

MINUTE FOR MISSION

Haitian Earthquake Survivors Build Their Future Through Education

I want to tell you about a man named Andral — a family man who has prevailed through terrible circumstances. The 2010 earthquake that devastated Haiti, and changed it forever, set Andral's life on a radically different course.

Andral lost his home and career in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital city. In Port-au-Prince and the surrounding region, an estimated 300,000 people lost their lives in the earthquake. You could say that Andral was one of the lucky ones — and he surely knows it.

He is a leader in his new community, which was built in the Central Plateau area with help from One Great Hour of Sharing gifts. Residents of the newly constructed community knew little about farming when they moved there, but Andral led them to embrace their new circumstances. He credits his education with giving him the skills needed to adapt to a profoundly different life.

"I look back at the earthquake and think that if I hadn't gone to school, my life would be much more difficult than it is now," he says. "Haitians will never thrive without a good education."

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, supported by One Great Hour of Sharing gifts, helped Andral and his community construct a school with classes through the sixth grade. The community recently added a room for the seventh grade.

"My dream is to keep expanding it to a high school and even a decent university, so our children don't have to travel to other cities for their education," he says. To attend high school now, students must walk five miles each way.

Andral and his neighbors live in an eco-village, a community designed to be socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable. It is one of four on the Central Plateau that

benefited from One Great Hour of Sharing gifts. Children from the eco-villages are joined by students from the surrounding community at the school. “Everyone has a right to an education,” Andral says. “We are not going to reserve the school only for our children.”

Andral is grateful for everyone who helped make his community and the school a reality. He dreams of gathering them in one room and thanking them. “I want to tell them what they have done for us,” he says.

We appreciate Andral’s kind words for the support that the church has offered him, his family, and neighbors but we know our work is not done. Through One Great Hour of Sharing, Presbyterians across the United States have moved outside the walls of their church to help make new lives possible for those like Andral — those whose lives have been turned upside down by disasters of all kinds here and abroad. From Haiti to New Orleans to Puerto Rico and elsewhere, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance makes a commitment to long-term recovery — often lasting for years because we give generously to this offering. With your gifts, lives are changed, and hope is restored.

Let us pray,

*God of comfort and hope,
draw near to those
experiencing disaster.
As your faithful servants,
move us beyond our doors
through these gifts and
through this ministry, so that,
in the words of Isaiah,
“healing shall spring up quickly.”
Amen.*