

DEVOTIONAL

A CHRISTIAN DEVOTION FROM LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Not just charity.

By the Rev. Paula M. Stecker

In March, I spent a week visiting Haiti and her people, a little less than two months after the January earthquake had toppled countless homes and lives. I saw miles and miles of debris and tents, more debris and more tents. The world rightly responded with deep charity to Haiti's ground-shaking tragedy, sending donations of food, shelter and relief materials as quickly as possible. And in the same moment, while many wondered "is this an opportunity for something new to happen in Haiti," LWR began to build a long-term response, that moved beyond charity to empowerment.

In Haiti and in Indonesia, in Uganda and in Nicaragua, God promises to us a day when God's people "shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit...they shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity" (Isaiah 65:22-23). Believing in that promise and the Christ who brings such graceful gifts to fruition, we work in this world to bring mercy to those who suffer, justice to those long denied it, and access to those isolated by economics, geography, race and class.

As consumers, we are daily in a position to show our solidarity with our brothers and sisters through the choices we make in the marketplace. Through relationships founded in Christian love, we build connections across economic dividing walls.

Already a connection has been built in a place where walls have been dismantled by love. In a suburb of Port-au-Prince, called Croix des Bouquets, more than 200 artisans are working together through the Comité Artisanal Haïtien (the Haitian Artisan Committee). Standing together for fair wages, environmentally responsible processes, sustainability and respect of women, they support their families. They earn a decent income. They have access to credit and hope for the future. And it's not just by charity, but by their hard labor, the skills passed on by their elders, and the choices of Lutherans like you. Making daily choices to buy Fair Trade items from communities like Comité Artisanal Haïtien begins to build new relationships that are making manifest God's promises that their labor shall not be in vain.

God of Mercy, use our arms to sow love across the economic divides created by our alienation, one from another. Draw us together that our acts of mercy will be multiplied a hundredfold. Amen

The Rev. Paula Stecker is the outgoing pastor at Trinity Lutheran in York, Pa. She currently serves on the Global Mission Planning committee of the ELCA and is moving to Haiti to work with her husband in ongoing relief and development.



Dona (left), Leonardo (center) and Nerline (right) Louissaint lost their house in the January 12 earthquake. Orders for their Riverstone Nativity provide income to rebuild.

These products created by Haitian artists will be available through LWR's Fall Handcraft Catalog. Call 888.294.9660 to receive your free copy.