

Walking With Our Neighbors:

10 Ways to Commemorate the Two Year Remembrance of the 2010 Haitian Earthquake

Courtesy Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington DC, <http://www.foundryumc.org/>

1) Linking to Other Churches-While our individual churches' efforts will be important in these remembrance activities, our efforts will be enhanced and multiplied through collective action. This can happen by getting best practices from other churches, sharing resources, and raising greater attention across our conference. Beyond linking to other United Methodist churches in your conference more generally, you can also try to seize opportunities to link up to primarily Haitian churches in the area. There may be a Haitian church in your area or if you're interested in connecting with other churches engaged in two year remembrance efforts, please contact Ace Parsi of Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, DC at workforchangetoday@gmail.com



2) Screen a Movie-Movies can be low stress ways to have a common experience and go beyond statistics to get a better understanding of people's stories. One potential activity is to organize a movie viewing and facilitate a discussion afterwards. Movies like [Strange Things: Children of Haiti](#) or the PBS Documentary, [Égalité for All](#) can act as ways to not only inform your congregation about Haitian history and current challenges, but be used as a medium to foster greater dialogue afterwards.

3) Collective, Organized Prayer- In many spiritual traditions, including ours, prayer is a powerful vehicle to convey our deepest desires to God, to create connections with our brothers and sisters, and to find strength and discernment in difficult times. Prayer is also an integral part of Haitian people's lives and can help bridge very different experiences people might have. Engaging in both individual and organized prayer is one important way we can connect to Haiti and the continued rebuilding effort. As a church, you can assign prayer dates for people and take volunteers to open up your chapel on January 12th. Another possibility to consider is to translate your prayers into art that can be displayed in various parts of your church.

4) Hold a Candlelight Vigil-Candlelight vigils can be solemn, powerful ways to convey and focus a connection to a specific cause. If this is part of your church's tradition, a candlelight vigil being held either in the city or in your chapel can be a significant way to express grief for the lost lives in the 2010 earthquake and convey solidarity with the people still working to rebuild their country.



5) Advocacy- As churches in the most powerful country in the world, we are in a unique position to be witnesses and raise our voices for the people of Haiti here in our country. Several bills and Congressional efforts need action in the coming year and the two year remembrance of the earthquake provides an ideal opportunity to raise our voices. Advocacy activities such as letters, phone calls, and member visits can act as a powerful witness to why not only we as congregations, but we as a country must continue to walk with our Haitian brothers and sisters as they rebuild their country. For more information around advocacy issues related to Haiti contact Ace Parsi at workforchangetoday@gmail.com



6) Collect an Offering- The act of giving, both of our time and resources, is an important part of our Christian tradition. To that end, this two year remembrance can provide a unique opportunity to focus our congregations on giving much needed resources people in Haiti need to rebuild their country. It is important to recognize that Haiti's challenges didn't start yesterday, the needs are great, and it is essential to identify reliable recipients of funds that are meaningfully engaging in Haitians in rebuilding their country. A Sunday offering or collection for Haiti could support a variety of causes including UMVIM Haiti general funds, a specific [UMCOR advance like the Haiti Hot Lunch program](#), or one of many great organizations like [Partners In Health](#), [Fonkoze USA](#), or [Action Aid](#).

7) Give Your Congregation an Update- Many of us were shocked at the magnitude of the devastation that came with the 2010 earthquake. Nevertheless, as time continues to pass and cameras leave Haiti, it can be easy to have Haiti fade from our congregations' collective memories. This two year remembrance provides a great opportunity to refocus our efforts and remind our congregations of the importance being good neighbors to Haiti holds to our churches' spiritual calling. This can be done through a variety of venues including having the senior minister preach on Haiti on January 8th or 15th, having congregants create informational tables with literature on Haiti, or organizing events before or after the service with outside speakers, Haitian food, and/or Haitian music. Organizations like the Haitian Embassy can be a good resource in helping identify potential speakers and literature and you may be surprised at the contacts your own congregants will have when you start asking.

8) Engage Your Youth- Remembering the Haitian earthquake, honoring the victims, and standing in solidarity with the Haitian people does not need to be simply an action for adults. You should encourage youth to get involved as well. Youth engagement can vary by age group. It can be anything as simple as teaching children's choir simple Haitian songs; making art and writing letters to children in Haiti for slightly older youth; and poetry readings and discussions for middle and high school youth.

9) Direct Service- Direct service is still an important way that we are called as communities of faith to act in this world. It is a way we can bridge boundaries and deepen our own spiritual connections to a cause. When it comes to Haiti, there are things we can do here at home like packing [birthing kits](#) or [school kits](#). Your church could also use this as an opportunity to get interested individuals together to start [planning a mission trip to Haiti](#).



10) Write an Op-Ed- In Matthew 5:15, Christ tells his disciples that people should not "light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house." Similarly, if we care about Haiti and the Haitian people, then our testimony does not have to stay in our churches. If your church chooses to do this, join us in writing in various mediums in the Baltimore Washington Conference why you felt this connection was important. You can also write op-eds for your local paper and convey why this connection to Haiti was important to you. You can find media contacts in your area through this [link](#).