



## From the voices of Haiti

The following story is from a friend of a friend of a fellow Rotarian in our club. It is a first hand account of how they felt during the earth quake. The couple are missionaries in Haiti.

I am exhausted, emotionally drained and in control at the same time. It is time to tell our story.

We are all OK. Our house still stands. That is a blessing. If that were not the case, we would not have been able to help so many after the quake hit.

I was in the kitchen, my son Grayden was in his room. Bridgely was in the house but close to the door. We think one of the twins was in her bedroom and one was on the porch. Teagan and Laurens were on the porch. It started as a low hum and shake, then it grew....

My mind thought, "that is strange", then my mind thought, "what is that?". In a matter of seconds the house came alive and I was at the end of my kitchen table. The shaking was incredible. I remember seeing the concrete walls moving violently in a wave like at a wave pool. One to my right, one to my left and then one in front of me moving in a different direction. I also remember the ceiling was moving in a wave above me. The floor beneath my feet did not feel attached to me.

Grayden ran to me screaming. Hysterical screams and I clung him tight to me and instinctively semi crouched. All of this may have only taken a few seconds..i don't know. The next thing I remember was Laurens running in the house yelling "get out, get out, get out...RUN" As he grabbed my arm, I went into full action. Still clinging to Grayden, I ran to the door grabbing as many of my children as I could. Yelling myself, "RUN, RUN, RUN, GO, GO". We reached the steps to the garden and I remember how difficult it was to run down them as the concrete steps were moving. I remember running through the front drive with the land still moving. Laurens was still yelling to run further to get away from the building. The dog followed us all. When I got to the end of the driveway, I looked around and counted kids, I could not see Bridgely. I turned back to the building and screamed "BRIDGELY, BRIDGELY, BRIDGELY" as I thought he was still on the upper level at our neighbours. Then there he was in front of me. He had been holding my hand the whole time.

Somewhere between the driveway and the road, the movement stopped. For a moment..... then it started again, smaller but almost as big as the first and long as well. I gathered the kids and instructed them to sit and we huddled until it stopped. Then it started again.....Finally the earth rested for a while.

Then I stood up and turned around.....From our rural hill not far from Port au Prince, we have a few of the whole city. As I looked out towards the city and the ocean, that is when I

realized what had just happened. The entire city went up in dust. One huge even dust cloud arose from the entire massive city. It was like a bomb had gone off and it was the smoke rising.

I looked to the right and saw a similar smaller cloud over our local village Source Matlas. I looked to the left and saw a large cloud of dust and smoke from the flour factory. I was speechless regarding what all this may have meant.

That may have been enough to deal with except that we realized that we had a team of 53 Canadian's visiting on a short term mission trip. We went into leader mode. Laurens went to check on a few things and I gathered the team. Grant went to get the ambulance and I gathered the visiting nurses and doc. We jumped into the ambulance and headed down to the clinic. Grant took the team in and I rushed to the front gate of our mission. By the time I got there, the injured started arriving. They came in tap tap (pick up truck taxi) after tap tap. Children, woman and men.

Their arms and legs were crushed, their bones sticking out of their bodies, their heads gashed open. Some crying in pain, some barely alive. 5, 6, 7, people per truck.

After a few minutes I left the gate and security took over letting them all in and I rushed back to the hospital. For the next 33 hours straight we worked on the traumatic cases that lie before us. It looked like war. We did not know the integrity of the clinic yet so we could not go inside. The aftershocks started to come and were frequent but less in intensity. We had to get supplies in side but ran back out every aftershock we got. The injured were lying all over our outside walk way. Grant, our visiting nurses and myself worked on triaging the worst patients. We are not a full service hospital, we are just a clinic....we started to get reports that the biggest hospital in PAP, General hospital had crashed down, Doctors without Borders had crashed (the only 2 main ER's in the entire city!). We got further reports that other hospitals were down. We started to realize, that we were all there was for miles and miles and miles.

At the 20th hour, we told the gate we could not accept anymore patients as we still had to get through many many more. We sent our nurses (except for a few) and our helpers to work in shifts and Grant and I worked on. We reduced (tractioned bones back in place) open compound fractures.....putting tibia bones, back into people's legs that were sticking out. We reduced and set many many femur fractures, lower leg fractures, arm fractures. We sutured arms, legs, heads. We put scalps back together and we cleaned concrete out of wounds for hours. We stabilized pelvic fractures and we helped babies with head trauma breath on oxygen.

We had 3 die. 1 baby, 1 two year old and 1 ten year old. We had 4 others on the brink of death. We saved a lot. Because we had no other choice (as there was no where to send them), at the end of 33 hours, we had discharged all but 5 to follow up. The last few we attempted to take to hospitals. 3 refused and wanted to go home to die.

The other 2 Grant and Laurens tried to find somewhere that would take them in Port Au Prince. It was true, most hospital's were not functioning and those that were, were full of bodies, inside and out. Everywhere, some alive and some dead. Bodies were piled up in the parking lots as there was no where to put them. Most of the doctors that used to work at the hospital's were dead or not heard of. Families had no where to take their loved one's bodies because their houses were crashed down, they still were missing family members or the funeral homes were destroyed....so they left them.

We went home and slept 6 hours. Then opened the clinic again. We worked another 10 hours, seeing the same things. Finally it stopped. There were no more tap tap's running as there was no more diesel for their vehicles.

That same night, our president of Mission of Hope arrived. We started into disaster relief planning with some partner organizations. By this time reports of what the damage in the country looked like were becoming clear.

We had US and CAN doctors start to come in through the Dominican to help.

We have had doctors coming now since Sat. We have been coordinating a grand scale disaster relief plan for the 100's of thousands of people that have not yet got into the hospital and for food distribution. It is to say the least, no small task.

We have hardly slept, we have not been able to communicate with you. Tonight it was time.


The capital is devastated. The national palace is on the ground (white house), the ministry of transportation is on the ground, the huge justice palace (the whole judicial system) is on the ground, the ministry of health is on the ground, the ministry of finance is not down but destroyed, the entire downtown core has almost every building down to rubble, the insurance bureau is on the ground, every national bank headquarters are crashed to the ground except one that stands severely damaged, the head police headquarters is in rubble, the hospital that Laurens was in after his accident (the best in the country) is severely damaged and non functional, the building that has all the adoption papers in the country is destroyed, the only grocery store that all the missionaries shop at (that I almost was at that day) is rubble on the ground killing and trapping everyone inside, the Montana hotel where we had lunch not so long ago is completely rubble killing everyone inside, many collages and schools and crashed down, Digicel world headquarters (cell phone) and the tallest building in PAP is to the ground (hence we have no cell communications and on.....and on.....and on.

We have 160 staff on our mission and we already know of one that has died and we still have not heard from about 100 staff. Everyday that someone shows up is joyous to see that they are alive. Most everyone has a family member that has died. One security guard has 4 children that died. Many of our Haitian staff suffer severe post traumatic stress after what they have been through or seen. One of our friends was trapped in his school next to 50 of his classmates that were crushed by the building. He heard them screaming but could not save them. He watched them die, as he was trapped inside for 3 hours with a dead man on his chest. He was pulled out eventually.

Every time a plane passes over, or a car drives up, we all brace ourselves and jump until we realize that it is not another quake. Aftershocks are stressful. We often have a false sense that the ground is moving. People have a fear to go in buildings. Our building is structurally OK but I do not like to be in my bedroom for long...it is too far from the door. Laurens sleeps on the couch. A protective move I know to be closer to the kids for evacuation. We sleep with the front door open for quick escape...baby steps. It is better than the tents we slept in at first to make sure the building was safe.

This earthquake was like no other. Mainly because it hit a country with such poor infrastructure. It was completely unexpected. It is like kicking a baby down before it knows how to stand.

But we are moving on. We are alive and our house is fine. Mission of Hope is an oasis compared to the city. The kids are good. They are resilient and they started back to school today. Diana has been amazing and the Canadian team was amazing being there for them too. We have a great team on staff at Mission of Hope.



Despite the destruction, we are seeing hope, we know that God will use this to show his light. We know many people that have come to Christ already because of this event and now is the body of Christ's time to shine. So many things destroyed...yet most of the Christian missions survived. God has big things planned for this country. God has used us in mighty ways this past week. He has used us for the Haitian people, He has used us in the media, He has used us to bond with each other and He will continue to use us mightily.

I have learned more in one week than most in a lifetime. I now know how to reduce compound open wound fractures, I know how to cast, I know how to suture and have become proficient enough that I sutured the flap of someone's nose back on (quite good too I might add :) ), I know how to handle cases when there is no other option, I know how to stab an attempt at coordinating disaster relief and to run functional field clinics. I have been on TV and am part of meetings at the UN logistic base with the World Health Organization, UN, military and other NGO's. I am one of the few North American doc's on the ground right now that lived in Haiti and I am visiting and coordinating inside many field and broken down hospital set ups. It is strange. It is surreal.

Rachel (missionary here) and I were just saying today that if someone had told us that this is what we would have had to do this week prior to this event, we would have "quit". We would have said no way God! I can't do all of that. We would have underestimated our abilities based on what we were comfortable with. We have learned that God knows more than we do, that He knows what we can handle and He has more faith in us than we have in ourselves.

We thank you for your prayers this past week. This is not over, it is a long road ahead. Please pray for the Haitian people. Every person was affected by this. Please pray for supply chains to open up, pray for the port to be fixed, pray for timely food and water distributions, pray for organization of relief organizations and military. Pray that now eyes will be opened to the need we had prior to this earthquake...our clinic and hospital, and that funding will come in. Pray for our family and the other staff.