

UMMA UpDate #54, September 22, 2007
e-bulletin of the
United Methodist Missionary Association
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"Linking mission workers worldwide and moving forward"

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[1] ***Global Mission Personnel Conference at Stony Point by Nan McCurdy***

The Global Mission Personnel Conference at Stony Point went very well. UMMA members Helen and Jim Dwyer, Dakin Cook and Sara Flores, Ev and Terry Erbele worked very hard to pull it off at fairly short notice.

As always the missionaries really enjoyed sharing with one another and feeling like a community. The testimonies by retiring missionaries were extremely moving. I expressed to all of the organizers, as well as to Steve Goldstein, Edith Gleaves and Randy Day that the presence of our retired community would have made the experience even better. Others expressed the same sentiment. We told them that we thought there were retired missionaries who would be willing to pay their own way (hopefully at a reduced rate) to be present in the future.

Members of UMMA and others interested in joining were able to have an informal UMMA meeting for sharing and questions on Saturday. We gained at least four new members. One of the things I emphasized with new members is that UMMA is a way for us to remain in community as missionaries. It's obvious, I guess. But I think it's important to point this out and really build on being a community.

There was not much time for missionaries to really share concerns in plenary. The ADVANCE is being totally restructured with eleven new personnel. All projects will have to reapply next year and it sounds like they are trying to reduce the number of projects. A lot of missionary concerns came up in this session like: projects that have been accidentally deleted, bishops using the ADVANCE in questionable ways, good projects that may not be able to continue because the bishop might not sign off on them.

Missionaries especially voiced concerns about how few church congregations actually get to hear from a representative (a missionary, retired missionary, GBGM staff or volunteer) concerning the connectional nature of our church, about the ADVANCE, about the Covenant, about UMCOR, etc. Many people expressed the need to have the new ADVANCE personnel out in the churches and suggested GBGM be more intentional

in having missionaries go to more churches and in giving them the time to do this. Also, our resource of retired missionaries was also mentioned a number of times. I heard from Steve that the new person who will be hired to head up itineration will also be asked to work on contacting and organizing retired missionaries for itineration in the conferences where they are located. I think this is good news. At least the intention is there. We've been talking about this for a long time.

I talked briefly with Randy Day. My impression is that he would be open to hearing more regularly from UMMA. We need to remind him about working together in the future (in two years) on back-to-back gatherings. Edith Gleaves was present the entire time, along with Steve and John Nuessle. Edith really seemed to be listening to the missionary community, and my sense is that communication will continue to improve between Edith and UMMA. Lynda Byrd was there for a day. Those of you who were in Evanston will remember that she was with us the entire time. She is amazing. With only one assistant she fundraises for and promotes the ADVANCE, Mission Initiatives, Global Mission Partners, Covenant Relationships, Special Sundays and Special Program Initiatives.

Avery Manchester facilitated two sessions on wholeness. These were terrific. John Nuessle led three Bible study sessions on mission and global ministries. These were also excellent. Please feel free to respond with questions and comments. I was honored to be there representing the United Methodist Missionary Association! Joy and Peace!

[2] **People of Faith in Areas of Conflict: Lessons...** by Howard Heiner

Abstract of a paper presented as part of a panel with Paul Jeffrey and Hugh Johnson.

Peggy, our four children and I walked into the La Paz, Bolivia airport excited to arrive in the country of our first missionary assignment. Two Bolivian Methodist pastors were there to greet us and drive us down to the Church's school complex and guest center in the center of La Paz. As we started down the long descent into town, one pastor turned to us and explained: "They are rioting against the U.S. embassy this morning so we do not want anyone to know we have North Americans in the car. Please get down on the floor so they cannot see you." This was our first lesson on the difficulties of living in developing countries where social turmoil is the norm. There were many experiences to come that revealed the influence of a U.S. foreign policy within a cold war framework.

During our missionary career Peggy and I served overseas in four countries – Bolivia, Chile, Somalia and Nicaragua. They were all engaged in serious social upheavals for a decent life, and that led to their governments labeling them "communist" which resulted in violent confrontations.

Our national friends helped expose the agenda of U.S. foreign policy that recognized and legitimized military dictatorships under the guise of fighting communism. Governments viciously persecuted their own citizens who spoke out for human rights. Our friends helped clarify where United States' "national interest" really lies as our country struggle/bullies its way to be an economic super-power.

Our overseas experience taught us that courage is a vital element taken by communities of faith when they "walk the talk of Christ".

Turning to the second part of the Panel's title, "**Possibilities for the future of mission in the UMC**", I would suggest three recommendations: **True Methodist Fellowship, Ministry of Reconciliation, Confront Globalization**

1. **True Methodist Fellowship:** The United Methodist Church should shed the twentieth century attitude of being the "dominant" Church of Methodism. We should turn to a vision of a global community of faith, which can transcend a faith draped in nationalism. The Council of Bishops has initiated the search for that vision by establishing the Task Group on the Global Nature of the Church. Their first report will be presented at the 2008 General Conference with a recommendation that a final report be presented to the 2012 General Conference.

2. **Ministry of Reconciliation:** A Ministry of Reconciliation is outlined in II Corinthians 5 where we are guided by the love of Christ to a mission of reconciliation with a special role as His ambassadors. Our government struggled to build a "gated country" through homeland security to protect us from "them" – the terrorists. Too soon those that speak differently, wear different clothing, have different colored skin, or speak out for peace and justice become "them." Terrorism has replaced Communism as the enemy to hate and fear.

Is there a role for long-term missionaries like Sandra Olewine who lived in Israel/Palestine, helping us understand that conflict; or Paul Jeffrey who travels the globe to bring us photos and articles about natural and human disasters? The GBGM should encourage a special role for long-term missionaries as agents of change to help in the process of reconciliation both here in the U.S. and with people around the world.

3. **Confront Globalization:** The structures of globalization have promoted social injustice, economic inequity and environmental degradation. This system is morally unacceptable! People of faith must resist with compassion and courage neo-liberal globalization based on capital accumulation.

Christ is weeping over the actions of our country. We Methodists are called to join in the reframing of our Church to "live into its world-wide nature more fully." Through faith, courage and the leading of the Holy Spirit we must respond. *Editor's note: For the full text click to www.umma-global.org/mission07.html . Other Mission Forum Papers are there too.*

[3] **Bridges of Hope in North Africa by Hugh Johnson**

We (Fritzi and I) have invested about two-thirds of our lives in a very special place, one that offered challenges and opportunities (they are not necessarily the same). We went to North Africa with a special call, one that we felt from God and another concurrent one, from a specific and special place. Because it is such a special place, I should like to use a part of my time tonight to share the historical perspective and development of life in a place that has been *throughout* history a place of cultural encounter in a conflictual environment. A great part of my preoccupation, not wanting to use expressions of anguish or "lostness", comes from a frustration that a lifetime of dialog, service, sharing and loving those who are, and will always be, different.

When we began our service in North Africa, we were among a handful of other people who chose to serve in a Muslim environment. We sought to understand, and to help others understand that special calling. The frustrating part is the recognition that such a mission is more than a lifetime project. We enter into the perspective of a thousand years

being as but a day. Lest we think in terms of what the United Methodist Church (and its predecessors) have been doing in North Africa for well over a century, we must add the ecumenical page to our notebook. In a land where Christianity died after the first centuries AD, it has become increasingly clear that Christianity should live together, or it will die again.

For decades, we have sought to define Christian presence and Christian mission where non-Muslims constitute less than one in one thousand inhabitants. One would think that such a microscopic minority should be no problem to the majority, but it is. I'll come back to that. We have sought to make a united Christian witness, to work and worship together, to live and love together, to testify by our very lives that God is One! Our work has traditionally been quite diversified, with a genuine Wesleyan balance of proclamation and social concern. *For the full text click to www.umma-global.org/mission07.html*

[4] Our Readers Write

Thanks for this rich information. May we continue to keep the missionary zeal alive. God bless you. - Bishop John Innis

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Congratulations on your report of Gene Matthews and the new book, *More Than Witnesses*. It is a study that we can all learn from, as did I myself. It may interest your readers that another informative medium has recently come (as did the Wise Men) from the East, namely, a new website on the development and use of the first atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, based on the first definitive accounting of those bombings to appear in English. Check it out at www.atomicbombmuseum.org.

The key computer expert is based in the Research Triangle (Durham, Raleigh, Chapel Hill, N.C.). The chief writer of the book was myself (based on my joint translation with a Japanese medical professor of the first full accounting of those two bombs, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The physical, medical and social effects of the atomic bombings* (published by Harper & Row's Basic Books division in the U.S., and Iwanami Publishers in Tokyo – Japan's premier publishing house) in 1981.

The problem was that fewer young people read books anymore. So our computer expert in Chapel Hill urged that the key info be put on a website, which was done last year. Viewers have numbered monthly in the tens of thousands, twice exceeding 96,000 in a single month (few books sell that well)... This website, and the book it is based upon, are not, strictly speaking, religious in character, but it is definitely missional, if that term includes helping to save the human race from destruction. - David L. Swain, missionary to Japan

[5] Chair's Corner: On the (Chopping) Block with Jim Gulley

My goal “to outline a vision of where we are headed together over the next year” has not yet been realized, though I have received numerous building blocks from Steering Committee members. My interpolations: *Nitty-gritty issues* that affect morale, relationships and work quality: >> **disconnects** – GBGM, missionary and local churches, eg, accessing up-to-date list of supporting churches; >> **itineration**: no resident base, no vehicle, no digital projector for expected presentations. *Strategic missional issues*: >> **lack of clarity on GBGM priorities** e.g., starting new UM

Churches neglecting historic autonomous Methodist church, ecumenical partners; lack of understanding of GBGM vision and goals at conference level; >> **growing hierarchal, clergy-dominated UMC**, decline of the voice of the laity, missionaries and absence of broad discussion on strategic issues; >> accompanying **short-term mission teams** with little knowledge of context, culture or language. What other issues are you confronting in your continued mission service?

Rev. Edith Gleaves extended an invitation to continue dialogue with UMMA on issues of mutual concern at a luncheon at the beginning of the Fall GBGM Board Meeting (Oct 8). Our agenda: follow-up to the Mission Gathering and Forum and GBGM's Global Mission Personnel Conference; retirement-related issues; resumption of GBGM consultations with missionary associations; mobilizing and utilizing the inactive and retired missionary.

***ACTION:** 1) Pray that our conversations with GBGM staff and directors will contribute to a revitalized, shared vision of the United Methodist Church in Christ's mission. 2) Contact your Regional Steering Committee Rep and share your vision, energy and action. May the daily grind not overwhelm our commitment. Grace and peace.*

[6] **Coordinator's Corner: "Know Your UMMA Representatives" by Fred Price**

The United Methodist Missionary Association was and is deliberately structured to be as representative as possible of the missionary community. Every two years we hold elections to select people to represent the concerns and thoughts of their communities (geographical regions and retired missionaries). A complete list of those persons (UMMA's Steering Committee) follows. Please, note who your representatives are and feel free to contact them. Also, note that you can always go to UMMA's website for a listing of your representatives.

Representing Sub-Saharan Africa are Jeff Hoover; email JEHoover@mwangaza.cd and William J. Savuto; email: jbsavuto@yahoo.com. Representing Europe/Middle East/Mediterranean/India are Mark Abbott: email mark_diane_abbott@yahoo.com and Carol Seckel; email: carkseckel@aol.com; representing Asia are Tim Boyle; email: za3t-by1@asahi-net.or.jp and Sonia Strawn; email: srstrawn@shinbiro.com. Representing South America are Gordon Greathouse; email gordongreathouse@terra.com.br and R. Stephen Newnum; email stephen@newnum.org. Representing the USA are Jim Gulley; email jim.gulley@comcast.net and Phillip Wingeier Rayo; email: pwingeier@yahoo.com. Representing Mexico/Central America/Caribbean are Nan McCurdy; email nanmigl@yahoo.com and Cherie White; email: velwhite@gmail.com. Representing Retirees are Hugh Frazer; email frazerhugh@brmemc.net, Hugh Johnson; email hughjohnson@use.net and Diana Upchurch; email: dianaupchurch@yahoo.com

In addition, we have appointed five Task Force chairs. They are Mission Contexts and Relationships: Gene Matthews; email genematt@mchsi.com; Spiritual Nurture: Carolyn (Belshe) Cowen; email: ccmission@cox.net; 2007 Mission Gathering and Forum: Norma Kehrberg; email kehrberg001@hawaii.rr.com; Communications: Ric Schwenk; email; ricschwenk@earthlink.net and Collins Task Force: Richard Vreeland; email: rlvreeland@sbcglobal.net.

Finally UMMA's officers are: Jim Gulley (Chair); Cherie White (Vice Chair); Carol Seckel (Secretary) and Jim Gulley (Treasurer - we will be seeking a new treasurer soon since Jim has now become UMMA's Chair); Fred Price (Coordinator).

[7] Report on UMMA to Potential Members by Nan McCurdy

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.

UMMA envisions its role as one of advocacy, advisory and support for those engaged in the Mission the Risen Christ charged us with, especially those working within the United Methodist structure. Since its formation in 1996, UMMA members have articulated a vision for mission and shared recommendations with staff. In UMMA, missionaries have a representative voice and an ongoing organization through which they can be in contact with United Methodist mission work.

One of the objectives of the missionaries of the United Methodist Church is to be in a fuller and more meaningful dialogue with General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) directors and staff in order to contribute our particular "Spirit-endowed" gifts to a common mission fellowship. United Methodist missionaries strive throughout the world to meet the needs of the poor and oppressed. We live, work and witness to the people in countries around the globe and in mission sites in the United States. We are in mission assignments for years – often for decades, and become well acquainted with the people, their country, local reality and history. We are privileged to be knowledgeable in our fields and strive to be faithful bridges between the United Methodist Church in US Churches, our ecumenical partners and the people we serve in our mission assignments. We are able to bring informed ideas to mission vision and planning of the General Board of Global Ministries.

Some of UMMA's successes since our founding as a non-profit organization in 1996:

- * Mission Gathering and Forum with 120 participants, Evanston, IL, August 2007
- * Membership ranges from 300 to over 400 with a large constituency that are on the verge of becoming...
- * The UMMA website <http://www.umma-global.org/> has a growing number of visitors, and the UMMA Update newsletter is e-mailed or postal mailed 11 times a year.
- * \$25 dollar/year of service increase in pension (Jan.1, 2007) and continued work to increase the pension amount per year of service to 1% of the Denominational Average Compensation (DAC), GBGM's stated goal.
- * Increased awareness among staff and directors that all Collins funds are meant for missionary health care and pensions.
- * At least two meetings a year with GBGM staff to discuss mission and issues

