

Haitian Missionaries to Captors: 'We Extend Our Forgiveness to You'

Christians who harbor any unforgiveness in their hearts this Christmas may want to sit up and take notice.

The Haitian missionaries who were abducted by the 400 Mowozo Group at the end of October and escaped this past week have said that they have prayed for their captors to repent of their actions and come to salvation in Christ, says David Troyer, general director of Christian Aid Ministries, a group to which the missionaries belonged.

Based in Berlin, Ohio, Christian Aid Ministries is supported and staffed by conservative Anabaptists, a range of Mennonite, Amish and related groups. Their hallmarks include nonresistance to evil, plain dress and separation from mainstream society.

And, in keeping with Anabaptist teaching, which puts a premium on forgiveness, Troyer offered conciliatory words to the captors in a statement.

"A word to the kidnappers: We do not know all of the challenges you face," Troyer said. "We do believe that violence and oppression of others can never be justified. You caused our hostages and their families a lot of suffering. However, Jesus taught us by word and by his own example that the power of forgiving love is stronger than the hate of violent force. Therefore, we extend forgiveness to you."

Troyer said the hostages had "prayed for their captors and told them about God's love and their need to repent."

The missionaries were abducted Oct. 16 shortly after visiting

an orphanage in Ganthier, in the Croix-des-Bouquets area, where they verified it had received aid from CAM and played with the children, Troyer said.

“As they became aware of what was happening at the time of capture, the group began singing the chorus, ‘The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them,’” Troyer said, quoting from the biblical book of Psalms. “This song became a favorite of theirs, and they sang it many times throughout their days of captivity.”

The hostages remained together as a group throughout, he said, in prayer, in song and encouraging each other.

Troyer said CAM workers were aware of dangers in Haiti, where gang activity and kidnappings have been on the rise. But the organization often works in such perilous places precisely because “that is usually where the biggest needs are.”

CAM hopes to continue working in Haiti, Troyer said, while acknowledging that it will need to bolster security protocols and “better instruct our people about the dangers involved.”

Authorities have said 400 Mawozo was demanding \$1 million per person in ransom, although it wasn’t clear if that included the children. The gang’s leader had threatened to kill the hostages unless his demands were met. {eo}

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