

"And God said, climb the mountain and cut some timber.. rebuild my temple. Do it just for me...You are caught up building your own homes, while my home is in ruins." Haggai 1:6 The Message.

If I had a dollar for every minute I've laid awake, and every sad moment I've spent agonizing, about a million and half people in Port a Prince, *still living?* in rotting tents while UMCOR builds churches, I could have built them homes! Now, as I prepare to preach UMW Sunday, I'm given this text and all the metaphors and images that go into "exploring" a scripture.

On January 12th, 2010, we sat with UMCOR leadership while President Gesner Paul envisioned a "new church" in Haiti. A new Haitian Methodist Church, in mission to Haitian people, NOT a church focused on self preservation, taking care only of members. Sam, Clint and Jim, suggested we hold our comments until the next day's meeting as these were words we wanted to absorb and honor. This was a new direction for the HMC. Hours later, the next day "was cancelled" and the church in mission was a "destroyed temple," like the temple in Jerusalem 2000 years before.

That January afternoon, a 7.0 earthquake, destroyed schools and churches, ended approximately 350,000 lives, created an additional 350,000 orphans, left nearly a million and a half people homeless, jobless and hungrier than ever before, and put dreams for "a church in mission" on hold.

Haiti had to start over; the international community had to re-think; UMCOR had to re-organize; the rubble of National Palace and Senate, businesses and homes including piles of broken bodies had to be addressed; and hundreds of thousands of lives had to adjust to life in a swamp, sans schools, markets, cathedrals and clinics.

Within hours "the international church" addressed immediate needs and people gave generously. International agencies promised billions in forgiven debt and rebuilding of infrastructure. Overnight, temporary shelters appeared in parking lots where a million still live. Schools and worship centers resumed in large tents. Street markets reopened, International Red Cross and Missionary Medical groups eventually faced epidemic cholera. The homeless still live in rotting tents. The HMC and UVMIM, build churches, schools and clinics on the mainland.

On La Gonave, 1100 families remain homeless while 10,000 refugees live now 2 to 3 families per small hut type homes. There is no water as the few working cisterns and wells were broken. Industry struggles to feed the people, take care of animals and live without the staple of fish because of cholera contamination of the reef water. AND we have been asked to finish building the church in Anse a Galets. I want to build homes. I'm thinking God wants the church. The project profile says they have been in outreach ministry to the poorest who are suffering the most, since the earthquake.

Haggai's mission was to "rebuild" the temple in just three short chapters. God said-says "my church is in ruins". I ask, is that a literal or metaphorical statement? We have a church to finish.

Pastor Shirley, Pondering God's "Church in Ruins"... February 11, 2011