

UMMA UpDate #39, January 31, 2006
e-bulletin of the
United Methodist Missionary Association
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"Linking mission workers worldwide"

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[1] **New Tasks to Be Given Force of Structure!** by Jim Dwyer, chair

The Administrative Council (executive committee) of UMMA has named a **"2007 Greater Mission Gathering Task Force"**. This task force has been put in place to take on planning for an event to motivate the church at large for the great commission of our Lord and to include the functions of our annual Gathering in 2007. **Norma Kehrberg** has agreed to employ her energies, vision and contacts to chair the task force and provide an exciting opportunity for us. Other members of the Task Force at this writing are Carol and Kevin Seckel, Gene Matthews, Dick Vreeland, and Fred Price. Various groups are being asked to join as co-sponsors and talks are underway to hold the Gathering at one of the UMC seminaries at a date in early August 2007.

A recent letter from Associate General Secretary Edith Gleaves which first went to retired missionaries before being published in Mission Matters for all missionaries, stated a desire of General Secretary Randy Day, Treasurer Roland Fernandes and Rev. Edith Gleaves and her staff for transparency in matters relating to pensions, health benefits and the Collins funds. UMMA leadership is encouraged by this development and hopes it will offer opportunity for some input in these matters at least for further clarification in the months ahead. The Administrative Council has been able to convince Dick Vreeland to be chair of this **Collins Task Force**. Other members are Howard Heiner, Fred Price, Jim Gulley, Ric Schwenk, Kathy and Bruce Griffith.

[2] **Thanks to UMMA: A Letter to the Editor** by Stan and Beryl Moore

As a member of UMMA, I would like to express sincere appreciation to the UMMA Steering Committee for detecting, and working to correct, the Board's oversight in regard to reimbursement for the Medicare Part B premium deductions. Some 98 of us were in that category. I understand the GBGM has set aside \$500,000 to rectify the error and to enroll those who had been left out so they will receive that reimbursement in the future.

I would encourage all retired GBGM missionaries enrolled in the Collins pension and health benefit plans, who have not done so, to check their monthly *Bank of New York* deposit statement. Make sure that just above “PENSION” is “MEDICARE-NON-TAXABLE” and the corresponding amount (\$88.50 per month per person for 2006). If nothing is printed there, you may well be eligible for a sizeable refund for past omissions. Call “Collins Pension Benefits” at 1-212-870-3681.

In our case the refund was considerable and will be an enormous help as we take a work team to Chile the latter part of February to help repair damage caused by a 7.9 earthquake centered near the Kusayapu agricultural school in the Andes of northern Chile.

We are thankful for the tremendous amount of time, persistence and energy on the part of our UMMA Steering Committee and concerned persons at GBGM to recognize and correct that error. The only compensation those on the Steering Committee receive is our gratitude, and we want them to know that those of us “out here” are indeed grateful for their dedication. They give a voice to us active and retired missionaries that we otherwise would not have. UMMA not only looks out for the rights of active and retired missionaries, they also are the best means we have to influence Board policy based on our collective experience.

I trust that each of us would support UMMA faithfully with our prayers and by keeping up on our dues, the only resources they can count on to continue their vital task.

[3] *A Decade of Devotion, UMMA's Past & Future* by Howard Heiner

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2 Cor. 4.1

UMMA was formed at the final Missionary Conference of the former World Division in 1996. We drew up the following mission statement:

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 envisioned its role as one of advocacy and support for those engaged in the mission of the risen Lord. Since its formation, UMMA has articulated our vision and shared our recommendations with directors, staff and the missionary community. The 1996 reorganization of the General Board of Global Ministries effectively negated a role for missionaries around the table of the GBGM that had blended directors, staff and missionaries as colleagues and friends.

During the past ten years we have tried to cultivate a feeling of trust in order to discuss such topics as:

1. Searching for a truly global United Methodist Church among the diversity of gender, economic level, race, language, and communities of faith found in our Methodist congregations around the world.

2. Working creatively with the reorganized GBGM structure to establish goals for mission and evangelism in partnership with autonomous churches and partner organizations.
3. Developing a working relationship with the elected and cabinet-level staff to:
 - a. clarify mission personnel compensation policies;
 - b. develop and publish an updated missionary personnel manual;
 - c. interpret the Collins Pension and Health Trust benefits in a transparent and equitable manner;
 - d. facilitate a program to use the experience of retired GBGM missionaries to promote mission outreach throughout the UMC.

The Next Decade:

Since its formation, UMMA has had some challenging and rocky road relationships with GBGM cabinet-level executives, but there are signs for optimism. An organizational analysis by the GBGM Executive Committee in April 2004 recognized the disconnect between GBGM mission personnel and directors and cabinet-level staff. In their Executive Committee Report, Article D of Section 2 states “particular attention is given to the process to enhance the participation of missionaries and other leaders from across the church in Board cross-functional teams, task forces and advisory groups.”

The Rev. Edith L. Gleaves, Deputy General Secretary of the Mission Personnel Program Area stated in her letter of December 15, 2005 to retired missionaries:

“We hope that this information helps in our effort to improve communication with you, our colleagues in mission service. It is the intention of the General Secretary, R. Randy Day and the GBGM Cabinet that in matters that concern all of us, we remain committed to transparency in our communication with all of our constituents. Please, do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or would like further clarification.”

These positive signs have encouraged UMMA’s membership to reexamine its goals. During the formative years of UMMA, it was felt that the difficult relationship with the staff precluded having active missionaries as officers. The congeniality of the present General Secretary and Cabinet has made it more feasible to elect active missionaries as officers of UMMA.

UMMA is earnest in its desire:

- To join with the directors in a process that would “enhance the participation of missionaries and other leaders from across the church in Board cross-functional teams (staff members from various program/functional areas appointed to work on a particular task), task forces and advisory groups.”
- To accept the offer presented by the Rev. Gleaves to engage with the staff in transparent communication that will clarify questions of both active and retired missionaries .

UMMA would like to join in a team effort with directors and executive staff to accomplish significant work toward alleviating human suffering and promote apostolic mission service in the following areas:

A. The Reverend Peter Storey, former bishop of the Methodist Church in South Africa, challenges us: “The church needs to rally its people to conscientize and theologically educate our church members to grapple with four questions: 1) the question of wealth and poverty and good news to the poor, 2) the question of violence, of war and peace, 3) the questions of altar and flag, and 4) the question of inclusion and exclusion.”

B. In response to apostolic service, a missionary stated: “I sense the need for a great deal of clarification about the uniqueness of the longer term missionary as a vocation, in contrast to the short term service provided by VIM. Without such clarification, it may appear to many that those of us who press for greater recognition of the need for longer term missionary service as a vocation are simply yearning for the ‘good ole days’ of a past that is no longer relevant in the 21st century.”

Obviously, the longer term missionary is by definition needed because of the investment of time to prepare to fully function in another culture and to educate national leaders to multiply effective service.

C. Continuing to explore mission outreach through the thoughts of Cornel West in his essay “Courage – Hope:”

The country [world] is in deep trouble. We've forgotten that a rich life consists fundamentally of serving others, trying to leave the world a little better than you found it. We need the courage to question the powers that be, the courage to be impatient with evil and patient with people, the courage to fight for social justice. In many instances we will be stepping out on nothing, and just hoping to land on something. But that's the struggle. To live is to wrestle with despair, yet never to allow despair to have the last word.

This is what Yahweh asks of you, only this:

“To act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

To live is to wrestle with despair, yet never to allow despair to have the last word.

These words remind us all – missionaries, staff and directors – that our strength comes from God when we are engaged in works of holiness.

Editors note: Howard Heiner, was the 1st Chair of UMMA and served from 1996 to 2003.

[4] SPIRITUAL NURTURE NOTES by Carolyn Belshe Cowen

Every professional has their favorite author from whom they quote as a gift – sort of sharing with their listeners/ readers those bits of knowledge which have helped them along life’s journey. I knew zero about desert fathers and mothers and monasticism until twelve years ago in seminary when *my idol* professor asked a relating question that sent me off to a section in the library that has been my soul’s solace during this phase of my journey.

Wayne Teasdale was a writer of such regard. In his *A Monk in the World: Cultivating a Spiritual Life*, words speak to me so loudly that I want to share. Someone asked him why he had chosen to be a monk in the world and not to live in a hermitage. His response sounds like our missionary calling: "I want to identify with and be identified with all those who suffer alone in the world, who are abandoned, homeless, unwanted, unknown, and unloved. I want to know the insecurity and vulnerability they experience, to forge solidarity with them." His primary element of understanding and practice of spiritual life was the inner reality of the Gospel: love selflessly to be a sign of hope for others. Our call to be missionaries is as the monk is called – in solidarity because of and with love.

[5] CHAIR'S CORNER - JimD's Jottings by Jim Dwyer

Life in Hamburg is continuing to move toward some kind of normalcy after more than two years of very extenuating circumstances. Our English-speaking International United Methodist Church offered an open house Sunday afternoon so that all United Methodists in Hamburg would have the opportunity to note that we had moved to a new location and that we had also survived the move.

In the service, we sought to claim Paul's assurance in Ephesians 2:19-20 that we are "no longer strangers and aliens, but ...citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God ...with Christ himself as cornerstone" – an often difficult message to claim in a foreign land, as each of you may well know.

Friday had also been Holocaust Memorial Day, when Europeans (at least) remember the end of Nazi rule and the opening of the concentration camps on the anniversary of the liberation of the still-living population of Auschwitz. Germany was simultaneously mourning the death last week of "Old Federal President" (*Altbundespräsident*) Johannes Rau, who was the first German ever to be invited to speak to the Knesset (Israel's Parliament) and highly respected for his efforts as a practicing Christian to create a culture in Germany which would seek international reconciliation and further respect of all people in the sense of inclusive Christian love. (His father was a Pietist lay preacher and evangelist.) Germans are very proud to note the universally positive echo to Rau's life and efforts for world peace and understanding.

And we had marked Martin Luther King's 77th birthday on January 15th with more input on Christian love and by distributing the "I Have a Dream" speech. We noted as well King's late realization that the victims of discrimination are also always the victims of war and that war in every form must be called into question. The Statement of Conscience of the Council of Bishops in opposition to the war in Iraq lay on the table next to copies of King's speech. We also mourn the death of Coretta Scott King this week, so soon after Martin's 77th birthday anniversary.

In this context, we listen with alarm to the internet broadcasts of Air America Radio – one of the few sources of what is really going on in Washington, it seems — as the Federalist Society perfects its intentions to fill the Supreme Court of the United States with justices who are willing to support the concept of a "unitary presidency" which is not bound by either the constitution or laws passed by the legislature. I ask myself how we can live as United Methodists – especially those of us who are also United States citizens – without speaking out against this "corporatism" being perpetrated upon us by another member of our church?

Welcome to the Steering Committee

At the practical level of UMMA structure and administration, we rejoice with Ron and Diane Ray that they have retired from active missionary service and taken off for South Africa for their retirement. Thanks go out to Ron for serving on the Steering Committee these past years. He conscientiously worked to find a candidate for his own succession and Bill Savuto has both accepted nomination and been duly confirmed by the rest of the Steering Committee to serve representing Africa along with Jeff Hoover. Bill and Jerri Savuto are currently living near Dallas, Texas, but anticipate returning to Africa next January. Bill writes,

"We presently are the Missionary Interpreters for the South Central Jurisdiction and will return to Kenya in Jan 2007. When we return to Kenya, we will be in Maua at Maua Methodist Hospital, where Jerri will be working with Quality Improvement in the hospital and I will work with computer training and maintenance as well as with the accounts department reporting, coordinating work teams and hospital building projects, and the AIDS Orphans ministry."

Bill's election provides for continuity in the Steering Committee.

The last Gathering seriously considered breaking the continuity of annual meetings parallel to the GBGM directors' meetings at Stamford after the presence of the group was overlooked at the meeting of the directors' of the Mission Personnel Unit. Further reflection seems to indicate that we would wisely meet in Stamford again in October 2006. Fred Price and Jim Dwyer plan to attend the spring directors' meeting.

The Two "Jims"

In its wisdom, UMMA has elected two Jims to its Administrative Council. Jim Gulley and I have taken to identifying one another as "JimD" and "JimG." What you call us is up to you — just don't call us late to dinner! JimD

[5] Coordinator's Corner: New Year, New Opportunities by Fred Price

The new year has begun. I hope last year was filled with God's grace as you continued your walk of service and mission. The new year offers new opportunities, not only for your service and mission, but also UMMA's.

We continue to be a voice on behalf of mission and the mission community of the United Methodist Church. Hopefully you have read the Moores' article above. With them and others we celebrate the Board's addressing the oversight concerning Medicare reimbursement. We are very excited as UMMA looks to 2007 and a Global Mission Happening where various persons and groups interested in mission in the United Methodist Church will be brought together.

It may sound trite, but our mission is mission. You have a vital role to play. Members of UMMA, please, renew your membership for 2006. Non members who are reading this, please, join with us and become a member in 2006. Membership dues are \$25.00 per person for full membership (voting rights) and \$15.00 per person for affiliate membership (non-voting). The larger our membership is, the stronger our voice will be.

