

UMMA UpDate #72 – All Saints’ Day, 2010

e-bulletin of the

United Methodist Missionary Association

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In this UMMA UpDate

This issue of UMMA Update does not begin to cover our Forum and Gathering, and Annual Meeting of GBGM Directors in October. For that reason, most of the reporting from those events will be held for #73, to appear shortly. Please look for it. And make sure our new “UpDate” mailing address <umma-update@googlegroups.com> is “white-listed” among the addresses you want to see in your inbox!

(1) Word from the Editor

(2) A Word from General Secretary Thomas G. Kemper

(3) “On the Road Again,” UMMA Chair, James L. Gulley

(4) Reflections on Missionary Making, Editor Emeritus Richard L. Schwenk

(5) Changes in Mission and Evangelism Staff

(6) Reunions

(7) A few brief highlights of the GBGM Directors’ meeting



(1) Word from the Editor

The recent GATHERING of the United Methodist Missionary Association asked me to succeed Ric Schwenk in his role as editor of **UMMA UpDate** for the long-term and in his function as Communications Coordinator. I am happy to acknowledge the great tradition Ric has maintained, and hope to do him justice, even as we as an Association seek to find what new challenges we can address to better represent missionaries young and old, active, retired, “inactive” and “returned” — our new effort to make visible the many who may have served a term and gotten lost from view, despite ongoing interest in the missionary endeavor.

I look forward to your suggestions and contributions, many of which are already evident in this issue. What I still do not have is the thread of information regarding reunions which Ric maintained so well over the years.

In the realm of the Communications Task Force the Gathering approved a proposal to establish a “Members’ Forum” where all may communicate

with all. It will be a Google group with the e-mail address <umma-members@googlegroups.com>. Over time we will be adding the e-mail addresses of all members to the Forum's membership. You may request NOT to be included, or you may ask to be removed at any time. Please contact me, preferably through the special account set up for the purpose <members-forum@umma-global.org>.

Once you are a member, you will have several options to receive all e-mails as they arrive, or to get summaries or digests, or to see the emails only when you go online at the Google group site: <<http://groups.google.com/group/umma-members>>. These options can be set by you, or I can set them for you.

I hope this is not "TMI" — too much information!

Just ask as questions arise. I'll do my best to respond helpfully!

Your [new] editor — Jim Dwyer <jamesdwyer@mac.com>

(2) A Word from the General Secretary Update on Global Health Initiative

Let me first say how good it was to be with many UMMA members at the Rethink Mission event in Nashville in mid-October. I really enjoyed the presentations and conversations I heard and was sorry I could not be there the whole time: I was committed to our first Malawi Initiative consultation and then to other activities. Near the end of October we had a terrific Vietnam Consultation, hosted by the West Ohio Annual Conference.

The autumn of 2010 has been busy for all of us engaged in God's mission through GBGM. Our United Methodist Global Health Initiative claimed a great deal of my time and energy, and I want to share with you some information as well as my enthusiasm for this venture in faith. I know that all missionaries are interested in health issues. The context is our denominational commitment to combat the diseases of poverty and, in concert with partners, especially to eradicate malaria. Central in our efforts is the "Imagine No Malaria" campaign, which has a fund-raising goal of \$75 million.

A part of the proceeds will go to United Methodist health ministries carried out through our hospitals, clinics, and community-based primary health care approaches, primarily in Africa. Our annual conferences and many of our missionaries in Africa are pivotal in this work. Some money will continue to go to "Nothing But Nets," particularly in partnership with annual conferences in both Africa and the United States. A third part — \$28 million

—has been pledged to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria which is related to the United Nations.

The United Methodist Church is the first faith-based organization to join the Global Fund, doing so in the realization that we alone cannot overcome malaria and the other targeted diseases. In early October I was privileged to represent the Church in making our pledge and in addressing Global Fund’s sponsors at a “replenishment” meeting in New York. Reflecting the sentiments of our Global Health Initiative, I think I surprised the gathering, chaired by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, in saying that our pledge came as an endorsement of the community-based and faith-based health efforts across Africa.

GBGM has major program responsibilities in the Global Health Initiative; UCom—the United Methodist Commission on Communications—is handling fund-raising. UCom has also played a major role in bringing the denomination into partnership with “Nothing But Nets” and the Global Fund.

The World Health Organization reports that 40 percent of the health infrastructure in Africa is religion-related, and in making our pledge I appealed to the Global Fund to take this section into serious account in combating major diseases. There is good reason to doubt that malaria can be ended without the engagement of community and church groups able to provide grassroots education on treatment and prevention. UMCOR has become expert in working with our conferences and congregations in Africa to offer this essential, practical training.

Collaboration with the Global Fund will in no way diminish our own sustained health ministries or stand in the way of new United Methodist work. We have been in this field of mission for a long, long time and intend to stay there, adding collaboration with government and private philanthropy as expansions of our dream of healthy families and children among all of God’s people. Our missionary doctors, nurses, other health professionals, teachers, and community organizers play major roles in reaching toward that goal. Thank you for your role in helping us “rethink mission.”

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*(3) UMMA & Global Ministries on the Road Again, Crossing New Boundaries
The Word from UMMA’s Chair, James. L. Gulley <jim.gulley@comcast.net>*

At the October 2010 Global Ministries board of directors meeting, we were challenged to be in mission "on the road." I had so hoped Bishop Ough would crank up Willie Nelson's tune to get our feet a'movin', but to no avail. Still, we were challenged and energized.

At a working luncheon with UMMA representatives, General Secretary Thomas Kemper warmly welcomed us, took a look at our white faces (and white hair — or not!) and wondered aloud: "Who really is UMMA?" — an especially pertinent question in view of the "internationalization" of the Global Ministries missionary community (nearly half now originating from outside the U.S.). At the same time, we acknowledge that UMMA has been welcomed and has found "a place at the table" to be with Global Ministries in mission. This includes the board of directors' table to provide input to program and policy of the Board. But the missionary community has other important roles as well. Let me note just two.

Let the missionary community continue to be leaders, as in the past. Under the excellent leadership of Norma Kehrberg, the missionary associations (CCWO, NADAM, UMMA) teamed up with professors of missiology and staff of Global Ministries to host "Rethink Mission: Reflection and Action" in Nashville. That conference elicited this from one annual conference mission leader: "Thank you for a very rewarding conference. I think it was one of the best I have attended in the UMC in a long, long time."

At the Rethink Mission conference GS Kemper affirmed the UMC's role to be in "mission from everywhere to everywhere." Sending is still important, with missionaries who continue to cross boundaries (cross-cultural and others), who continue to experience the "strangeness, the foreignness, the uncomfortableness, the vulnerability that requires us to depend on the Spirit to lead." Let us be a global, international mission but "built from the voices of the grassroots." Let us be facilitators of mission not dependent on giving gifts but "taking only a comb and a toothbrush", Kemper noted. We have begun and must continue to "rethink mission".

Let UMMA and the whole missionary community in the USA be prepared to receive missionaries from the "2/3" or "majority" world who come to us with the Gospel in a new key, with a new face, with renewed vision and the ever-new transforming power to change us! Let us become the providers of hospitality, the hosts to the new vanguard of missionaries from outside the U.S., the drivers of cars, the providers of food and beds, the interpreters across cultural differences. We have vital new roles to play. Perhaps we must decrease as the new missionary community increases.

Who really is UMMA? We must be those who imitate our Lord, who "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave [and] humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil. 1:7-8). The missionary God whom we meet in the man Jesus calls us to follow him, crossing new boundaries of mission service, sometimes far away, sometimes near.

Who really is UMMA? We are those who have been called into God's mission for a lifetime of missionary service, sometimes abroad, sometimes at home, but always living out a singular calling to be "on the road" with the Good News of Christ, wherever we are. —***Jim Gulley, UMMA Chair***

(4) Long Timers' Report —Reflections on Missionary Making

Richard L. Schwenk <RicSchwenk@yahoo.com>

In one sense, Wilson Boots was my JFK. Will was a young short-term missionary who in 1957, showed slides of his work in Bolivia after teaching there for three years. He made a plea for agricultural missionaries. I was about to receive my B.S.-Ag. Ed. degree from the U of Wisconsin at River Falls. The Wesley Foundation, where Boots spoke, had made a highly significant uplift in my life and purpose. I was president of Wesley at the time. He announced an urgent need for short-term (3-year) agriculture teachers and asked, "Who will go and teach hungry people better methods of growing their own food."

So, the next day after Will extended God's call, I began the application process at the (then) Methodist Board of Missions in New York via air mail (no e-mail then). Later in the process, the head of missionary recruitment, Mel Williams, asked me, "Can you raise goats?" I answered, "Yes, that should be similar to cattle raising. I grew up on a Wisconsin dairy farm and earned a blue ribbon at the 4-H fair with my Holstein heifer project." Later, I found that dairy farming was not appropriate for the places I served. Improving on basic food production and health education turned out to be appropriate technology — I learned that as a short-termer in the Philippines when we increased rice yields five-fold in our high school farm.

Only a few years after World War II, the Methodists' call for short-term missionaries was innovative and later influenced JFK's call, "...what [can] you do for your country?" The result was the Peace Corps. The organizers of the Peace Corps asked to see the training curriculum of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church. Our intensive six-week training in basic anthropology,

language, health, and biblical theology from experts gave us 33 men and women a great start as short-termers.

After three years of teaching in Thoburn Memorial Academy, (TMA) a Methodist affiliated high school in the Philippine boondocks, I proposed marriage to my co-teacher, Paz Caridad “Caring” Aragones. She was the daughter of the founder of TMA. The announcement of our engagement came as a surprise to our co-teachers. They were sad to lose their only teacher of Biology, English, Spanish, Choir, Girl Scouts, etc., but saw it as Thoburn’s contribution to the larger mission of the church. Little did we imagine that this would eventually lead to mission work of almost 40 years for me and 37 years for Caring (or even that we would be celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary on January 1, 2011).

Before being accepted as career missionary candidates, the Mission Board told me I needed at least one year of seminary education. So in 1961-1962 I took advanced courses in liberal arts courses at my alma mater for a year and then entered Garrett Theological Seminary (now G-ETS) for three years. I completed my M.Div. in 1965. We were assigned to Sarawak , on the island of Borneo. It was one of four “Lands of Decision” (1960-1964) and they needed multi-purpose missionaries with backgrounds in agriculture, church and rural development. Sarawak had joined the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. We were rushed to the field to relieve a missionary who was going on home assignment. So Caring and I, along with our six month old son, John, took charge of the Methodist Agriculture Training Center, 150 miles up the Rejang River by a small boat. After about six months of in-service Iban language study, I was also assigned to be pastor of a circuit of 17 Iban longhouse congregations, in addition to my rural development work. On weekends I traveled by outboard-motor-driven longboat up those rapid-flowing rivers. Worship services were held sitting on woven mats of the common porch of the longhouses and often at their farms as they asked us to teach better farming methods and pray for their crops and families. Caring stayed at the mission center to teach the women, play the church organ, and lead the choir at the Iban church.

I literally had to sink or swim as I learned the language and culture. On my first trip to a longhouse our boat hit some rocks and I fell overboard, but I was able to hang on to the gunnels. Another time my Iban co-workers and I were late in returning to the mission center and kept dodging logs in the rain swollen river as our flashlight grew dim. Finally as the flashlight went dead,

we saw a faint kerosene lamp that Caring had put on our porch to guide us home.

There were exciting episodes overcoming rapids, whirlpools, cobras and crocodiles as we helped train local leaders as extension teachers in agricultural, health and church development. We traveled with local teammates to teach indigenous families holistic sustainable development. After 14 years, the Malaysian government informed us that our visa was about to expire, but would be renewed for a year because of the progress in training local leaders for our comprehensive health and rural development programs.

So in 1979 we were invited by Philippine Christian University (PCU) to head up a new extension education service that we called "SEED" Center (Synergistic Extension for Extensive Development). In 1983 I started the first computer lab at PCU with a few Apple computers. By 1992, it would grow into the College of Computer Science at PCU with me as the first dean, until I turned it over to my Filipino colleague. During our last eight years Caring and I also taught courses on Church and Community Development at Union Theological Seminary south of Manila. We took UTS student pastors with us to do their practicum in church and rural development with the indigenous tribes at the foot of Mt. Pinatubo during the weekends. Caring taught and trained local leaders to lead Daily Vacation Bible School for hundreds of kids and to improve health practices and family life in the slums.

It was a great joy to help disadvantaged people improve their livelihood. Some highlights were working with groups to develop agro-forestry plantations, preventive health practices, building gravity fed water systems along with Christian education in church and schools. We also helped them attain from the government, a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim of over 6,500 acres of farm and forest land. Thus, we saved their lands from logger and rancher land-grabbers. It was hard to leave the work when it was going so well, but eventually one has to turn over the work to local leaders and devote time for our health and four kids and seven grandkids in the States. We retired in 2000 after training local leaders to carry on the projects.

Looking back at my missionary service of almost 40 years, I treasure all the learning experiences that prepared me for mission, such as: getting up early to do farm chores, 4-H, Boy Scouts, sport teams, Wesley Foundation, student trainee in the Soil Conservation Service, B.S. Ag. Ed., short-termer, M.Div., M.S. and Ph.D. and most important, sharing learning experiences

with all kinds of people. As a short-termer, living with and learning from a Filipino family about their culture, language and practical way of advancing with limited means, made me more adaptable and confident when I became a career missionary. Being teamed up with a well-educated, devoted, and talented Filipina wife and co-missionary was the greatest asset of all. Her Christian family background and practical ways gave me a greater depth of vision and saved me many a misstep. We learned from the wisest people in each assignment. Cross-cultural missionary teamwork and building on indigenous materials and know-how is essential as we seek to be aware of the nuances of other cultures and basic needs as we share the Good News to people in other environments.

Now, after 15 years of editing UMMA UpDate, I feel it is time to turn over the editing to the younger and more talented hands of Jim Dwyer. He also was a founding member of UMMA who helped greatly in writing our bylaws. Jim has been one of the first responders on our editorial team with many good suggestions and tweaks for the 70 issues that we produced since the start. May the Good Lord Bless and keep us till we write again.

(5) Changes in Mission and Evangelism Staff

Elizabeth Lee — new Executive Secretary for Young Adult Mission Service, room 329, 212-870-3620 (responsible for Mission Interns, US2s, and Summer Interns). She comes to GBGM from the WCC.

Alberto Dominguez — new Program Associate for Missionary Recruitment, Support & HRIS, Missionary Services Unit, room 310, 212-870-3662. (Antoñietta Wilson is now Executive Secretary in the Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence, room 338, 212-870-3699.)

(6) Reunions —Please submit details to <umma-update@umma-global.org>!

(7) A very few highlights of the Directors' meeting: "Environmental Scan," "Vision/Mission/Values" and "Theology of Mission" statements presented in Strategic Planning Process; Marriott lease will expire 2011, future meetings in NYC, Dallas, elsewhere; "10-Fold" celebrated with missionary interviews, including newly commissioned class. New Global Ministries' "contacts" link: <<http://new.gbgm-umc.org/about/contact/topic>>.

The End of UpDate #72

Continued in #73 (Coming Soon)

"Linking mission workers worldwide and moving forward"