

365 Days after Thirty-Five Seconds by Zachary King (*Christian Reformed World Missions, Haiti*)

At 4:53 p.m. on January 12, 2010, an earthquake registering 7.0 on the Richter scale struck Port-au-Prince and its environs for approximately thirty-five seconds. In those seconds approximately 200,000 structures were destroyed and 230,000 people would eventually lose their lives.

The recovery has been challenging. It would take a fleet of one thousand trucks one thousand days to remove the over 40 million cubic meters of rubble from the quake. The Haitian government, already struggling to manage the country, was decimated by the quake as the majority of its installations were destroyed and many employees killed. Many aid organizations functioning in Haiti were incapacitated as headquarters buildings collapsed, killing key employees. Most of the large churches in Port-au-Prince were smashed and many community and religious leaders were killed.

But God's grace is more powerful than even the shaking earth. As soon as the tremors subsided, Haitians filled the air with their prayers and songs. And they continue to pray and work today. The ministries of the *Christian Reformed Church in North America* (CRCNA) in Haiti (called *Sous Espwa*) began working immediately to help the survivors. Thousands of people in *Sous Espwa's* (SE) partner communities were among the first to receive food aid. Within a week after the earthquake, *CRWRC Disaster Response Team* (DRT) was functioning in Haiti. Since then, DRT has begun a massive project in Leogane, near the center of the quake. 831 wood-framed houses have been built, nineteen wells have been dug, and food and tarps have been given to nearly 5,000 families.

Meanwhile, SE's long-term ministries have focused on assisting the communities served through the local Haitian organizations with which it partners. One of the greatest needs is spiritual and emotional support for earthquake survivors. SE has developed effective faith-based programs that assist survivors to heal emotionally so that they can help themselves. SE has helped to rebuild four churches, provided housing for twenty staff members its Haitian partner organizations, and continues to provide grants for relief projects run by partner organizations. These organizations are rebuilding homes, counseling earthquake survivors (both children and adults), rebuilding churches and community centers, and providing wheelchairs and prosthetics to persons who lost limbs in the earthquake.

What does the future hold for those affected by these thirty-five disastrous seconds? It will not be easy. The cholera epidemic, which has killed 3,500 people, has redirected relief efforts. Political instability following the November elections has slowed down the work. But, by God's grace, we know that progress will be made. While *Sous Espwa* continues to be focused on the long-term objectives of equipping Haitians to build God-honoring communities and churches, the effects of January 12 linger. Beginning in January, 2011, our ministry partner *Perspectives Réformées* will begin producing radio messages of comfort from Scripture for Haitians still struggling with the pain of loss. The *Christian Reformed Church of Haiti* will begin making repair materials available for communities in Jacmel to repair homes damaged by the earthquake. It is true, the thirty-five seconds on January 12, 2010, were the worst moments in the history of Haiti. But God has shown his grace more than an equal to nature's fury.