

UMMA UpDate #33, June 25, 2005
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United Methodist Missionary Association
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"Linking mission workers worldwide"

In This Issue:

- [1] UMC Professors of Mission Meeting by Norma Kehrberg, Chair
- [2] A Strategy Beyond Talking to Ourselves by Howard Heiner
- [3] Upbeat Updates, "Premature Requiems" by the editor
- [4] Missionary Reunions & Gatherings
- [5] Covenant Relationships for a Better World by the editor
- [6] UMMA Membership/Renewal Form for 2005 by Fred Price

[1] UMC Professors of Mission Meeting by Norma Kehrberg, Chair

June 16-19, 2005 I participated in three gatherings in Techny, Illinois for UMMA. They included the annual meeting of the Association of Professors of Mission, the American Society of Missiology and a meeting of UMC Professors of Mission.

This invitation came through contact with Dr. Dana Robert, Professor of World Mission at Boston School of Theology. Mutual interests had been identified following a letter sent in June 2004 from the UMC Professors of Mission regarding the breakdown of the connectional system of the UMC for mission and the moratorium by GBGM on the sending of longer term, cross-cultural missionaries. The letter was addressed to the Council of Bishops, Presidents of the Schools of Theology and GBGM. A copy was forwarded to me and I contacted Professor Robert last September.

During the UMC meeting, issues of concern identified by the participants included: meaning of connection in mission, interfaith communication and mission in the local church, mission understanding of practices in the local church and what UM Professors of Mission can do to help the church. **The issue** that I identified on behalf of UMMA was the continuing decrease in the numbers of longer-term, cross-cultural missionaries, now numbering 271 – and an assumption that the underlying issue may not be a financial issue for GBGM but a theological issue. **Is there an understanding and commitment for apostolic missionary service as a vocation in the UMC today?** (Apostolic = having to do with Apostles. Alan Richardson, in his *"A Theological Word Book of the Bible"* reminds us that the Greek apostolos is the person sent, i.e., "a messenger, especially one authorized to act in a particular matter for the one who sends him" or her. Richardson cites 2 Tim 1:11 as a prime NT example: "For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher....")

As a result of the 2004 mandate, Dr. Maxie Dunam, a GBGM director, will chair a study to address mission education and formation for pastors. Dana Robert is a member of this group.

Also, at the April 2005 meeting of GBGM directors, it was announced that there is an effort to further mission education among pastors and laity through the formation of an Academy for Mission Renewal. At present, the focus is on the establishment of a document as a mission resource.

Dr. David Lowes Watson, retired professor of mission at Perkins and Wesley, is the coordinator for this project. Dr. Watson submitted a first chapter for discussion in April just prior to the GBGM meeting. A panel of responders included Dana Robert and Phil Wingeier-Rayo.

Two action items resulted from the day-long meeting for UMC Professors of Mission. One was to ask each participant to develop a chapter for possible inclusion in the resource book for the Academy for Mission Renewal. On behalf of UMMA, we were asked to develop the chapter on the **“Apostolic Mission Service as a Vocation in the UMC.”** Dr. James Dwyer has agreed to write that. I am hoping that it will be available, at least in draft form by the time of the UMMA Gathering in October for discussion.

The second action was for the Professors of Mission to write to the three parties – the Council of Bishops, heads of schools of theology and the GBGM – to request an **explanation regarding the continued lack of opening within the UMC for apostolic mission service as a vocation.**

Participants at the meeting of the UMC Professors of Mission included: Dr. Dana Robert (Boston), Dr. Arun Jones (Austin Presbyterian), Dr. Robert Hunt (Perkins), Dr. William Daniel (Candler), Dr. David Watson (retired from Perkins and Wesley), Dr. Norman Thomas (United), Dr. Ben Hartley (newly appointed to Baptist Seminary outside Philadelphia). Others present included: Marcia Florkey (GBGM), Dr. John Nuessle (GBGM), and Rich Darr, pastor from Joliet completing a doctorate in mission. (Norman Thomas, Robert Hunt, William Daniel and Arun Jones were GBGM missionaries)

The meetings of the Association of Professors of Mission and the American Society of Missiology included participation from evangelical groups, conciliar Protestant groups and Roman Catholics. Leadership in both of the groups is shared on a rotation basis among the three groups. The topic for the Professors of Mission meeting was “spirituality in mission” with two academic presentations, one from the Roman Catholic perspective and one from the evangelical church perspective.

The topic for the Society of Missiology was “The Mission of Public Theology” with presentations by Dr. William F. Storrar, Director of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at New College, University of Edinburgh; Dr. Helene Slessarev-Jamir, Associate Professor of Politics and International Relations, Wheaton College; and His Excellency the Minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammad Al Saimi, Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, The Sultanate of Oman. All provided thought-provoking and challenging presentations.

Since GBGM seems not to be able to hold Global Mission Personnel Conferences, UMMA might consider holding its annual meeting in conjunction with these missiology meetings. It would enable UMMA members to engage in discussion in missions with those committed to cross-cultural mission. Additionally, books on mission were displayed at greatly reduced prices from the publishers of mission books, including Orbis. It might even encourage missionaries among us to write on mission topics.

It was a personal pleasure to meet many of the “big names” in mission scholarly research including authors of many publications that I reviewed while doing the church growth study in Nepal. I was happy to have the privilege to represent UMMA at the three meetings and would commend attending one of these events to all retired and active missionaries. It is refreshing to learn that there continues

to be a group of people involved in contemplating what mission in the 21st century is and can be. In recent years the meetings have been held at Techny, Illinois, 20 miles north of O'Hare Airport, and are held in mid-June. Let me know if you would like more information. (John Nuessle and Maria Florkey represented GBGM. Rena Yocom (GBGM) was expected but we heard that her mother died the night before the meetings began.)

[2] **A STRATEGY BEYOND TALKING TO OURSELVES** by Howard Heiner

There has been a recent email dialogue among members of the UMMA Steering Committee concerning the challenges relating to the missionary Covenant Relationship Program. The expressions were heartfelt since the issues are of major concern for standard support missionaries.

I have gathered major themes from the emails to emphasize the need for a new focus for missionary outreach and how it can be implemented throughout the UMC. Service in love and compassion through Christ's example remains the foundation of our calling.

Is the lack of a passion and direction for mission outreach throughout the UMC a major concern? If so, how can we find a firm direction within the GBGM, our conferences and local churches, both nationally and internationally? Has the GBGM lost its role as the pivot around which mission outreach of our Church takes place? Or, must we realize that GBGM is one of many efforts?

From input we have received, the missionary community is deeply concerned to see a serious effort made to confront the lack of passion for mission within the UMC. This challenge needs to be addressed through consultation with representatives from all levels of our Church.

If taken seriously we would refocus on whether there is a future for standard support missionaries for long term service. The Board gives verbal support and praise to missionaries, but serious consultation and follow-up over mutually agreed goals is no longer part of Board policy. The program for receiving and training missionaries now plays a minimal part in the Mission program. There will always be budget limitations, but **if there were a clear vision, funding would be available.**

Is the administrative structure of the GBGM adequate to address the need for mission outreach in the 21st Century? Active missionaries raise questions about the GBGM infrastructure's ability to direct such an endeavor. In the past decade, the Board has supported various Mission Initiatives with millions of dollars, yet the staff has been cut by at least 30 - 40 percent. Has adequate planning been given at 475 to support a balanced program of mission outreach?

Let us not be naive or arrogant and think that active and retired missionaries have all the answers. We do not! The challenge is larger than a small group of Christians, and even larger than the GBGM. It is going to take a team effort and coordination at all levels within our church to address the national and international problems. We live in a culture and nation that is the major threat to the world. Most standard support missionaries are aware from their overseas experience of the unsustainability and inequity of the Western lifestyle. Christ's message of service and compassion is a difficult message that suburban America does not particularly want to hear.

However, a thought reflected in Carol Seckel's email has kept me participating all these years. **"Sometimes I think the missionary program offers some hope in the midst of the fear and cynicism that seems to be so prominent in the US today."**

We are privileged to be part of the solution. To bring the Good News! Let us keep up the discussion on how to make it happen. Through prayer and Christ's guidance, we can develop a strategy that goes beyond talking to ourselves.

[3] **UPBEAT UPDATES on "Premature Requiems" by the editor**

John Woodall gave this title to Mark 5:21-43. It tells about new life for the daughter of Jairus and a sick woman. Both seemed beyond saving, yet their faith in Jesus renewed their lives. Just when all hope is gone, a turn-around can take place. Some examples:

Thoburn Memorial Academy (TMA) was founded in 1945 and became the first rural Methodist high school in the Philippines. It has educated thousands of church and community leaders and others with strong Christian character. Many of these are leaders in their fields of influence and witness daily to Christ. Three short-term UMC missionaries were assigned in succession from 1950 to 1965 to give the school a boost. Advance Specials funding dried up after that, yet Thoburn struggled on. A 60th Anniversary Celebration of TMA in April 2005 brought together about 200 alumni from around the world for five days of activities. One day was devoted to a free medical and dental clinic with TMA alumni doctors in charge. A revitalization of the school is now going on to help it carry on its mission.

Christ Hospital was built in Sarawak in the 1960s by the GBGM predecessor agencies and flourished with an international staff of medical professionals. It was the only hospital in a remote upriver area the size of Switzerland. When funds and staff dried up in the 1970s, the medical work of our Church in Sarawak seemed on the verge of drying up too. Instead the hospital was turned over to the Malaysian government with compensation. For the last 30 years, the interest from that nest-egg account has funded an innovative Community Health Education and Motivation Program with indigenous health promoters and pastors in team ministry. They travel to longhouses by boat to teach prevention more than cure.

The 10-10-10 program of the UMC was recently phased out as a mission initiative. Lionel and Marion Muthiah told me of inspiring things in the Dakotas Conference where the budgeted amount for their former 10-10-10 missionaries was **increased** from \$72,000 to \$130,000. That means that Rick Jost is able to continue his solar oven project in Haiti and Bob and Ada Lower will expand their innovative programs among children and Native Americans. The Lowers fostered such projects as a Sidewalk "Son"-day School truck that the Lowers drive around to teach Sunday School on weekdays in poor communities. "Children of the Harvest" ministers to children on Native American reservations. Each year they organize a "Children's March" to either the North or South Dakota legislature to submit their prayers for the lawmakers. Their successful "Under God's Canopy" camping programs are conducted on the edge of parks. High school kids eagerly sign a "Computer Education Contract" for one-year of computer education in exchange for a clean record in home and school. They must teach adults computer literacy. The successful ones receive a computer at the end of the year. For details and pictures, click: www.dakotasumc.org/children_harvest.html

It ain't over until rigor mortis sets in! Revival is possible. Please tell me about mission programs that seemed close to rigor mortis but are now revived. UmmaSchwenk@earthlink.net

[4] **MISSIONARY REUNIONS & GATHERINGS**

July 8-10, 2005 - **Liberia Reunion**, at Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. Contact: Wilfred & Stella Boayue, 340 Wickerberry Lane, Roswell, GA 30075 Tel: 770.649.9373 Email: boayuew72@cs.com

July 28-31, 2005 - **Angola Reunion**, Niagara Falls, Ont. Email: Etta Snow esnow@allstream.net Tel: 416.242.6246, 61 Richview Rd #808, Etobicoke, ON M9A-M8, Canada

Aug. 4-7, 2005 - **Korea Missionaries Reunion** (including but not limited to Methodist) at Lake Junaluska. Email: Gene Matthews genematt@mchsi.com or KoRe2005@aol.com

Sep. 30-Oct. 2, 2005 - **Brazil Reunion**, Lake Junaluska, NC, Send Reg. fee \$35 before Jul. 31. Email: Jane Spencer jane.bob@verizon.net

Oct. 9-11, 2005 - **UMMA Gathering 2005** – Stamford, Connecticut Plan to join the UMMA Gathering to fellowship and help in planning the future of United Methodist mission. Email: Fred Price: fred_price_30084@yahoo.com

This year, GBGM is expected to name a director to participate in the UMMA Gathering as per the action taken by the Directors from last quadrennium. This may be the start of a more meaningful way to communicate with GBGM. Mark your calendars and try to squeeze in a trip to the Northeast. Your presence is needed. Please tell Fred Price and Norma Kehrberg of your interest in joining the Gathering. An advance list will help gather more participants.

2006 Reunions:

March 27-30, 2006 - **The River Plate** Argentina and Uruguay Missionary Group Reunion at the Florida Conference Life Enrichment Center, Leesburg, Florida. Contact: Valene Long Vall321@aol.com or 941-748-7520. Reservations due Nov.15, 2005.

June 23-26, 2006 - **Malaysia, Singapore & Indonesia Reunion**, Scarrett-Bennet Center – Notify before Dec. 2005 re: extra day. Contact: Ernest Heard, Nashville hearde@mail.belmont.edu with cc to Phil Wilson, the new chair; revphilwilson@webtv.net

July 28-30, 2006 - **Servants of Sierra Leone Biennial Reunion**, Holiday Inn Select, Naperville, IL. 60563, near I-88. Email: Marilyn Kopp mgkopp@bitwisesystems.com Tel: 309.444.2136

Aug. 4-7, 2006 - **Philippine Missionary Reunion** Lake Junaluska Conference & Retreat Center-Lambuth Building, Lake Junaluska, NC. Contact: Claudia Webster clwebtr@cablespeed.com by June 1, 2005 (this year) send \$40 (per adult) deposit check to Claudia L Webster, 7619 SW Surfland St., South Beach, OR 97366

September 15-18, 2006 - **Chile Reunion for Missionaries and Chileans** living in the USA, Virginia

United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone, VA. Email Walt Whitehurst <WaltPungo@aol.com> or Stan Moore <Berylstan@aol.com>.

[5] **COVENANT RELATIONSHIP FOR A BETTER WORLD** by the editor

Under this banner, the 12th Annual Conference Missionary Luncheon gave recognition to outstanding churches supporting CAL-PAC (California-Pacific Annual Conference) related GBGM Missionaries. It was the climax of a friendly contest that has been going on annually for the last 12 years. June 24, CAL-PAC Bishop Mary Ann Swenson and Missionary Support Coordinator, Dr. Dale K. Smith gave "Special Recognition" for outstanding Missionary Supporting Churches for 2004: San Diego, First gave \$11,202. The highest in per capita giving for others was L.A. First German with \$651 per capita. A congregation only needs to give \$3 per member per year to qualify as a Covenant giving church. <http://www.covenant-rbw.org/> Norma Kehrberg led Hawaii District to being top giver with \$30,376. Hats off to CAL-PAC which ranked 1st in per capita giving, 2nd in percentage of Covenant Churches and 3rd in total giving among all UMC conferences. So publish church stats, give awards – have fun giving generously for God’s mission!

Please pray wellness for Gilbert Bascom, Paul Perry, Muriel Henderson, Sharon Crowe, John Hooper, Carolyn Belshe Cowen, and others as they are treated. Rejoice in the news of a "Sandra Oelwine Scholarship" set up by the Alumna Council of Claremont School of Theology in honor of Sandra's work for peace and justice in the Middle East.

[6] **UMMA MEMBERSHIP** by Fred Price, Coordinator

Membership dues paid to UMMA help produce the *Update* as well as other services, e.g., our UMMA website. If you are not yet a member of UMMA, or if you have not yet sent your dues for 2005, please do so now while the urge is strongest!

----- please fill out now **any new info**, cut off here, and send to Fred -----

United Methodist Missionary Association Membership/Renewal for 2005

Name: _____ Spouse: _____
(given name) (family name)
Address: _____
City: _____
State/Province: _____
Country: _____ Zip or Postal Code: _____
Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

DUES: \$25 each for Full (voting) Membership; \$15 each for Affiliate Membership. Please make your check payable to: "UMMA" and Send to:

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