

UMMA UpDate #44, August 1, 2006
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United Methodist Missionary Association
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"Linking mission workers worldwide and moving forward"

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[1] Join the 2007 Mission Gathering, Aug. 5-8, 2007 by Norma Kehrberg

Plans are moving forward for the 2007 Mission Gathering and Forum at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, August 5 to 8, 2007. G-ETS is in Evanston, just north of Chicago. Registration will be open on November 1, 2006 with a fee of \$35 per person. Dormitory space is limited so those who register early can be accommodated on campus. However, the Hotel Orrington and Best Western Hotels are nearby and reduced rates will be available. We are happy to announce that Bishop Roy Sano will be one of the plenary speakers. Bishop Sano was a long-time director of the GBGM and served as president of the World Division for four years. Other speakers are pending. There will be time to listen and learn and to share and discuss. Plan now to attend from August 5 to 8, 2007 at G-ETS near Lake Michigan.

[2] HAPPY 10TH ANNIVERSARY of UMMA by the editor, et. al.

To refresh our memories it is helpful to look back at our purpose and history that led up to the formation of UMMA in 1996:

The **purpose** of the United Methodist Missionary Association (UMMA) is to develop and nurture a vital connectional network among active, inactive and retired missionaries of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church for the purpose of promoting Christian mission.

History: In 1995 all active and retired missionaries were contacted in response to a felt need for a continuing consultative body by the missionaries of the former World Division of the GBGM, urging them to join the forming association.

Prior to the last World Division's Missionary Conference at Ridgewood, NC, in July, 1996, a group of retired and active missionaries gathered and drew up the draft of a constitution for a United Methodist Missionary Association (UMMA). At the Conference, an Interim Steering Committee was chosen to proceed with the structuring and legalizing of the organization.

The second annual meeting of UMMA was held July 15-16, 1997 at Simpsonwood retreat center outside Atlanta. This UMMA Gathering proceeded to elect a Steering Committee made up of representatives from active missionaries and retired missionaries plus the then-current Missionary-in-Residence and a Coordinator to serve as office

manager of the organization. Task Forces were established to maintain an on-going dialogue with the staff and directors of the GBGM for problems and issues being faced by the missionary community around the world.

Today as then, we urge all missionaries, both active and retired, to contact at least one of the representatives from your active field of service or the retiree representatives to let them know of your interest and to express your opinion concerning important issues.

We thus pattern our lives on Jesus and fix our eyes firmly towards a goal of ***Linking mission workers worldwide and moving forward – discerning God’s mission and helping do it.***

What memory or highlights would you like to share about this 10-year vital life of UMMA? Is UMMA what you thought it would be – more or less? What do you see as goals for the next decade? Let us use this coming year to revitalize our souls and organization by what we have laid down on our journey of the last decade. Excerpts from your comments may be printed here, with or without your name – your choice.

[3] **The Light That Shines from Older Missionaries by Donald W. Turman**

A sermon by The Rev. Donald W. Turman delivered at the reunion of missionaries and nationals from Malaysia, Singapore & Indonesia, Scarritt-Bennett Center, Nashville, Tennessee, June 24, 2006.

Text: Mathew 5:13-16 (NRSV)

13 "You are like salt for all mankind. But if salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown out and people trample on it. 14 "You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 15 No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead he puts it on the lamp stand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. 16 In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.

I. Introduction: New Beginnings

A week from today will be my first day of retirement. At the end of June, Ramona and I will officially be retired from the General Board of Global Ministries and I will also be a retired member of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference.

I think I experienced what retirement might be like this past January when we came back to the United States from Jakarta where we have lived since mid-1999. Ministry in Jakarta was characterized by just trying to keep my head above water as I taught at Wesley School of Theology, served as pastor of Wesley Church, and tried to maintain meaningful relationships with family, friends, and supporting churches here in the United States. But in January, after a few weeks of rest and renewal and after preparing the sermons and presentations we would share with our supporting churches, I realized that I really no longer had a job. All of the things that had given my ministry meaning were gone and I could not look ahead to a time when these meaningful and enjoyable parts of my life would resume. In the past I would leave ministry in one church but then pick it up in another. Or I would come to the States on furlough but return to the field when it was over. But the retirement recognition service at Annual Conference and the letter of appreciation from Rev. Jungrea Chung at GBGM made it clear that everything is different this time.

Recently I have been remembering the words of my good friend, Gertrude Wadsworth, who lived to be almost 100. She said one of the keys to her long and happy

life was that she always tried to “have some new beginnings.” And so, that is where Ramona and I are at this time in our lives and ministry. We are eager to discover the “new beginnings” that God has for us as “former missionaries.”

One of the scripture passages that has been jumping out at me during recent months has been Matthew 5:13-16 which has been read today. It has also been jumping out at us here since it was the focus of Doug Wingeier’s message last night and then it was central in the letter from a colleague read by Lionel Muthiah. That letter ended with the words, “Remember you are the light of the world, the salt of the earth.”

The challenge that Ramona and I have is to discover the implications of this great mission passage for us in retirement. When I think about being the salt and the light of the world, I must think about what it means to be old and used salt and an old and used light. Since that is where I am in my journey, I choose that for my topic today: “The Light That Shines from Old Missionaries!”

Recently Ramona and I were asked to help Esther McGill move and arrange the books at the Brooks-Howell Home in Asheville that are considered “the archives.” The archives include books about missionaries and the countries in which they served. Some of the books are written by missionaries telling about their work and the colleagues with whom they served.

As I handled these books, I made it a point to notice each title and sometimes I would open a particular book to glance at the table of contents or to look at the photographs. I don’t ever remember being filled with such a deep feeling of gratitude for the missionaries who lived in decades past and the impact they have made on the world.

This experience led me to remember and think about the profound influence that “older” missionaries had on me when I was a new Christian and a young missionary. I would like to talk about some of them today because through them I have been helped to get a glimpse of what being in mission as a retired missionary might be.

II. The Contributions of Missionaries to My Life

The Rev. Norman Parsons, a missionary to Japan, came to speak at my home church in rural North Carolina when I was 16 years old and just finishing my junior year in high school. After hearing his message I joined four other young persons, including my best friend, Steven Edwards, in coming forward to accept his challenge to surrender our lives to God and to commit our lives to “full time Christian service” as he called it. For me this began a very wonderful and exciting journey of being a Christian, a pastor, and sometimes a foreign missionary.

One very famous Methodist missionary was Miss Lorena Kelly who served for more than 30 years in the Congo. Not long after I made my personal commitment to God, Steven Edwards and I learned that she was at her home in Mt. Mourne just few miles from where we lived. So we arranged to go and see her and were very warmly and graciously received. Two things made a great impression on me. First was her hospitality. I was very surprised and pleased that she served us a drink and some fried peanuts, certainly something that was not the custom in that area. And the second thing that really impressed me was her enthusiasm and love for her work and the people in Africa to whom she had given her life. We left her house feeling that we had been treated like kings.

A few years later in 1960 I was sent to Malaya, as it was then called, to serve for three years as a short-term missionary. I was 22 years old and as green as they come, feeling

very much that I had jumped in way over my head. The missionaries I came to know in Malaysia were all at least a little older and much more experienced than I and most of them had a significant impact on my life:

- It began with Bob and Joyce Foster who welcomed me to Singapore and opened their home and hearts to me as I prepared to travel by train to Kuala Lumpur. I think this was my first experience of being around someone from England. Their hospitality and warmth far exceeded the many things about them that seemed strange to me.

- Next was Ralph Kesselring, the District Superintendent who met me at the station in Kuala Lumpur and drove me to my new home in Bentong, Pahang. He also made me feel very welcome and gave me the impression that he really thought I could handle the job of teaching in the Methodist English School and serving as pastor of the English language congregations in Bentong and Mentakab.

- I must also mention Ted Miles with whom I was to work daily for three years. Even though he planted a harmless tree snake in the bookcase in the parsonage that I found on my first day, he proved to be a faithful mentor and friend.

- Among others who accepted me and were hospitable and kind were Dick and C'Lee Babcock, my nearest neighbors in Raub with whom I occasionally spent the night. They were followed by Chuck and Peggy Grose who continued providing me a place of refuge.

- There were also Laura Schleman and Paul and Lee-Lee Castor in Kuantan whose hospitality enabled me to get away to be near the sea that always refreshes and renews.

- I must also mention Bob and Wiz Lundy. Bob was one of my District Superintendents who was also very kind in giving guidance and encouragement to an untrained pastor.

- David Hilton I would see on visits to Kuala Lumpur. He was like an older brother who always knew where to find the best food in KL.

- Hoadley Berkman was another missionary who made me feel special. Hoadley was a devout baseball fan and subscribed to the Sporting News. Usually when he sent mail to me from Singapore, he would include clippings from the Sporting News that he thought would interest me.

- And finally, I remember being at Fraser's Hill at a time when Bill and Ruth Ann Zimmerman were there. Before going to bed one night Ruth Ann talked to us about cleaning up the mess we had made in the family room. The point that she made that has stuck with me was that if we didn't clean it up before going to bed, it would just be there waiting for us to clean it up the next morning.

III. Being Salt and Light in Retirement

Now when I think of being salt and light in retirement, old and used salt and light, I remember these and others who have demonstrated its meaning to me.

- There was Lorena Kelly and the many missionaries in Malaya who showed me warmth and hospitality as well as their love for the people they served.

- There was kindness and consideration like I found in Hoadley Berkman as he shared his love of baseball with a newcomer.

- There was guidance and encouragement that I received from church leaders like Ralph Kesselring and Bob Lundy.

- And then there was the Gospel message that was boldly and clearly shared in a meaningful way by Norman Parsons of Japan that contributed to the initial transformation of my life.

Now as I think of what is involved in being salt and light as an older, “retired” missionary, I am indebted to some of you and many others who came into my life at a time when I was very young and inexperienced.

Being the salt and the light of the world is clearly extending hospitality and showing kindness to both strangers and friends; accepting those who are younger and inexperienced and in need of encouragement; giving guidance and instruction to those who need to be nudged along the way; and sharing the message of God’s love and new life in Christ through the spoken word.

Thank you for helping me to experience that! May God give each of us the grace to continue being salt and light to those who come into our lives and homes each day.

[4] OUR READERS WRITE

Ric, I wanted to say how much I appreciated the last two updates and the sermons included therein... – an executive staff of the GBGM

I have just finished reading every word of your report and appreciate what I have learned from it. Thanks for all of your intense work. Sincerely, Frances Bray, served in Japan

Thanks for including me [in the UMMA UpDate mailings]. The info is always interesting and helpful. Sometimes parts of it even get into my local church newsletter...they think the needs are so great "here" that they can't afford to help "there" however that attitude is slowly but surely eroding away. – a GBGM director

Thank you so much Richard for sharing this bulletin with me. I look forward to it.
Bendiciones, Becky Harrell, Volunteer Coordinator-Emana Corporacion Metodista-Chile

[5] JIM'S JOTTINGS by James Dwyer, chair

Norman Parson's recollections drive home how varied our missionary experience is and highlight the changes in both the world and the church during the active service of many of us. Especially the ten years of UMMA's existence have seen radical changes which have been tough for many of us to anticipate or comprehend. Much change was intentional and good, while other parts were forced upon us all by circumstances and have not yet demonstrated their beneficial side.

NEWSCOPE notes not only that UMC membership in the U.S. has fallen below 8,000,000 for the first time in 75 years (unfortunately), but that 1/3 of GBGM missionaries serving in countries other than their own are not North American (great!). Let us all pray that U.S. United Methodists will be given heightened interest in the work of a portion of the Body of Christ in which their dominance is diminishing, and that the role of the people missionaries have gone to serve for centuries will blossom according to the gifts given them.

As part of our gratitude to those who have gone on before, I acknowledge the work of Howard Heiner, a founder of UMMA and a member of its Steering Committee since founding, and chair of UMMA for more than half of its history before being succeeded by Norma Kehrberg's able leadership. Fred Price – successor to the late Gilbert Bascom, Coordinator to Howard's Chair and "co-conspirator" in much UMMA activity – reports that Howard wishes not to be reelected to the Steering Committee at our Gathering in

