

Ministry

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Dear Friends,

RESCUED!

THE STORY OF OUR AMAZING RESCUE FROM HAITI

Steve Svendsen, Rich Powell, Anna, and I arrived in a peaceful Haiti February 27th with plans to conduct Module 5 of the Haiti Bible Institute, the school we founded in 2009. All fourteen of our pastoral students were able to attend the Module which started February 28th. With great expectations, we were all set for another great teaching session. The students were eager to learn, and the professors were well prepared to teach. But the next day everything changed. The gangs in Port-au-Prince launched well-orchestrated, coordinated attacks on the airports, the police stations,



and the prisons, freeing 4,000 inmates. **Haiti was in turmoil!** The students became visibly concerned for the safety of their own families, but with much prayer and great trust in God we pressed on to complete the module. On Monday, March 4th, all the airlines cancelled service to Haiti indefinitely and so the airports closed. **Now we were stranded!** The Module ended successfully March 6th, and all the students were able to return safely to their homes, but we could not leave Haiti or Port-au-Prince since the gangs controlled all the main roads restricting travel anywhere.

Anna and I, and along with Steve and Rich notified our churches and we prayed for a way out. After ten more anxious days of waiting and hopeless searching for a rescue, we finally received a call from the office of Rep. Cory Mills, US Congressman from Florida's 7th District. Many of our families and friends had reached out to their representatives and to Rep. Mills on our behalf, and we were told that Congressman Mills was organizing a rescue for us on Sunday, March 17th. At 9:30 PM Saturday, we were informed of the secret rescue site, so we left the hotel immediately and traveled through the dark night violating the curfew to reach the appointed area. God graciously allowed us to arrive there safely without incident, and we prepared to board a helicopter at midnight.

While we were assembled in the waiting area, we received word that the landing site was no longer viable, and no other landing site was available. **Our hearts sank!** But God again intervened, and just two hours later we were given a new landing site with a 5:00 AM rescue scheduled. So again, we traveled through the streets of the city in the dark and arrived at the new site at 4:30 AM. Five o'clock came and went, and no helicopter came; then six o'clock, then seven o'clock, then eight o'clock passed and still no word on the rescue. Finally, just before nine o'clock we received a call that Congressman Mills and the helicopter would arrive at 9:20 AM. When we heard the sound of the helicopter flying overhead, then saw it landing on the soccer field, our hearts leapt for joy! We scrambled onto the chopper, and it lifted off two short minutes later. **We were rescued!**

We were flown to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic where we booked a flight to Maimi later that afternoon. When our plane touched down at Miami International Airport, the indescribable joy we felt being safe on US soil was overwhelming. Never in our lives had we experienced anything like the providential care of our great God who brought us safely home. It caused me to wonder how much greater joy we would experience once we finally reach our heavenly home where we will be forever with our Lord. Praise God for His enduring love and care for His children.



Grace and peace,

Doc & Anna Bearss

Pictures: (front) Rep. Cory Mills, Doc, and Anna on helicopter. (back) The 13 who were rescued March 17th, Steve on right, Rich on left in back.

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Haiti Bible Institute is the only fully accredited evangelical Bible School in Haiti!

Testimonies from Steve Svendsen and Rich Powell Professors who taught Module 5 at HBI

Our time in Haiti and our exit from Haiti will always serve as a reminder to me of God's sovereignty and of His goodness to His children. The danger all around, the prospects of deliverance that never came, and the dramatic helicopter rescue were timely lessons this year to take us into Holy Week. The parallels between our exit from Haiti and the Exodus from Egypt rang in my mind as we flew from Port-au-Prince to the US by way of Santo Domingo. God taught His covenant people to be prepared at a moment's notice, to recognize the danger of staying behind, to travel light, to tell their story, and to recognize the real hero of their story. So it is for all of us who have experienced the ultimate gospel deliverance. The future effectiveness of Haiti Bible Institute will be a reflection of how well the faculty keeps the final redemption story central to the mission of the school.

Steve Svendsen

Senior Pastor
Providence Reformed Baptist Church
Rice Lake, Wisconsin

Having successfully completed module five (of eight) for Haiti Bible Institute cohort four, the students expressed genuine gratitude, not only for the teaching, but for the risk we took to go to Haiti to teach them.

The ordeal of being trapped in Haiti for ten days amid the outbreak of violent revolution led to the necessity of being intentional about what occupies the mind. It would have been easy to slip into the rut of preoccupation with all the "what ifs." Having the selective power of that upon which we set our minds (Phil. 4:8; Col. 1:1-3) is a grace of God. Words have meaning and power. Having been in a valley of adversity, isolation, and uncertainty, words became precious. I discovered words of encouragement, written prayers, expressions of comfort... to be life-giving.

Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.
Proverbs 25:25

It was also encouraging to hear reports of the churches tightening bonds of solidarity through united prayer. From reflecting on the ordeal, I realize that the challenges of waiting, and the rescue operation manifest striking parallels to the gospel of grace.

Rich Powell

Lead Pastor
Grace Bible Church
Winston-Salem, North Carolina