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United Methodist Missionary Association

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"Linking mission workers worldwide"

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- [1] **UMMA Gathering: October 2004 Brief Report** by Norma Kehrberg, Chair

Greetings to all! We have just concluded the 2004 UMMA Gathering. Most of the Gathering participants left on Wednesday, October 20, 2004 but Howard Heiner and I stayed through most of the GBGM meeting that concluded on Friday, October 22nd. The report of the GBGM Directors' meeting follows.

The UMMA Gathering began on Sunday afternoon, October 17 with a discussion of the paper "Global Gospel" by Sara Miller from the *Christian Century*, July 2002. The paper reviewed aspects of "**The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity**" by Philip Jenkins. The discussion centered on the understandings of the gospel among Christians in the southern hemisphere where they are increasing. Numerous differences in the expression and beliefs of Christianity were cited depending on the culture. Christians in the southern hemisphere lean to a belief in the direct, divine intervention of God in their lives where poverty, persecution, disease and exile are a part of their world and are factors in their lives – much as Christians of the New Testament church. The Gathering included missionaries with over 300 collective years of mission experience across the world. The discussion enriched our time together.

The number of participants at the Gathering was slightly less than anticipated due to illness that prevented a few from coming. Elizabeth Frazier and her husband Hugh were expected but Elizabeth fractured her hip about ten days before the meeting and they were not able to attend. Cherie White, the UMMA secretary fractured a bone in her foot on her way to buy a ticket to attend the Gathering. The UMMA sessions included intercessory prayer for these and colleagues around the world and for others present at the meeting. Even with those illnesses we were heartened to have more attending than last year.

Sally Wisner-Ott, representative of the Association of Church and Community Workers joined us for the entire meeting. Joann Reich, President of NADAM joined the session on Monday, October

18, 2004 before she had to leave for work with GBGM. Their reports and presence enhanced and enriched our time together.

Out of the discussion, three priority agenda items emerged for UMMA during the coming year.

1. Encourage and work with the Mission Personnel Unit to mobilize a celebratory plenary on missions and missionaries at the April 2005 Board Meeting. This would increase awareness that at present many who are called to mission service are unable to realize that calling due to constraints on GBGM in recruiting, training and sending new missionaries, particularly longer-term, cross-cultural missionaries. A task force has been set up composed of representatives from the Church and Community Workers, NADAM and Phil and Larry Asher and Howard Heiner from UMMA. Howard agreed to be the convener of the task force.

This action item from UMMA was presented to Edith Gleaves and John Peterson, the new chair of the MPU unit; however, Edith said that they would not be able to act on it at the MPU session as it had to be processed first through the staff. We hope that there can be a celebratory program at the Spring board meeting. This current meeting emphasized missionaries, particularly in relationship to the cultivation of Covenant churches for missionaries.

2. Continue to request representation from the associations on the Compensation and Placement Review Committee or whatever mechanism is used in the Board to determine compensation and placement of missionaries. Though this specific committee was set up several years ago, it has yet to function. All associations agreed that a representative should be on the committee, and that it should particularly include a representative from UMMA because the Collins Pension and Health Benefit is a part of that discussion.

In September, a letter was sent by the chair of UMMA to Edith Gleaves and Roland Fernandes, the newly elected General Treasurer, requesting a full review report on the Collins Health and Benefit Trust Fund – one that is transparent. The letter also requested action regarding the compensation committee. Roland indicated at a luncheon meeting with Edith, Steve Goldstein and UMMA representatives on Monday, October 18, 2004 that he needed a month or so to study the Collins material and then he would get back to us.

3. Continue to strategize the utilization of inactive and retired missionaries as a resource for GBGM in contacting and working with local churches for the cause of mission. This natural channel continues to be stalled it seems by the lack of understanding as to how it could fit into the work of the regional MIIRs (Missionary Interpreters In-Residence), the GBGM Regional Jurisdictional Representatives, and Conference Secretaries of Global Ministries. Part of the problem may be a lack of staff in MPU to devote to this issue.

Other actions:

1. Requested the chair of UMMA to follow-up with Professors of Mission to work for solidarity in promoting and “fixing” the broken connectional system in the UMC for the sending of missionaries.
2. Acknowledged the action of the GBGM to appoint a director to represent the directors at the UMMA Annual Gathering, though noting that at present it is not one specific director.
3. Acknowledged that the health insurance cards from Stirling and Stirling have been sent. Some clarification is still needed with retirees residing in countries outside the U.S.
4. Approved minutes of the 2003 Gathering and received the financial report for 2004. It appears that UMMA may end the year with approximately \$5000-7500 as a balance in the account. This is slightly lower than past years due to fewer members paying and some increases in costs for UMMA work. However, as of this writing we have received more dues with some promises of more before the end of this year.
5. Requested that the membership list of UMMA be circulated to the members of the Steering Committee with the goal that they contact those in their areas who are not members and encourage them to consider membership.
6. Requested that we seek an active missionary to assume the position of the chair of UMMA beginning in October 2005. Some discussion is needed with the leadership of GBGM to lay out the expectations of how to manage this role by someone in active service.
7. Set the next UMMA Gathering to be held in Stamford, Connecticut in October 2005 beginning one day prior to the GBGM meeting to orient the director who will be appointed by GBGM to join our meeting. It was noted with regret that GBGM does not plan to hold a Global Mission Personnel Conference in the year 2005 though there is still hope that one may be held during this quadrennium.
8. Expressed appreciation to the Rev. Douglas MacArthur, former missionary in Japan and pastor of First UMC in Stamford for graciously allowing the UMMA Gathering to meet at First UMC. Rev. MacArthur joined the Gathering on the first morning and shared some of his experiences and was very generous in providing coffee, tea and snacks for day two of the meeting. The Chair was requested to write to Rev. MacArthur expressing our deep appreciation and thanks.
9. A letter and small token of appreciation in the amount of \$50 will be sent to the church of Fred Price. The church has been very generous in their support through telephone, copying services and time of the Coordinator to conduct UMMA business.

The sessions began and ended with devotions led by the participants. It was a rich time of sharing, praying and making commitments to hold each other in prayer.

Norma Kehrberg, Chair, October 24, 2004

[2] **GBGM Fall Report - October 18 - 22, 2004** by Howard Heiner & Norma Kehrberg

The first meeting of the GBGM directors at the start of the quadrennium is divided in two phases. The first two and half days were devoted to the election of officers, the organization of the various committees and orientation of the directors to the policies and operational procedures of the Board. Approximately two-thirds of the directors were new members. The final two days were used to carry on the governance of Board activity.

General Secretary Randy Day's address to the directors was titled, "Christian Love: The Energy of Christian Mission." His text came from 1 Corinthians 13:13 and 14:1 "And now faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. [therefore] Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts..."

The General Secretary pointed out that: "the commentaries suggest some alternative with respect to 1 Corinthians 14:1, including those of the "promotion of a cause" or the "attachment of oneself to a goal, or cause, or person. Promote love, attach yourself to it, make it known, Paul is telling us."

Let me say this clearly and slowly so that there is no misunderstanding about what I am saying. I, R. Randy [Day], general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries, have become convinced over the last two years that we spend too much mission time, energy, and money maintaining the institutions of the denomination and that we should invest more time, energy, and money on mission with and among people and their communities. God has led me to the firm conviction that our entire United Methodist Church needs to look beyond itself, to get a better focus on the urgent spiritual and physical needs of the world's people.

Rev. Day identified three areas of ministry in the missional pursuit of love for the next quadrennium. They are:

***First**, ministries with Children and young people,*

***Second**, ministries with people in Crisis or coming through Crisis;*

***Third**, ministries with the Cast-outs, those people and groups that society pushes to the sidelines, leaves by the wayside, relegates to the margins. We sometimes call them the marginalized.*

He concluded with the admonition:

Here are three individual and community-centered areas of ministry that I long to see increase within the work of the General Board of Global Ministries during the next four years. Pursue love. Attach yourself to love. Promote love through mission. Promote Christ's love as you are in mission with Children, those in Crisis and those Cast-out of society.

The new Treasurer Roland Fernandes reported “that 2003 was thankfully a better year than 2002. While we are still in a deficit position, indications so far are that 2004 would continue to be a steady year. We diligently continue to monitor and wherever possible address this situation.”

The 2005 GBGM budget proposal has included a reduction from 2004 of \$1,530,000 mostly through a 20% cutback in support program development and grants while holding staff travel at 2004 levels. However, the 2005 budget does recommend a 3% increase in salary for GBGM staff and both active and retired mission personnel.

The 2005 totals for each section is:

GBGM	\$57,826,019
Women’s Division	\$18,225,527
Committees on National and International Ministries	\$ 4,052,887
Health & Relief	\$ 8,570,050

A member of the recently created Office for Financial Development put forward a challenge for more local churches to join in a covenant relationship with missionaries. Of the present 35,744 United Methodist churches in the United States only 2,734 churches have a covenant relationship with missionaries. An effort will be made to raise that number to 5,400 during this quadrennium. *(Note: The 2,734 number of covenant churches only reflects those churches that have a current, signed covenant relationship form in the office of GBGM. Up to 1500 or more churches contribute to covenant missionary support but do not have signed covenant church relationships.)*

In the report of the Deputy General Secretary for the Mission Personnel Unit, Edith Gleaves stated:

The 2005 Mission Personnel Program Area budget, pending director approvals, projects the preparation, training, commissioning and sending of 56 new mission personnel across six categories of service. These include five GBGM, five National Plan for Hispanic Ministries, eight Mission Intern, eight US2, 20 Deaconesses and 10 Home Missioner mission personnel. The Home Missioner is a new lay office in the UMC approved at General Conference in April. The Home Missioner relationship is comparable to the deaconess relationship. These lay men are commissioned to lifetime service in ministries of love, justice and service in the United States.

The following Mission Personnel statistics were presented:

<u>Commissioned Mission Persons in 2004</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Fall</u>
GBGM Missionaries {65 US / 207 Overseas	291	271
Other categories	419	316
Sub-Total	710	587

Non-Commissioned Mission Personnel Total	102	106
Partner Church Mission Personnel Total	<u>257</u>	<u>274</u>
Combined Total	1069	967

I hope the report will give you an idea of the work of the directors. If you have any questions please contact us.

[3] Our Members Write

Dear UMMA Colleagues, Thanks to Norma for the concise but thorough summary of the UMMA Gathering, which I had the opportunity to attend in part. I departed Denver for Phnom Penh Cambodia on 22 Oct, arriving safely on the 24th. I'm...assisting the emerging Methodist Church of Cambodia with its community development program. I will work with regional coordinators in developing programs in eight provinces. I am also teaching one course in community development.... My goal is to give some overall direction and guidance to the program.... There is great opportunity to witness to the love we have experienced through Jesus Christ as we help build up skills and leadership capacity of Cambodians.... Keep me in your prayers. Grace and peace, Jim Gulley jimgulley@earthlink.net Jim's Webpage: www.jimgulley.org includes a "blog" (= web log) titled "Jim's updates" where he posts updates of his activities.

[4] Spiritual Nurture Notes by Carolyn Belshe Cowen

We need to sense/feel with a mind and focus toward those that have unkind spirits, those who hunger after economic and turf gain which many times is at the physical expense of those we are called to serve. May we strive for meekness in our cries for mercy and healing of that brokenness created by freewheeling ills.

One of my favorite church newsletters has the usual article by the pastor. What is so very unusual is the pastor always, always, signs off by expressing loving deeply her church family. I learned from that closure such is my feeling for each of you. Many of you signed off on a very nice card sent from UMMA Gathering in Connecticut last month. Your personal words were much so comforting. Now, may I say I love you all deeply. Grace and Peace, Carolyn

[5] Increasing Website Visits and Membership Spurts by Richard Schwenk

Visits to our <http://www.umma-global.org> website in September and October show the highest numbers ever. You can find all the back issues of UMMA UpDate there plus much more.

Last minute membership dues are still coming in for 2004. We appreciate your loyal and steadfast support to UMMA. If you haven't yet sent in your check, just make it out to "UMMA" (\$25 for singles and \$50 for couples. Affiliates = \$15 each). Please send to:

Fred Price, UMMA Coordinator, 165 Grandview Ave., Pitman, NJ 08071 U.S.A.