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December 2, 2010

Re: Update on Lashbrook Family Ministries and In the Father's Hand Children's Home

I am writing to provide an update on the situation in Haiti, and with adoptive families in the U.S.

We have been working on this crisis since April. Our Task Force has spent hundreds of hours on this crisis, meeting with and listening to the adoptive families, talking on the telephone and meeting with the Lashbrooks, and making trips to Port-de-Paix where we have met with the Staff in Haiti, and visited the ministry. We have consulted with outside counsel. Since August, because we would not comply with demands made by some families as quickly as they wanted, we were accused of indifference to the problems, unresponsiveness, and more. Our decision to discontinue meeting with some of the families, and our suggestion to the Lashbrooks to do the same, came after conversations became abusive. At that point, there was no redemptive reason to continue the dialogue at this time.

Some of you may also have received a packet of letters from several adoptive families. The packet included the Globe Task Force letter of August 24, 2010. Some of those letters made very serious allegations. We would like to make a few responses:

We HAVE been committed to learning the truth – through a pro-active and careful due-process – and to recommending changes, where needed, at the Home in Haiti. We continue to be committed to that. Getting to the facts, finding the evidence, and then requesting changes, has not been an easy assignment. It has absorbed exorbitant amounts of time and expense.

The most serious allegation seems to be that Keith Lashbrook knew about abuse for a long time and did nothing about it. He denies it. There are facts that have bolstered our hesitancy to fully accept the story from one side or the other too quickly:

1. The allegations of abuse only began to emerge in mid-December, 2009. Even the letters recently circulated bear this out. Specific investigations began at that time, but then the Haiti earthquake hit on January 12, 2010, less than one month later, and overwhelmed all other focuses.
2. Hundreds of people – interns, volunteers, medical teams, building teams, etc. have regularly visited Haiti in recent years, including most of the families who have written letters. One of those families had been on the compound more than 20 times according to their statements to us. Numerous volunteers have lived on the compound for months, even years, at a time. To our knowledge, until December 14, 2009, not a single report of abuse was brought to anyone's attention.
3. The Haitian Staff, when confronted with the adoptive children's allegations (during a visit in June 2010 by Task Force member Sandy Carter), vehemently denied indifference to such things, and stated, in writing, that every incident of sexual activity at the Home, when discovered, was immediately dealt with, and that there was a zero-tolerance policy towards it.

None of this means abuse didn't happen. On the contrary, we believe that there were incidences of abuse and sexual activity, most frequently between the children. Collaborative information is also emerging indicating that an American volunteer, not associated with Globe, engaged in sexual abuse of some of the boys. That person is no longer in Haiti and is under investigation by the FBI. Our investigations, and the timeline that everyone refers to, simply casts doubt on the allegation that there was intentional indifference to abusive activity. Even during this time of investigation, it has taken months of work for a clearer picture to emerge.

The allegation that Keith has a history of sexually immoral behavior is also misleading and overstated. An allegation, brought to us this summer, involved a few female interns who were associated with FIRE School of Ministry in North Carolina several years ago. The specific allegations were that he had touched the head and shoulders of interns, on one occasion had kissed the feet of a female who was living with them in their home, and on several occasions was alone in a room with one or another female intern during counseling sessions. No one accused Keith of making sexual advances or engaging in sexual contact with females. We discussed the allegations with

Keith within a week of learning about them, and emphasized that such contact was inappropriate. It was not serious enough in our opinion to require a dismissal. At that time we did ask Keith and Cindy to further reduce their involvement in Haiti while we continued the investigation and formulated our response. We began discussions about a leave of absence at that time. The Lashbrooks have now begun a one-year leave of absence from the ministry.

Last month (October 2010) Sandy Carter visited the Home for the second time and asked that they remove the nine older boys from the Home. These young men, who had been with the Lashbrooks since the boys were very young, were causing problems at the Home – insubordination, refusal to participate in responsibilities or work, and other problems. The older boys were removed from the Home while Sandy Carter was there.

It is possible that some of the abuse of the younger children originated with these older boys. The Haitian Staff had taken steps to ensure that the children were monitored and that sexual activity, which they did discover from time to time, did not re-occur. In our view, however, the IFH leadership should have transitioned the older boys out of the Home sooner.

The statement that Globe is raising money to build an apartment for the Lashbrooks in Port-de-Paix is not accurate. On their own initiative, a construction company in the United States has offered to ship a metal building to rebuild the Girl's and Babies' Home that was destroyed in the earthquake. That building will be a two-story metal structure for this purpose. Design possibilities included a small apartment on the second floor to be used by missionaries and guests, but none of these designs are final; even the building location is not yet finalized. Globe is helping raise funds for the foundation, additional materials and shipping of the metal components.

Keith and Cindy Lashbrook are taking a minimum one-year leave of absence from the ministry. During this period, they will not be involved in operations or fund raising for the ministry.

This week, at our request, an outside representative volunteer went to Haiti to visit the ministry and work with the Haitian Staff to implement more changes.

Globe's Haiti Task Force has assembled an interim team, of Globe personnel and outside consultants, to continue the process of review and implementation of improvements in management and operations at the Home. The goal is simple: to provide care for the nearly 100 children who currently live there. Support for those children is urgently needed. Besides the Haitian Staff, six American volunteers (a mid-aged couple, three single women, and one single man) are now working in various capacities at the Home.

I realize all of this is very troubling. We also realize that some of you may be distrustful of Globe and the Lashbrooks after reading the reports that have circulated. I hope my explanations above have helped provide a more complete perspective. This has been a difficult time for everyone who has had involvement in Haiti. Thank you for your prayers for Haiti, and your patience as we move forward.

Sincerely,



J. Douglas Gehman
President