Two church mission executives die in Haiti quake

United Methodists around the world are mourning the deaths of the Rev. Sam Dixon, the head of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and the Rev. Clint Rabb, head of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) office of mission volunteers, who died in Haiti as a result of injuries received when the hotel where they were meeting collapsed during the Jan. 12 earthquake. Several mission and relief specialists were at the Hotel Montana in Port-au-Prince when the earthquake hit at about 5 p.m. The hotel collapsed, pinning the UMCOR team and many others beneath its rubble.

The rest of the team was rescued Friday after 55 hours in the ruins of the hotel. Rabb was evacuated to a hospital in Florida, but died later from his injuries.

The UMCOR team had been in Haiti for meetings with other humanitarian organizations working to improve medical services.

“Sam Dixon was a tireless servant of the church of Jesus Christ on behalf of all of us,” said Bishop Joel Martinez, interim top executive of The United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, UMCOR’s parent agency. “His death is an incalculable loss to Global Ministries, UMCOR and our worldwide ministry of relief to God’s most vulnerable children.”

After serving as a pastor in North Carolina for 24 years, Dixon joined UMCOR in 1998 as director of field operations. He was named director in 2007. Rabb was a native Texan and had been a pastor for 35 years with extensive mission work in Africa, Asia and Europe. He had been with GBGM since 1996. Rabb leaves behind eight children.

A third colleague, the Rev. Jim Gulley, was pulled from the rubble of the hotel relatively unscathed.

Jean Arnwine, a member of a Dallas mission team providing eye care to Haitians, died of injuries suffered in the quake.

Meanwhile all members of a 15-member team from Blacksburg UMC that was working on construction projects in Haiti was safe. The team, led by the Rev. Reggie Tuck and his wife, Cathy, was evacuated through the Dominican Republic to flights home.

Quote of the Week: “I have no answer about why I was given the gift of life and Sam and Clint were not. All I can do is continue to try to use that gift in God’s service.” — The Rev. James Gulley, who survived the collapse of the Hotel Montana that killed Sam Dixon and Clint Rabb.