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"Linking mission workers worldwide and moving forward"

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[1] **MISSIONARY GATHERING at GETS, August 5 to 8 by Norma Kehrberg**

ALL SYSTEMS GO! Plan now to participate in the 2007 Mission Gathering and Forum at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (GETS is one block from Lake Michigan) in Evanston, Illinois – just north of Chicago – from August 5-8, 2007. **Please note the New Dates.**

The Gathering will begin with arrivals on Sunday afternoon, August 5, 2007. The event will end with lunch on Wednesday, August 8, 2007. The earliest registrations will have the option to stay in the dorm rooms at Garrett-Evangelical. Nearby Orlington Hotel and Best Western Inn are available for rates used by Garrett-Evangelical and Northwestern University.

Several missionary reunions are being planned for those serving in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and India. Time and space will be given also for other country reunions that register early. They will share time, program and facilities at GETS with one simple registration.

Registrar of the Mission Gathering and Forum is Richard Vreeland, former missionary to India and former treasurer of the World Division and UMCOR, and of the West Michigan Annual Conference. Look for a registration form in future UMMA UpDates.

The taskforce has extended the program to include a forum where mission concepts can be discussed and debated by those vitally interested in the mission programs of our church. Program details will be available soon. We will appreciate your ideas and suggestions. E-mail: Chicagomissiongathering@yahoo.com

Current participating groups include NADAM – an association of deaconesses, home missionaries and home missionaries; Mission Professors of the UMC; Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and the United Methodist Missionary Association (UMMA). Conversations are underway with other groups – **"joining forces with others."**

Chicago is a great city. Plan extra time to enjoy the sights at the Millennium Park in downtown Chicago next to the Art Institute or take in Second City. **Mark your 2007 calendar and plan to join this unique event.**

[2] **MORE AFTERGLOW & OVERFLOW OUT OF NASHVILLE** by the editor

The afterglow of the SE Asia Missionary Reunion in Nashville still glimmers in our minds, and our cup overflows. Time for visiting with old and new friends is never enough, but keeping in touch is easier now. Membership in UMMA is now up to 70% from the 50 missionaries who attended the Nashville reunion. Will other reunions top that? More dues for 2006 and beyond will be appreciated. The closing sermon of the Rev. Dr. Robert Hunt gave us significant new insights of a familiar scripture and application to God's mission. Read what follows to find out if missionaries are becoming "extinct or learning how to fly."

[3] **"WHAT IS THE QUESTION?"** by Robert Hunt from Mark 4:35-41

A sermon preached at the Reunion of United Methodist Missionaries to Southeast Asia, June 25, 2006 at Scarritt-Bennett Center, Nashville, Tenn. The Rev. Dr. Robert Hunt is Professor of Missions at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University

I love the sea. I love it in the morning when it glows red in the sunrise. And in the evening when it fades into the blackness of a star-filled night. Maybe you are the same way. Some of you had the privilege of belonging to the "boat people"; the people who actually sailed from the United States to Malaya or Indonesia or Singapore or Borneo. I often thought that this would be the grandest thing – to be out on the ocean at night, away from the lights of cities and towns, pressed down by the *doxa* of God, the immense weight of glory. So I resonate with all those stories of the sea in our scriptures. Perhaps that is why when I read them over and again I discover things I'd never noticed before: details the author intended for us to see, but which we failed to see because we were inattentive, or thought we already knew what was going to be said.

That is very much the case with this scripture passage, a passage so familiar that we hardly read it. After all, isn't it about Jesus who calms the wind and waves, the Messiah who rescues his disciples from the storm? Let me suggest that today we read it carefully, and see if perhaps there isn't more to this story of the sea. Let us see if perhaps it can speak to us with fresh challenges and insights.

The passage begins with a simple phrase, "On that day." Not "One day" or "Once" but "On that day." Doesn't that raise the question in our minds, "What day was that?" It was important to Mark to specify that on *that* day this happened, so I think we might start by investigating what day it was. And the answer is easy to find by reading the previous couple of pages of your Bible. This was the day on which Jesus taught his disciples about the Kingdom of God using parables. It was the day that he taught them, and that they did not understand. And it was the day that he took them aside and explained to them the meanings of those parables about the Kingdom of God. It was on *that* day when Jesus tried to make his disciples understand this Kingdom of God that he had come to proclaim that they all got in a boat to sail from Capernaum to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

"On that day" says Mark, "they took him in the boat *just as he was.*" And again this raises a question. What does Mark mean by "just as he was?" How was he? Of course there are several possible answers to this question. A couple are obvious within the

context of the passage. One is that he was dressed “just as he was.” Neither he nor the disciples had gone home and changed clothes for the journey. And that may be important, because here there is a big difference between Jesus and the disciples. Most of them at this point are fishermen. The clothes they wore were clothes cut for work in boats and on the sea. (Don’t imagine that in those days people had enough money to go out and buy special “apostle” clothes. Remember that most would not have even owned two cloaks.)

Jesus on the other hand was a landsman, a carpenter, and most recently a religious teacher. Almost certainly he would be dressed in robes since he had been teaching all day. So when we read that “they took him into the boat just as he was” we are almost certainly intended to understand the difference between the disciples as the crew of the boat, trained sailors that they were, and Jesus as the passenger, religious teacher than he was. Under the circumstances why shouldn’t he then make himself comfortable in the boat and go to sleep? He had been working all day as a teacher. Now it was their turn to do their jobs as sailors.

And then we read, “And other boats were with him.” I don’t know about you, but I think I’ve missed this all these years of reading. All the pictures of this story show only one boat with the cowering disciples, the raging storm, and heroic Jesus saving them. But there wasn’t just one boat. There was a fleet, no doubt a fleet of fishing boats from Capernaum making the same trip across the Sea of Galilee. The disciples and Jesus were not alone out there. They were surrounded by their friends and fellow fishermen, most of whom knew them and all of whom, no doubt, would have come to their aid if they were in trouble.

And if we can pause for a moment, this is important. There are two images that are often used for the Church. One is the image of the ark, the boat that bears a saved people over the face of the waters of chaos. And that is okay, if we don’t forget that there are a lot of other boats on the sea as well. We aren’t living in the time of Noah’s flood. We Christians are not the only people in the world sailing through life. We aren’t the only ones trying to keep our heads above water either. Similarly the other image for the church, the “*oikoumene*” or the household of God has social implications because the household of God is part of the city of humanity. We Americans love our frontier images, but that isn’t the world of the New Testament. We Christians are not the little house on the prairie facing the rigors of the wilderness alone. We have a lot of other households around us, facing the same perils as we face and woven into the same human social fabric. And that can be pretty relevant when the storms of life are raging.

Which is what happens in the story. A strong wind whips up a furious squall and waves begin to break over the side of the boat. This is a problem for fishing boats because they have high bows and sterns but low sides designed to make it easy for the fishermen to haul in their nets. If the fishermen cannot get the boat to face into the wind, it will be in danger of being swamped, which is what happens here. And so we can imagine the scene. A group of experienced and able-bodied fishermen, surrounded by many of their friends and peers in other boats, gets into trouble. We might hope that they are busy bailing out the boat – but possibly they are losing the battle with the storm. Maybe they are panicked because they cannot bring the boat around and the water seems to be gaining on them. In any case what they do next is understandable, but on reflection a little absurd. They wake up Jesus and say, “Rabbi, don’t you care that we are perishing?”

Two things about this sentence are fascinating. First they address him as teacher, a reminder to us if not to them that they are the sailors while he is the religious teacher. I was thinking about this because I'm a religious teacher myself. And I know that if I was a passenger on a boat in trouble, only the most desperate or clueless of sailors would call on me for help. Given the other things we read about the disciples perhaps they are both desperate and clueless. After all, at this point in their time with Jesus, they clearly, as will be seen, have no idea how he might be able to help them.

And then look at what they say: "don't you care that we are perishing?" Wouldn't "Hey, give us a hand" make more sense? Or "Grab a bucket and get to work unless you want to drown." But no, what they want isn't practical help. They want to know if Jesus cares about them, that he sees their plight, maybe even that he is admiring all the work they are putting in to save him. They seem to want their passenger awake to observe their desperation, pain, heroism, or something. Because it's all about them, isn't it? "Don't you care!" Which isn't a question as much as an accusation, right? And of course no doubt you and I read this passage with many of the same concerns. I'm afraid that all too often when we call on Jesus our question is not "how do we get the water out of the boat?" It is, "Can't you see how hard I'm working, how much I'm suffering, and why can't you please pay attention to me?!"

I don't want to suggest for a moment that we shouldn't call on Jesus for help, or even for sympathy. But it seems to me that the story we have, as it is written, begs us to consider the other options available. What about focusing our minds on getting the job done instead of wondering whether Jesus is watching? What about realizing that we're surrounded by other people who might help us if we called to them – fellow sailors out on that same stormy sea? How about a little faith in ourselves, and in our fellow humans? But then that question is coming.

Jesus does wake up. Possibly he isn't in such a great mood. He is human after all, and a lot of folks who fall asleep exhausted, expecting others to do their work, get a little irritated when they are suddenly wakened up with a cry of "don't you care?" So what does Jesus do?

Well, if Jesus is irritated, he takes it out first on the wind, which he rebukes and which promptly calms down. To the waves he merely speaks, saying "peace, be still." And they are still. The wind and the waves are remarkably compliant to the command of Jesus. They obey promptly, they don't answer back.

Then Jesus turns to the disciples to speak. First wind, then waves, then disciples. Always better to bring the situation and yourself under control before speaking to a friend. And he says, "Why are you afraid, have you still no faith?" Good, direct, questions. But you know what? Unlike the wind and waves the disciples do not promptly answer Jesus. Indeed, they ignore him. They huddle around and start saying, "Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him?" It's a great question. It has launched 2000 years of Christological controversy, endless heresies and church councils. It keeps my seminary and people like me in business. You can talk about who Jesus is until the cows come home and indeed until their calves are grown and giving milk. *But is that the right question?* What about the question that *Jesus* asked? Isn't *that* the more important question for us to answer? If your teacher (and remember the disciples call him "teacher") asks you a question, shouldn't you answer the teacher's question? Or do you say, "I have a much more interesting question, teacher. My friends and I will be

discussing it while you go back to sleep.” Maybe, just maybe, we should consider answering Jesus’ question first, and leave our question for much later.

And the questions Jesus asks are good questions. Because we are afraid. And we live in a nation that is afraid. And we still have no faith, and we live in a nation that has no faith. Although we know the teaching of Jesus that the Kingdom of God is near, and that this Good News should encourage us and give us faith even in time of trial, we are afraid and all too often faithless.

I see this fear all the time. I hear it in the Sunday school classes I teach and read it in the letters to the editor of the local newspaper. We’re afraid of Muslims living among us because we think they may be part of some sleeper cell of terrorists. We’re afraid of gays and that somehow they are destroying our family values. We’re afraid that the Mexicans and Salvadorans and Nicaraguans are going to overwhelm our cities and towns and change our culture and nation. We’re afraid of the Chinese because their thirst for oil is driving the price of driving an SUV through the roof and their cheap labor is driving the price of cotton underwear under the floor. Good heavens, if they wanted to, they might just make us freeze in the dark! And of course there are the Africans with AIDS and civil war and harboring terrorists, not to mention beating the U.S. soccer team in their third game of the World Cup. And the Indians with their call centers putting us out of work and their accents on the phone driving us batty and, of course, their nuclear weapons and cheap labor. And let’s not even talk about bird ‘flu’ from Southeast Asia, or maybe Turkey and “Old Europe” with its anti-Americanism. We’re afraid. Let’s admit it, and then ask what we ought to do about it.

That is your task. That is our task. We are people who have lived with, worked with, and who have been loved and cared for by all those whom this nation fears. We are witnesses that all those boats on the sea around us are filled with fellow human beings. And almost all of them will come to our aid in time of need. It was a gentle Muslim man who, after having fasted for 12 hours, put aside his dinner and literally took me by the hand and for two hours led me through Malaysian customs and got me into a taxi for my home in a new country. You have such stories as well. Your neighbors of other religions and races and political systems were the one’s who brought medicine to you when you were sick, fed your children when you traveled, chased the cobras from your bedroom in the night and wept for love and loss when you had to leave your adopted countries. That is a witness our nation desperately needs to hear. It needs to hear from those of us who have lived long in foreign lands and who can say from personal experience that they are not full of ogres and monsters but simply humans like the rest of us. Our nation needs to hear that it is not alone on the sea of time and history, but sails in a fleet of folks who like us quake at the fury of the storm, but who also will not ignore a ship in distress.

And it is your task, our task, to witness that we are not so weak as we think we are, if we will but walk in the way of God. It seems to me that there is a palpable fear of weakness in our land. It is always those who fear their weakness who are obsessed about showing off their strength. It is those whose lives are most impoverished who are obsessed with showing off their wealth. And that is us. The clear evidence of this fear of our own weakness is in our religion. The great majority of American Christians are pre-millennialists. Although the Revelation of John is clear in saying that the tribulation time is a time of testing for the saints we don’t want to believe it. We want to believe, and are encouraged to believe, that before things ever get tough Jesus will swoop down and

rapture us up so that we can watch the tribulation from a safe distance, like a news report on Fox or CNN. We don't want to actually *experience* the tribulation. We don't want to live to see our strength of faith tested. We want to read about it in a book by Tim LaHaye while we lay out on the beach on the sunny side of the New Jerusalem getting a tan. We no longer have any confidence that our so-called faith will stand up to the tests that the scripture assures us we will face. So we fantasize a divine rescue from tribulation and go on with our faithless ways.

In the face of this fear that we are not strong enough you and I need to be witnesses. We need to be witnesses to the strength of arm and mind that God gives those who do God's work and will. Among us are people who have faced prison for their faith, and on Friday we lit a candle for those who actually went to prison, and who died for their faith, in the strength of our Lord. Some of you left home and family and every material comfort for places whose name you didn't even know. You slept on woven mats in sweltering heat deep in the jungle. Although now you laugh, you didn't the first time one of those huge yellow bodied spiders wove its web over your door. You have given birth far from a modern hospital, and raised children where there were no schools, clinics, soccer teams or day care centers. You have uttered unintelligible tongues, and sometimes by God's grace they were understood, and by God's strength you even learned to understand. You have canoed through rapids that could tear a body to pieces, and you didn't think to be scared because you were so focused on bringing Good News to God's children. And you have faced the wrenching decision to leave your adopted homes, and the people you loved, so that they could grow and flourish into a maturity they would only know by being self-sufficient.

Now be witnesses here among us **here!** Be witnesses to a nation afraid of its own weakness. Be witnesses that when God's people get on with God's work they are strong. They are strong enough to face the trials of this world and the tribulation to come. Be witnesses, as Jesus was, that the Kingdom of God is near, very near, and in God's Kingdom there is strength. The problem isn't that our people lack faith in Jesus. They call upon him all the time. They just don't have faith that the Kingdom he proclaimed is near us, in our very hearts and minds and souls. They don't believe that this Kingdom of God – in which neighbor cares for neighbor and souls are steeled for the time of trial – is real. And so we must be witnesses to this Kingdom. For the sake of the faith of the nation we must be witnesses telling what we have seen – that the Kingdom of God has come among us and upon us. We must be witnesses that we can have faith in our neighbors, even those who don't share a common language, or skin color, or religion. We must be witnesses that we can have faith in our own strength, even when the tasks are enormous. And we must be witnesses to the lives we have seen changed by the gospel, the societies transformed by the Good News. We, who have been witnesses out at the ends of the earth, now need to be witnesses here – so that none of us need be afraid, and all of us can have faith in God's Reign come near in Jesus Christ.

Last night as we talked about future reunions someone behind me said, "We are becoming extinct." And let me tell you, I know what you mean. Lilian and I were the last long term United Methodist missionaries in Malaysia. At the memorial service, when we lit candles for those missionaries who have gone on to God, I had a moment when I wondered if there would be anyone still alive to light a candle for me. On the other hand,

when we left Malaysia it wasn't as if we shut the door and turned out the lights. All of us, when we left, left something behind.

Extinction is redolent of dinosaurs. And maybe when I asked you to make contributions from your papers to the Methodist archives you were thinking we would sink them in mud so that some future generation might dig up some old missionary bones. But if I read my science right it isn't quite true that dinosaurs became extinct. Indeed, you hear their descendants singing outside your window in the morning and circling in the sky above. The dinosaurs didn't become extinct, they evolved. They changed to meet new circumstances and challenges. A shifting of the hip bones, a reversal of a joint, a retexturing of the skin, and in time they began to fly. Who knows, maybe the Iban are right, and if you go back far enough we are all relatives to the birds. I love a song by the Malay poet M. Nasir. It is based on the wonderful Persian story of the Conference of the Birds. This is the refrain: "*Tanya sama itu hud-hud, lang menghilang, kui miskui. Kerana dia yang terbang akan aku kembali.*" It speaks of the future saying: "Ask it of the hoopoe, the eagle wheeling, the hawk circling. Because the one who flies, will fly me home."

Extinct? I don't think so. **We missionaries are not going extinct. We are learning how to fly.** And if you have your doubts, I ask you to look to the east. Look to the lands where you have served the Lord. There you will find your spiritual children, and grandchildren, and great grandchildren. There you will see them, your descendants, your successors, your legacy soaring and wheeling on the wind of the Spirit in the light of rising sun. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

[3] **MISSIONARIES WRITE** – *Reports from God's frontier workers mean much.*

Congratulations to United Methodist Missionary, the Rev. Paul Jeffrey, who has won the Egan Award for Journalistic Excellence, awarded annually by Catholic Relief Services. The award, announced May 25 at the Catholic Press Convocation in Nashville, recognizes journalists for their reporting on humanitarian and social justice issues around the world. Jeffrey, one of six winners this year, won the series division for a four-part series on the crisis in Darfur that he wrote for Catholic News Service. A clergy member of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference, Jeffrey also won the Egan award in 2002 and 2005. The competition is judged by journalists from secular news outlets. Judges this year included Jeffrey Frank, Senior Editor for the New Yorker; Jim Cox, Foreign Editor for USA Today; and Kevin Eckstrom, Editor for Religion News Service.

Paul, a long-time member of UMMA, wrote a note to this editor: "*The nice thing about the CRS award is that the prize is a trip somewhere. In the past they've taken me to Cambodia and Indonesia. This year it's the Middle East, specifically the occupied Palestinian Territories. So it saves the GBGM the price of a ticket.*"

Paul's articles appear regularly in *Response*, the *Christian Century*, and the *National Catholic Reporter*. His photos have appeared in *Sierra* and *National Geographic Explorer* and others. He wrote *Recovering Memory*, a book about the role of churches in the Guatemalan peace process. The book inspired "Precarious Peace," a 2003 documentary video about the church in Guatemala.

Paul also covers emergencies for Action by Churches Together (ACT), the Geneva-based network of church disaster agencies.

Paul has filed stories from more than 45 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, writing about everything from hurricanes, health care, and massacres to indigenous rights, refugees, and ecumenism. Over the years he has "the privilege of witnessing the poor become subjects of their own history rather than the objects of someone else's history."

His work examines how Christians and church communities struggle for justice and peace in the midst of repression, violence, and rapid economic and social change. In 2001, Paul and Lyda were named distinguished alums of Pacific School of Religion. After living in Central America for 20 years, Paul and his family moved to Oregon in 2004. [parts are from a *Newscope* story]

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Dear Ric, Good to see the latest UpDate with an obit for my long-time neighbor and colleague in campus ministry, John Krummel. As we live near Asheville, NC (in Lake Junaluska), we had been able to see him and his wife Fusako periodically.

Now, a different matter. My own involvement in campus ministries for the better part of forty years in Japan offered many opportunities for relating faith to knowledge, and especially key life issues such as nuclear weapons. That included collaboration with a Japanese medical professor in the English translation of the first full accounting of the effects of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In retirement a wholly unexpected opportunity came from a friend who wanted to put the basic A-bomb history and its contemporary implications on the Web. The result is easily accessible at www.atomicbombmuseum.org, and has many visits daily. I urge you to make known via the *UMMA UpDate*. - David Swain, missionary to Japan, retired

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Dear Ric: Thanks for yet another great UMMA Update. The insights and interpretations of various events are most helpful. UMMA, like the rest of the church, continues to face the tensions and challenges of *chronos* and *kairos* time. Easter is a wonderful time to recall God's ever-present love and invitation for us to be faithful pilgrims of The Way. Easter Blessings to you and yours, Bud & Millie Carroll, long-time UMMA members

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Fabulous material, Ric, Thanks for UMMA UpDate. This is the best source. Shalom, Ruth Ann and Bob Caufield, long-time UMMA members

[5] MISSIONARY MILESTONES

On Friday, June 2, 2006, Elsie Finney passed away peacefully, surrounded by her family at the Cambridge Memorial Hospital, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada. Elsie will be lovingly remembered as a most remarkable mother, grandmother and great grandmother by her children. As a missionary in India for 34 years, Elsie lived a wonderfully full life that touched the lives of many, many people. Elsie was always curious about God's creation and, despite her quiet and unassuming ways, was actively engaged in life until her last day. Despite great geographical distances, Elsie somehow managed to keep her family lovingly connected. She will be fondly remembered and sorely missed by them all. She was a long-time member of UMMA. A celebration of her life was held in the Auditorium at Fairview Mennonite Centre, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada on Sunday, June 4th at 2 pm.

[6] **JIM'S JOTTINGS "Joining forces with others..."** by Jim Dwyer, chair

Reading through today's *UMMA Update*, I am again impressed at the richness of our missionary experience. Thanks are especially due to Ric Schwenk, editor of the update and chair of our UMMA Communications Task Force, for throwing light on that wealth and depth of experience and reflecting it back to us yet again, as he has through 42 previous issues of the *UMMA UpDate*.

As missionary in Europe – a position I shared for a while with Robert Hunt, whose sermon on “**dinosaur flight**” is included here (“What Is the Question?”), I am grateful to have escaped some of the greater hardships (and adventures) that tend to be reported when missionaries gather who have served in inland Africa, atop the Himalayas and in other parts of Asia, or in politically distressed Latin American countries. On the other hand, as visitors to our points of assignment in Europe have pointed out, the more severe adjustments of such situations often elicit a higher degree of involvement and supportive response from the persons among whom we work. European individualism and privatism often engender a sense of isolation, when few even consider what a missionary may have left behind, what role he or she may have been asked to play in the local situation, or even the fact that working conditions and benefits may be different than those of others in the same church structures.

Certainly, the opportunity to share joys and sorrows of missionary reunions even into our more strongly isolated contexts is one of the great benefits which falls to all missionaries as a result of Ric's work and that of our communication task force, and is a benefit to us all of UMMA's very existence.

Before turning the editorial pen back over to Ric, I would like to pick up one thought from Robert's sermon and give it a European turn. He addresses the sense of fear which seems to be so prevalent in the U.S.A.

From a seat on the front row of the FIFA World Cup Soccer Tournament (front row in front of the “telly,” that is), it has been most gratifying to see how Germany has dealt with all the potential for “hooliganism,” skin-head violence or terrorist attacks by inviting the world to be “**at home with friends**,” talking openly of both the dangers and the remedies and, finally, living up to that invitation. Although Germany's "black-red-gold" flag, used in one form or another by each of the two German states since 1945, symbolizes democracy and was not the flag used by either Imperial Germany or the National-Socialist State, Germans have been very hesitant to raise the German flag for the past 60 years. The World Cup has allowed Germans to “wave the flag” for the German National Eleven; it has allowed foreigners living in Germany to wave both their own and Germany's flags as celebrations not only of victory but also of honorable losses; and has motivated vast groups of people (millions at times) from all participating nations gathered in public parks in front of massive LED television screens in all major cities. (Unfortunately, the U.S. soccer team seemed to have come prepared to be the brunt of terrorist attacks or anti-Americanism and kept out of public places until their disqualification and departure, unless under massive police and military guard.) Public thanks that all dangers were averted has been second only to the joy that Germans and foreigners could peaceably celebrate one another's victories and mourn one another's losses together. Africans, Central Americans, Asians, Brazilians and other South Americans, Italians, French and Brits all have been expansive in their praise of German hospitality and clear about their need to revise their stereotypes of the dour and cool

Germans based on the excitement of the last two weeks. (I've always felt the soccer stadium is the one place Germans "let down their hair.")

For Europeans, the greater source of anxiety is, however, American foreign policy or the related fear that there may not be a cohesive American policy. For many, the idea that there is design behind what the American administration is doing in the world is even more frightening than the idea that there is none.

Just as Robert Hunt invites us to ask about our own faith and the tasks it calls us to, rather than whether Jesus has noticed the water rising about us, and encourages us to pronounce the good news and to invite people to work together in faith, so also a recent book, reviewed by theologian John B. Cobb in the *Pilgrim Place News* of Claremont, California, calls upon us all to confront the policies developed consequential to "9/11" with a "Christian Critique of 9/11 and American Imperialism." That is, indeed, the title of Part Two of the book Cobb reviews. The book itself is by David Ray Griffin (Westminster John Knox 2006). Its title is *Christian Faith and the Truth behind 9/11*. It is Griffin's third book on the subject in three years, in which he has (according to Cobb) thoroughly researched and documented the facts suggesting the validity of a "conspiracy theory." I am *anxious* – an intentional choice of words - to get my own copy to read. As further encouragement for your own reading, I cite the penultimate and last sentences of Cobb's review: "We may hope that those who disagree with Griffin will engage in serious efforts to disprove his facts or his theories. We need an investigation by those wanting to know the truth and with subpoena power to learn it."

Meanwhile, I second Robert's plea to **join forces with others in the same or similar boats in facing the storms raging about us.**

Wishing you an abundance of God's own grace, peace and joy from the "World Cup Host and Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg."

[7] **MISSIONARY REUNIONS for 2006-2007**

See *UMMA UpDate*, June 2006 in our website, click to: <http://www.umma-global.org>