says that this compassion is part and parcel of Christ's high priesthood, "for we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (4:15) And again, "Therefore, he had to be made like

his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted." (2:17-18)

This Christ-centered compassion, then, becomes more than just a source of good works. It pushes back against forces that threaten to erode our common humanity. It slows down the bullet-train of our hyped-up media-saturated world and re-connects us to the precious gift we have in the recognition of our share in one another. That compassion characterizes Christian mission, and distinguishes the calling of the Church from any number of other service organizations who are performing valuable service in Haiti. It is the story of Pilgrim in Uganda, of our mission partners in New Orleans, of Saint Stephen's in the South End. It may, if we let it, become the ordinary story of our relationships here, with each other, the ones in the pew next to us, or across the aisle, whom we may have seen but have not known. That is all right. Compassion takes time. It presumes a willingness to suffer with others, in order eventually to enjoy with them the fruit of Christ's love. It presumes that we will move toward the stranger, until the one we did not know, becomes the one we truly know, and deeply love, for Christ's sake.

*Dorsey McConnell is Rector of the Church of the Redeemer in Chestnut Hill.*

*You may contact him at:  
dmcconnell@redeemerchestnuthill.org*

### CLERGY SPOUSES/PARTNERS MEET MONTHLY

Spouses and partners of clergy meet monthly (usually on the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm) at the Convent of the Order of St. Anne-Bethany, 25 Hillside Avenue, Arlington, MA 02476 (781-643-0921).

The group has been meeting for over ten years and has proven to be a wonderful fellowship offering friendship and mutual support. All spouses and partners of clergy are welcome.

For information, please contact the group's convener, Mr. Philip Whitbeck, 29 Princess Road, West Newton, MA 02465-1636, (617-969-8892) bpwhitbeck@rcn.com

# Response to Haiti

By the Rev. Jeffrey Gill

The Sunday after Haiti's devastating earthquake, we called an impromptu meeting after church for anyone who was interested in discussing our parish's response to the disaster. We knew that we had some natural connections to Haiti in the parish – our regular Wednesday morning Eucharist offering support for the Sisters of St. Margaret in Haiti; a parishioner whose mother has lived in Haiti for the past 10 years – but we also felt that there might be other connections we did not know about, or ideas we would not want to miss. About 25 people came to the meeting. We prayed, then briefly introduced ourselves with reference to why this was important to us. We came out of this meeting about an hour later with some action items, some short-term and others long-term, that would form the backbone of our parish's response to the disaster.

Prior to this, the morning after the earthquake, I had phoned Clarkson Williams to see if he had heard from his mother. Clarkson is a 40-something man in our parish, and a former vestry member, whose 82-year-old mother had moved from her comfortable home in South Carolina ten years ago following her husband's death to devote the rest of her life to the people in Gange, Haiti. She and Clarkson's father had been going to Haiti for several years before his death through their church in South Carolina, and were instrumental in helping Paul Farmer establish Partners in Health in Gange. "Mom's fine," he said. They did not suffer quake damage in Gange, which is about 40 miles outside of Port-au-Prince. He had heard from her by phone a few hours after the quake.

In subsequent conversations that week, I asked Clarkson if he would speak to our Sunday morning meeting after church, to give the group a primer on Haiti, including his own experiences visiting his mother there. His brief background included some of the recent political history as well as his knowledge of the Episcopal Church of Haiti and Partners in Health. His talk was extremely informative and helpful. He added a lot of texture to impressions of a country too easily dismissed as "the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere," a place we perceive only as somewhere people want to leave, irredeemably mired in poverty, political instability, corruption, and misery – without reference to its rich history and culture and the beauty of its people.

Other parishioners spoke of their connections to the

Sisters of St. Margaret. One has been selling Haitian vanilla to benefit the Sisters' work for many years. A relatively new parishioner spoke up about her colleague at Children's Hospital who was organizing an emergency shipment of medical supplies to Haiti. By the end of our meeting we had decided to take several actions, some immediate and some for the future:

We would immediately encourage people in the parish to support Haiti relief through ERD and/or Partners in Health, with announcements each week during church and in all of our printed and electronic media.

We held a sale the following Sunday morning of Haitian vanilla to support the work of the SSM.

We sent a list of medical supplies by email to the entire parish on Tuesday to be donated by that Friday morning for shipment to Haiti the next day. We had a very positive response to this appeal on very short notice.

We would begin to plan for a future mission trip, once they are prepared on the ground in Haiti to receive such groups. We have around 20 people who are ready and eager to go on a mission to be coordinated through Clarkson's mother, Jackie Williams.

We pledged ourselves to regular, on-going prayer for Haiti, long after it had receded from the headlines.

Although I have never been to Haiti, I have found myself bringing examples from the situation into sermons regularly since the earthquake. Haiti has awakened something in us here that is powerful, and people genuinely want to be involved in making a difference. When we ended our fiscal year with a \$6,000 surplus, our vestry immediately voted to use it for Haiti relief through ERD. People who have never before been interested in going on a mission trip are suddenly interested. Others are eager to support those who do go. Everybody seems to want to do something.

Our challenge is to keep the issues alive for the long term, because it will take a very long time to meet Haiti's need. It is one more way for our congregation to be engaged at a deep level with people who will undoubtedly change us at least as much as we help to change their lives.

*Jeffrey Gill is Rector of Christ Church in Andover.  
You may contact him at: [jgill@christchurchandover.org](mailto:jgill@christchurchandover.org)*

## **PARISH SEARCH & CALL REPORT:**

Go to [www.diomass.org](http://www.diomass.org) for more information.

### **CHURCHES IN SELF-STUDY:**

ROXBURY, St. Cyprian's

### **CHURCHES PREPARING PROFILE:**

BEVERLY FARMS, St. John's

NORWOOD, Grace

### **CHURCHES RECEIVING NAMES:**

EAST DEDHAM: Good Shepherd

(Please contact The Rev. Cynthia Hubbard directly)

NEWTONVILLE, St. John's

(Please contact the Rev. Cynthia Hubbard directly)

NORWOOD, Grace

SAUGUS, St. John's

(Please contact The Rev. Cynthia Hubbard directly)

SOUTHBOROUGH, St. Mark's

WAREHAM, Good Shepherd

### **CHURCHES NO LONGER RECEIVING NAMES:**

BEVERLY FARMS: St. John's

### **OTHER POSITIONS:**

BROOKLINE: Membership Coordinator, All Saints Parish, Brookline. Ten hours per week. Please send resume to the Search Committee, All Saints Parish, 1773 Beacon Street, Brookline, MA 02445-4214 or [office@allsaintsbrookline.org](mailto:office@allsaintsbrookline.org)

HINGHAM: Curate/Assistant to the Rector, St. John's, Hingham. Contact Jami Gregory at [sjsearch.hingham@gmail.com](mailto:sjsearch.hingham@gmail.com)

Communication regarding deployment and parish transitions should be directed to the staff officer responsible for deployment,  
the Rev. Cynthia Hubbard  
([chubbard@diomass.org](mailto:chubbard@diomass.org)  
or 617-482-4826, ext. 400).

## **10 Reasons to Join MECA**

*The Massachusetts Episcopal Clergy Association needs you!*

And we believe that you have ten excellent reasons to become a member:



### **WHEN YOU BELONG TO MECA:**

1. You assert your solidarity with other clergy in Christ's Church.
2. You contribute to raising the level of clergy morale.
3. You foster excellence in ministry through support for continuing education programs for your brother and sister clergy.
4. You have an important vehicle for making clergy needs known to the Bishop and leadership of the Diocese.
5. You help Massachusetts clergy to be connected with clergy in other parts of the country, through the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations (NNECA).
6. You support communication among clergy through the MECA Newsletter.
7. You help new clergy become integrated into the Diocese.
8. You learn of important issues and developments which affect your ministry and your future.
9. You give hope and encouragement to your brother and sister clergy in what is sometimes a lonely ministry.
10. You have the confidence and satisfaction that you are taking a pro-active, not a re-active, stance toward improving the mission and ministry of the Body of Christ in this part of the world known as the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts.

**SEE BACK PAGE FOR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

*Please join MECA today!*

# *CONCERT*

*featuring*

*Haitian, Jewish and Irish  
cultural traditions*

**SING OUT, REBUILD!**

**A concert to benefit the work of  
PARTNERS IN HEALTH in Haiti.**

**A Besere Velt  
El Shaddai, A Haitian Choir  
Irish Ensemble**

**Thursday, June 10th • 7:30 pm**

**All Saints Parish, 1773 Beacon St., Brookline**

Sponsored by Boston Workmen's Circle with Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries  
and the Brookline Clergy Association.

For more information, go to The Workmen's Circle website at [www.circleboston.org](http://www.circleboston.org)

## *MECA Newsletter*

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## *The MECA Newsletter*

Published four times a year, *the MECA Newsletter* is sent to all clergy of the Diocese of Massachusetts. The newsletter can also be accessed through our website: [www.mecaclergy.org](http://www.mecaclergy.org)

Membership dues for calendar year January 1-December 31, 2010 are being received now. Please send your check (payable to MECA) to the Rev. David Milam, MECA Membership Secretary, Church of Our Saviour, P.O. Box 89, Middleborough, MA 02346-0089. If you have any questions about your membership, please contact Dave at 508-947-1900 [frdave@verizon.net](mailto:frdave@verizon.net). Dues are \$100; \$70 for retired and part-time clergy. MECA members who pay the above dues receive ten issues of *LEAVEN*, the newsletter of the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations (NNECA). Membership dues (without *LEAVEN*) are \$40. There is no fee for clergy on disability retirement. Members are entitled to discounts at MECA-sponsored events; your dues promote communication among clergy through the website, newsletter, and continuing education events and enable MECA to be a voice for clergy in the diocese and larger church.

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Articles and letters are welcome and subject to editing. Permission is given to copy this newsletter; please give appropriate credit.

**Address changes:** please send to James Reamer, Diocesan Center, 138 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108 or [jreamer@diomass.org](mailto:jreamer@diomass.org) or 617-482-4826, ext 339.

### **MECA officers for 2009-2010 are:**

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## ***NEW MECA WEBSITE: WWW.MECACLERGY.ORG***

Please check the MECA website for news of upcoming events and to access the newsletter. The editor also invites your reflections on clergy support groups, sabbaticals and other issues affecting clergy. Please send your articles to the editor at [rectord@allsaintsbrookline.org](mailto:rectord@allsaintsbrookline.org)