

Minutes, UMMA GATHERING, October 3-5, 2015

Meeting of the UMMA Steering Committee

3 October, 2015

2:30pm EST — Saturday Afternoon

The UMMA constitution requires a meeting of the elected and delegated Steering Committee in the course of any Gathering. The Steering Committee was called to order at the Newark (NJ) International Airport Marriott Hotel by the outgoing chair, James Dwyer.

As the first official business, Jim Dwyer asked for concurrence for Hillary Taylor, UMMA secretary elect, to serve as secretary pro tem. So approved. Upon Hillary's departure on Sunday Marilia Schüller will function as secretary pro tem through the end of the meeting.

United Methodist Missionary Association members received a welcome from Jim Dwyer, and introductions were made around the table:

Esther Gitobu — missionary in Cambodia from Kenya, serves on steering committee as the rep for SE Asia Pacific

Hillary Taylor — former Mission Intern and current UMMA secretary elected, previously served on the Steering Committee representing her class of Mission Interns.

Katherine Parker — previously missionary from US in Cambodia now serves in Nepal, current vice chair of UMMA and chair elect.

Larry Schmitz and

Kristy Schmitz — new MIRs, served in DRC from US. Larry lifted up the relevance of his work with the National Education Association advocating for his profession and cause.

Dakin Cook — newly retired missionary from US, served in Bolivia and as GBGM regional auditor for Latin America. Dakin resides in Ecuador with missionary spouse Sara Flores from Bolivia. Dakin is chair of UMMA task force for pension, salary and benefit issues and serves on GBGM's pension and investment subcommittee along with Jim Dwyer.

Marilia Schüller — missionary in Brazil from Brazil and UMMA rep for South America

Scott Atnip — liaison from GBGM Board to UMMA, from US.

Dick Vreeland — former Missionary to India from US

Mary Escobar — current missionary from the US in Paraguay, and UMMA rep for South America

DarEll Weist: former missionary from US to Sierra Leone, current treasurer

Alina Saucedo Paucara — missionary from Bolivia to Nicaragua, former GBGM regional auditor, treasurer elect of UMMA

Jim Dwyer — retired missionary from US, current chair of UMMA, UMMA communications coordinator and editor of UMMA UpDate.

Jim apologized for a lack of printed materials for the Gathering because of a personal health crisis in the two weeks prior to the meeting. He asks for flexibility and patience!

Katherine Parker gave a report on the state of relief efforts in Nepal. The disaster relief is moving into recovery phase. More than 7,000 people died in the earthquake. The elderly adults and young children made up most of the body count. Nepal has had lot of landslides during this rainy season, so that has impacted relief efforts.

United Mission to Nepal, Katherine's organization, is working in a lot of remote areas. The organization is looking for alternatives to bringing supplies for heavy items. There were 11 highly affected districts and 4 severely affected districts in Nepal.

Two weeks ago, the Nepal government passed a new constitution in which there were several key issues of a controversial nature. Leading up to the vote, there were 45 days of protests, including some deaths in riots. Discord involved police and military intervention. Nepal is maintaining its Maoist secular state and consequent religious freedom, despite the displeasure from some neighboring countries, who have closed borders, creating fuel shortages. About 3:30 p.m. the meeting of the Steering Committee officially closed.

Meeting of the UMMA Gathering (annual general meeting)

3-5 October 2015

3:30pm EST — Saturday Afternoon

Introductions were made again for new arrivals to the meeting. Judy Chung: Associate General Secretary for Missionary Services at GBGM, Hugh Johnson and Shirliann (Fritzi) Johnson — retired missionaries from the US to Algeria, now retired in France.

Judy reported on several aspects of the work of Missionary Services.

MIRs: Judy welcomed Larry and Kristy among us. They joined Global Mission Fellows training in August and have spent three weeks at Stony Point with the most recently commissioned Global Missionaries. They will be moving to Atlanta very soon, where Global Ministries staff will follow next August.

Larry will be going to the meetings of National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries and of the Church and Community Workers Organization. The Schmitz' are great liaisons in partnership with GBGM and missionaries, and they help connect us to the mission field. Judy expressed her pleasure that they will be working closely with her.

GBGM DIRECTORS: Judy then gave a report from the Global Ministries Board of Directors meeting October 1-3.

Global Ministries is excited to be intentional about recruiting new missionaries, and continues to recruit Global Missionaries. The Board commissioned 8 new missionaries at the most recent Directors' meeting this past Friday (October 1st). It was live-streamed and it can be seen on our website.

<<http://livestream.com/globalministriesUMC/events/4386354/videos/100818153>>

It was a very diverse class, primarily going to Latin America to serve, but coming from different continents. Two missionaries in this class are to be Mission Advocates for young adults. They will be working with partners all around the world to promote Generation Transformation, expanding that program and making it known "from everywhere to everywhere." So there is a "both/and" approach for the promotion of young adult and standard missionary positions.

[Check out <http://UMMA-global.info/New%20Missionaries%20Cyclone/>.]

GENERAL CONFERENCE: At General Conference 2016, we will be commissioning missionaries during one of the main services (May 19th). It's a great way as a UMC to be reaffirmed in our call to mission and covenant to support all missionaries. We hope there will be a young adult reunion at there as well. We are expecting about 25-30 people to be commissioned.

VISAS: We need all of your prayers for the recruitment process and for visas. It is one of our growing challenges. It was one of the reasons we had training in Zimbabwe for our young adults most recently. It will be the biggest problem as we continue to become a missionary organization "from everywhere to everywhere," especially with the global migration crisis and xenophobia. We had a training last fall in Ecuador. It was very visa friendly, except for the fact

that people needed visas to get to the transit countries. That was a problem, especially in the midst of the Ebola crisis. We are continuously looking for creative ways to accomplish training. Questions for Judy:

Dakin: Will [GC] commissioning include all the different categories of missionaries?

Judy: No, it will not include GMFs. We will have standard missionaries from around the world. We will have CCWs, and it is possible we will have National Plan Missionaries.

Dick: asked whether the new missionaries are enrolled in the Collins Pension Plan?

Judy: They will be on the Defined Contribution plan with deposits going monthly to individual accounts in UMPIP (United Methodist Personal Investment Plan).

CONVERSATION ABOUT PENSIONS: We are hoping to involve missionaries in this discussion about retirement. We are mindful of this and we are trying to see if there are ways to connect. With UMMA, we've talked about how we can work more together and provide more accompaniment for other missionaries.

REGIONAL GATHERINGS: Regarding regional gatherings, Larry and Kristy will be working on some additional regional gatherings. We are having a regional gathering on the continent of Africa in a few months. Anticipated attendance will be about 120 people (including children). As these opportunities continue to happen, we hope to have more interactions between missionaries in regional areas. Other regional groups are interested in coming together on their own (e.g., Eurasia, Southeast Asia).

HEALTHY LIVING: In terms of health promotion, we are also encouraging the Virgin pedometers for healthy living and self-care. It may also be a part of your new iPhone as well. (Katherine mentioned that not only walking can boost one's step-count, as she has found riding in jeeps in Nepal).

MOVING TO ATLANTA: As you know, GBGM is going through a transition from New York to Atlanta. We are committed to avoid interrupting missionary services. We are doing our best to prepare for that transition, and to provide quality service simultaneously. We ask for continued prayers for this transition and for our staff who will be impacted one way or another.

On Monday or Tuesday of this week there will be a press release on the opening of the Latin America Regional office.

The Atlanta building will be ready on August 3rd. The two months afterwards will be "transition times." The invitations for staff who will be asked to move to Atlanta will be coming out in January instead of October. Departments are looking at restructuring. The Directors got a chance to look at the structure this past weekend. In about 2 weeks, the GBGM staff will be notified of what that structure will look like.

Comments on Judy's Announcements:

Katherine: When will you tell the missionaries?

Scott: My understanding of the process is there will be a presentation to the staff in 2 weeks. From there, the cabinet will appoint unit heads, and those heads will structure the departments and decide which people will remain. In any case, employees will be notified in January about whether they are invited to stay on.

Dakin: Sometimes these details get lost on their way to the missionaries, so we appreciate your intentionality about telling us what will be happening between now and the move.

Jim: This sort of communication is part of the intent of UMMA. One of the things we've struggled with is getting to know one another as missionaries and learning together. In the past, we haven't had a lot of engagement provided by Global Ministries. The idea of regional

communication that is not depending on NYC or UMMA members has been growing in the last few months, and several people have expressed interested in creating a regional group for communication with one another.

Judy: We would love to provide any tech support we can give to you when it comes to regional communication and organizing.

Jim took a moment to acknowledge Scott Atnip's presence in the UMMA Meeting:

NEW PENSION AND SALARY STRUCTURES: Over the last 3 years, we've been struggling with pensions and salary programs. As details were being drawn, the Board finance committee, the directors, and treasurer Roland Fernandes have been responsive to input from the missionaries. When we were discussing format for the Defined Contribution plan, we were literally appalled at the level the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits was first suggesting.

Even the Board of Pensions was flexible in responding to suggestions for changes in the program. Scott was especially helpful in formulating three points for revision of the plan which were accepted. The most concrete ones are clearly visible.

The component regarding "**financial literacy training**" has not moved very far yet, but it is something to work on later.

Also, **Social Security as an aspect of pension-building** has come "out of the dark" as an issue that impacts non-US originating missionaries, and I think its very much in the forefront of everyone's mind that this is an issue searching for a solution. In that regard, I would like to express my **praise of Roland Fernandes**. He is very transparent about the Board's needing to plan for providing adequate pensions for missionaries.

The money **does not** come directly from the **Collins Forests** holdings, but funds from that source are also used. (The Board has taken measures to limit liability from potential forest fires.)

Regarding the money needed in the future to pay out missionary pensions from board assets, the Board has set aside **an appropriately large amount in "unfunded liability"** which includes provision for **an annual increase of 2%** in the **Defined Benefit (DB)** plan for those currently retired or grandfathered into the plan for some of their years of service. Under the previous way of dealing with the DB system, if no one at the directors' meeting brought up pensions, there was no incentive to increase it. Even if missionaries brought it up, they might not get anything anyway since no provision had been made for funding an increase. Now the standard procedure is that every year, missionaries drawing DB funds will get 2% more each year.

I think Roland has been working to get this established for missionaries and I'm personally grateful for him to working for this. Without Scott though, we wouldn't have the level of **Defined Contribution** for newer missionaries we now have. It could have been a third lower than it is presently.

Scott : Thanks for the praise. A few reflections on the last three years. When I found out that I was getting onto the board, I was excited. First I was made **Board Secretary** and then put on **Missions Program Committee**, then **Finance** committee, then the **UMMA Liaison**, and then appointed to the **Pension and Investment subcommittee**. It was a challenging first couple of years. There were no easy solutions, I didn't know anything about pensions. What I can say, though, is that every staff member who worked on this issue was looking out for the best interest of missionaries. The other thing I can say is every group of board members I sat with wanted feedback from UMMA. The current Directors recognize that you all need to be treated

fairly. The staff provides a ton of great information. But I found that sitting down with all the missionaries and learning about issues made the process better. You might thank me for my work, but it wouldn't be possible without you all. We still have work to do about the social security issue. I hope the dialogue will continue. Board members want to hear from you. I'll pass along my thoughts that there will continue to be an UMMA liaison. I probably will not be back next quadrennium, but it makes sense that there would be a liaison in all of these areas I've been on. Thank you all for your ministry. Any questions?

Questions

Esther: How does it work for non-US missionaries for social security?

Scott: There's not an answer right now.

Judy: There's a consultant (Curtis Grund) helping the Board investigate what an equivalent benefit to US Social Security pension would look like in a global context. He is looking at how we offer fair/equitable compensation worldwide. I assume it might move in phases, not all at once.

Jim: Curtis' report is due in January to be considered by the Board over the next year or two.

Dick: The government share for social security: does that come from Collins money?

Jim: No

Dick: That portion is what I'm talking about. Pension money comes from Collins.

Jim: Commitment to pension is not exclusively related to the Collins Fund. Pensions are getting funding from other sources — not only from Collins. It is the mass of money that will be needed to pay missionaries that is important. Obligations and liabilities are not linked to specific income.

Alina: As a non-US citizen I want to thank you for your work because this affects me. I have lost 8 years [of opportunities to invest social security equivalent payments] as a missionary but there are others who have lost more.

Judy: I do want to note that non-US missionaries do get a higher net income. The 7.65% that is taken out of US missionaries salaries does not come out of income of non-US missionaries. There is a PIP plan to which they can contribute if they so choose.

Katherine: But that's where the financial literacy comes into play — which is different for US and non-US people.

Alina: The PIP plan also doesn't apply to my country.

Jim: And social security is only half of the issue. It doesn't include things like Medicare. Scott, it is significant for us to note that you yourself work for a church group that doesn't allow for a pension plan.

Scott: My salary is a little higher, but I do put money away independently.

Judy: Perhaps we can offer financial literacy for board directors as well!

(Dick interjected a question relating to delayed reimbursement of benefits from Collins Retirees Health Benefits Plan. A general response from various members is that reimbursement comes within the month it is submitted. Jim suggested Dick look up his account online to trace it, but it is always possible the request may have gotten lost and a phone call and resubmission may be needed. The website is <www.stirlingbenefits.com> via "eNet login." Judy offered to follow up with the Sterling personnel if these issues continue.)

(Katherine raised another "Nuts and Bolts" salary question. When she was an MI, the salary plan included an annual experience increase. In the new salary scale, there is no a work

experience salary adjustment for the first 15 years. Some staff executives seem to be unaware of the current details. Judy confirmed Katherine's understanding)

Jim: **Collins Retiree Health Benefit Plan** and **GBGM Health Plan** for **active missionaries** are two different plans and the coverages are different. Also, dental and vision coverages have different reimbursement and reporting processes. Collins Retiree Health Benefit Plan is expressly linked to the Forests. But nuances in accounting and liabilities are complex.

Discussion around **Generation Transformation:**

Dakin: I have a comment about Generation Transformation. Am I correct that you currently cannot accommodate people who can't speak English?

Judy: Some fluency in English is required. Training and applications are currently in English, and the cohort is as well. We're looking at different ways to offer this program for other regions with other language groups. We're excited to have three people from Latin America this year, and two people are assigned to Latin America as well.

Regarding prerequisites to serve, we're looking for maturity to include not just college grads (i.e., "equivalent life experience). DACA and visa-holding young adults are able to participate in the U.S. program. We would love to be able to have tracks for a local 2-year domestic service program in other areas around the world (At this point, Hillary and Judy describe the new set-up of Generation Transformation, how the new names have absorbed the old names, etc.).

Dakin: In Latin America we have lots of young adults who would be a great fit, but they can't speak English. We would love to have an "LA-2" program.

Mary Escobar: Does work experience count towards health benefits for young adults who become long-term missionaries?

Judy: There is strict language regarding interruption, so I will have to go back and look.

Katherine: It was a discussion and has a history. When I was an MI my service years were allowed for pension vesting, but not those of US-2s.

Judy: A few comments about some other young adult missionary programs (not just the Global Mission Fellows). First, the Global Justice volunteers: This is a 2-month opportunity to be in mission service for persons between 18-30. This summer, we trained 30 young adults from 7-8 different countries and sent them out (in pairs or groups) to be engaged in mission service for 8 weeks. It's also open to young adults from everywhere to everywhere. Also, we have the Mission Volunteers program, where persons serve for 2 months – 2 years as a self-funded missionary. For this program, the young adult in question needs to be between 18-30 years old.

Treasurer's Report from DarEll Weist

This is an 8-month report. We have total assets of \$24,000 in our account. That's liquid assets that could be spent. We have some restricted assets. Added together we have around \$33,000.

I have provided a memo on travel subsidies for officers, as well. UMMA income is about \$5,000 every year. It is committed to our having a presence at both spring and annual GBGM Directors' meetings.

In a two-year period, Administrative Council will use \$9,400. To provide travel subsidies to the yearly Gathering for the Steering Committee, it would be about \$6,000 more.

We currently have the money available, but it's not going to last forever.

(Katherine notes that some of the money in reserve was set aside as seed money for a future forum.)

Of the \$5,000 in dues, most of it comes from retirees. We need to think about how to work with current missionaries if we are to have sustainable funds. We also need to think about what we provide for retirees who do contribute out of a sense of giving.

Jim: Most people do not pay for the first year. Steering Committee members elected to represent a newly commissioned class are allowed complimentary membership for their first 2 years.

Esther: How do we help people become UMMA members if they don't have access to computers or credit cards?

Katherine: We did ask treasurer Roland Fernandes if payroll deduction could be an option for UMMA dues. It would help if UMMA had membership for people who can't get access to an American checkbook or computers, and thus have a more complete representation of the missionaries "from everywhere to everywhere" at these meetings. [In the meantime we have received the answer that this has been discussed and it is not feasible "at this time."]

(Dick made a comment about the lifetime membership item and its outflow on the report. A motion was made and passed to accept the report as it was presented in the meeting, with the agreement that Alina would make changes to its form to more accurately clarify 3 specific sections of the report. It was also agreed that there would be an audit of the UMMA account for recent years to review any errors that may have occurred in the calculation of lifetime membership receipts.)

DarEll will continue to function as treasurer through December 31, 2015, closing his books in early January, at which time he will turn the records over to Jim Dwyer for transfer to Alina Saucedo, who will assume responsibility as of January 1, 2016.

The Gathering adjourned for supper at 5:15.

7:30pm EST, Saturday Evening

Devotions:

Jim brought the devotion that was originally scheduled for earlier in the day. He acknowledged a devotion led by Dee Stickney-Miner, GBGM Director, as his source. It concerned the Leviticus definitions of clean and unclean, leading to the theme of Jesus and healing, with emphasis on priesthood and cleanliness. Questions to reflect on: How do we bring grace to people so they can feel themselves accepted into society again (even when they've been excluded and pronounced "unclean" by society)? Have we made people clean who are counted as "unclean?" Have we made them feel valuable? Have we known of others in these situations? Dee was specifically dealing with prisoners who were facing release into a potentially hostile environment.

Report for Nominations and Election:

Jim: A nominating committee with about 10 people on it sought nominations for Administrative Council and Steering Committee. Marilia received ballots cast by e-mail. The first slate was an option to continue current leadership. The second option was a slate to elect new leadership. The third ballot option was for a write-in slate

Marilia: We had 19 voters. Slate B (the new leadership) was elected with 16 votes. Slate A received 3 votes. There were no write-in ballots.

Katherine: Thanks for supervising that process, Marilia. The newly elected offices were me as chair, Becky Harrell as vice chair, Alina as treasurer, and Hillary as secretary. They will assume office at the end of this meeting. For administrative purposes, DarEll will continue as treasurer to the end of the year.

At the same time, we received nominations for people to fill positions on the Steering Committee. We have 2 Steering Committee positions available from each of our different regions. These are “West/East/Central, Southern Africa” (WECSA) “USA,” “Europe, North Africa and the Middle East” (ENAME) “East and South Asia and Pacific” (ESAP), “Caribbean, Central America and Mexico” (CCAM) and South America (SA). Some people have agreed to continue as representatives for another term even though their current terms are ending in 2015. We have some new people to nominate as well. We’ve really struggled to receive nominees for people in West/East/Central Africa and Southern Africa. It’s a really large area. We really do want to encourage more participation in this area, as there are almost 90 missionaries serving there. One thing I’ve floated to the steering committee is to increase representation from West/East/Central/South Africa members from 2 members to 3 members. We’ve had difficulty engaging them, and even when they engage us, there are often internet difficulties. We definitely want to ask the MIRs to engage people at the regional gatherings. We can accept the people who we have been willing to contact them. Perhaps we can have regional members elected at regional gatherings.

Larry: Can we have something written to read people so that we can have something concrete to take?

Dick: Are there more new people?

Katherine: I would say yes, but I’m not sure. I can only say so for Asia. We have a lot of people that might be newer.

Esther: I think we need key people to educate people about the benefits of membership.

Dick: We’re getting more missionaries from that region of the world, so I think this would be essential.

A discussion surrounding salaries happened, as well as UMMA’s effectiveness in the past and present. Marilia and Esther testified to how helpful and necessary UMMA is.

Discussions for engaging other missionary groups (e.g., CCWs and Deaconesses) might be beneficial. As Dakin pointed out, UMMA is not in the Book of Discipline, CCWO and NADHM are. UMMA may want to have this discussion, as there are some advantages/disadvantages to it].

Jim: There was at one point and time a study about the different circumstances around salaries and benefits for CCWs, who have their own association, CCWO. Similarly NADHM, the National Association for Deaconesses and Home Missioners and Home Missionaries is for the Deaconesses and Home Missioners. Women as Deaconesses and men as Home Missioners relate primarily to the structure of United Methodist Women, Inc., and no longer to GBGM.

When UMMA was created, the purpose was to combat the devaluing of the World Division missionaries within GBGM. For that reason we often had different issues than the other missionaries, but we have always been willing to cooperate with them in common concerns and in ways that were deemed helpful by both (or all sides).

We’ve never been a union. If people are on the emailing list and they haven’t paid their dues, they can stay on the list.

[A discussion ensued of how to clarify the distinction between regional and class reps (2 reps from each newly commissioned class). Another discussion followed about how the new plan should be to recruit new UMMA members, as well as regional reps., especially in Africa.]

[A final discussion focused on the necessity of introducing UMMA at trainings in person, not just solely via email.]

Katherine: I’ve done some work about recruiting on CCWs. I’m hoping we can reach out to them a little more and be more communicative, maybe have one person from UMMA sitting in

on their meetings. We considered at one time exchanging members, but at that time they didn't see a need for it. The one occasion we've dealt with all the missionary groups together, we talked about commissioning with Global Ministries. There's a tradition that once you're commissioned, you are commissioned for life. But another tradition was that once you are commissioned, you are decommissioned after a period of time. We learned that we don't have the same understanding of this, and that was helpful.

[Dick discussed again the short and long term understanding of missionary commissioning. Communication with CCWs was affirmed by all UMMA members. It was acknowledged that we are in mission together and we want to be involved in any way to support other missionary groups. There was a question, as to how Deaconesses and UMMA relate to one another, since they're now officially under the jurisdiction of the UMW.]

Katherine: The last group I want to lift up is the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries. They are more like CCWs, but they're not organized. I think it would be helpful to include them when we're thinking about organizing. We did reach out to Brenda Vaca, a National Plan missionary working as coordinator for the Western Jurisdiction.

Larry: Again, if I could have something written, I would love to bring it to them.

Minutes of the Gathering for 2014

Jim presented the minutes from the Gathering for 2014 (held in January 2015).

The minutes were approved unanimously.

Report of the Chair

Jim presented the Report of the Chair

"I really struggled with the report. We have two decades with UMMA. It's a time when we need to reflect on where we have been and where we are going. I attended the Missionary Conference and Consultation in 1996 when we established UMMA. I've been involved all 20 years in one way or another as a regional rep, vice chair, or chair. Howard Heiner is the only other person who has served as chair as long as I. Until Katherine's election, I was the only active missionary to serve as chair.

"We went through a lot back then. We had conflicts, impulses, advances, and failures. In the early days, there was the attitude from Global Ministries that nobody should respond to UMMA's concerns. Over time, a conversation developed.

"When I look back on it, it was difficult, but there were many of us involved in the process. Recently, there have not been very many people involved. A change in personnel and personal circumstances awakened in some of our leaders a memory of struggle.

We had a difficult meeting in April between the Administrative Council and representatives of the Board's elected staff and directors. The difficulties were almost entirely due to inappropriate missionary input.

"Katherine and I had a follow-up meeting with Thomas Kemper at this past Board Meeting. All three of us were grateful for the spirit of that conversation. Thomas indicated that the General Secretary doesn't have to be in on every meeting with UMMA, and that we could meet with Judy Chung or Roland Fernandes or George Howard, depending on which issues we wanted to address. As GS Thomas could meet with us perhaps once a year over lunch, or even in another forum. In any case, he wants to continue to be involved.

"Our last Gathering was in January in Claremont, which contained many mixed anxieties.

"I'm willing to stay on as Communication Chair and editor as long as the chair wishes.

“I want to underline that once I leave the chair, the last of the old guard will be gone and there’s a new generation. So it may be a new organization. It may be a challenge to reach new international missionaries and for them to set a new direction. But I am pleased we’ve reached out to reach new groups of missionaries. I give the new leadership my blessing.”

The full text is available on our website at <<http://umma-global.info/resources/2015-Gathering-Resources/2015-Report-of-the-Chair-to-UMMA.pdf>>

Marilia: Thank you so much for making communication easy and welcoming us.

Kristy: Thank you for your vision.

Dakin: This afternoon, I was reflecting on the history Jim talked about, it’s a new missionary cohort and a new GBGM. UMMA needs to move on and deal with a new century. The battles that have been fought are done and UMMA should evaluate other needs and duties. It’s a good time and a new time for that process. I’m happy to see a fairly young leadership.

Alina: You are moving and I want you to keep moving because the present will never be reflective if we don’t see the past. We’re going to need you. It’s not that you’re moving out. During these last two years, issues like pension and salaries were hard to deal with. Nothing is going to be completely 100% the best, and many things are not over. But there is a great link between then and now, and we thank you for your work.

The Gathering adjourned for the evening around 9:30 p.m.

8:30am EST, Sunday Morning Worship, 4 October, 2015

Hillary Taylor began our meeting time with worship and a reflection on how God is present with us and those whom we consider to be “the other.” Nobody is beyond redemption, and all difficulties can be used by God in the process of reconciling the world back to God’s Kin-dom. Jim Dwyer led the Great Thanksgiving on this World Communion Sunday.

10:30 a.m. EST, Sunday Morning Business Meeting

The official meeting began at 10:30am EST. The group began by looking at the Global Ministries Theology of Mission statement. Two missionaries each took a section and shared reflections aloud:

Judy and Dakin (God’s Mission from Creation to Completion): It’s very Wesleyan. Salvation is a process. There is concern for other sentient beings.

Marilia and Alina (The Self-Emptying Life of Jesus the Christ): The paragraph discusses humanity and its place in creation. Marvelous things, but also trials and risks. It discusses the ways our human weakness can be transformed, as well as God’s willingness and power to reconcile all creation and restore the world to its divine purpose.

Fritzi/Kristy (The Church as a Community of Servanthood in Mission): “This is a whole meal.” People are part of creation, and the church’s mission is to reach out to all people with total respect to what they are as they present themselves with no strings attached. If there is not mutual respect, there is no chance for mutual dialogue and no chance for mission. In dialogue, you had best be prepared to be changed yourself. There’s not just one sign of God’s presence in the world (not just worship).

Larry and DarEll (Grace at Work Everywhere): Its good to receive God’s grace. It’s God’s grace driving the whole thing, the idea of perfection in love.

Mary and Hillary (Transformative Witness): “Making disciples” and the “Word become flesh” are two salient images. It reminds me of walking down the streets of my neighborhood and

how I can be used as a light in the darkness...how we Christians can be a light in the darkness. It's also the idea that we can be "theotokos:" the Bearers of God.

Hugh and Esther (God's Prior Presence, Our Current Response): Dialogue is essential, and God is present.

Dick and Katherine (The Spirit's Surprising Activity): Being in a place of active listening is important, because it enables us to hear where the spirit is moving. Transformations are always happening.

General discussion of how God's purpose is much larger than we can see. "Beware of anyone who knows what God's purpose for you is, because they are acting out of their own prejudice!" Questions arose as to how young adult missionaries viewed this Theology of Mission Statement.

Hillary: Young adults have different views of the statement, some preferring to emphasize the social justice narrative, others preferring to emphasize the evangelism narrative.

Judy added similar comments, and noted that sometimes the differences in perspective were regional. Alina affirmed that in her mission context (Nicaragua), there were a lot of differing perspectives regarding theology of missions. A general discussion of differing views regarding social issues (such as justice for LGBTQ individuals) in the church-sphere and in other areas of the world. Katherine asked Marilia about ecumenical/interfaith/multi-faith participation and statements of faith (i.e., "How do we engage in partnership in missions when we believe in different statements of faith?") Marilia replied that Koinonia (her placement site in Brazil) is formed by people from different religious traditions, and because of this "inter-religiousness," they would not ethically create a statement of faith by which all persons had to abide. This then introduced a discussion on the origins and intentions of ecumenism and how ecumenism has become a platform for inter-religious and interfaith dialogue in surprising places, including in rural U.S., where big corporations are drawing huge groups of immigrants, thus necessitating this type of dialogue.

Katherine: We've been wanting to have a dialogue about these types of theological statements via Skype. It would be helpful to revisit this as a community. I'm hoping we can organize some regional Skype conversations. So let's be talking about the technology and whether you want to help facilitate it, whether you think it is possible. (Marilia expressed interest. Mary said we could start with this statement). In Asia Pacific, we asked Wes and Jerusha Neal to lead and facilitate the conversation. It might be good within our regions.

Dakin's report on the **Pensions and Investment Subcommittee**

I represent UMMA on the investment subcommittee of the Board of Directors. It's an involved structure. Pensions for missionaries are under this subcommittee. It deals with all our investments and pensions. However, I want to go back to 2014-2015 briefly. There were lots of changes. After years of nothing, it's been a positive experience being involved and participating and seeing actions being taken. In 2014, the investment subcommittee had 3 issues they were looking at 1) increasing financial literacy education for missionaries for the new pension system, 2) an emergency fund to help the most vulnerable missionaries and 3) an incentive for persons to continue as long-term missionaries.. The Board of Pensions had already contracted through EY (formerly Ernst and Young) to provide financial advice free of charge to pension account holders. The services can currently only be provided in English, however. Additionally GBoPHB, offers the "Life Stage" investment management service to govern how your funds can be paid out upon retirement. [The system was first set up for U.S. pastors.] To remind you, under the old system, we had a Defined Benefit plan where for each year of service, you were eligible to receive payout in pensions each year. It is now a Defined Contribution where the

board actually contributes to a fund in your name and you decide how much you want to take out. There are advantages and disadvantages to each, but the new system requires more decisions on the part of the participants. The pension planning part is more important to understand, especially concerning what the best way to manage the pension benefit is.

As far as incentivizing missionaries to stay longer, this is what was approved by GBGM: for longer numbers of years of service, the Board's contribution to your plan would increase. The plan includes an initial contribution 12% of average standard salary each year into your account. From 15-20 years of service, the contribution is 13%. From 20-25 years of service, it is 14%. For over 25 years of service, it is 15%.

There is an emergency fund that hasn't been used in a while which has about 3 million dollars in it. The pension subcommittee would need to decide how to use that fund. It could be used for those whose resources have been exhausted, or it could be used to strengthen the missionary salary fund. But it would require the initiative of someone like the treasurer.

(DarEll made comments about the Kairos initiative and the resistance of Wespath, the investment of GBoPHB to cooperate in efforts to divestment from businesses profiting from Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories. Jim reported that Thomas would be going to Israel/Palestine as we meet, and he is also concerned to work toward justice in the region. DarEll's point was that our pensions profit from policies which harm others.)

The main concern regarding the Defined Contribution plan as initially presented was that the majority of people affected by it would have received less money for retirement than under the Defined Benefit plan. Not until salaries could also be addressed did the plan seem viable to missionaries. However, there is now a new salary scale and new Cost of Living Adjustment policies which increase average salary (upon which pensions are based) substantially. By bringing up the average salary, the financial situation has been ameliorated. Since salary increases followed the new pension plan by one year, there would have been one year of substantially reduced contribution. When missionary representatives asked for pension payments based on the 2015 salary to be made retroactive to 2014, Roland Fernandes readily suggested an additional 5% contribution for 2014, the year the gap occurred. (Katherine noted that it is not common for Global Ministries to make a retroactive adjustment of this sort.)

Esther: Could you follow up on education for the non-US missionaries? Even when we were filing the forms, we didn't know what they meant. That needs to be taken care of and made a priority. I think we were told there is a number we can call, but even if we do, I don't know the questions to ask.

Jim: Part of the problem is that the questions are supposed to be addressed to Ernst and Young (EY). They're probably not too prepared to understand your international situation. And it's sometimes complex to get through their gateway on the telephone system. Perhaps we have some hope with Hillary and her knowledge of financial coaching?

Dakin: That's a great question. And we have had English brochures, which isn't helpful always. We brought it up with Board of Pensions, and they were asked "how are we going to handle 10 different languages?" But we are an intentional community. I don't know what UMMA and GBGM can do together, but it needs to be done.

Katherine: Part of the challenge of calling Ernst and Young [EY] is that you need to know what you have in talking to them. It's great that missionaries are able to stop in at headquarters now when they itinerate. It's helpful for language issues. It also might be helpful for MIRs to say "We will provide you a phone line and a private room to call EY and a packet of info, it might be something."

Judy: When we have gatherings with CCWs and National Plan missionaries, financial literacy is an issue for everyone, not just non-US missionaries. We've had people from Board of Pensions, someone like Immanuel Vargas. So we can take small steps. Email me later and I can connect you to him.

[A general discussion followed as to whether information disbursement of the pension plan could either be a part of regional gatherings and/or itineration.]

Dakin continued with his coverage of Investment Subcommittee:

Regarding the Defined Benefit plan, the directors approved a policy where the pension rate will increase by 2% for those grandfathered into the system. This is an automatic process. It was approved last year. The pension will go up in 2016, which means it will be about \$546. GBGM is now planning in their books for 2% increase every year from here on out, and for an obligation to the missionaries every year.

Another area of action is the Service Grant. There was an increase made to it. It's an amount per month of service as an active missionary, and it's a grant you receive when you leave service if you have more than 15 years in service. It has now been increased from \$15 to \$25.

There is a pending issue that we're still bringing before Global Ministries. It has to do with the equivalent social security benefits. In the past, GBGM included a benefit for those who did not qualify for US Social Security. It is a 6.2% additional contribution. Those who were eligible got an extra 6.2% benefit, so UMMA has proposed that missionaries non-eligible receive a 6.2% benefit either to the defined contribution or a missionary's home benefit plan. The pension subcommittee hasn't wanted to get into this, but it is being considered in the Study of Compensation of Benefits being done by Curtis Grund. (Judy spoke about consultations with staff and Jim. As we have regional and field offices with UMCOR, all of that is how we are looking at). There is an awareness, which is more than what we've had in the past.

One action that the directors did take this week was to approve policy affecting those persons who do not receive their housing through a GBGM Place of Assignment budget, but have it provided by the receiving partner organization. Following new U.S. IRS regulations, housing provided to employees is subject to FICA taxes (Social Security and Medicare). The new policy provides that housing, if not provided in monetary form, will be the equivalent of 20% of salary or fair market value. GBGM will provide an additional payment to cover this increase in tax for those affected. The result does not affect net pay.

Judy thanked everyone for their participation. Katherine reiterated UMMA's appreciation of Thomas' willingness to meet with us, his continued desire for engagement, and Judy's presence in our meetings to help us get our "Nuts and Bolts" together.

- The Gathering provided the following advice to the United Methodist Federal Credit Union.

Re: Account Updates for account no.601865 of the United Methodist Missionary Association held at the United Methodist Federal Credit Union:

UMMA requests the UMFCU to change our account signatories as follows:

(1) Beginning on receipt of this notification the following persons should have signatory rights on all accounts of the United Methodist Missionary Association:

DarEll T. Weist (current signatory)

James A. Dwyer (current signatory)

Katherine T. Parker

Becky Harrell

and Hillary Taylor;

(2)Beginning January 4, 2016, the following persons shall have signature rights on all accounts of the United Methodist Missionary Association:

James A. Dwyer (current signatory)

Katherine T. Parker

Becky Harrell

and Hillary Taylor

The Gathering adjourned for the noon meal around 12:30 p.m.

2:30 p.m., Sunday Afternoon Business Session

In the absence of Hillary Taylor, Marilia Schüller assumed the task of secretary pro tem.

The afternoon session started with the presentation of Mary Ellen Kris, consultant of Global Ministries for Ministry with the Poor. Mary Ellen shared a flash drive with the resources that can be further consulted. Check out the official website at <www.ministrywith.org>.

Ministry with the Poor involves ministries of love and justice, where appropriate action is defined and taken in *right relationship* with, among, and by those who are impoverished — materially, spiritually, or otherwise.

Disciples of Jesus are all called to be **ministers with** the poor. As such, disciples are called not only to be prophets, liberators, healers, equalizers, and justice-makers, but also to be hospitable and caring brothers and sisters in Christ, who break bread with each other, nurture community, and work together to make this world a place of justice, mercy, and love.

Ministry with the Poor, aiming at reaching out to people's hearts and minds, have defined more experiential training, taking people to locations where programs like affordable housing, health etc., are being developed and they can hear about what people are doing in their specific areas. There are several training programs being developed which get down to the grassroots level and encourage local congregations to do the work locally as well as to support the work that is done internationally. More and more churches and conferences are organizing seminars for those who want to work on Ministry with the Poor.

They are aiming at influencing the trainings of missionaries, Global Mission Fellows, etc. The approach is to start the work from what is there, from an "assets" perspective and not from what is lacking (the "deficit" perspective).

As an example, Patrick Friday has developed the 50/50: Partnership Covenant – where U.S. congregations enter into covenant with other congregations/or projects in Mission Initiatives. *Ministry with* is long term, sustaining, building trust towards one another, it goes beyond the "quick fix" mentality. Living examples of *ministry with* includes Relationships building, Vulnerability, Positive asset-based approach, Decision-making and Power-sharing, Inclusive worship and Bible reading, and Sustainable impact.

The *ministry with* approach is also present in disaster response work.

Comments:

- In some circumstances Volunteers in Mission teams going to a particular project do not want to connect to the local people. They focus on the practical work that is at stake. It was pointed out that the preparation of volunteers' teams needs to provide awareness about that and stimulate people to put their hearts into relationship-building experiences.
- The other aspect emphasized is that ViM should be encouraged to long term relationships with communities they help.

- In Cambodia, they organize an orientation that includes sharing on what are the expectations, the concrete goals, building relationships. They develop other activities that give the opportunity to interact with the local people. The local people and the volunteers can share about their lives and also give their testimonies. They also assign roles to all the volunteers.
- A message that can be conveyed to the Conference of Bishops is about the need to stimulate congregations to focus on long term basis relationships.
- North Texas had a Justice and Reconciliation round table and started a program of relationship-building with communities that can work to support one another. The project is culturally sensitive, working from the possibilities defined by the people.
- Comments were made in relation to situations that attract more volunteers and financial resources (like Haiti). There is lack of volunteers and financial support to local churches that also have needs that are not responded to.

7:00 p.m., Sunday Evening Business Session

Katherine encouraged members of the Steering Committee that will be itinerating in 2016 to include the UMMA Gathering participation as part of the travel arrangements;

UMMA have been actively involved in the organizing of the two Forums that happened up to 2010. During the encounter of UMMA chairs past and future [Jim and Katherine] and Thomas Kemper, Thomas encouraged the possibility of holding a third Forum.

Dues

Jim Dwyer and Katherine Parker shared reflections on the review of the membership fees. A proposal for increase on dues was presented for approval: After much discussion about the desirability of maintaining the current couples' discount for retirees, Fritz Johnson spoke for equal treatment of retirees and actives. This motion resulted from the discussion:

- Effective from January 1, 2016, there will no longer be a discount for couples; All active and retired missionaries will pay US\$ 36.00; Affiliates will pay US\$ 25.00; corresponding lifetime membership remains for missionaries over 75 years of age who pay 10 times yearly dues at once and missionaries under 75 years of age who pay 15 times yearly dues at once; If a missionary has already paid dues in 2015 for 2016 (or 2017) they will be charged at the 2015 amount; no increase will be asked; Dakin Cook moved the dues increase which was seconded by Alina Saucedo Paucara; The motion was approved.
- A request will be presented to Roland Fernandes asking about the possibility that dues could be payroll deducted (US\$ 3.00 every month).
- Larry Schmitz (MIR) have said that it would be good that this agreement be cleared before the Costa Rica missionaries' gathering, in February;

There are a few retired missionaries that can or do no longer pay but want to continue to receive the UMMA bulletin; we will continue to accommodate them.

Issues we want to keep up front

Equal compensation - Social Security

- At the moment we have to await the conclusion of Curtis Grund's study on compensation and pension in order to define what are the next steps;
- UMMA has been persistent in pushing the subject for discussion over the last 5 years;

- Jim Dwyer moved that we ask Larry Schmitz to raise the matter with Roland Fernandes. If no response is forthcoming, then Katherine Parker, as chair, will write a letter formally requesting that the matter be considered; Mary Escobar seconded. The motion was approved;

Families in Mission

New policies of GBGM on itineration: Accompaniment of spouses and children and home leave.

- We need clarification from GBGM with regards to travel expenses, meals and transportation of spouse and children when a missionary comes to the US for itineration;
- There is a new draft of the Mission Personnel Handbook dated June 10, 2015 that can be accessed in the missionary intranet: <[http:// www.mission.gbgm-umc.org](http://www.mission.gbgm-umc.org)>;
- The Administrative Council will review the present grievance policy that is in the Mission Personnel Handbook. We believe that the procedure is first, to write to one's regional executive, then to write Judy Chung, before escalating a request to George Howard and, finally Thomas Kemper. This needs to be reviewed for clarity.
- Issues to keep on the table are the lack of a policy manual, individual placements and COLA;

8:30 a.m., Monday Morning Closing Business Session, 6 October, 2015

Greetings were received from the following persons (with hopes that the list is complete): Becky Harrell, Charissa Shawcross, Katy Wrona, Norma Kehrberg, Otshi Ombaku, Jack Turner, Hall Duncan, Wilson Boots and Nora Quiroga Boots. Hall asked about film-making interested related to a book and screen play he has written. Wilson reported that two major bequests had been received into the Encounter fund for ministry in Latin America from the estates of missionaries Martha (and Bill) Kent and Jane Miller totally nearly \$250,000..

Addressing the Environmental Crisis

Pat Watkins (Virginia Annual Conference), standard support missionary for the Care of God's Creation lead the devotion and shared with UMMA about the work in that area. The goal is to enhance how the mission of the Church can also contribute to the Care of God's Creation. Caretakers of God's Creation, as a ministry within the Virginia Conference, is now being taken to the national U.S. level as a service to the whole church.

The formal place of assignment of Pat Watkins is the Council of Bishops. The Council understands that the 3 major issues that have to be addressed together are pandemic poverty and decease, environmental degradation and proliferation of violence and weapons. A Creation Care statement is being drafted.

Devotion.

The reflection shared by Pat Watkins focussed on the creation account in Genesis 2 and 3. Check out the current website <www.umccreationcare.org> or the original site set up in response to the Bishop's 2009 Call to Hope and Action <hopeandaction.org>

Pat helped us to remember pieces of the story that we do not think about as much such as God's cursing the Earth because Adam and Eve have disobeyed; God asked the Earth to bring forth the vegetation; it was God in relationship with creation; there was reciprocity in the action of creation; the creation of Adam is from the dust of the earth and the breath of God; We have a relationship with the earth and relationship with God's breath; we have in common with all creation the vegetation and the animals; what is particular to human beings in creation is the vocation to till and to keep the garden.

Nominations to the Steering Committee

- WECSA: New nominations of **Francine Mpanga**, and of **Brian and Tara Vinson**; Continued term of Ngoy Kalangwa and Alfred Zigbuo;
- ENAME: Renewed term of **Kristen Brown**; pending new nomination of **Matthew Laferty** [*since confirmed*],
- USA: New nomination of **Ron Whitlatch**; we are asking a representative from the National Hispanic Plan to be appointed by the Plan;
- ESAP: Continued term of Ester Gitobu; renewed term of **Prumeh Lee Kim**;
- CCAM: Renewed term of **Belinda Forbes**; continued term of Alina Saucedo Paucara;
- SA: Continued term of Mary Escobar; renewed term of **Marilia Schüller**;

Acceptance of the nominations slate was moved by Hugh Johnson and seconded by Dakin Cook. Motion approved;

The Steering Committee understands that the regional gatherings are the best place to assign/affirm suggested regional representatives to the Steering Committee.

UMMA Gathering closing worship was conducted by Hugh and Fritz Johnson.

[JAD notes: Despite frequent reminders of the opportunity to connect via Skype to the Gathering, only a very few indicated they would attempt to connect. Those who had intended to do so were finally prevented by obligations at their place of assignment or personal hindrances. This was the third year such attempts were made. In each of the previous years there were at least two or three persons who were able to participate via Skype, compared to none this year.]

Minutes respectfully submitted by Hillary Taylor, secretary elect, and Marilia Schüller, secretary pro tem; reviewed by James Dwyer, outgoing chair, and Katherine Parker, chair elect.