

**UMMA UpDate #45, September 10, 2006**  
e-bulletin of the  
United Methodist Missionary Association  
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***"Linking mission workers worldwide and moving forward"***

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[1] **UMMA GATHERING IN STAMFORD, CONN., Oct. 8-10, 2006**

The annual UMMA Gathering will be from October 8 to 10 in Stamford, CT. Hotel Amsterdam will be our lodging and breakfast place again. **Highlights include:**

Oct. 8 - 3:00 p.m. Sunday at the hotel, "The Task of God's Mission in the Face of Imperial Forces – How should UMC and GBGM respond to U.S. American global policies in God's world"

Oct. 9 - 8:30 a.m. Monday - Depart for First UMC, 4220 Cross Rd, Stamford, CT –  
- 9:30 a.m. UMMA Chair's Report by James Dwyer  
- 11:00 a.m. Input from Past UMMA Chairs, Howard Heiner & Norma Kehrberg  
- 1:30 p.m. GBGM Opening Plenary, Marriott Hotel, president & treasurer  
- Evening at the Marriott Hotel, GBGM Program Unit meetings

Oct. 10 - 8:30 a.m. Tuesday - Transfer to First UMC  
- 9:15 a.m. CCW Report  
- 9:30 a.m. Small group work on issues identified & reports in plenary  
- 5:00 p.m. Adjournment. Evening meal together for all who can stay

See more on agenda topics in [8] "**Jim's Jottings**" below. Fred Price, our coordinator, gives the current registration details in article [9] below.

[2] **CHICAGO MISSION GATHERING and FORUM by Norma Kehrberg**

A Mission Gathering and Forum will be held from August 5-8, 2007 at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (G-ETS) in Evanston, Illinois, a suburb just north of Chicago. Members and friends of mission in the United Methodist Church are invited to attend. The official sessions will begin on Sunday Evening, August 5, 2007 with Bishop Roy Sano speaking on the "Biblical Basis of Mission".

Other confirmed speakers include Ruth Daugherty, former President of the Women's Division and Dr. Robert Hunt, Professor of Mission at SMU. Participating groups in the Mission Gathering and Forum include NADAM, an association of deaconesses, home missionaries and home missionaries, Professors of Mission of the UMC, the United Methodist Missionary Association (UMMA), Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and the (1) India, (2) Southeast Asia and (3) Philippine missionary reunions. Others are expected to join as participating groups.

The registration fee is \$35 and will begin on November 1, 2006 – details in the next *UMMA UpDate*. On site housing will be in the dorms at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Nearby hotels are available for others at rates used by G-ETS.

The schedule will include time for Bible Study, worship, roundtable small groups for special interests and discussion among the speakers and the participants. Missionary reunions will also be held by countries and regions.

### [3] PARTNERSHIP and PARTICIPATION by Howard Heiner

As I complete my time as a Steering Committee member, I want to thank all of you for the kind words of appreciation for my service as a part of the UMMA team.

It has been a challenging time. We had multiple experiences as we did our best to work with the intricacies of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). Over the years, as the UMMA Steering Committee and members prayed and worked together, we attempted to maintain our mission focus and to offer support to all. With the Holy Spirit's guidance all concerned grew throughout the entire process. As in the reality of life itself, we have witnessed many blessings from our work as a supportive community of Christ.

In thinking back, what stands out for me is the dedication of so many people – directors, staff and missionaries – to the call of mission as a vital part of our response to Christ. At the same time the wounds and needs affecting people across the world seem to have intensified. A haunting question faces us, "How do we respond?"

A response to that question was presented by the Rev. Randy Day in his address to the board of directors entitled - *Mission: The Heartbeat of the Church*. Among his major emphasis was *Strategy Two: Listen, Learn, and Connect*. He stated the following:

*"We must listen to the many voices within the Church, learn patience and wisdom in deciding on mission priorities, and connect the parts of the Church that can do the work. We will never have within this agency itself enough personnel-missionaries and staff-or enough money to do all that can be, that must be done in mission. Partnerships and networks are essential as we connect the church in mission."*

It is wonderful to hear the General Secretary call for partnership and participation – goals for which UMMA has strived during the past ten years.

Historically, the former World Division had a regular system of consultation for listening, learning and connecting that allowed their missionaries to experience a sense of unity and participation. It allowed missionaries to share among themselves, as well as with staff and directors in forming the vision of mission outreach. This was an important methodology by which, as the Reverend Day stated, essential *partnerships* and network connected the church in mission.

**UMMA must continue to explore with directors and staff how to implement a strategy of listening, learning and connecting. That goal is as important today as it was when UMMA was formed.**

I recently taught a course on globalization in the Oregon-Idaho Conference School of Christian Mission. It helped me recapture a sense of urgency for the social, economic and environmental conditions of our planet. It is a critical time for people of faith to seek a spiritual base for peace and justice. There is confusion in our Nation over moral issues that call GBGM to provide vital leadership.

I thank all of you for allowing me to be a part of the UMMA team who has strived for justice and peace within the GBGM. May we continue to be witnesses of God's grace in our participation in mission for a hurting world.

#### [4] PHILIPPINE MISSIONARY REUNION 2006 by Richard Schwenk

Some 60 missionaries and nationals who served the UMC in the Philippines gathered for a reunion from August 4 to 7 in Lake Junaluska, N.C. Claudia Webster was in charge of registration and liaison with the venue. She also told the sad story of her Chickasaw people (many of them Methodists) who were forced to march from their ancestral lands east of the Mississippi River to what later became Oklahoma. Many died along the way known as the "Trail of Tears." Dave Williams, program coordinator, led the planning and delegated various tasks to give all a chance to participate. Singing was lead by Bill and Norma Matthews. Auring Cepeda creatively worked up the worship theme: "Rekindling the Spirit," including banners to keep us reminded. Blocks of time had the sub-topics: "Generosity & Sharing," "Daring & Courage," "Joy & Laughter" (there was plenty of that), "Love & Gratitude," "Forgiveness," and "Hope." There were few dry eyes in the room after Paul Eppinger preached on three true stories of hope. Don't miss this in the next issue of *UMMA UpDate*. Read also the splendid communion sermon by L. Elbert Wethington in the next article of this issue. A gift of \$1000 was sent to Mary Johnston Hospital for the Jose L. Valencia Cancer Institute. Auring Cepeda and Gloria Coltharp volunteered for the leadership team for the next reunion. Six more joined UMMA at this reunion.

The group was saddened to learn that 18 church people had been killed in the last two years, 15 of whom were affiliated with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (the former EUB is part of the UCCP). A statement was created and affirmed by the group and addressed to the U.S. and Philippine governments, regarding a long series of unsolved assassinations of church leaders, who have been advocating for human rights in the Philippines. The Philippine Reunion statement had these excerpts quoted by the media:

"We call upon the United States government to bring pressure to bear upon authorities in the Philippines to respect civil liberties and human rights and to enforce effective policing and the judicial process" Other quotes in the press from the statement of our 60 former and current church workers in the Philippines were these:

We are "painfully aware of the extrajudicial killings, illegal detention and even torture of persons who have been critical of the government in its failure to address poverty, corruption, and the abuse of power."... "We wish to express our profound sympathy to the victims of these abuses and their families," and;

"We express our appreciation for the courageous Filipino church leaders who continue to speak prophetically to this tragic crisis at great personal risk. We pledge to them our advocacy and our prayers."

These were quoted by media around the world such as: the Uniting Church in Australia and the leading Manila paper, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. The *PDI* published on the top front page on August 18, 2006. "OUTRAGE OVER THE POLITICAL killings in the Philippines are swelling in the international Christian community."

In a separate statement, church leaders representing denominations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America expressed "shock and dismay" over reports of the extrajudicial killings.

In the same *PDI* article was a statement signed by R. Randy Day and James Winkler, the United Methodist Church's general secretaries for global ministries and church and society, urging the Bush administration to "use its influence to prevent the imposition of martial rule or other severe means which would hinder democratic processes in addressing abuses." They went on to say: "We wonder to what extent arms, ammunition, training, and encouragement given in our name and with our tax money are exacerbating this crisis?"

They specifically appealed to the administration to "avoid labeling those working for economic justice, particularly among the poor, as 'subversives,'" and noted the "linkages between the current abuses and the police or the military."

#### [5] *Rekindle the Gifts of God: Love & Gratitude* by L. Elbert Wethington\*

*A communion meditation delivered for the Philippine Reunion on August 4-7, 2006.*

Here at Lake Junaluska we are gathered on Inspiration Point overlooking the Lake and facing this entrancing life-size sculpture of Jesus offering the bread and cup.

During these joyful days of reunion of United Methodist Filipinos and US co-workers we have shared our personal stories and awakened memories of relationships and events. In our enthusiasm, I'm sure, for every word spoken we have suppressed at least ten words to allow time for others to speak. I shall try to follow that precedent now.

The theme of our reunion is "Rekindle the Spirit," and various qualities of that have been highlighted in our devotional periods. I consulted Morrison's Concordance of the New Testament for references to the word "rekindle." To my surprise, I found the word used only once in all the NT, 2 Tim. 1:6, and that was "rekindle the gift of God"—not rekindle the spirit. The Greek word *anazopyreo* may be loosely translated "fire-up the gift of God in you." The emphasis is theologically emphatic: we are not challenged to generate or "fire up" the Holy Spirit. Rather, we are reminded that we are subjects who are called to receive fully the gifts of the Spirit and be excited, faithful stewards of those gifts of the Holy Spirit. It reminds us that the most frequently repeated phrase in the Psalms is "His steadfast love endures forever," and the NT reminds us that God is constantly seeking to shape us in God's nature, Holy Love.

Therefore, we are reminded that we are not football cheerleaders who generate loud enthusiasm; indeed, whenever we presume to generate or control the Holy Spirit, we botch the job. Perhaps we are more like pieces of charcoal which have been fired already and waiting to be fired-up again. And like charcoal we do not fare well alone, but produce more heat and light when we are together. So we are active parts of the Body of

Christ when we are being rekindled, fired-up, and glorifying God by sharing God's gifts with others.

Just a few moments ago I experienced a disorientation of place: I felt this worship service was happening back in the Philippines, until our leader made a reference to "here in the United States." Suddenly I felt re-located. But that moment reminded me of the wonderful words of Prince Vladimir when he was so transported by the liturgy of the Greek Orthodox Church: "I knew not whether I was in heaven or on earth."

This is the work of the Holy Spirit to rekindle us continually in the Grace and Truth of Christ, especially when we are receiving again and again in this holy communion the love, the forgiveness, the gratitude, the joy and the strength of our Lord's own body and blood. John Wesley emphasized in word and practice the need for "constant communion," which has been translated by his followers as "frequent." So, this is not the memorial celebration of a sad meal of departure, but rather a real event in which, through the sharing of the bread and cup, we are offered the Real Presence of Christ in this time and place. My personal conviction is that this is a Holy Presence more real than this bronze sculpture of Jesus which we see with our physical eyes.

Now, may I accent my words by reading the Scripture, 2 Tim. 1:3-14: Let us be assured that in receiving this Grace and Truth of God in Christ the Holy Spirit regenerates love and gratitude, qualities of Christ which we are unable to hide. This experience may be the nearest to heaven we can know in this world. "O what a foretaste of glory divine," fellowship in the Real Presence of Christ. May it be so for us, here and now.

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\*A charter member of UMMA, The Rev. Dr. L. Elbert Wethington, served with his wife, Lois, from 1954-1963 as Methodist missionaries in the Philippines under the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church. Dr. Wethington taught Theology at the Union Theological Seminary in Manila and assisted forming a new congregation. Upon their return to the U.S. in 1963, he taught in the Department of Religion at Lebanon Valley College in Annville, Penn., where he chaired the Department for 20 years, retiring in 1983. Soon after this first retirement, Dr. Wethington led the Wesley Heritage Project, the translation, publication and distribution of *Obras de Wesley*, for 25 years. He retired as the first President of the Foundation in 2005. Elbert and Lois continue to reside in Durham, NC. <http://www.wesleyheritagefoundation.org/elbertw.html>

## [6] **MISSIONARY MILESTONE: Paul Perry Returns to His Creator**

The Rev. Dr. Paul F. Perry died peacefully on August 11 after having been confined to bed for only one week. He was a Methodist minister in the Southwest Texas Conference for 40 years with involvements in ecumenical projects and voluntary mission service locally and in countries such as Lebanon, Mexico, Israel/West Bank and Brazil. He also taught courses in university, seminary, and in schools of mission. After retiring from his annual conference, he and his wife Callie Hugley Perry were sent by the GBGM to pastor the English-speaking congregation in Milan, Italy. His ministry was oriented toward the large immigrant community. Those from the Philippines formed the original and largest part of the Milan church.

Paul and Callie served close to seven years with the GBGM in Milan and as MIIRs (Mission Interpreter In Residence). They were active UMMA members. Paul came to the UMMA Gathering days after getting the diagnosis of the melanoma on the top of his head, including news of its early spread. He attended a second UMMA Gathering after diagnosis last year. He made the most of the many months after his initial diagnosis with

many worthy activities. Peace in the Middle East was his on-going concern. Hopefully the seeds, he and others, have planted will come to fruition in the near future.

## [7] OUR READERS WRITE & TAKE AWARD WINNING PHOTOS

The Rev. Liberato C. Bautista\* wrote this – must-read – article about one of our most basic needs – water. It was written for the “Seasonal Newsletter” *pers.pec. tives* of the General Board of Church and Society. The United Methodist News Service turned that into a commentary on poverty eradication which Rev. Bautista helped edit. Photos illustrations were by Paul Jeffrey, a long time UMMA member. Please click: <http://tinyurl.com/g2qrk> as a short-cut URL leading to the latest eco-friendly ideas.

“Commentary: All Are Responsible,” Aug. 31, 2006 News media contact: Linda Green. Note: Photographs are available at <http://umns.umc.org>. A UMNS Commentary by Bautista reads in part:

“The 2004 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, the denomination's lawmaking body, adopted a resolution on "Protection of Water" that affirmed access to water is a basic right to be used and enjoyed by all God's people. Individuals as well as societies and governments must take responsibility for the way they use, and abuse, water.”

“As United Methodists continue to support the Millennium Development Goals the need for environmental sustainability should be lifted up. By 2015, the goal is to cut by 50 percent the number of the world's people who don't have access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation.”

“Information on climate change is available from the World Council of Churches, Church World Service or John Hill, director for environmental justice at the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, at [jhill@umc-gbcs.org](mailto:jhill@umc-gbcs.org).”

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\*Bautista is the United Methodist Board of Church and Society's assistant general secretary at the United Nations in New York. “Levi” Bautista, as he is called by friends, is a graduate of Thoburn Memorial Academy, a Methodist high school in northern Philippines.

## [8] JIM'S JOTTINGS by James Dwyer, chair

As I look back at my initial year as your chair, I note that much of our progress in this year as an Association has been behind the scenes in a continuing improvement of atmosphere. At the spring Board meeting our now-traditional lunch at the invitation MPPU staff, including GBGM treasurer and MPPU directors and UMMA officers was quite cordial, even as issues of common concern were clearly noted and shared. We met in a quiet meeting room, a helpful change from the busy and loud restaurant of the Marriott. In April the Board accepted a salary increase for missionaries retroactive to January 1, 2006, at the same rate that staff salaries had been raised by decision of the previous Board meeting. This matter of acknowledging the appropriateness of a link between the two is a welcome step. Norma Kehrberg's comparison of her own pensions as missionary and as staff person was also quite revealing. We hope to see additional adjustments in this regard.

On a similarly positive note, our Collins Task Force has also been at work this past year. On behalf of the Collins Task Force of UMMA, Richard Vreeland, task force chair, and Roland Fernandes, GBGM Treasurer, found time for in-person conversations and email communications in the course of the past year. It was clear from these contacts that issues of improvements in pension benefits for retired missionaries and salaries for active missionaries are a matter of high concern of the Treasurer, who is seeking ways to regularize the procedures for review and adjustment.

Please plan now to join us at the UMMA Gathering from October 8 to 10, if you can! Fred Price, our coordinator, has been taking time in August for much needed vacation and recuperation from recent illness. He provides the current cost details and registration information below.

Ric Schwenk has maintained a flow of information about UMMA which has caught the interest of many attending missionary reunions and others. Our membership has increased considerably this year. No doubt the prospect of the 2007 Mission Forum and Gathering in Evanston has helped focus attention on our efforts.

In the light of a number of recent studies which have been published by professors of theology at United Methodist theological schools, I have set as a theme for one session with this question: "The Task of God's Mission in the Face of American Imperialism – How should UMC and GBGM respond to American global policies in God's world?" I am seeking to convince David Ray Griffin, recently retired at Claremont School of Theology, or Catherine Keller, professor at Drew University School of Theology, to join us to discuss their book, co-authored with John B. Cobb Jr. and Richard A. Falk, **The American Empire and the Commonwealth of God – a Political, Economic, Religious Statement** (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville / London 2006). Failing that, I will attempt to lead the discussion myself. David Griffin has also written three books on the truth about attacks on the World Trade Center on 9/11/2001. Westminster John Knox Press has published all three, including the latest in August 2006, **Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11 – A Call to Reflection and Action**. Griffin feels the critical time has arrived when Christian leadership must consider the "status confessionis" of confessing Christ and opposing caesar, cost what it may. If Griffin can join us, he will be available to speak to these questions.

I would suggest reading **The American Empire and the Commonwealth of God** and Griffin's books on the "search for 9/11 truth." See you at Stamford!

#### [9] REGISTER for STAMFORD GATHERING by Fred Price, Coordinator

The UMMA Gathering will be held from October 8-10 at the **Amsterdam Hotel** (formerly Rodeway Inn and Budget Hospitality Inn), **19 Clark's Hill Avenue Stamford, Conn.** Our meeting will coincide with the GBGM board of directors' meeting in a nearby hotel. UMMA will make the reservation to be sure you get the best group rate (\$99.00 + tax – cheaper than last year. The hotel has complimentary breakfast. All other meals will be at your own expense. Please fill & return the following form to Fred Price (his address below) or email [fred\\_price\\_30084@yahoo.com](mailto:fred_price_30084@yahoo.com) as soon as possible to assure your room reservations and official name tags for some of the most important GBGM meetings. The UMMA Gathering will end with supper on the evening of Oct. 10 (Tues). Departure to the LaGuardia Airport (LGA) will be early on Oct. 11.

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**Rev. Fred Price, UMMA Coordinator, 165 Grandview Ave., Pitman, NJ 08071**

Hi Fred,

Please reserve a place for \_\_\_\_\_ (your name) for the nights of (state which) 8th 9th 10th for \_\_\_\_\_ persons in \_\_\_\_\_ room(s).

I will inform you of my flight # with arrival and departure times and airport as soon as I know those details so information can be shared with others attending for possible car pooling from the LaGuardia (LGA) Airport to Stamford, Connecticut.

**Airline tip:** LaGuardia (LGA) in NYC seems to have the most direct flights and cheapest fares at this time from O'Hare Field (ORD). For example UA flight 678 leaves ORD at 11 am and arrives LGA at 2:04 pm and costs \$178. I may be able to pick up some at LGA on my way to Stamford on Sunday, Oct. 8 for arrivals around mid-day.

I/We will be arriving on \_\_\_\_\_ Airline Flight# \_\_\_\_\_ at – Time: \_\_\_\_\_ on Oct. 8, 2006

I/We will be arriving by car at approximately – Time: \_\_\_\_\_ on Oct. 8, 2006