

For Immediate Release
Thursday, January 14, 2010

United Church Launches Emergency Appeal for Haiti

Toronto: The United Church of Canada announced today that it is launching an emergency appeal asking its congregations for donations designated for earthquake relief and reconstruction in Haiti.

"People see a need, and have a desire, to reach out as brothers and sisters in Christ to show compassion to those in dire need," says The United Church of Canada's Moderator, Mardi Tindal. "As one part of God's world suffers, we all suffer."

The United Church's Haiti Appeal will enable global partners in the region to address both the need for immediate relief and for long-term reconstruction following the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti on Tuesday, January 12, 2010.

Funds raised through this emergency appeal will be channelled through the United Church's partners in Haiti and through Action by Churches Together (ACT), the network of churches and Christian aid agencies that enables global responses to emergencies.

Members of ACT are already in place in Haiti, assisting those affected by the earthquake. The United Church's partners in the region are The Methodist Church of Haiti and The Karl Lévêque Cultural Institute (ICKL).

"We rejoice at news this morning that ministers of the Methodist Church are safe," said Jim Hodgson, the United Church's program coordinator for the Caribbean region. "But the same message contained the news that three visitors from the United Methodist Church in the United States are missing. Our prayers are with the people of Haiti and with those who work alongside them in solidarity."

In addition to launching this emergency appeal, the United Church has also immediately committed \$20,000 for Haitian relief and reconstruction from its Emergency Response Fund (ERF). The United Church is exploring further options to respond to the crisis in Haiti in collaboration with other Canadian churches to take advantage of matching funds from CIDA that may be offered.

The Emergency Response Fund is used to help alleviate the effects of humanitarian crises caused by nature, human action, or a combination of both. The fund is replenished annually from the Mission and Service Fund and member donations. Fifteen percent of all donations received and intended for emergency relief, reconstruction, and rehabilitation are deposited into this fund for use in future emergencies that do not receive intensive media coverage. The remaining 85 percent of the monies received are directed as designated by the donor.

It is important to note that unlike many charities, and thanks to regular donations to the Mission and Service Fund, the United Church is able to absorb the staffing and administration costs of processing donations whenever an emergency appeal is launched. Therefore donors

can be assured that there are no administrative charges deducted from donations received.

Individuals are invited to contribute to the United Church's Haiti Appeal either through their local congregation or directly to The United Church of Canada's national office, 3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300, Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4. Cheques should be made payable to The United Church of Canada and marked "Haiti Appeal." Online donations can be made at www.united-church.ca. Choose "Emergency Response" and specify "Haiti Appeal."

Donations made by United Church members and congregations to the Haiti Appeal are considered "over and above" gifts to the United Church's wider work, so they are not recorded as part of a congregation's Mission and Service Fund giving. But they are eligible for tax receipts. Congregational treasurers may receive and receipt individual cheques and then forward one congregational cheque to the United Church, attention "Haiti Appeal."

Information about the United Church's Haiti Appeal has been posted on the United Church's website (www.united-church.ca) and will be updated as new information becomes available.

For more information, please contact:

Mary-Frances Denis

Program Coordinator, Media and Public Relations The United Church of Canada

Tel: 416-231-7680 ext. 2016

Toll-free: 1-800-268-3781 ext. 2016

E-mail: mdenis@united-church.ca