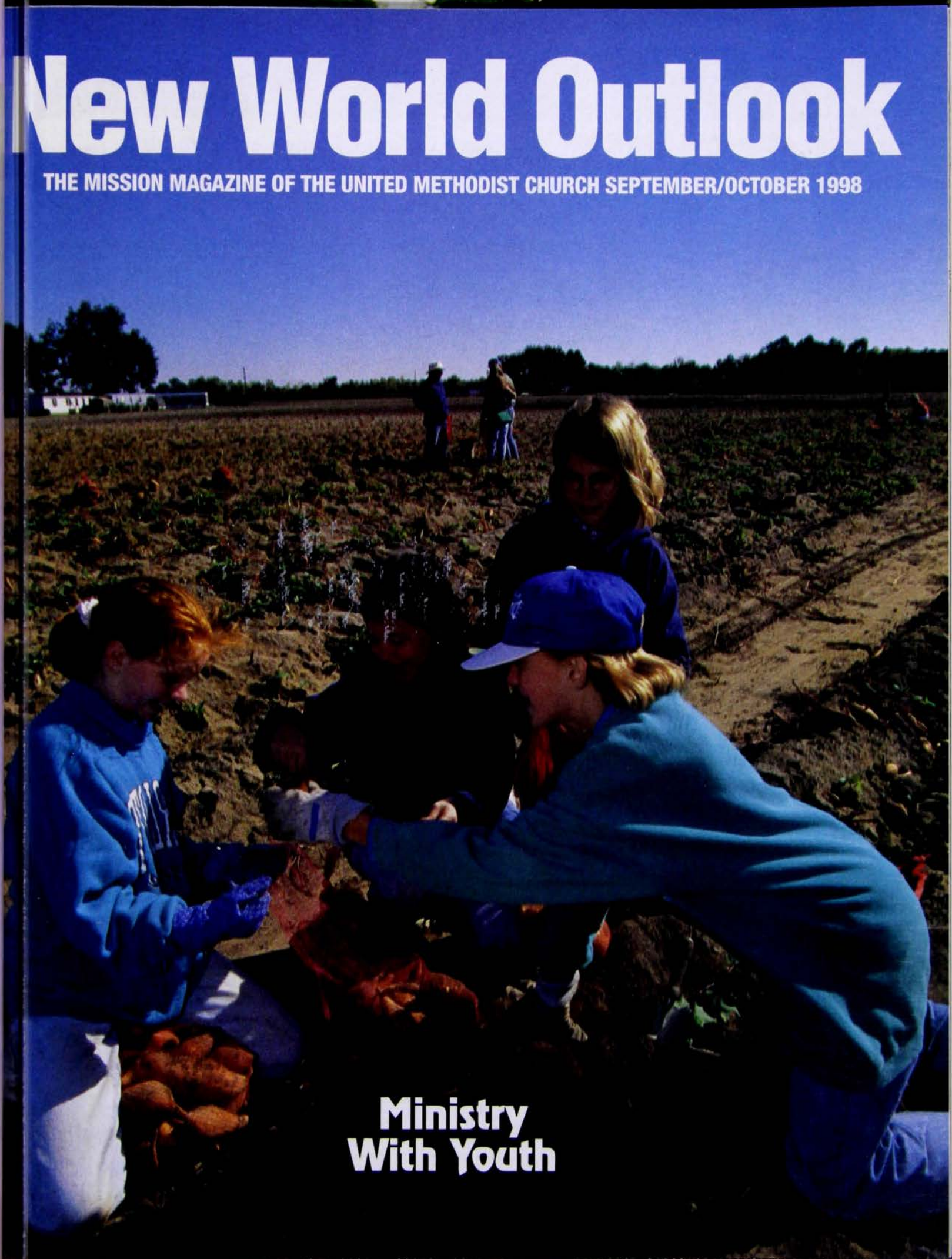
New World Outlook

THE MISSION MAGAZINE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1998



Ministry With Youth

NEW WORLD OUTLOOK

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Cover Photo: Mike DuBose, United Methodist Communications. Members of Girl Scout Troop 460 in Durham, North Carolina, glean sweet potatoes for the Society of St. Andrew. Left to right: Lynn Winkler, Brittany Lambert, Jaime Franklin, and Emily Heil.

Editor's Column: Empowering Youth

To get a sense of what life in the church is like for many youth, think about how *you* feel when you are stymied. You are ready to go, ready to give your all, ready to use your gifts and graces to accomplish great things. You lack only empowerment, only permission, only an invitation or an opening to begin.

But no one gives you the signal to start. The people who might employ and empower you look right through you, walk right past you, act as if you were not there.

In a hierarchical structure, even experienced adults can find it hard to position themselves for leadership and action. But adults who are thwarted will often hang around anyway. Youth, with their high energy levels and greater impatience, will split. Leave them out and they'll leave *you* as soon as they are able, shaking the dust of the exclusionary church off their feet.

All three synoptic gospels report Jesus' words about what his disciples should do in places where people won't welcome or listen to them: "Shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them" (Luke 9:5; see Matthew 10:14 and Mark 6:11). Surely, Jesus' own church could not be such an unwelcoming place for youth. But ponder the words of a young woman from the West Coast: "The church is not meeting my needs. I got this big faith kick in high school. Then the church dropped me when I went to college." Another teenager from the East reported: "People in my church tell me: 'You'll make a good leader someday.' I'm a leader *now*."

We have many excuses for not wanting to empower the young. Perhaps it's human nature to think that making a place for someone else means giving up a place for ourselves. Certainly, it's hierarchical nature to want to exert a tight control over others. It reminds me of the opposing romantic and classical views of human nature. The romantic view holds that human beings are a vast well of wondrous possibilities. The opposing classical view holds that we are fallen creatures whose aspirations have to be tightly disciplined and controlled, contained in the bucket that dips into the well. In truth, human beings need both freedom to innovate and discipline to excel. Young people need unlimited opportunities to prove themselves but also need experienced mentors to guide them along the way.

If we are ready to welcome, ready to listen, and ready to learn from youth as well as teach them, this issue of *New World Outlook* provides a host of ideas and models and a wealth of resources. For example, see our special centerfold section on the General Board of Global Ministries' multifaceted work with children: "Every Child Is Our Child." Read about the church's Shared Mission Focus on Young People. Listen to preteen missionary Emily Gipe relate some of her experiences in Africa. See our exciting report on the new United Methodist Church in Senegal—where missionaries work with youth (and grownups) to nourish them spiritually while also providing practical empowerment.

Like parenthood, youth ministry is a 24-hour job—not easy but infinitely rewarding. We just need to remember that it involves youth and adults in ministry *together*.

—Alma Graham

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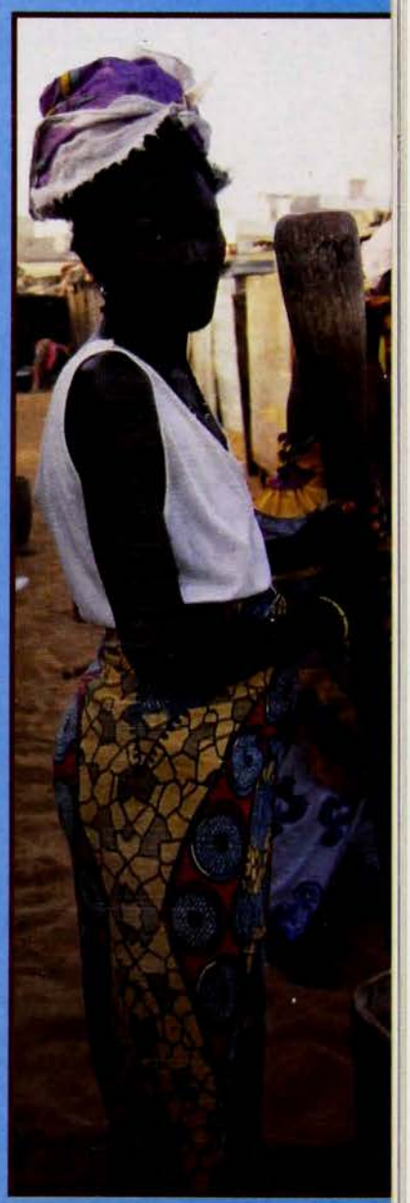
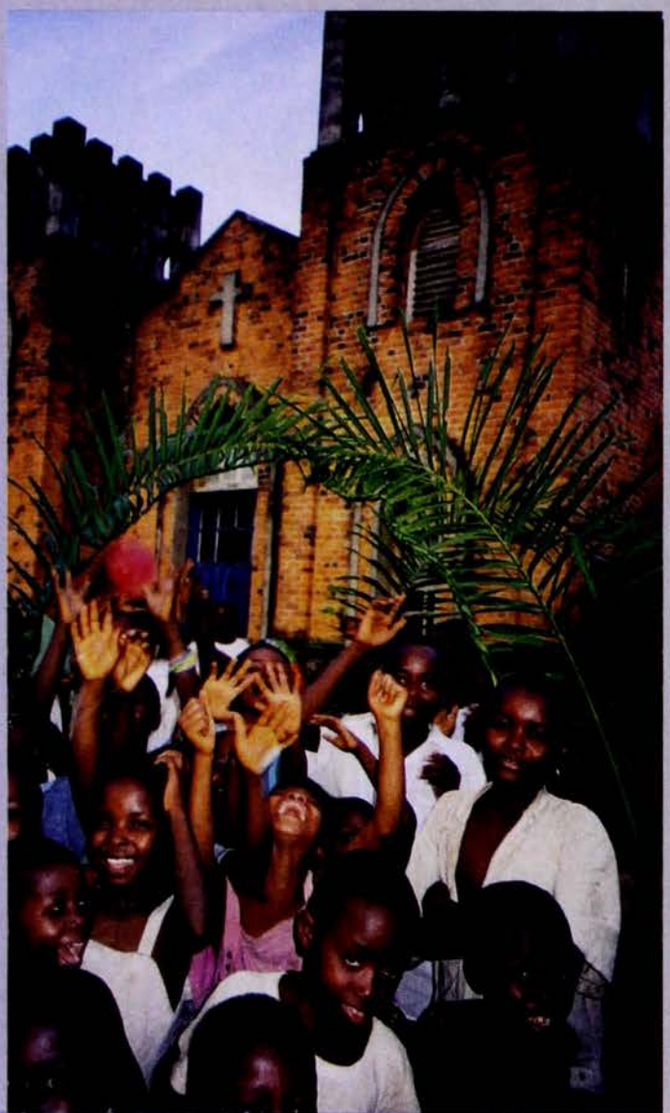


STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

Youth Ministry: A 24-Hour Job

by Christie R. House



Youth of the Salama United Methodist Church in Kindu, Democratic Republic of Congo (the former Zaire).

Strategies for working in youth ministry have undergone change throughout the 1990s. The position of youth minister was once seen as a steppingstone to "real ministry." It was often considered a temporary post to be held by a student pastor working toward full ordination. But today, though seminary students may still fill part-time postions as workers with youth, more and more pastors and lay workers are making a full career of youth ministry. As part of this trend, more large churches are hiring full-time youth ministers, while smaller-membership churches are hiring youth workers jointly, to share.

Jeff Miller is a pastor in the Western Pennsylvania Conference. "When you become a youth minister," he says, "you are available to youth when and where you are needed. That means being outside the church with them—on the basketball courts, on the soccer field, in your home. When they have a fight with their parents and they're thrown out of the house, they're sleeping on your couch. You're there for them."

Callie Jackson, of Nehemiah Mission in Philadelphia, agrees. "It's a 24-hour job, seven days a week," she notes, adding: "All my assets belong to the youth. You cannot withhold who you are from children and youth. They will sense that you are not for real. How can they share with you how they feel if you are never able to share your life with them?"

The constant danger for workers with youth is burnout. Many young adults last only a year or two at youth ministry. "But you don't have to be in your early twenties to do this work," notes Miller. "Young people need adults of every age to be their friends and walk through life with them. Young people need the wisdom of an experienced youth worker."

Jeff Miller has been ministering to youth since 1972—or, as he puts it, "forever." Though he pastors Franklin Street United Methodist Church in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, he still engages in youth

ministry. Franklin Street UMC is one of four churches in downtown Johnstown that formed JUMP: the Johnstown United Methodist Parish. JUMP Youth brings young people together from all four churches in the cooperative parish to engage in programming.

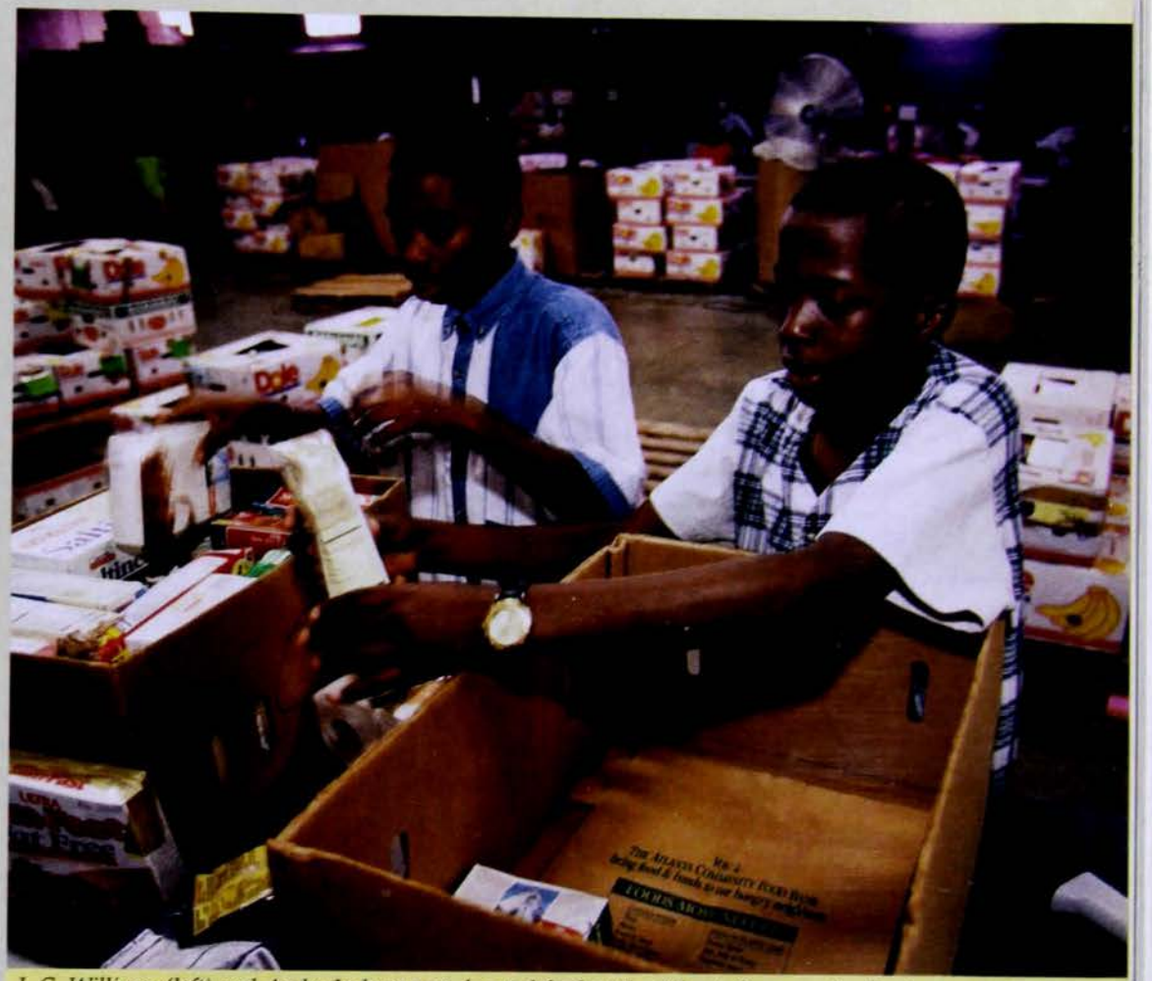
Kids in Christian Mission

"The most successful programs we've had put the kids to work in Christian mission," Miller explains. "They need to identify with the message. They need to know that faith makes a difference in this world. When they put their bodies to work and expend their energy building something, they can see a tangible difference. They see that having God in your life means something. The relationships they form with each other, with youth leaders, and with people we serve can change their lives forever."

Miller has led more than 20 mission work trips over the last 13 years. This past summer, some of the youth from JUMP went to Lithuania with youth from other areas—a trip made possible by the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) and "35,000 gobs." "Gob" is a Pennsylvania word for a homemade chocolate-cake cookie with cream filling. Members of the youth group and their families couldn't make gobs fast enough to satisfy the Johnstown public. Meanwhile, the GBGM made arrangements for the work site in consultation with the reemerging Lithuanian church.

Training Youth Ministers

The demand for youth ministers within The United Methodist Church is rising each year. According to population studies, the number of young people is also rising annually. The up-and-coming "millennial generation"—children born between 1982 and 1999—is the biggest generation of young people the United States has ever produced, an even bigger cohort than the baby boomers. Churches, now seeing their Sunday schools filling up with preschoolers and elementary children, are wondering how to get their youth programs ready.



J. C. Williams (left) and Andre Jackson sort donated food at the Atlanta Community Food Bank while participating in the Thomas-Shockley Summer Youth Academy of Theology.

Dr. Ed Trimmer, a professor at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO) reports that efforts to train pastors with a special emphasis in youth ministry have been improving over the last 10 years. In 1988, The United Methodist Church approved a certification process for youth ministers. Several seminaries throughout the country—MTSO among them—now offer courses toward a Certification in Youth Ministry. Most churches with full-time youth-ministry positions now require the certification. "But we've got more churches wanting youth ministers than we have people trained," says Trimmer. It is not unusual now to find youth ministers of other denominations in youth-ministry positions within The United Methodist Church. Besides United Methodist seminaries, Baptist institutions and independent denominations have been offering minors and majors in youth ministry much longer than most other seminaries have.

MTSO offers several formats and degree programs for youth-ministry certification, including an option to take the two specific youth-ministry courses over three weekends instead of over a 13-

Volunteer workers take a lunch break at La Resurrección/Elton Ave., a Hispanic congregation in the Bronx, New York.

week quarter. This way, students spend less time on campus and more time in their churches but still get the training that they need.

Jeffry Bross, director of youth ministry at Whitefish Bay United Methodist Church in Wisconsin, agrees that access to training would greatly improve the resources within his conference. Bross puts in "quarter time" as the interim director of youth ministry for the Wisconsin Conference during its restructuring. While Bross is a full-time lay pastor with youth at Whitefish Bay UMC, he recognizes that most churches cannot hire staff to guide their youth groups. "By and large, volunteers do the work of this mission," he says. "We're trying to help them better prepare for it." Wisconsin has held round-table discussions for youth workers in eight locations throughout the conference. The workshops allow people within a region to exchange techniques and share resources.

"We have people in our churches who could do this kind of work, but they lack the training and say they don't know where to begin," Bross notes. "Some are afraid to work with youth. Teenagers question everything. They give you all their emotions. Then you have to figure out what to do with them." Bross agrees with Jeff Miller, however, that the church needs stable youth leadership. "Adults have to stay with it more than two or three years," he urges. "You have to form a cohesive group. Growth just doesn't come about if, along with the kids, the leadership is changing all the time. Youth have enough instability in their lives."

Championing Youth Concerns

Angela Gay Kinkead is employed by the National Youth Ministry Organization (NYMO), which is within the General Board of Discipleship. She works with a board of directors made up of people aged 12 to 18. "My boss is generally 17," says Kinkead, "and changes every year." NYMO's board is made up of three youth members and one adult member from each jurisdiction. Youth elected to the board serve two-year terms, and two classes rotate every year. Kinkead has been with NYMO for 12 years, seeing different classes of youth focus on different issues.

The latest classes of directors have focused on spiritual growth "in a way I have not seen before," says Kinkead. "A few years ago, our directors were concerned about hunger at home and abroad. The current class has different concerns. Its members place a lot of emphasis on spiritual formation. In 1992-93 there was concern about at-risk youth. Now, with adolescent violence so much in the news, this concern is surfacing again. But recent classes place the emphasis on the health of the whole family as a way to deter youth's self-destructiveness. An ongoing concern in every class is the place of youth in the church."

Jeffry Bross has 125 active youth in Whitefish Bay's 1400-member congregation. Their number-one concern is—stress. As the teenage years unfold, they bring an overwhelming number of activities into young people's lives. With sports, clubs, school, church, lessons, work, and family concerns, sometimes youth are overburdened. Relationships with friends, family, and significant others are a constant concern. And Bross, like Kinkead, finds that youth's concern about spiritual growth is now a major issue.

"Only 20 percent of parents even pray with their kids at home more than once a week," Bross says. "Youth leaders can do only so much. Parents are it. If the parents are not backing up what the church is trying to do in spiritual formation, we're not going to change the trends. Rebellion runs rampant. Right now we're seeing more kids smoking again. We thought that was on its way out, but now tobacco has become the ideal rebellion drug. Kids know its bad for them."

Older youth are now expressing a concern for the needs of younger, junior-high students. Junior-high youth struggle with physical, hormonal, and emotional changes as they mature. Bross says the best thing to do is try to boost their self-esteem. He concentrates on making the church a fun place for these kids to gather, focusing on their relationships with others, with themselves, and with God. At Whitefish Bay UMC, the senior-high youth work with the junior-high students at all levels of the ministry. This practice has helped both age groups develop.

Youth's Place in the Church

An ongoing theme at NYMO meetings is the place of youth in the church. "Youth are young for only a short time," Kinkead points out. "They need adults to walk with them, to champion their causes and concerns. Youth who are elected to conference, jurisdictional, or general-board positions need help to navigate the political waters. They may have no idea what is expected of them." Some youth resign their posts, feeling utterly ineffective and superfluous to the church process. "But they need to be on our boards," Kinkead continues. "They have an important voice and a different view of the world that we need to hear."

Youth need adults of all ages to be their friends. Laura Ann Garcia of Green Street UMC in Augusta, Maine, gives youth-group coordinator John Ash a dripping wet hug.

Kinkead used the 1998 United Methodist Student Forum as an example of how youth handle controversy in a different way than adults do. News coverage of the May meeting simply reported that the students "rejected a resolution calling for the Student Forum...to declare itself a 'Reconciling Movement' [and] rejected a resolution urging the 2000 General Conference to remove from the denomination's governing *Book of Discipline* all language that excludes gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people from leadership and ministry in The United Methodist Church."

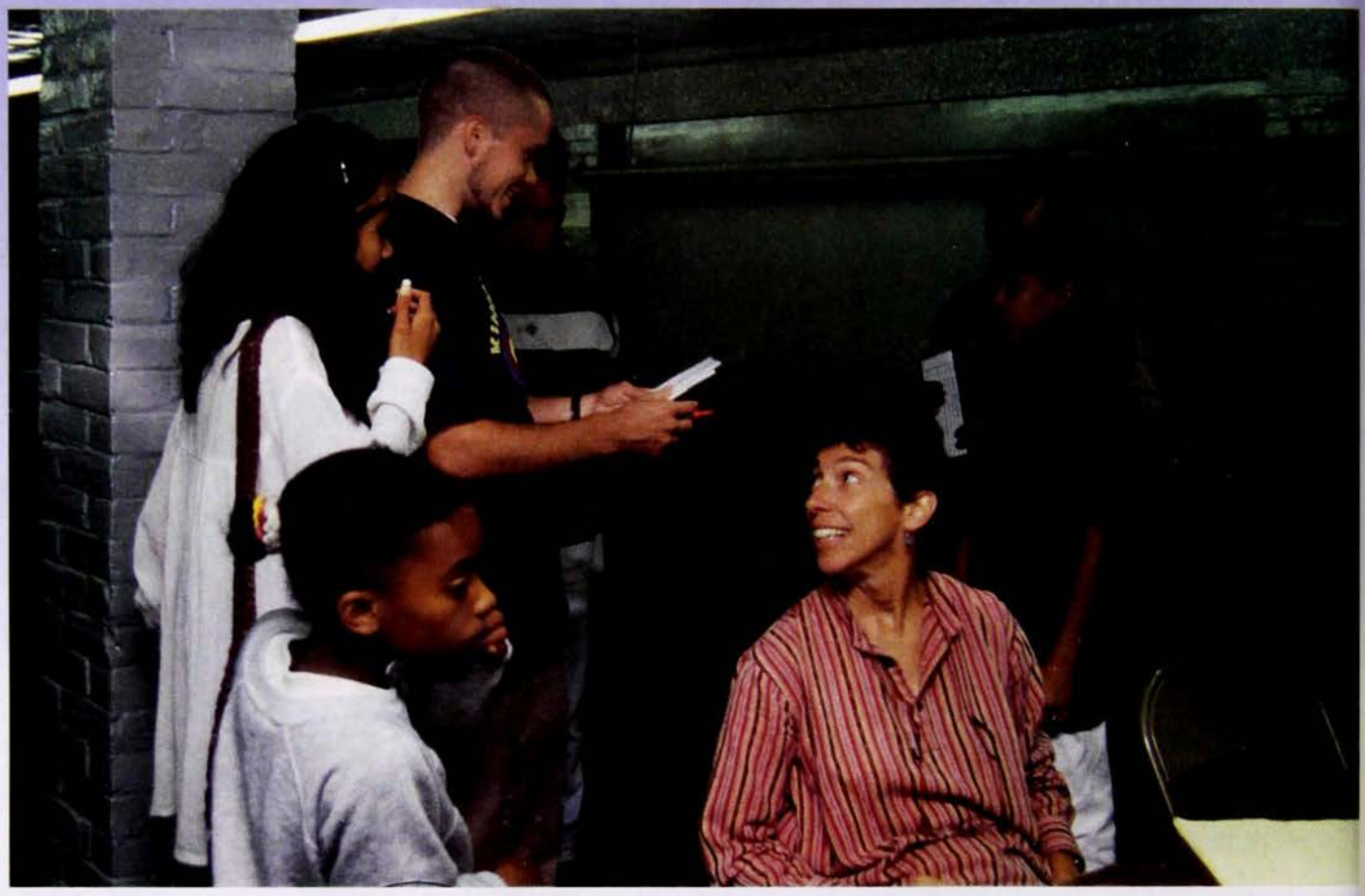
Taylor Walters, president of the United Methodist Student Ministries at American University in Washington, DC, wrote to NYMO to explain the students' actions. "That [news report] does not tell the whole story of Student Forum," Walters pointed out. "We were able to dialogue peacefully about hot topics without the angry, violent conversations I often hear at other United Methodist gatherings. The article stated only that the students rejected the resolutions. True, they were not passed—but in some cases there were significantly more *yes* votes than *no*. In fact, in the resolution to become reconciling, the vote was 150-*yes* to 69-*no*! The undecided votes were what kept the resolutions from passing. Many of the people who were undecided asked that these resolutions be brought up again next year so that they would have time to learn more about all sides of the issues.

"Students from all over the country with viewpoints covering the entire spectrum of United Methodist opinion gathered as a family in Christ. They talked about hot topics, found that they had fundamental disagreements, and yet still parted as good friends. The United Methodist Church has a lot to learn from its college students," Walters concluded.

The church has a lot to learn—and a lot to offer—in ministering full-time with all its youth. ❑

Christie R. House is the associate editor of New World Outlook.

Youth Reaching Youth



Dave Krueger (third from left), director of Shalom House in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, meets with Luana Goodwin and youth from the neighborhood.

"If the job of ministry was just left up to the 'professional ministers' of the world, we would be in a whole lot of trouble," says Dave Krueger, director of Shalom House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "No offense to pastors, but everyone knows that, in order for a church to grow, lay members must play a significant role in church leadership. It is no different in a youth ministry. All the work cannot be done by the adult leaders. With the Mt. Pisgah Youth Group, some kids who came to the Wednesday night Bible study were just unreachable by the adult leaders. Their attitudes were so bad that we had to kick them out. We, as leaders, did not know what else to do."

That's a familiar adult-leader attitude. It is often shared by teachers and Sunday-school directors who find that dealing with disruptive students takes time and energy away from teaching the rest. But Dave Krueger goes on to report (in his "Note from Dave" in the *Shalom Newz*) that he and his colleagues "finally got smart and decided to try something new. We decided to let some of the mature youth lead the Wednesday night program and Bible study. What a difference that made! First of all, our core kids got much more serious about studying the Bible themselves. If they had to teach their friends, they wanted to make sure that they were prepared. Secondly, the kids who were termed 'unreachable' were suddenly ready to sit down and participate—with a good attitude. What a revolutionary concept of evangelism—friends sharing the love of Christ with friends! Sometimes we don't give our young people enough credit. Our teenagers are able to reach youth who might never respond to adult leaders." ❑

Discerning God's Will

In school, teenagers are expected to tackle complex problems of physics and mathematics and to analyze great works of literature and the theater. Some teens also become fluent in a second language. What many youth leaders are discovering is that teens are also capable of deciding what spiritual nurture they need.

In fact, says Callie Jackson of the Nehemiah Youth Mission in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, it is during these teenage years that young people are seeking models with which to identify. They are smart enough to know whether or not what you want to convey to them is something you believe in yourself. "If the truth is not in it," says Jackson, "they will be offended by your attempts at ministry. What you are teaching must have a sense of reality for them."

A team from the Nehemiah Youth Mission provided leadership for the "Ministry With Youth" workshops at the Holy Boldness Convocation in San Francisco last November. The Rev. Daniel Gordy, director of the Nehemiah Youth Mission, and Callie Jackson, a youth minister, led the workshops alongside two of Nehemiah Mission's youth participants from Philadelphia: Mark Campfield and Faith McCloud.

"Youth are actively discerning the will of God for their lives. Are we willing to empower our youth to discern their proper role and ministry in life?" Jackson asked convocation participants. "This may not necessarily be what *we* think they should do, but what they feel *God* wants them to do."

Callie Jackson (left) and Faith McCloud of Nehemiah Youth Mission in Philadelphia.

She pointed to the story in Luke 2 about how Jesus as a youth, traveling with his family to Jerusalem, stayed behind in the temple at Jerusalem without his parents' knowledge. "Jesus knew in his heart what the will of God was for him—even at age 12," she said, "and he followed God's call, though it caused his parents great concern. After three days, when they returned to Jerusalem and found him, they decided that what he had done wasn't safe, that he ought to return home with them. And Jesus returned, obedient to his parents at that time. But he knew that God's will was for him to be in the temple, listening to the teachers. He continued to follow God's will. Verse 52 says that Jesus increased in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favor."

Youth today can also identify with God, follow God's call, and do the kinds of things that Jesus did. "Young people particularly identify with what other people see in them," Jackson concluded. "What we see in them can help them become what God wants them to be." ❑

Are We the Church Together?

by Cheryl A. Hemmerle

"I am the church. You are the church. We are the church together." It sounds nice. It even has a catchy tune. But is it really true?

For one student, Abigale Melroy from Ridgefield, Washington, the answer is "No." Abigale says: "The church is not meeting my needs. I got this big faith kick [in high school] and then I was dropped by the church [when I went to college]."

Because Abigale realizes that her experience is not unique—that other college students also experience alienation from the church—she is not giving up on her crusade to hold the whole church, her local congregation, and others accountable for ministry with young adults. She believes that, if we are the church together, then we must find ways of including and supporting youth after they "graduate" from the youth group.

Kim Martinez and Anna Vigil, 1998 softball team, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico.

College Women's Concerns

Other college and university women have expressed concern that the church is still not welcoming them as leaders in lay and clergy positions. While many of them have had very positive experiences with female clergy and are inspired to pursue a ministerial vocation, others fear that being ordained clergy is not a viable option for them because of their gender, given long-held prejudices against women as pastors. Even when young women hear that The United Methodist Church has the largest number of ordained clergywomen and more female bishops than any other mainline denomination, this does little to reassure them that a ministerial vocation will afford them the same respect, rights, and privileges accorded to male clergy. They are painfully aware that sexism is still a reality in our church despite our official doctrine and polity on the matter.

If we are the church together, then we must remove barriers of participation for young women and we must eliminate sexist attitudes and behaviors.

Active Youth Involvement

College women and men are silent members of the church because their educational aspirations have taken them away for a time from their local congregations. Most of them are left to find some sense of meaning and community among their fellow students and in ministries on or near the campus. Many simply leave the church and do not return until much later in life. As a result, we are not the church together.

If we are to be the church together, then we must move from listening to taking action. Indeed, we have come a long way in our treatment of young people in the church. In past decades, youth could be their natural, exuberant selves only in youth group (if there *was* a youth group). But during worship they were to be seen and not heard—except maybe on the occasional Youth Sunday. Many congregations today are incorporating youth into every aspect of church life—in roles ranging from committee members to liturgists to Sunday-school teachers to part-time employees.

Carrie Beadle, age 16, of Toms River, New Jersey, says: "I love

Young women like these are telling the church that it must welcome them, include them, and work harder to meet their spiritual needs.

everything about our church. It's very welcoming." Most teenage youth will agree that their churches are welcoming and meaningful. What they do not agree about is whether the church sees them as an integral part of the church today. While a teenage woman, for example, may be involved in a variety of activities and opportunities, she often finds herself as one lone youth in a sea of adults.

Tiffanie Fairweather, age 17, of the Bronx, New York, says that if youth are given the opportunity to be a part of the planning and decision making, then they can move from passive representation to active participation in the life of the church. For this to happen, adults must want youth to be present, must accept them for who they are, and must trust them to be responsible team members and leaders. It is young people like Carrie, Tiffanie, Abigale, and their male counterparts whom the church must listen to, talk with, and plan with for the present and for the future.

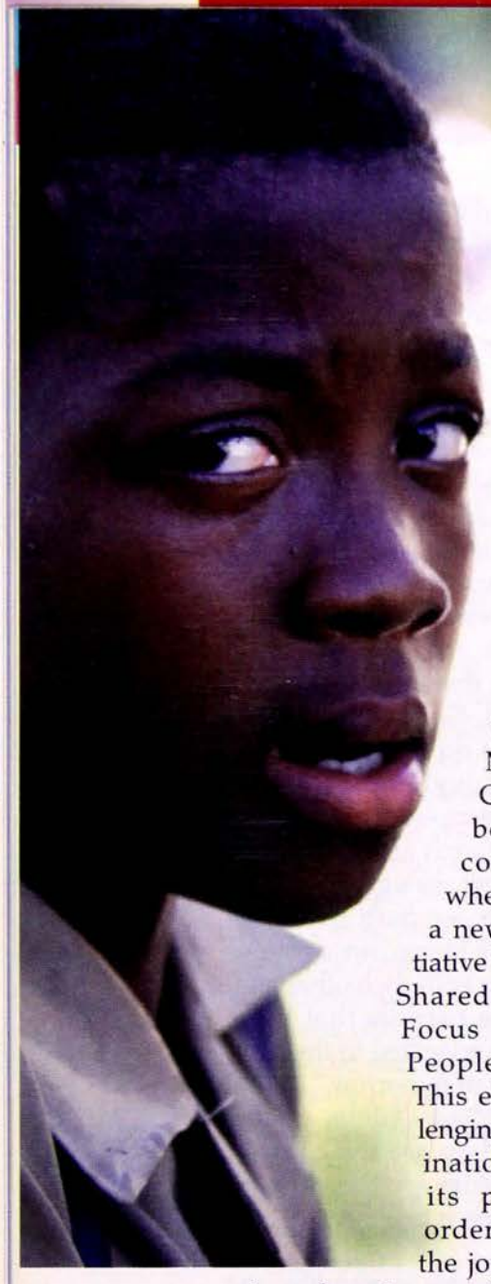
Sarah Hyo Mee Thompson, age 14, of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, is active in her local church. She is a talented young musician who plays the piano, flute, and harp. Sarah affirms that her self-confidence is raised through knowing that adults in the church are willing to be her mentors and role models. She says: "I want my church to keep being what it is now. It's a church of very outgoing and caring people, a church that involves the youth in many activities." Sarah supports the idea of having teen-only groups in church organizations. Such groups would give the youth experience in leadership and decision making while also giving them a strong sense of adult support for their growth toward independence.

Young people have made it clear that they want to be actively involved in the life and mission of the church. Their active participation will not only afford us a bright future but will also provide a vital present-day reality. For many of them, it is fine to talk about God's love and mission, but it is better to turn the talking into action. Just as they are calling themselves to action as ambassadors of God's love, they want "the church" to do the same for them. Can we be the church together?

Whether they are in middle school, junior high, high school, a community college, or an Ivy League university, high school- and college-age youth want to know how older church members will respond to their needs, concerns, and interests. Knowing the societal and cultural pressures of life in this world for young people is not enough. Asking young people what they think, feel, and want is not enough. Giving them token representation on church committees is not enough. Even having youth and young-adult ministries in the local church and on college campuses is not enough. To be the church *together,* we must share our resources, our ideas, our dreams, and our hearts with each other and dismantle the barriers that keep young people relegated to the nebulous "church of tomorrow." Youth are the church *now.* Adults are the church. Children are the church. College students are the church. WE are the church together. ❑

Cheryl A. Hemmerle is executive secretary for teens & college/university women for the Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1501, New York, NY 10115.

Pilar Salazar, Maria Avarado, and Summer Garcia (grand champion)—winners of the 1998 McCurdy High School Science Fair.



Together We Move Mountains:

YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE CHURCH

by Linda Bales

The 1996 General Conference of The United Methodist Church acted boldly and courageously when it adopted a new global initiative known as the Shared Mission Focus on Young People (SMFYP). This effort is challenging the denomination to reorder its priorities in order to focus on the joys and pains of youth and young adults and to enable young people to become full participants in the church's life and work.

As with most mainline denominations, The United Methodist Church (UMC) is experiencing a decrease in membership. At the same time, the critical needs of young people ages 12 to 30 are increasing. In areas where the UMC has member churches—Africa, Europe, the Philippines, and the United States—people under the age of 30 represent from 40 to 70 percent of the population. And yet the UMC itself reports that only 6 percent of its membership falls into the 12-to-30 age range.

"The issues of young persons who live outside the United States are varied," says the Rev. Lillian Smith, co-team-leader of the mission focus. "In some African countries, such as Mozambique and Angola, young people are dealing with poverty and the aftermath of war. There, ex-combatants and victims of war must strive to coexist in peace." In the United States, youth face different hazards, including the highest rate of adolescent drug use of any country in the industrialized Western world (according to *Adolescence*, a 1996 study by Brown and Benchmark).

The 19-member team guiding the global initiative on young people sees itself as an advocacy body working for systemic change in a "graying" institution—the church. This team believes that, to make a real difference, United Methodists will have to work together, with all parts of the denomination asking hard questions about the presence and involvement of young people in the church.

***Top**: A young man from Jamaica. **Above**: Students at the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in Nanjing, China.*

Ask the Hard Questions

How is God calling our congregation/agency/organization to be in ministry with youth and young adults?

How are the voices of young persons being heard in our local church, agency, or organization?

What are the critical issues that face the young people in our communities?

What assets do young people in our communities have to share with our church/agency/organization?

What resources do we have or need as a congregation/agency/organization to do effective ministry with young people?

How long has it been since we've had an in-depth conversation with someone under the age of 30?

The mission-focus team has allocated approximately $1.7 million to local churches and annual conferences in the United States, Europe, Africa, and the Philippines to implement 27 dynamic, cutting-edge ministries with young people. Three examples of such ministries follow.

Look Up and Live

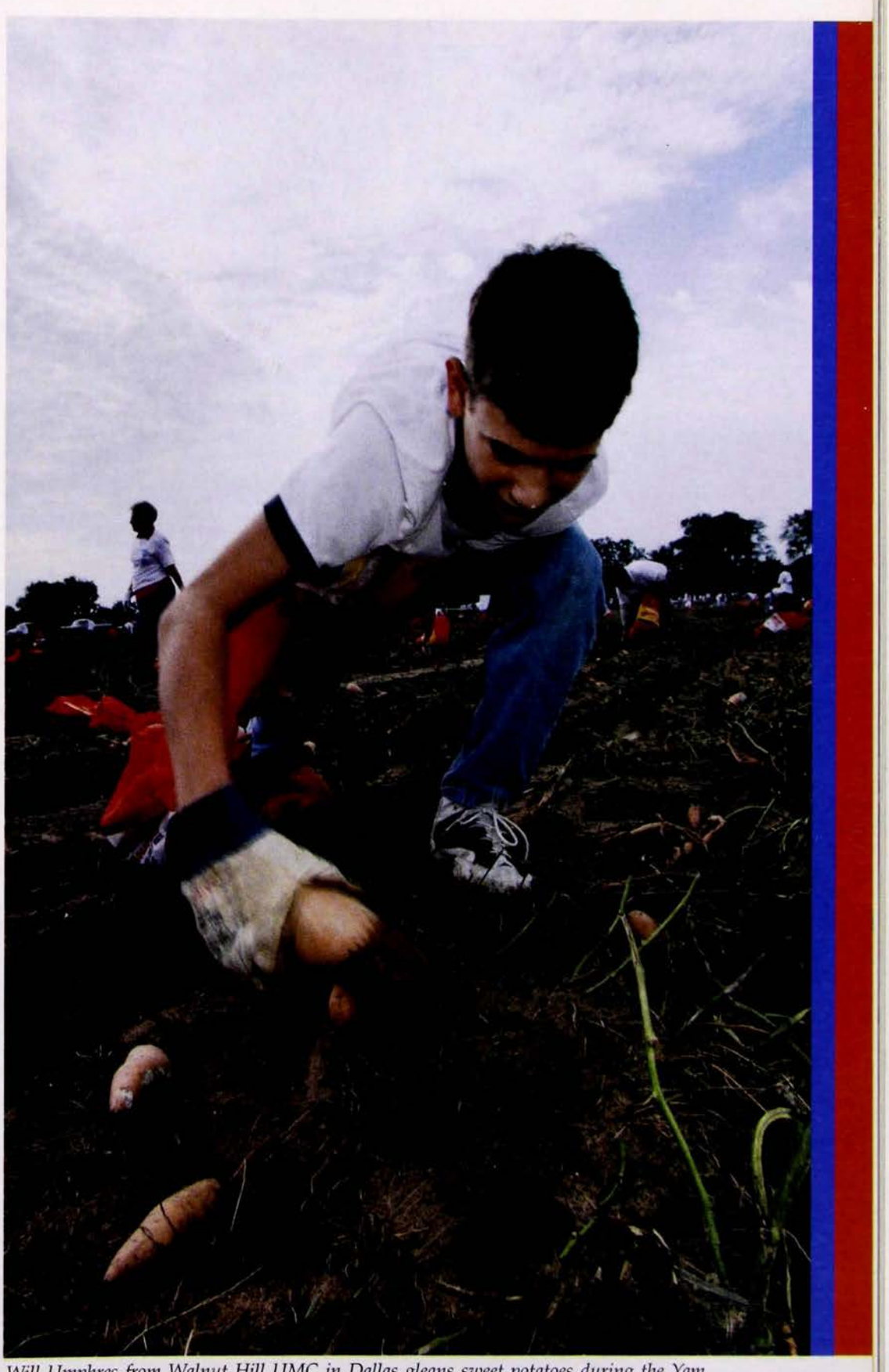
Look Up and Live invites youth, college students, and young adults into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ through a multifaceted program. This ministry is sponsored by the New Life Community United Methodist Church—a new congregation located in a shopping plaza on the north side of Jacksonville, Florida. The vision of this church is to reach out especially to the baby-buster generation (born after the baby boomers) and to the unchurched. Forty percent of the church's members are under 18 years of age.

One of the components of the *Look Up and Live* project is called *Out of Egypt*. This is a ministry serving youth 14 to 18 years of age who are seeking support academically and spiritually. A local school is assisting with the implementation of a mentoring program. This program provides training for adult mentors to work with youth on academic subjects.

Using media arts, the New Life Community UMC plans to sponsor Christian nightclubs for college students, a talk show for radio (and possibly television), and other kinds of media productions. According to Tracy Collins, director of *Look Up and Live:* "The response in terms of people's willingness to help with the first phase of our plan has been nothing short of miraculous. We are seeing people and Christian organizations rally around our cause." The ministry has formed a board of directors that is also charged with the task of fundraising and that is responsible for sharing information with the wider community.

A Vietnamese Fellowship

The Vietnamese United Methodist Youth Fellowship Initiative is a creative partnership being operated for, with, and by young people. The



Will Umphres from Walnut Hill UMC in Dallas gleans sweet potatoes during the Yam Jam in Yantis, Texas, sponsored by the Society of St. Andrew. The food was distributed to the poor by more than 50 agencies throughout North Texas.

Look Up and Live, a project of the New Life Community UMC in Jacksonville, FL, invites youth, college students, and young adults into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. A mentoring program at Pinecrest Middle School (top) is part of this ministry.

network formed by the fellowship links 15 young-adult groups across the United States. According to the network's national youth director, the Rev. Duy Thanh Pham: "Vietnamese young people who have lived in the United States a relatively short time may not know how to go about improving their lives in their new country. They feel lost. A language barrier is just one of the constraints holding them back." On the other hand, "young Vietnamese people who were born in the United States or who grew up here may be oriented to the American culture, but often they find themselves at odds with their Vietnamese community."

This pilot project is providing listening and mentoring experiences, leadership training, worship enhancement, global interchanges, evangelism, and mission to Vietnamese young people throughout the United States. Quarterly meetings among young people will occur regionally to provide opportunities to share concerns and to dispel feelings of isolation. Another goal of the youth fellowship is to equip approximately 150 youth yearly for leadership opportunities.

Currently, the mission-focus team is organizing a short-term mission project for Philadelphia, where six to eight Vietnamese young people will be working to start a new Vietnamese United Methodist ministry. And a summer camp with the theme "You Can Move Mountains" was held in August in San Jose, California. There, young people experienced the power of prayer as well as the concept of "Possibility Thinking!"

Empowerment in Sierra Leone

The United Methodist Vocation Institute is a new project that will serve young people ages 12 to 30 in the Sierra Leone Annual Conference. The goal of this effort is to empower young people to reshape their destiny, to acquire basic skills, to aspire toward more creative accomplishments, and to avail themselves of opportunities for self-sufficiency.

"The funds [from the SMFYP] are coming at one of the most crucial moments," says the Rev. John Yambasu, director of youth and young adult ministries for the Sierra Leone Annual Conference. "The church is wrestling with the task of providing a practical and empathetic ministry to the thousands of young people marred by the six-year war [in Sierra Leone and by] nine months of exploitation by the most destructive, repressive, and oppressive military government this nation has ever had."

Approximately 100 young people will be involved with this initiative, which is designed to address the root causes of distress in the country. The primary skills to be taught are African Gara tie-dyeing, tailoring, carpentry, and welding. The mission-focus team is searching for a project director and instructors.

The project itself will be located in Bo, the headquarters of Sierra Leone's Southern Province. This town was a place of refuge for thousands fleeing from the country's rampage of violence. The large influx of people increased the population of the town from about 400,000 to 700,000. Many of the displaced young people may never again have the opportunity of continuing in school.

Moving Beyond Boundaries

Each of the 27 projects chosen for funding by the Shared Mission

Focus on Young People demonstrates a commitment to moving beyond the four walls of the church or the boundaries of the annual conference into the wider community. These creative projects are changing the future for youth and young adults—as well as entire congregations—in positive and life-giving ways. ❑

Linda Bales, director of the Shared Mission Focus on Young People (SMFYP), is based at the General Council on Ministries in Dayton, Ohio. The SMFYP is supported by the Missional Initiatives/Focus 2000 Fund and is Priority Advance Special #194790-2.

***Top:** Students at Lodja Secondary School, Lodja, Democratic Republic of Congo. **Below:** Students from Hartzell School worship during a United Methodist Youth Fellowship at Old Mutare Mission, Zimbabwe.*

Resourcing Youth Leaders

by Steven Games

Helping youth leaders reach, support, and activate young Christians is a challenge that demands the best efforts of the church. The United Methodist Publishing House works in partnership with youth leaders throughout the church to produce the resources that will help them minister to teens and develop disciples.

The Publishing House conducts formal and informal research continuously to ensure that we are producing learning materials that will undergird ministries in a wide variety of settings. These materials include not only curriculum resources, books, and music but also computer-oriented tools.

Youth leaders repeatedly tell us to focus on relevance. Many ask how specific learning experiences can be more closely tied to the real-life experiences of their group. Resources must also provide step-by-step directions that move toward a stated purpose. Leaders no longer have adequate time for lesson preparation, nor can we assume that all adults can clearly articulate the spiritual outcomes that learning experiences are designed to produce.

Youth resources are selling better today than at any other time during the last decade.

"Help me involve our youth in things that matter to them" is a recurring request. Our youth resources incorporate images and learnings from television, movies, computers, and current events. Connecting daily-life experience with the Scriptures and our faith is challenging and rewarding. This is especially true during a Sunday-school session or weekend retreat.

People who purchase youth ministry resources tell us they're looking for the following things:

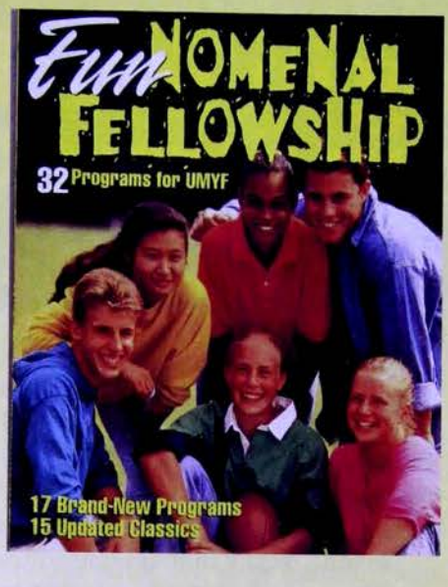
- Meat-and-potatoes resources that deliver solid biblical teachings, connecting these teachings to contemporary issues faced by youth.
- Ministry tools for youth that also minister to the spiritual needs of adults in youth ministry. There's an epidemic of burned-out, discouraged, confused adults who are striving to be mentors for youth. If they are to minister to others effectively, they need some spiritual nourishment for themselves.

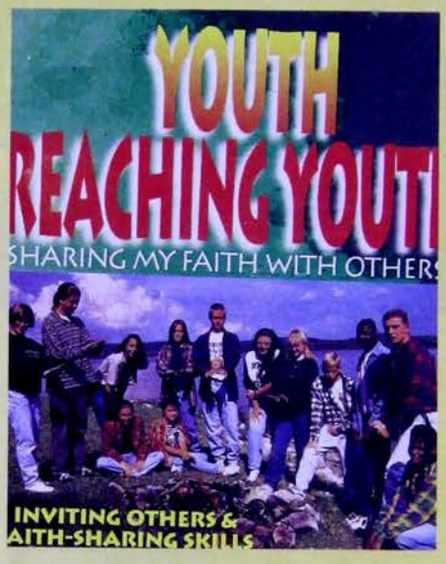
•Easy-to-prepare resources that are relevant to today's dilemmas, placing problems in the distinctive context of the Christian faith. Such resources stress our call to be advocates for understanding, forgiveness, and responsible decision making.

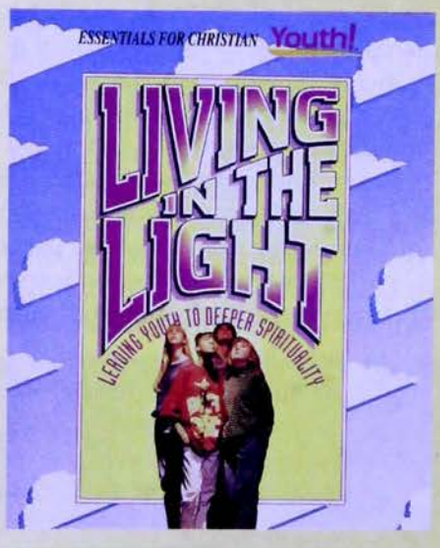
Our curriculum and book sales reflect the needs of our customers. *Reel to Real* is a quarterly resource connecting current movies with the life issues of youth. It continues to be a strong new entry in the youth-resources market. Lots of tips are given for using movies on videotape to build learning experiences during youth programs and retreats.

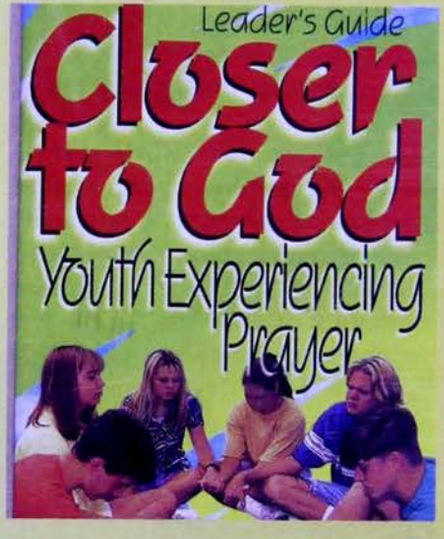
Sunday-morning resources—such as *Connect* and *Questions Senior Highs Ask*—also seek to confront tough questions with faithful responses. In each case, youth have been asked to contribute their concerns, questions, and interests. Then learning sessions are designed based on their input. The newest resource for Sunday morning is *LinC* (Living in Christ"). It is faxed or E-mailed to leaders on Wednesday evening for use the following Sunday. Topics are researched, sessions designed, and the resource developed all within two weeks. So timeliness of topics and information are special features of this high-tech resource.

There continues to be significant interest in youth resources that help teens develop and express their spirituality. Two seasonal resources written by youth ministers—*Destination Christmas* and *Destination Easter*—provide faith practices that youth can employ daily to discover the spiritual significance of these seasons for their lives. *Closer to God* includes a student prayer journal and many opportunities for young people to explore the dimensions of prayer in their daily lives.









Sales of resources from the United Methodist Publishing House have demonstrated a positive growth trend, especially during the past three years. Gains tend to be seen in program books and resources with specific ideas for such activities as fundraising, retreats, and adventure learning. Curriculum resources are holding their own as a result of significant design and style innovation during the past two years. Spurred by a competitive marketplace, youth resources are selling better today than at any other time during the last decade.

Youth leaders are continually looking for resources to get youth involved, stimulate discussion, and promote spiritual growth. Through listening, research, discernment, and evaluation, the United Methodist Publishing House continues its commitment to create and deliver timely, relevant resources designed for use in ministry with youth. ❑

Steven Games, now pastor of First United Methodist Church in Fortville, Indiana, was recently Senior Editor for Youth Resources at the United Methodist Publishing House.

Keeping in Touch With Dominican Street Children

by Raymond K. DeHainaut

Delaine DeHainaut

A letter that my wife, Delaine, and I received from the Dominican Republic reminded her of an incident that took place there in the early 1990s. She had started a special ministry to the street children of Barahona—one of whom was Eddie Beltré. Though twice the usual age for first or second grade, Eddie had eagerly accepted the ministry's offer to help him go to school. He had advanced two grades in his first year.

Delaine recalls that, on one sultry Barahona afternoon, Eddie accompanied her on a trip to the market to purchase food. Suddenly, as he was skipping along the street in front of her, he pointed to a sign and shouted: "Oficina de Abogado" (lawyer's office). Quickly he pointed to another sign and exclaimed: "Farmacia" (drug store). Then he turned to Delaine and gleefully boasted: "I can read! I can read!"

Today, Eddie can both read and write. Now that we are retired and living in Florida, we receive letters from him and from Josie Encarnación, another young man who was part of Delaine's ministry to street children. Their letters are full of news. Some approach poetry as the youths employ their writing skills to express their religious beliefs and views on life.

Ray DeHainaut watches children blow bubbles at the group birthday party given by Delaine DeHainaut for all 30 Barahona street children that her ministry reached.

First Encounters

Barahona is a Dominican seaport with around 100,000 inhabitants. Its docks dispatch tons of cane sugar to other countries each year. Most of the workers who cut the sugar cane in the hot sun come from Haiti, which is only 30 miles away. Dominicans usually try to avoid this low-paying employment with its extremely uncomfortable working conditions.

Our first encounter with some of Barahona's street children came on the same day we moved into the parsonage next to the church on the town's main street. The truck that was to deliver us and our belongings to Barahona the day before had broken down during the four-hour trip from Santo Domingo. As a result, we found ourselves trying to move into the parsonage at 2:00 AM—in pitch darkness since the town's electrical generator was regularly turned off at midnight.

Somehow, we were able to get some beds set up with flashlights. But we had scarcely fallen asleep when we were suddenly awakened again around 7:30 AM by students of the church's parochial school. They were knocking on the door asking for a drink of water. We thought that this was just an excuse for them to get a look at the new American occupants of the parsonage. Later, we learned that, because of a water shortage, each day at 7:00 AM the city waterworks would divert all the water to the sugar-processing plant. We had been told to store water in large containers before our supply was turned off.

Later, on that first morning, a few ragged street children knocked at our door with the magic words: "Un poco de agua, por favor" ("A little water, please"). At first, we didn't know what to think of these barefoot, unkempt kids carrying homemade shoeshine boxes to place before the tourists or cans of roasted peanuts to sell on the street. That same afternoon, someone broke into our parsonage while we were shopping in the marketplace. The radio we had borrowed and two other small items were missing. Some church members said this might be the work of our street-child visitors, who could have looked into our house while we were getting them water. Yet, though few church members lived much above the poverty level, themselves, they had not yet thought about developing a ministry to serve the poorest of Barahona's children.

We never accused any of the children of the break-in and they continued to drop by from time to time asking for water. Hearing that our house was robbed, some of the older children told us that they would keep an eye on our parsonage from the main street. Our home was never broken into again.

A Growing Ministry

After Delaine got to know several of the street children by name—Kerbin, Dignora, Lenni, Yiovani—she couldn't help noticing that they were undernourished and offered them something to eat. She served some of them breakfast and others lunch. Within a few months, 20 to 30 hungry, unschooled street children began to show up at noontime in our backyard for a Dominican-style lunch of rice, chicken, and fruit.

When the children first started coming to us for lunch seven years ago, Delaine asked why none of them had ever gone to school. "They won't let us go to school barefoot and without proper clothes," the children answered. Delaine then decided to go home with some of them and talk to their mothers.

Yiovani, newly equipped for school.

Most of the street children come from single-parent families—some including as many as 11 children. Some live in palm-roofed shanties huddled together on the outskirts of town. Others sleep in multifamily longhouses, or *barrancones*, located between open sewers and dirt streets that are crisscrossed with myriads of wires resembling spider webs. These wires are precariously—and illegally—strung from the *barrancones* to nearby high-tension wires. When we lived in Barahona, it was not uncommon for several children and youth to be electrocuted each year while attempting to reconnect the wires each time the power company tore them down.

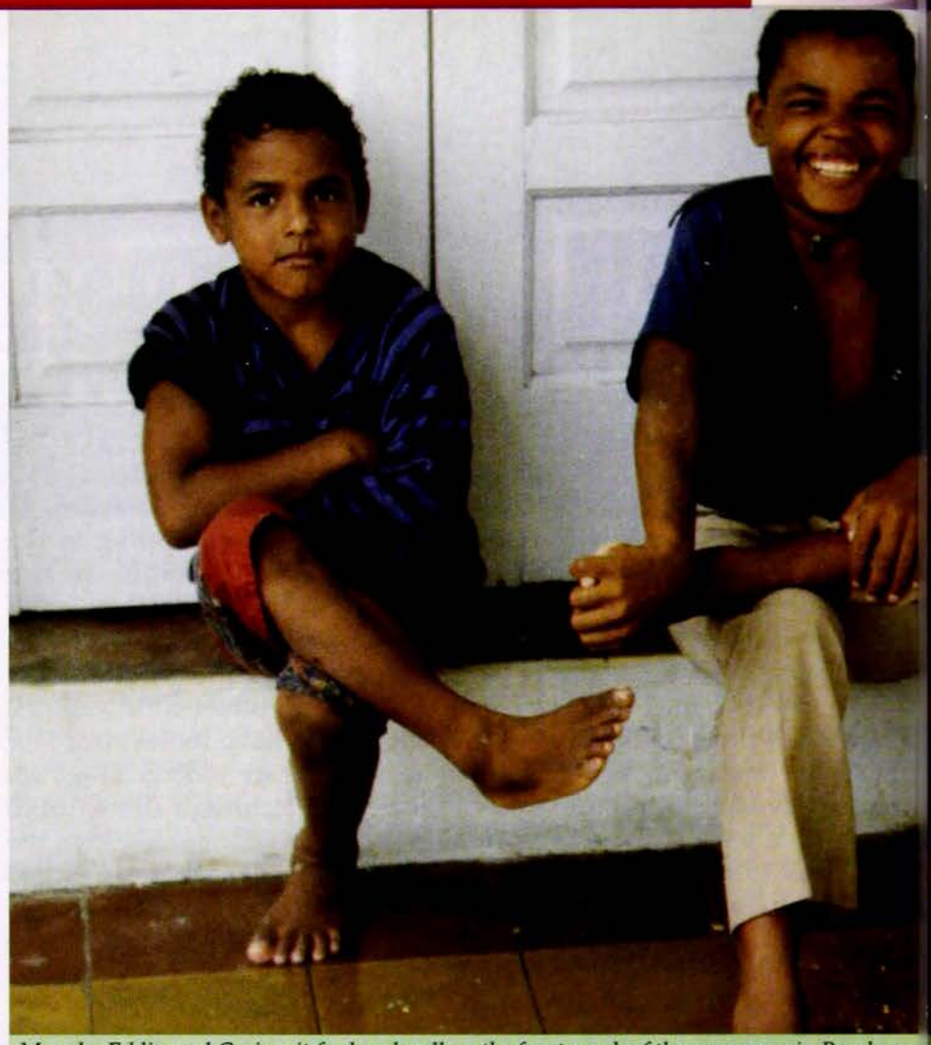
On her visits to the mothers seven years ago, Delaine asked them how they would feel about the children's going to school if she could get them the necessary shoes and clothing. Many mothers were not pleased at the prospect of their children's spending half a day in school instead of a whole day begging, shining shoes, or selling peanuts in the street to support the family. Some children told us that they were severely beaten if they

came home at night with any unsold bags of peanuts. They sold some of their peanuts to the men who hung out by the docks drinking beer and were sometimes molested sexually in the process.

Once a child named Geri came with the group for lunch. We noticed that he had a deep cut across his face. The other children told us that his mother had hit him across the face with a piece of barbed wire because he came home without his day's earnings—which, he said, were taken away from him by some older street children who were bullies.

Since the mothers were concerned about a lack of income from the children, Delaine promised them that she would feed their children a nutritious meal every day if they would let the children go to school. The mothers finally agreed to these conditions. Then Delaine discovered that the schools required each child to present a birth certificate—something none of them had. In order to get the birth certificates, she had to go to the courthouse with each mother or with another relative who could verify the child's date of birth. To get the necessary shoes and clothing for the children, she appealed to a team of Volunteers in Mission (VIM) who were scheduled to come down and help our church members with repairs on the church and parsonage. She asked them to bring along extra suitcases loaded with the items of clothing the children needed.

Our 30 street children ranged in age from three to twelve. Now that they had nourishing meals, clothing, and birth certificates, the ministry provided those of school age with scholarships for school tuition. They would go to school in the morning, sell their wares on the street in the afternoon, and go home at night to join their families.

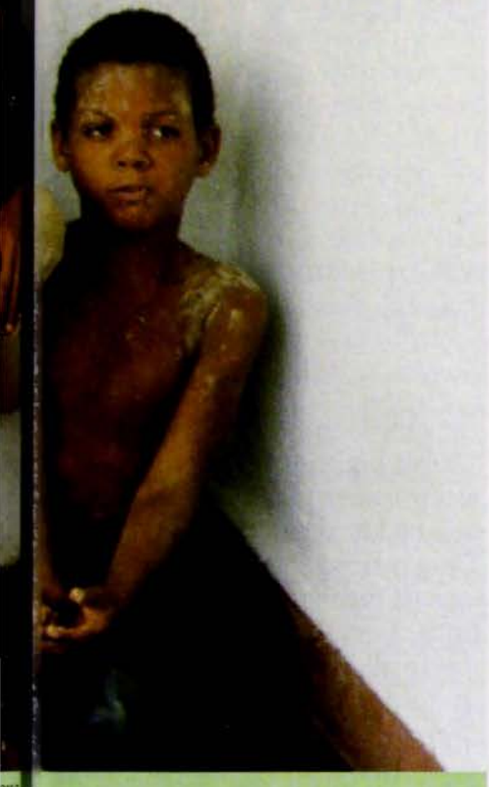


Manolo, Eddie, and Geri wait for lunch call on the front porch of the parsonage in Barahona.

When the children came to the parsonage for lunch each day, Delaine always had a basin of water and soap waiting for them. They enjoyed the ritual of washing up, as most of them had no bathing facilities at home. One day, when two or three of the children were near their birthdays—according to their new birth certificates—Delaine asked them if they wanted to have a birthday party. They said that they had never heard of a birthday party, so she decided to plan one party celebrating everyone's birthday. "When we have the party, everyone will get a present," announced Delaine. She then asked: "What kind of present would each of you like?" Suddenly, we realized that this was a risky question to ask these streetwise children. "Oh boy, " I thought, "what if they each want something big and expensive—like a bicycle?"

The kids soon got together and discussed possible presents among themselves. Then they came back with their request. "We decided that what each one of us wants is our own bar of soap," they said. They had learned to enjoy washing up before meals and realized that they needed soap at home to keep their school clothes clean. Most of them took their clothes down to the community water spigot or to the beach to wash them.

Some of the physicians and medical students coming to Barahona with Volunteer-in-Mission teams were very helpful in attending to the children's medical needs. For example, a medical student from the University of North Carolina was present when Josie got a big splinter in his foot and was able to



extract it without causing too much pain. And a volunteer doctor from Florida brought us a good supply of expensive tapeworm medicine for the children. Visiting volunteers also provided us with a water-storage tank and made various medical services available to the local people.

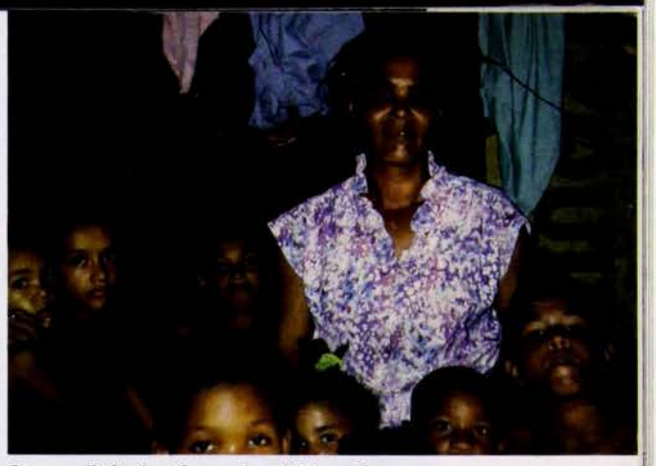
The Connection Continues

Since our retirement, Delaine has made four trips back to Barahona—one each year—with three interested volunteers from Florida and North Carolina. They have traveled loaded down with suitcases and footlockers full of shoes and clothing for the children. Some of these volunteers have also represented churches in the United States that provided funding for the building of three churches in the Barahona area. They have been working hand in hand with the Rev. Pedro Kery Johnson, present pastor of the Barahona Dominican Evangelical Church where I once served. He has planned and coordinated the building of churches and the repair of parsonages. The Dominican Evangelical Church is a united church representing Moravians, Presbyterians, and United Methodists.

For the past four years, a Dominican family has taken over Delaine's former task of preparing nutritional lunches for the children. Interested supporters have provided the funds used to purchase the food. Narobi Garó, a young woman in her late teens, has been planning the meals and her mother does the cooking. They have received no pay for all this work, but the seven children in their family have been eating with the street children.

As the 30 original children grow older, the feeding program is being phased out. Those still in school get a daily snack there. However, the program to provide the children with shoes, clothing, and scholarships to attend three different schools is being continued. Señor Antonio Novas and his wife Sigris, who are members of the local church, have taken over the responsibility of distributing the clothing that arrives by mail. They also manage the scholarship funds that Christian friends and church groups donate, helping the ministry keep the kids in school until they graduate.

Now that Eddie and Josie are in their late teens and are about to leave the nutritional and educational program, they have dreams of someday being able to purchase or rent a motorbike so they can earn three pesos (16 cents) per trip taxiing their customers to various parts of town. Finding employment in Barahona is difficult, as



Cuevas Beltré at home in 1994 with some of her 10 children.

the unemployment rate is over 60 percent. But now that they are able to read and write, Eddie and Josie and some of the older children might be able to get a job in one of the 10 tourist hotels now being built on the Barahona beaches. Some of the children have already moved to Santo Domingo where there are more employment opportunities for them.

The 30 street children that Delaine's ministry reached were hungry for food, for knowledge, for attention, and for hope. We continue to give thanks for all those who have made Christ's love evident to these children by opening up their world and helping to transform their lives . ❑

Raymond K. DeHainaut is a retired United Methodist missionary now living in Florida. He and his wife Delaine have served in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Argentina. Ray has also helped train Volunteers in Mission on cross-cultural adaptation and has served as a Peace-With-Justice educator.

A gift of $10-$50 will help provide Christmas food or clothing for the Dominican street children in this article. Scholarships cost $150 per semester, or $300 for a full year. Contributions for tax credit, made payable to Temple Terrace UMC Program for Dominican Children, may be sent to Temple Terrace United Methodist Church, 5030 E. Busch Blvd, Tampa, FL 33617.

Adventures of a Missionary Kid in Africa

by Emily Gipe

The July-August 1995 issue of *New World Outlook* featured an article by 9-year-old Emily Gipe, "My Feelings About Becoming a Missionary." At our request, Emily has given us an update on her experiences as a preteen in mission.

Hello. My name is Emily Gipe. I'll be 12 and starting seventh grade when you read this.

My family is a missionary family that served in the former Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. Right now, we're living in Englewood, New Jersey, while my parents are Missionaries in Residence at the General Board of Global Ministries in New York. We attend a small United Methodist Church where I serve as an acolyte and take part in youth fellowship.

In 1995, after our family was commissioned, we moved to a village in France, where we lived at a language school. We had to learn French because it was Zaire's official language. I didn't really use my French book much. Instead, I learned by what people were saying and then showing me. For three out of nine months, I was confused; after that, the rest was easy. I think French is easier than Spanish—maybe because learning it was necessary, not an option. I like the way it sounds, too. My baby sister, Mary Elizabeth (Meg) was born while we lived in France.

When we got to Africa, my parents' job was to work as teachers in TESOL (The English-speaking School Of Lubumbashi). My twin brothers, Andrew and William, and I were students there. I had to get used to calling Mom and Dad "Mr. and Mrs. Gipe."

In Lubumbashi, we lived in a nice, large missionary house. It had cement floors and walls that were 12 feet high. At night, you had to sleep under a mosquito net, and you had to get used to tucking it in. Once, when I slept with my arm up against the net, I got four mosquito bites. Luckily, they weren't from the small, dangerous kind of mosquitoes that come out during the darkest part of the night.

Emily Gipe (center) with her twin brothers, William and Andrew.

We had our own orchard in our backyard. We had lemon trees and made lemonade almost every day. During the avocado season, there would be avocados dropping from our tree. One day my mom filled up a big box with avocados and set it outside our gate to let people pick them up. We also had a rubber tree in our front yard and there was a hanging vine that the boys would swing on. There were flower boxes on the outside of our house with aloe plants in them. If you got hurt outside, you didn't have to go inside to get calamine lotion or disinfectant. You could just break off a little piece of aloe and put it on and you'd feel better.

The main Methodist church in Lubumbashi was right across the street from our house. We went there the first Sunday morning after we arrived. The service was in Swahili, and we didn't understand what the people were saying. But they knew we were there. They called us by name and welcomed us. The English-speaking church

had a service at 4:00 in the afternoon. When we would go there, we got to see all our English-speaking friends. In Africa, they have the French style of eating, with a small breakfast, a large lunch, and a small dinner. So after church, we would have popcorn and soda for supper and watch a movie. That was nice. In Lubumbashi, I had American friends, New Zealand friends, Zambian friends, Indian friends, Belgian friends, a Lebanese friend, and, of course, Zairean friends—our babysitter, our housekeeper, teachers at the school, the pastor and her children.

Our housekeeper and cook, Justine, was very, very tall. She was taller than my dad. She would scrub the floors every day and she ironed everything. There was a putsi fly there that will lay its eggs in your clothes because of the moist atmosphere. If you don't iron your clothes before wearing them, the eggs will embed themselves in your skin and form boils.You have to pop out the tiny white eggs very carefully. If an egg breaks, the cycle starts all over again.

The dry season began in April, May, and June. In early morning, it would be close to freezing. You'd have to have a lot of blankets since the house didn't have any heat.

Emily takes her baby sister Meg for a slide.

Emily (center) takes part in a tug-of-war game at The English-speaking School Of Lubumbashi (TESOL).

The weather would start getting warmer around October and the rainy season began around November. That was the worst time for mosquitoes, ants, and termites. You'd be driving down the road and see a big, lumpy termite mound 10 feet tall. One night we came out of church and there were millions of termites everywhere. Another day, the boys went out to play in the grass and there were fire ants all over the place.

We would get mail only once a month, and sometimes there were only bills or business letters. But one church had eight women's circles and we got one card from each of them: Circle 4, Circle 3, Circle 5. They'd just say: "Hi. Hope you're feeling good. How are you?" So we wouldn't feel like we were being forgotten—we'd know they knew we were there. And that was nice.

When Zaire's president Mubutu was in Switzerland being treated for cancer, the military started putting up roadblocks. Once Mom was on her way to school and a soldier stopped her and asked for her papers. She had everything except her driver's license. So she said: "My husband is just down the road. Can I go get the license from him?" She left her other papers with the soldier and went to get her driver's license. The man might have taken her papers and left with them, but he stayed there and waited for her to come back. That shows that God is always there watching you, and He can help if you're in a bad situation.

The civil war in Zaire caused us to evacuate to northern Zambia, where we stayed in a mission guest house. One night, my mother was accidently injured so we had to return to the United States for her to have knee surgery.

I was happy because I was going to see my family but sad to leave friends that I might never see again. Home is so many places. But of all the places I've been, I would pick Africa as my home. After living there, I know what it's like to actually be accepted for what you are. In Africa, people are less judgmental. They don't care what you wear, they don't care how you talk, they don't care how you look—as long as you're nice to them. It bothers me that people here think that you have to be a certain way to be their friend. So I just like it in Africa better and hope I'll be able to return someday. God loves me and goes with me wherever I am. ❑

Emily Gipe, daughter of Beth and Douglas Gipe, loves art, music, math, language arts, swimming—and getting letters. Her address is: Emily A. Gipe, 334 Tenafly Road, Englewood, NJ 07631-1790.

MISSION MEMO

Stocking for Hurricane Season
September is hurricane season. The UMCOR Depot at Sager Brown in Baldwin, Louisiana, is collecting and stocking material goods year-round in order to be ready for hurricanes and other emergencies when they strike. To order the brochure "Material Resources: Another Way to Give," call the Service Center (1-800-305-9857, requesting item #5319). The depot stocks kitchen, bedding, and food-staple packs; health, school, sewing, and homecoming kits; and layettes. Instructions for gathering materials and packing the kits are included in the brochure, along with information about needed cleaning supplies, construction materials, personal items, linens, baby items, bottled water, food, and clothing. Call the UMCOR Depot for instructions at 1-800-814-8765 BEFORE collecting or shipping supplies. You may also make monetary donations to UMCOR's Domestic Disaster Response, Advance #901670-1.

North Korea Famine Update
Erich Weingartner, a liaison officer of the World Food Programme in Pyongyang, North Korea, visited the offices of the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC) in New York recently while on a month-long leave. Weingartner was nominated to his post by Church World Service. "When I arrived in North Korea last June," notes Weingartner, "I saw some of the worst cases of malnutrition I have seen anywhere in the world. In many nurseries and kindergartens, I saw rows of emaciated children lying still, and they looked like they wouldn't survive." Many children did die. But the World Food Programme, a UN agency, has been making a concentrated effort to feed children up to age six. As a result, Weingartner says, "we are not seeing the same extent of malnutrition this year. Now when we visit a kindergarten, we may be told: 'We don't have malnutrition anymore.' But they may say: 'We have 10 weak children.'"

Diarrhea among children is a common problem because of the breakdown of North Korea's water purification system and the severe shortage of medicines and medical supplies. The World Food Programme, while continuing its priority assistance to preschoolers, has initiated a school-snack project that will provide older children a daily, high-energy snack. The European Community is targeting its 86,000 metric tons in food aid this year to school-aged children. Last year's rice and corn harvest in North Korea fell 1.8 million metric tons short of the 6 to 7 million tons needed. The World Food Programme has appealed for 658,000 metric tons in food aid, but only about 300,000 tons have been pledged by the international community. United Methodist help is still needed for North Korea Emergency, Advance #226435-0.

Celebrating The Advance
The 50th Anniversary of The Advance for Christ and His Church was celebrated by a number of annual conferences in 1998. Central Pennsylvania Conference established an endowment fund in honor of Howard and Elizabeth Brinton to recognize "those individuals and congregations that carry the spirit of the Brintons into mission." Howard Brinton, former director of The Advance, died last spring. Annual conference giving to The Advance totaled about $25 million in both 1996 and 1997. The West Michigan Conference led the 1997 giving with a contribution of $1.62 million—an average of $19.29 per member. North Indiana was second with $8.58 per member and the Dakotas third with $7.61. The denominational average is $2.97 per member. Over the past half century, The Advance has raised more than $700 million for mission.

Dirdak Heads Health and Relief
The Rev. Paul Dirdak, a pastor from the California/Nevada Annual Conference, has been elected a deputy general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) and assigned to lead the Health and Relief Unit, which includes the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Health and Welfare, and Mission Volunteers. Dirdak served as a GBGM director from 1988 to 1996 and was president of the former National Division. During those same years he pastored Trinity Parish in San Francisco and oversaw the development of the AIDS/HIV Life Center, a project that will replace the existing church building with a $7 million facility housing both the church and a wide spectrum of AIDS service agencies. Dirdak is also a director of the General Council on Ministries and was the lead clergy delegate from the California/Nevada Conference to the 1996 General Conference.

DEATHS Ida Bilger Landrum, retired missionary with 19 years of US service, died May 18, 1998...**Helen Wildermath White,** retired missionary who served with the Women's Division 12 years in Zimbabwe, died May 27, 1998...**Isabel DeRuiter**, retired missionary who served 38 years in Zaire, died June 9, 1998. ❑

Every Child Is Our Child

"Whose child is this?" the General Board of Global Ministries asked at the 1997 Global Gathering, and heard the resounding response of "God's child—and all our children." In accordance with scriptural teachings and the mandate of the 1996 General Conference to make children a priority, the Board continues placing children first.

Every Child Is Our Child

The General Board of Global Ministries as mission agency for a global church is actively involved in administering aid, providing resources, networking, advocating and praying for health and wholeness among children. This witness spreads beyond our shores as we work toward improving the quality of life for children around the world.

"Receiving the gif... the impoverished ... a ... through which God... contemporary chu...

In each stage of their development—

Infancy

Adolescence

- Child Advocacy–child abuse prevention, community activism on behalf of children and youth
- Church Outreach Programs–day care, after-school programs, partnerships with public schools, camps, tutoring and mentoring programs, drug and gang prevention
- Community Centers–recreation, child care, parenting support classes, youth intervention
- Health Programs–immunizations, maternal and child health, community clinics, environment
- Hunger and Poverty–welfare reform response, nutrition, shelter, employment support
- Issue Education–resources on abuse, violence, war, substance abuse, gangs, etc.
- Legislation–public advocacy, lobbying, voter registration, letter-writing campaigns
- Media and Values–monitoring television, internet, videos, music
- Mission Education–schools of Christian mission for children and youth, United Methodist Seminars on Public Policy
- Special Initiatives on Children and Youth–Campaign for Children, Children's Sabbath, Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty
- Special Funding–Projects supported through committees on National and International Ministries with Women, Children and Youth

One in every five children in the U.S lives in poverty. Thirty million children in

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Bishops' Initiative on Children
Poverty Foundation Document

Marija Zeko of Bosnia commenting on youth center built by UMCOR:
"In the youth center, I discovered that there are not enemies on the other side of the street, but children just like me, who want to learn."

Every day in America
14 children are killed by firearms
1,403 babies are born to teen mothers
8,470 children are reported abused or neglected

ildhood

Robin Cotton of Rapid City, Michigan:
"The community center taught me everything that is good to know—moral values, respect, how to get along with others..."

Byron Tso, International Voices from 1997 Global Gathering:
"The church has always been there for me as a youth; I want to give back what I received."

Nancy Pereira:
"We must help abandoned and poor children with a call for political participation that seeks to end the unjust system that excludes children born in poverty."

"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs"
Luke 18:16

"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea"
Mark 9:42

are homeless. Every day three children in the U.S. die from child abu

Every Child Is Our Child

General Board of Global Ministries staff who relate to issues concerning children are:

Executive Secretary for Women and Children, Global Networks & Ecumenical Relations
Room 1330, 212-870-3707

Executive Secretary for Children, Youth/Family Advocacy, Women's Division
Room 1502, 212-870-3766

Executive Secretary for Ministries with Women, Children and Families, Community Ministries
Room 1549, 212-870-3833

Executive Secretary for Mission Studies and Resources
Room 1346, 212-870-3788

Photo credit: Richard Lord

RESOURCE LIST

Books:

PUTTING CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES FIRST (#2627; $4.75; 5 or more, $4.27 each) Handbook for congregations to develop a plan for comprehensive children's and family ministries.

SAFE SANCTUARIES: REDUCING THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE IN THE CHURCH (Discipleship Resources; $15.95) Guidelines, model policies, forms and other resources to help congregations protect children in their facilities and activities. To order, call 800-685-4370.

WELCOME THE CHILD: A CHILD ADVOCACY GUIDE FOR CHURCHES (#1895; $9.95) Description of how the church and community can organize on specific children's issues. Includes worship resources.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN JEOPARDY (Eng. #1229; Span. #1285; $3.50) Analysis of concerns related to children and youth: suicide, pregnancy, drug, alcohol/tobacco abuse and the criminal justice system. Revised 1990.

MINISTRIES WITH WOMEN AND MINISTRIES WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH: A GIFT FOR THE WHOLE CHURCH (Eng. #1892; Span. #1893; Kor. #2580; 30¢) A policy statement of the Women's Division that reviews the position of women, children and youth in our society to discern our ongoing mission.

BREAKING WALLS/BUILDING BRIDGES (#2646; $3) Stories of community and institutional projects and programs related to the GBGM.

GREAT MISSION IDEAS FOR WORKERS WITH CHILDREN (#4293; $3) Material for mission minute talks, bulletins, and mission programs, with promotion and publicity suggestions.

CHILDREN'S FUND STORYBOOK (#2518; $3.50) Stories about children's lives and how the Children's Fund improves them.

ABCs (ADVANCE BOOK OF CHILDREN'S PROJECTS) (#5173; free) A list of more than 100 Advance ministries with children and youth.

WORLDWIND: MISSION MAGAZINE FOR CHILDREN. (#2724; $2.50; 10 or more, $2.25) Special issue on refugees.

CALL TO HOPE: LIVING AS CHRISTIANS IN A VIOLENT SOCIETY (#2640; $3.95) Full-color children's magazine designed to help children cope with violent experiences.

Brochures:

CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN CONTINUES (#5222; free) Summary of past actions and future strategies to continue the Campaign for Children.

CHILDREN'S FUND FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION (#Eng. 5699; Span. #1062; free) Teaches children how to contribute to selected mission projects.

Videos:

LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN (#2664; $12.50) Children in four church settings sing, dance, act, interview and film each other.

EMPOWERING VIEWERS FOR MUSIC VIDEOS (#2507; $15) Video with study guide on violence and gender stereotyping in music videos.

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN: TO LOVE IN DEED (EcuFilm; Rental $10; Sale $15) A video showing two successful outreach programs for children. To order, call 800-251-4091.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST: A FAITH-BASED PERSPECTIVE ON WELFARE REFORM. ($15, plus $4 for shipping.) To order, call 202-488-5661.

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN'S ACTION NETWORK. To join legislative action on children's issues, call 202-488-5661.

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Pilate as a Moral Example

by Charles Cole

When Pontius Pilate washed his hands of responsibility for Jesus' death, he bequeathed an enduring 2000-year-long legacy to Christian preachers and moralists. Thenceforward any action disregarding moral responsibility was stigmatized as reprehensible.

Lately, however, the maligned Roman official seems to have received a renewed following. You see more and more expressions that mimic the memorable words: "I am innocent of this man's blood." (Matthew 27:24)

For instance, migrant workers in the United States continue to suffer from poor housing. At one time, some of the agricultural firms that hire migrant workers provided housing for them—and a few still do.

But the United States Sugar Corporation closed a 150-unit camp in Florida in 1994. Their spokesperson, Andrew Esposito, explained: "It got to the point where there are a lot of rules and regulations on housing and that created a tremendous cost. It just wasn't economically feasible."

If Mr. Esposito had stopped there he might have had our sympathy. We know that regulations can be very costly. But he added: "Our job is to grow sugar and citrus. We're letting the private sector take care of housing."

In other words: "If the migrant workers don't have housing, we are innocent."

The really serious effects of the Pontius Pilate syndrome, however, take place in places like Bosnia. The following account was written in 1995: "As Bosnian Serb forces closed in on the United Nations 'safe area' of Srebrenica in early July, some 12,000 draft-age

Muslim men gathered on a hill outside the town. Terrified of being killed by the advancing Serbs, they decided to gamble their lives on an arduous 60-mile trek through enemy-held territory to reach the Muslim stronghold of Tuzla. As they trekked along wooded mountain streams, they could see NATO warplanes destroy a single Serb tank in a futile, last-ditch attempt to prevent the fall of the 'safe area' in eastern Bosnia.

"Of the 12,000 men who set out that day, significantly less than half ever made it to safety....Nearly all of the remainder were butchered..." ("Serbs Massacre Muslims in 'Safe Area' of Srebrenica," by Michael Dobbs and Christine Spolar, *The Washington Post*, October 27, 1995).

This massacre occurred because the United States, NATO, and the UN could not decide how to prevent Serbs from attacking civilians. Yet it is undeniable that all these powers are innocent. They shed no blood. All they did was dither. They washed their hands.

The same could be said of the massacres between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda. We Westerners were not to blame.

How, though, do we distinguish between those things for which we are legitimately responsible and those things that we cannot do anything about? A popular prayer asks: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

The question has two sides for those of us in the church. One side is the temptation to justify ourselves by proclaiming our innocence of the sins of others. But the other side is the temptation to claim too *much* responsibility. We may feel the weight of sin because of complexities outside our control. Here is where we wonder just how responsible we are for events like those in Bosnia and Rwanda. A religion that takes on the evil of the whole world is going to end in fear and dread, not hope and joy.

H. Richard Niebuhr wrote that in seeking to be responsible, we don't respond to some "law," such as a clear and obvious reality in the world. Instead, we respond to an *interpretation* of an event. He specifically meant the event was God—what God is doing and what God is calling us to do.

We are indeed like Pontius Pilate in having to make decisions for events outside our control. Unlike Pilate, however, we know it is not so easy to wash our hands of responsibility. We seek instead to dirty our hands as we cooperate with God in bringing about justice and community in the world. ❑

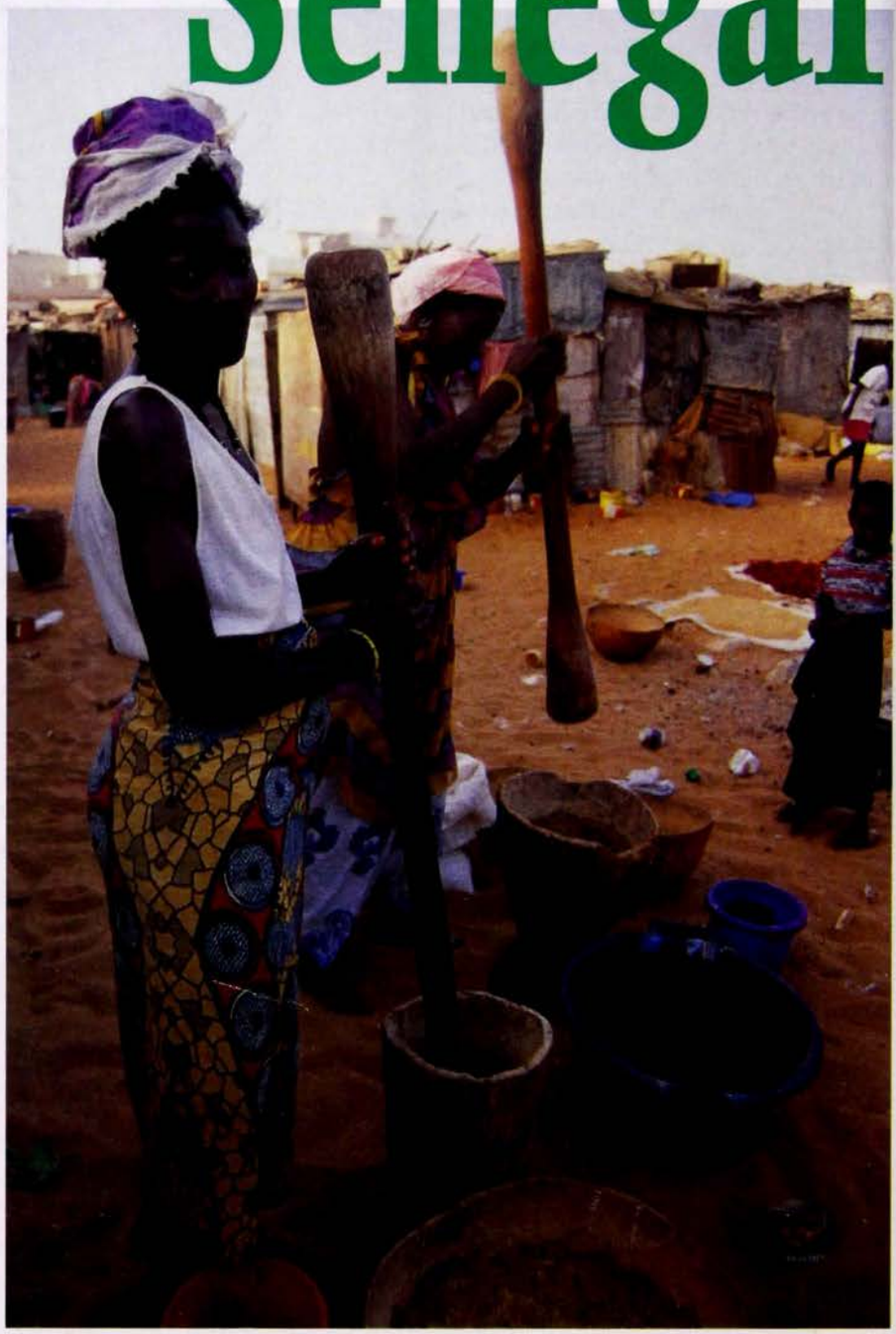
The United Methodist Church in Senegal

A New Mission Begins

In 1986, the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) identified Senegal as one of four African countries where a new United Methodist Church might be established. Three years later, in 1989, a GBGM task force was organized to explore this possibility. There was already a GBGM presence in Senegal through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), which had worked in agricultural development and refugee resettlement there since the late 1950s. So in 1990—after consultations with the Senegal Mission to the United Nations and with the US Embassy, followed by visits with Protestant church leaders and missions already in Senegal—the Senegal Task Force recommended that the GBGM proceed.

The goals of any mission established by The United Methodist Church through the GBGM are to witness to the Gospel for the initial decision to follow Jesus Christ, to proclaim and live the Gospel and challenge others to discipleship through Christian community, and, where direct proclamation is not permitted, to develop a caring presence. In its historic witness, Methodism has emphasized the whole person by ministering to the spiritual, material, personal, and social needs of individuals and communities.

The GBGM missionaries now in Senegal recognize the contextual realities of their presence in a nation where more than 80 percent of the



Women preparing food in Parcelles Assainies, a community north of Dakar, Senegal.

population is Muslim. The United Methodist Church adheres to the principle of working toward establishing and strengthening relationships with other living faiths. Also, while making disciples for Christ, the church works to improve the quality of life for all, especially for the poor and marginalized.

Historically, Methodist missions were established in rural areas of Africa. In Senegal, however, the GBGM decided to begin its work in Dakar, the capital and largest city, since many young people and families have migrated there looking for work. Five United Methodist missionary families now live in Dakar. Harold and Roberta Smith, of the Northern Illinois Conference, arrived in Dakar in 1995. They were followed in 1996 by Mavis and Alan Streyffeler, also from Northern Illinois, and by Glenn and Darla Rowley and their daughter Chayla from the Oklahoma Annual Conference. Earlier this year, GBGM missionaries Nkemba and Mbwizu Ndjungu, from the Southern Congo Episcopal Area, arrived with their daughters—Itanda, Mufuka, and Mbwizu—and their sons—Nkemba, Ndjungu, and Mukazu—to begin work in Dakar. This month (September 1998), Sebastine and Karen Ujereh, of the Lousiana Conference, and their children—Laura and Sebastine, Jr.—arrive. The Ujerehs have worked in the Southern Congo Conference and the Zimbabwe Annual Conference. In Senegal, Sebastine will work with young people and with women in economic-development projects, while Karen will serve as the GBGM financial officer.

While devoted to evangelism and church development, the mission in Dakar is developing a variety of ministries, including community-based health care, community organizing, and literacy training. A newly established United Methodist House Church now has more than 50 worshipers each Sunday, both missionaries and Senegalese. They sing and pray in French, Senegal's official language, and in Wolof, a language spoken by more than 80 percent of the people. A lay pastor, Alice Sapereau, leads the house church. She is Senegalese and the mother of four teenaged children. The Aurora District of the Northern Illinois Conference has made it possible for her to study at Garrett Evangelical-Theological Seminary for a lay pastor's license.

In "A Church Is Born" (below, page 28), Alice Sapereau writes about her experiences with her house church, the first congregation of The United Methodist Church in Senegal.

Harold Smith assists women at a newly opened public fountain. The United Methodist mission in Dakar enabled the opening of two fountains in the Biscuiterie neighborhood, saving young women from walking extra miles to get water for their families.

A young woman attends the ASC Ndaali meeting with her child.

A Church Is Born

by Alice Sapereau

A vision of a church located in Parcelles Assainies—a community of 250,000 north of Dakar city—is becoming reality. The name *Parcelles Assainies* means "parcels of land with healthful amenities." The area has such amenities as garbage collection, electricity, and a delivery system for water. But it has *no* Protestant church.

For years, the vision of a church where Christians might break bread together remained a dream. Then the United Methodist missionaries said: "Let us pray for this vision, for God is calling us to be a passionate witness of the love of Jesus in this Muslim land."

Now we have been meeting as a house church for more than a year. We gather for singing and prayer, for reflection over the Word of God, and for regular sharing of the sacrament of Communion. On Epiphany Sunday, five new Christians were baptized in the Atlantic Ocean. On Pentecost, 28 adults and children covenanted to become the emerging United Methodist Mission Church in Dakar, Senegal. Each week, Christians—and some visiting Muslims—gather to worship in my living room.

We are bulging at the seams of the house in which we meet and are making plans to open two more house churches in Parcelles Assainies. "Who are we?" you ask. We are housekeepers, students, unemployed people, missionaries, children, lay pastors—saints and sinners alike.

It is an exciting time for The United Methodist Church. We are challenged to make visible our symbol of the cross and flame in an urban community where the call to prayer from the local mosque is what awakens us at sunrise. ❑

Darla Rowly (seated left) and lay pastor Alice Sapereau (center) at a worship service in the house church, the first congregation of The United Methodist Church in Senegal..

Canvassing a Neighborhood

by Harold and Roberta Smith

Neighborhood Youth Surveys

The ASC, *Association Sportif Culturel*, is a secular association of sports clubs for youth with branches throughout Dakar. United Methodist missionaries have found that the young people involved in these groups are interested in more than simply soccer and local dances. They are looking for ways to improve the lives of the people in their communities.

In two areas, United Methodist missionaries have been instrumental in showing the young people how to access the needs of their neighbors by making a door-to-door survey. Below, Harold and Roberta Smith explain how this process took place in the Biscuiterie neighborhood, which is home to 50,000 people and takes its name from a large cookie factory in the area.

Many meetings were required to assemble the leaders of the eight young-adult organizations of Biscuiterie. It was a first. From the eight groups, 24 young adults and four supervisors were selected by the youth leaders. They agreed to survey the estimated 8000 people aged 15 to 30 in the neighborhood. This Youth Capacity Survey was to identify levels of education, skill, and employment. Each canvasser received $50 for two weeks of interviewing. However, these young adults said they had received much more than money. "We gained a new appreciation for the people in our neighborhood," they said.

In an evaluation session that closed the survey program, one after another of the canvassers expressed appreciation for the confidence shown by The United Methodist Church in letting them conduct their survey. They also

testified to the profound effect on their lives of being reminded at each meeting that it is God who calls us into community service, and it is God who wills a better life for all in the community.

•Jacine Ndaiye said: "There is Hope here because you United Methodist missionaries showed confidence in us. You let us do the work our way, without taking over. You have inspired us to look for ways to use the information we gained to create jobs for the 80 percent of young adults here who are unemployed."

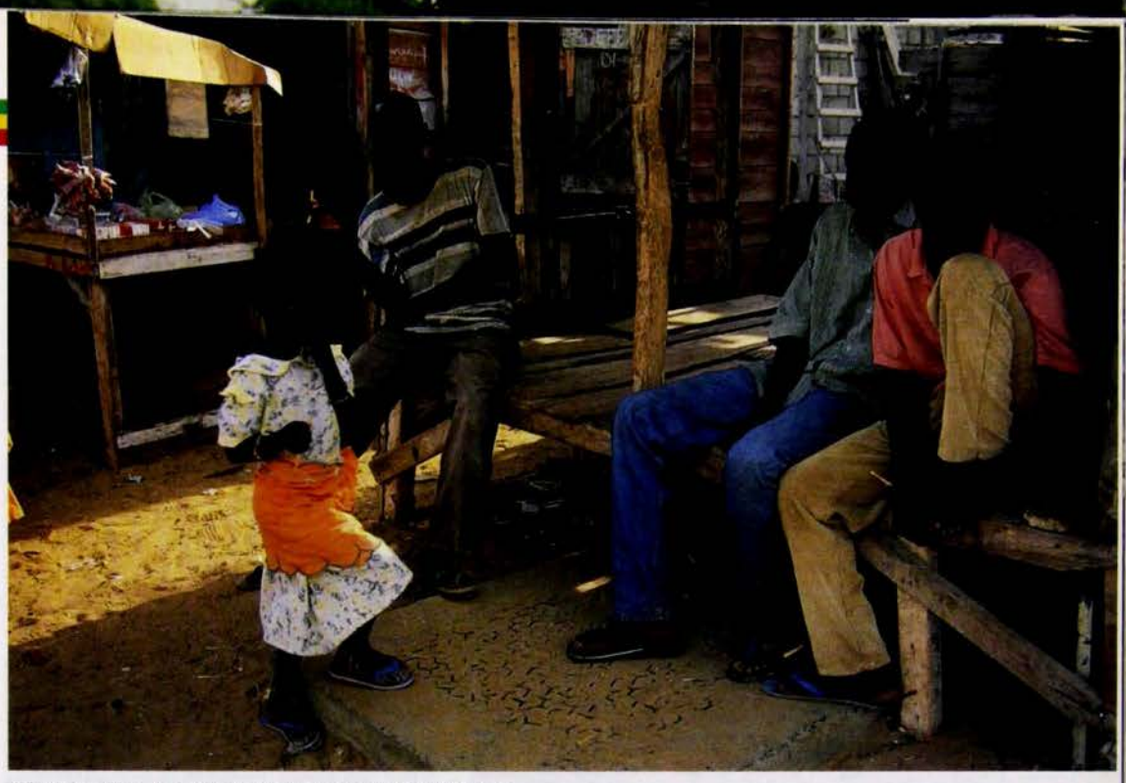
•Noumou Nieng said: "I have lived in the same house for 28 years. I thought I knew my neighbors, but now I understand so much more. Life is very hard for some of my neighbors, and I am so blessed that I want to find ways to help others."

•Yousou Badj noted: "So many of the elders [retired men whose pension is the sole regular income for the household] fear the future. Their children are frustrated and discouraged because their education and effort have not led to employment."

• "We need more foreigners like you United Methodist missionaries who offer us opportunities to use the capacities and resources we have to create something better for our community," said Serign Fall.

These experiences are the basis for our hope that a genuine fight against unemployment will rise up out of the youth of Biscuiterie.❑

Like the Smiths in Biscuiterie, Glenn and Darla Rowley are training young adults in Parcelles Assainies to become community leaders who can plan and implement community-based programs that respond to the community's defined needs.



The Parcelles Assainies community north of Dakar.

Life-Giving Water

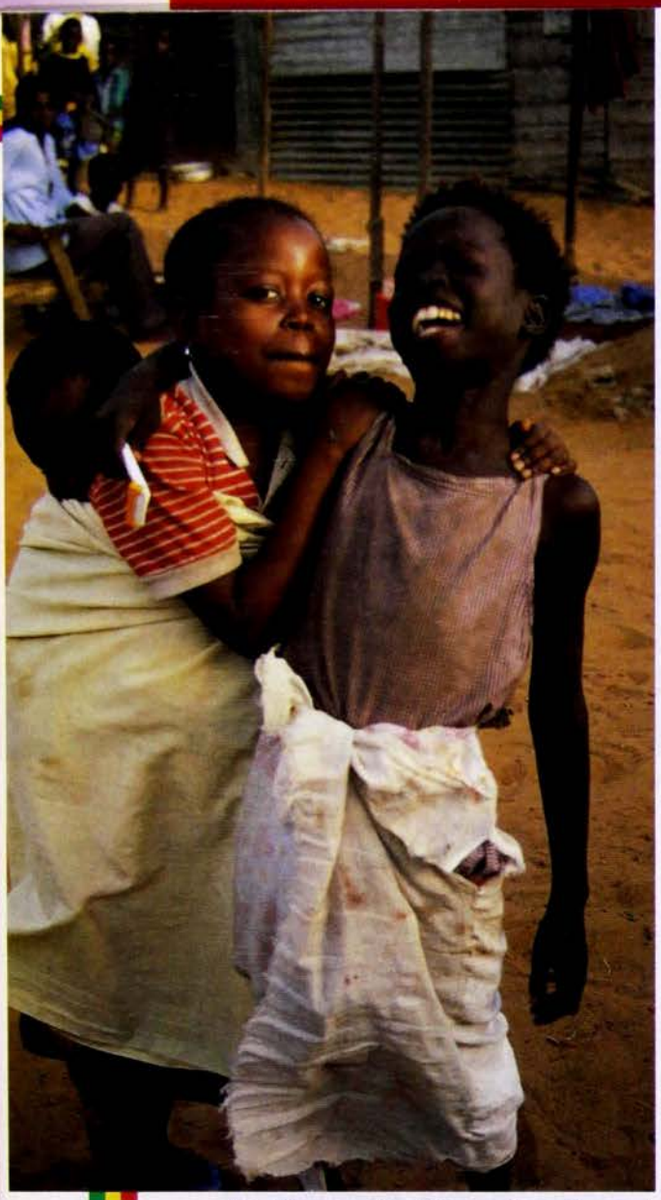
by Darla and Glenn Rowley

The Wolof word *ndaa li* means a large earthen (clay) jar. The jar, which usually has a spigot on it, is used for storing water either for washing and bathing or for cooking and drinking. These water jars are a common sight in Dakar, Senegal. Some of them are regarded as community property and provide public drinking water. In this semiarid climate, the water held by the *ndaa li* is a precious, life-giving resource for the community. So is the youth association known as the ASC Ndaali.

The ASC Ndaali was established in 1993 by the youth in Parcelles Assainies. Like their counterparts in Biscuiterie, these young people believe in themselves and have a strong faith commitment to improve lives and living conditions in their community.

Together we are trying to best discern God's plan for Parcelles Assainies through a ministry involving both Christians and Muslims. As one youth, Mamadou Ndiaye, stated: "I alone in my poverty have never been able to offer anything to my community. But now, through the efforts of our ministry, I—together with Ndaali and you—have much to offer my community. All things are possible with the help of God. Surely God must have sent you here to work with us as partners in ministry."

The Ndaali youth carried out a community needs-assessment survey in Parcelles Assainies and discovered that health care, education, and employment were the top three needs of their neighbors. Together, we have held both leadership-development and program-planning workshops. As a result, Ndaali has begun to address some pressing needs in the community. One current Ndaali program provides help with school fees for elementary-aged schoolchildren of unwed teen mothers and other single parents who are unemployed. ASC Ndaali has also started a pilot program for "security vigilantes" to deter and reduce escalating crime in the community. A third program trains community health workers through health-education workshops. Sessions on AIDS and other



Health care, education, and employment are the three top needs of the people of Parcelles Assainies.

It is God who calls us into community service.

sexually transmitted diseases, on maternal and child health, on prevention of teen pregnancy, and on drug prevention are being held this year.

A future program proposal from the Ndaali youth is for the creation of a center that will provide a holistic approach to mental, physical, and spiritual health in the community. It will thus advance the goal that Ndaali youth and United Methodist missionaries share: to keep the life-giving supply of living water flowing. ❑

Striving Toward Abundant Life

In Dakar, where the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and unemployment is always a major concern, United Methodist missionaries are working with local people at the neighborhood level to provide both spiritual sustenance and skills training. In Parcelles Assainies, for example, Alan Streyffeler has organized Jacob's Workshop, a metal workshop where neighborhood youth learn to make and repair exercise equipment and to rebuild furniture. These items will be used in a recently opened Wellness Center, which provides a chapel for meditation and offers opportunities for interfaith dialogue along with literacy classes and fitness training. In Biscuiterie, the mission has opened a small listening center called *KeuJamm,* "place of peace," with a similar purpose: to serve as a space for classes, workshops, and spiritual dialogue.

In Parcelles Assainies and Biscuiterie, old and new approaches to microenterprise among women and young adults are being explored. Missionaries are working with the elders and youth in these communities to discern what activities will be sustainable so that the whole community can have Jesus' promise of abundant life.

Ministries With Women

A ministry to women in prison was started by a mission team of four Senegalese women—two Muslim, two Christian—plus missionary Mavis Streyffeler. They pray with the women in prison, counsel them, and try, through reconciliation, to bring the women back into their families. They also teach embroidery and Wolof literacy, and they discuss such issues as AIDS, self-respect, bodily integrity, and abuse in monthly conversations inside the prison. Every week, the Christians and Muslims on the mission team pray together for peace—peace inside the prison and inside each woman's heart.

In 1996, the United Methodist mission helped train Wolof women to teach literacy classes to women in their neighborhoods. The mission covers the expenses for teacher preparation, supplies, and classroom rental. The participating women pay a small fee to provide the teachers' salaries. Below, Awa Samb Maane, who is a Muslim Wolof literacy teacher on the mission team, tells her story, "Literacy Classes for Women."

Literacy Classes for Women

by Awa Samb Maane

It started under a tree, as most things in Africa do. Every day the women in the neighborhood would gather under the tree of a young Muslim woman named Sofi to chat and relax. And every day, the new woman in the neighborhood—the United Methodist missionary—would join us, even though she could not understand a word of our Wolof language.

We are Muslim women. All of us speak Wolof proficiently but we had not been to school to learn to read or write, for we had gone to Islamic schools and learned to recite the Qur'an (Koran). Ninety percent of the women in Senegal cannot read or write. As girls in the family, we had to work very hard to prepare the food, wash the clothes, and clean the house. Now we wanted to learn to read and write and to help our children in school. Yes, now even our daughters all go to school.

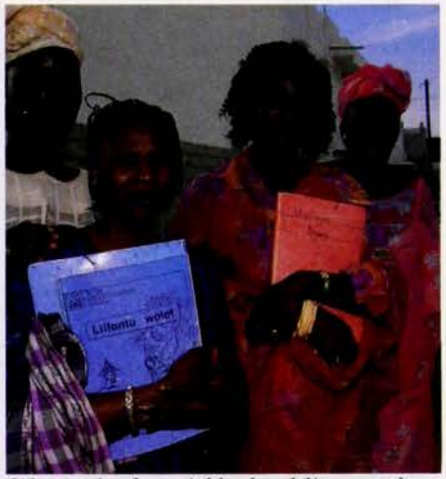
After two years of working together with The United Methodist Church to start literacy classes, we have the following:

- five trained women teachers from the neighborhoods;
- two classes of graduates: Wolof women who have written books of stories and poems;
- four new beginners' classes;
- two classes for women who have never before held a pencil to make shapes and letters;
- two classes in Wolof literacy for the women in prison in Dakar;
- one advanced writers' workshop (including Ndey Astu Si Siise) that publishes a newspaper in Wolof about women's issues.

We call this "holding each other in our common work"—Christian and Muslim women studying together, praying together, and holding each other.

One woman wrote: "What was it like to write my name for the first time at age 42? I can now read the advertisements. I can now help my children in school. I feel better about myself. I think maybe I can do other things, now that I know how to read and write."

God is good! God is great! ❑



Women in the neighborhood literacy class, Parcelles Assainies.

Women of Africa (Jigeenu Afrik)

by Ndey Astu Si Siise

Oh we women of Africa
So full of dignity.
So early in the morning
we are awake,
with no rest anymore.
Struggling only.
Only struggling.

Oh we women of Africa
So full of honor
In the markets,
In the factories,
In the fields,
In the houses.

Oh we women,
So full of dignity.
We are struggling to help our husbands.
We are struggling to feed our children.
We are struggling to keep our honor.

Oh we women of Africa
So full of dignity.
We are looking to better know
our country.
We are looking to better know
our language.
We are looking to better know
who we are.

Oh we women are unique.

The United Methodist mission in Senegal has been officially recognized by the Ministry of the Interior as the *Ministeres de l'Eglise Methodiste Unie au Senegal*. The missionaries are prayerfully discerning ways to develop a new church in a new age in a predominantly Muslim country with no models to guide them. Moussa Diedhiou is one young Senegalese whom the mission has reached. Harold and Roberta Smith write about Diedhiou's growing faith.

Moussa Diedhiou

by Harold and Roberta Smith

Moussa Diedhiou has worked with us for nearly three years—first as a tutor in French and in Islamic faith and practice. He is Muslim. He was educated in both the Qur'anic school and the public school in his village. He came north to Dakar when his father died and was able to find work for five years. Then the company for which he worked went bankrupt, and for eight years Diedhiou was unemployed. Now he works with our mission as a community organizer in Biscuiterie.

Diedhiou is interested in the Christian faith—particularly as he finds it expressed in the missionaries' commitment to the poor of the city. He participated in the first module of a leadership-development training program called "Training for Transformation." One element of this program is the idea of spiritual equilibrium, based on Micah 6:8 (and on a parallel expression in the Qur'an book of Surate 49:15): "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

These personal, social, and spiritual elements of daily living, as expressed by the prophet Micah, have shaped the way Moussa Diedhiou understands his work and how he relates to people in the neighborhood. Now he asks if one can discern the spiritual in an activity—if one can see what makes the work of a church different from that of a secular agency. Diedhiou is reading the Bible with us now and is discovering the One God who calls us all into community. ❑

In addition to the authors named, contributions to this report have been made by missionary Mavis Streyffeler; Doreen Tilghman, a member of the GBGM executive staff who was part of the Senegal Task Force; and the editors of New World Outlook.

Reaching Out in Christian Mission: Hinton Rural Life Center

by Christie R. House

The people at Hinton came to us at a time when we felt as if everything was hopeless. A large tree had fallen on our porch and no one offered to help us. They built a new porch for us, the old one was in such bad shape.

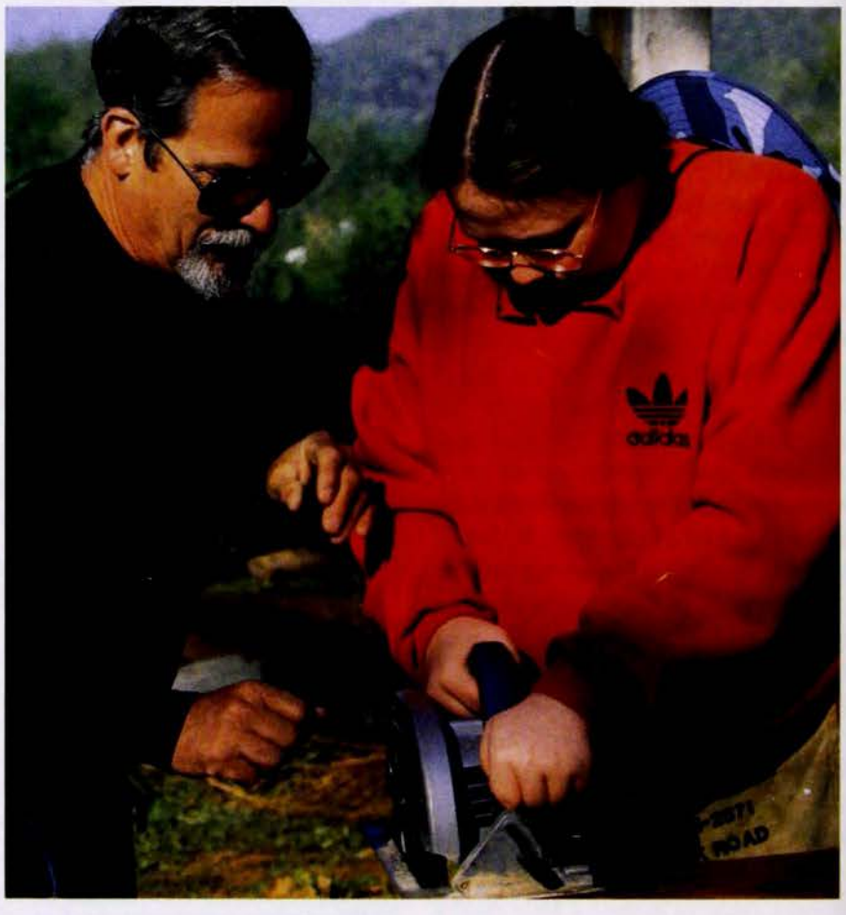
It didn't stop there. They helped with other things, such as the water, painting, putting in floors, and so much more. They repaired our home until it changed from a home of coldness to a home of warmth. We met many friends from the groups that came to fix our home.

— Shammie Gibson, age 12

The Housing Ministry is just one of Hinton Rural Life Center's many missions in the southeastern United States. Situated amidst the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains by Lake Chatuge, this United Methodist regional mission agency is a place of hospitality, spiritual growth, and renewal. Through its program staff and volunteers, Hinton's programs extend beyond its retreat site in Hayesville, North Carolina, to churches and congregations throughout the region.

The center is a Southeastern Jurisdictional training-and-resource facility that focuses on the mission and ministry of small-membership congregations and the dynamics of their communities. It provides staff and resources to strengthen and equip pastors and laity for the development of congregations with 200 or fewer members—a category that includes 70 percent of the 37,000 churches across the denomination as well as 70 percent of the Southeastern Jurisdiction's 13,000 local churches.

The Hinton Center began as the gift of J. Walter and Velma Moore. Harold Hopkins Hinton had bought 4 1/2 acres of land in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Hayesville in order to build a commercial hotel and retreat center. He succeeded in building the lodge but died in 1956 before he could finish his plans. The Hintons—who lived in Athens, Georgia, and spent their summers in North Carolina—were members of the First Methodist Church of Athens. Since Alice Lanier Hinton did not feel she could continue with her husband's project, she convinced J. Walter and Velma Moore, friends and fellow Methodists in North Carolina, to purchase the property. The Moores mortgaged all they had to buy it. They donated it to the First Methodist Church of Hayesville and then to the Southeastern Jurisdiction as a mission and retreat center.



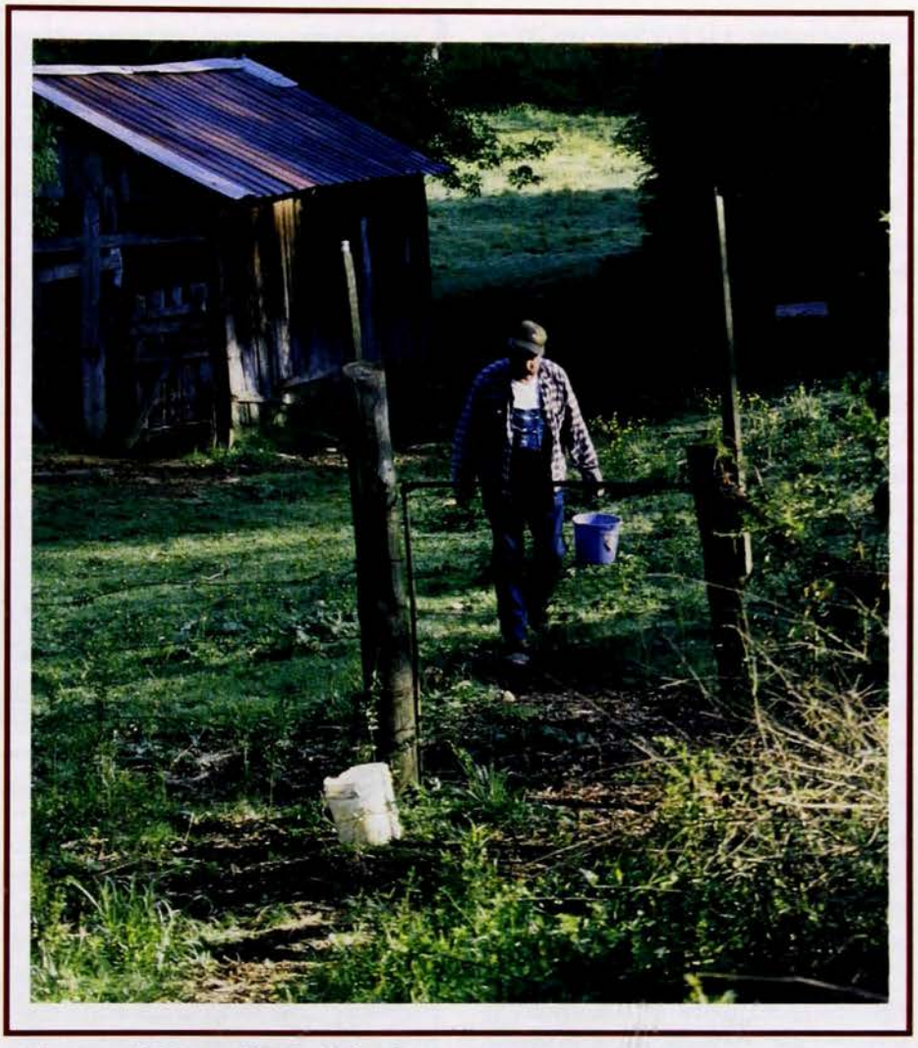
Steve Long, staff member of Hinton Rural Life Center, trains Erica Tobey from Augusta, Maine, to use a circular saw.

Resourcing the Rural Church

This September, Clay Smith celebrates 14 years as Hinton Center's executive director. He and various members of Hinton's full-time program staff are on the road a few days out of almost every week and on most weekends. They travel as far north as Virginia and south to Mississippi and Florida to offer development and visioning programs to small-membership churches. "Well, actually," says Smith, "we go just about anywhere people invite us.

"Our primary concern in the way we approach our ministry is to develop a healthy congregation," Smith continues. "That may mean extremely different things in different places. Every congregation is called to significant ministry. No matter how small or how isolated it may be, it is a congregation of worth. We believe every congregation has the gifts and graces for ministry—already present—and we believe that the people in that congregation are the experts about that congregation. And so our approach is about helping people to envision ministry and to discern what God is calling them to do."

Out of this process a congregation can begin to identify one or more areas on which it wants to focus its energies. The staff of Hinton Center often finds that members of congregations are not generally trained to sit down and talk to each other about their church's problems. "We try to resource congregations with training or models of ministry, depending on what they need," adds Smith. "We also try to work with congregations to help them see the possibilties of cooperative styles of ministry. They can begin to look at the geography of ministry rather than at 'our congregation and our members.' In this area, how many other congregations are there?



A farm outside Hayesville, North Carolina.

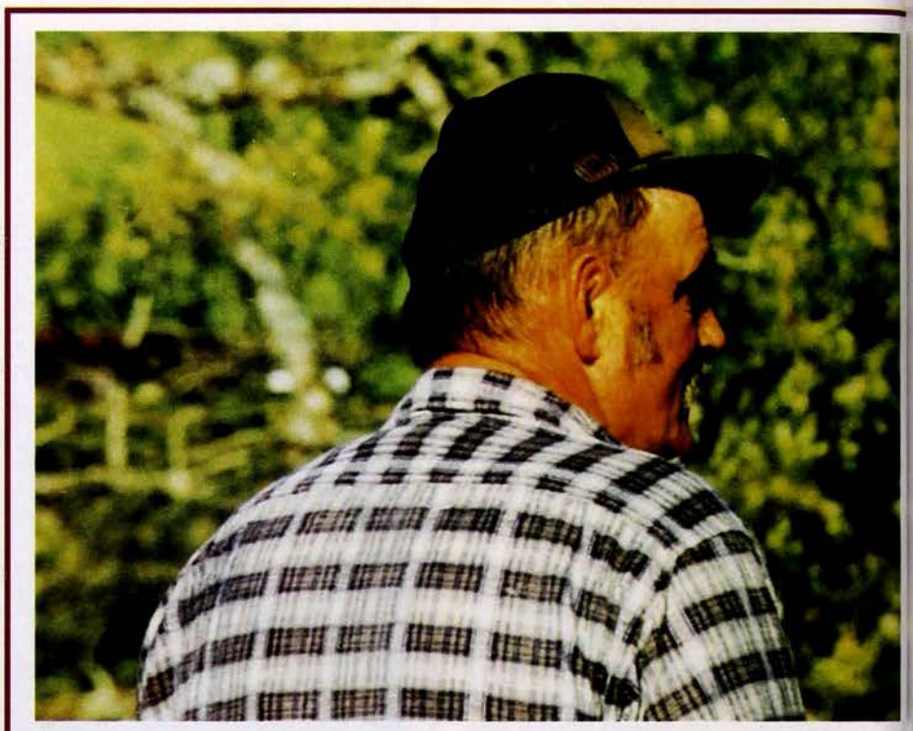
United Methodist congregations begin by cooperating with other United Methodists, but we strongly encourage them to look at other denominations, particularly if there are ethnic churches in the area.

"One cooperative ministry, the Caswell Parish in north central North Carolina, was formed to work on issues around domestic violence. Now this parish even has a spinoff nonprofit agency, but it started as a cooperative ministry. The parish began with all United Methodists. Then, over seven or eight years, it became interdenominational and a very strong presence in the county. Parish members do the usual things, providing clothing closets and fuel assistance. But they also do prison ministry. Many prisons are in rural communities. Almost no rural church can mount a prison ministry on its own. But the Caswell Parish developed a very strong prison ministry because it is made up of many churches working together."

Other cooperatives have specialized in housing issues. Many ministries become possible when churches experience their interconnectedness in their communities and face their common issues.

Tracy Anne Allred, who coordinates Hinton's volunteer ministries and Elderhostel program, added: "We facilitate the process, but the local people are really the ones who do the dreaming and visioning. It's exciting when we ask questions that the congregations have

never been asked before—for example, to verbalize those things that they do well. Many times congregation members say: 'We cook and we eat and we feed people well.' One congregation also sang a lot and had a wonderful music ministry. So the members decided to put those two things together and had a fish fry with singing. That's how they became known in the community."



Tracy Anne Allred (right), coordinator of volunteers at Hinton, with Garvin (left), a client

Building Community

The success of Hinton Rural Life Center lies not only in the staff's ability to resource the region but also in the center's connection to Hayesville. Hayesville, with a population of about 250, is the county seat of Clay County (total population about 8000). Half of the land in Clay County is part of Nantahala National Forest and Lake Chatuge, both Tennessee Valley Authority reserves. People are sometimes separated by miles of mountain roads. Many of the residents in Clay County and in neighboring Cherokee County live below the poverty level. The main industry in this part of the South is the textile industry, but recent plant closings have created an 11 percent unemployment rate. Some people travel as far as Atlanta, Georgia, or Chattanooga, Tennessee, to work.

About 25 years ago, Hinton began hosting work teams over the summer to help people improve their substandard housing. This ministry has grown to the point where, over the summer, Hinton Center hosts 14 different work teams each week. Teams travel to hundreds of different work sites over the summer to help people repair homes, build wheelchair ramps, and improve their living conditions.

In addition, 11 years ago, Hinton Center started a housing network to build new three-bedroom homes for families in need. To qualify for a new home, families must have children, a steady income, and a $25,000 bank loan in order to buy property and help with construction costs. Now incorporated, the Clay and Cherokee County Housing Network is made up of people who have received a new home through this Hinton Center ministry, along with others in the area interested in low-income housing. The County Housing Network raises money all year long to buy building materials, and volunteers from across the United States provide the labor. Family members also contribute a good amount of their own sweat equity. In the last 11 years, 18 new houses have been built. "Holy Smoke," one of the housing fundraisers, brought pastors from area churches together—each pastor making his or her best dish. Members of all the town's congregations paid $5.00 per person to sample the dishes, raising a total of $2000.

Planting Good Seeds

Recently, Hinton Rural Life Center applied for a grant to develop its organic-gardening project. The project has developed over the past few years into a community garden. Children from the community come up to help plant and, later, to help harvest. "We had kids from the local school here last year," Clay Smith said. "They were picking tomatoes and putting them into bags to take home. We let them dig for potatoes. When they found the potatoes there in the dirt and dug them up, the potatoes were like gold nuggets to them. They were so proud of what they found," Smith chuckled.

"What we try to do with the gardening program," Smith continued "is to reconnect people with the earth, particularly children. As rural America changes, people are losing contact with the land; they are losing the agricultural skills that everyone once knew and took for granted. We also want to help

whose front porch was rebuilt by a team from Green Street UMC in Augusta, Maine.

families become more self-sufficient in terms of their own food production. We've helped organize a local farmers' market for growers around Hayesville. The local grocery stores won't buy local produce from farmers in this area. It's a corporate rule. They go to California and pay to ship the produce in. Saturday mornings during the summer we have a tailgate farmers' market right there in Hayesville Square. The first year we started, people just came out of the woodwork. It's a wonderful thing. The rule is that you have to grow or make what you sell."

Hinton Rural Life Center is part of the Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SAWG), a professional advocacy group that works for more sustainable styles of agriculture in the United States. The North Carolina SAWG unit has been working with agricultural teams at state universities. Over the last four to five years, they have set aside a whole 500-acre sustainable organic-agriculture research farm. One of the obstacles to organic farming is that most of the research done at the state university level is paid for by grants from chemical companies and manufacturers. Hinton Center has always used organic pesticides on its garden. "We'd even like to make organic produce out of the rabbit that comes and eats our broccoli," says Smith.

Last year, the potato crop was so abundant that Hinton fed all of its residents and visitors for the year and still donated a goodly portion of potatoes to the local food pantry. Hinton also supports the Hayesville Hands of Hope, an organization that helps people through crisis situations.

Blessed to Be a Blessing

At Hinton Rural Life Center, youth and adults grow in discipleship, share their faith, and develop friendships. As disciples of Christ are built, so are new houses, porches, roofs, and ramps. As congregations are trained and nurtured, exciting ministries begin to happen. In addition to work teams, Hinton hosts the usual youth groups, church retreats, and other church-camp functons.

The latest development at the center is a new initiative for pastors: The Hinton Colleague Covenant Forum for Pastoral Leadership in Rural Churches of Small Membership. It is based on the belief that God uses spiritually healthy leadership to form a spiritually healthy church. Participating pastors will meet for three days each quarter over two years. The Forum is designed by the staff and Hinton's board members to provide pastors with fellowship and support; time for worship, prayer, and reflection; two projects that focus first on development and renewal within their local congregations and then on mission outreach in their communities; and eight academic courses led by an invited faculty.

In all of its activities, Hinton Rural Life Center strives to be a blessing in the lives of the people it serves. In doing so, the center itself becomes blessed with faithful volunteers, committed donors, visionary staff and board members, and a mission that keeps on fulfilling its calling. Recently, through hard work and pledges from friends, Hinton acquired another 19 1/2 acres of land from the Herbert family farm, bringing its total acreage to 30. The blessings just keep growing. ❑

Christie R. House is the associate editor of New World Outlook. *Hinton Rural Life Center can be supported through supplemental giving by United Methodist Women; by Advance #731372-2; or, for renovation and development, by Advance #732374-4.*

Teen Team From Maine

People of all ages come to work at Hinton Rural Life Center, but many of the work teams are made up of teens. Some youth even devote their spring break to a work camp. The United Methodist Youth Fellowship of Green Street United Methodist Church in Augusta, Maine, traveled more than 3000 miles to do just that.

The Maine teens were probably ready for North Carolina's sunshine and balmy breezes. Augusta was hit hard by the winter ice storms early in 1998. "But the church never lost power for more than five minutes," says the Rev. Janice Davis, who co-pastors Green Street with her husband, the Rev. Michael Davis. The church stayed open, while more than one

Carol Elene Kimball prepares to throw Melissa Zimmerman into the Hinton Center lake while Alicia Lynn Garcia looks on.

family from the parish sought refuge from the winter's harsh temperatures. Most of the town lost power for the better part of two weeks. Pipes froze and people came to the church for water.

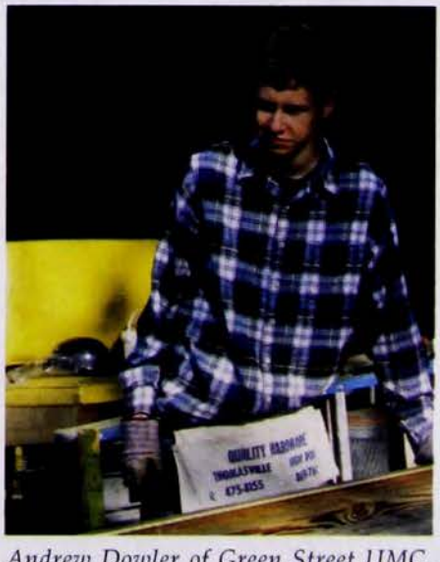
How did a church in Augusta, Maine, find the Hinton Rural Life Center in Hayesville, North Carolina? "Through the Internet, of course!" said Pastor Jan, echoed by a dozen voices. This is the third year the youth group has used its spring break to help others. Three years ago, the youth visited the Red Bird Missionary Conference in Kentucky, and last year they traveled south to Lumberton, North Carolina, to the Robeson County Church and Community Center.

Each youth-group member had to raise or contribute $300 to come on the trip. At Hinton Rural Life Center, work teams pay to rent out the lodge rooms or cottages and pay for their meals as well. Some of them, like the Augusta group, rent a cottage and cook their own meals. The Augusta youth hosted a number of fundraisers over the year. In one effort, members of the congregation contributed $10 each to buy "stock." Stockholders get a postcard from North Carolina and a big dinner when the team returns. Another fundraiser was a "rockathon" in which the youth rocked in rocking chairs for 12 hours with only 5-minute breaks at a time.

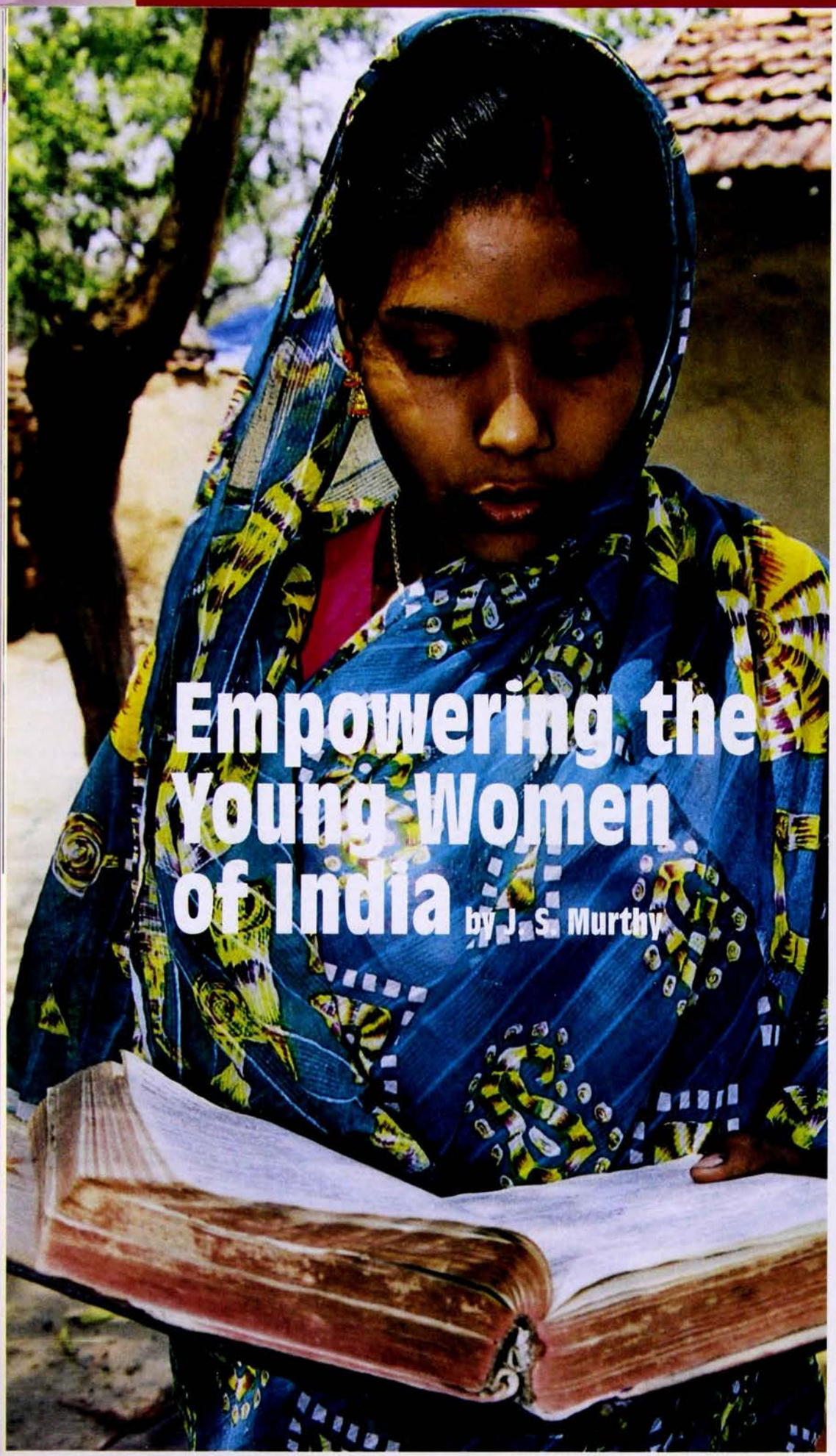
Finally, the Augusta group rented two vans and drove five adults and 12 teens (between the ages of 14 and 18) from Maine to North Carolina. They left on Friday and arrived on Sunday. At 8:00 AM on Monday, the Augusta group divided up for work at three different sites. A volunteer from the community or a staff member from Hinton went with each team. "We have a lot of people from the community who come back and volunteer to go out with the teams," notes Tracy Anne Allred, who coordinates volunteers at Hinton Center. "Some are retired people. Some are youth in the community. Some just like to come. Some are people who were helped out by a team earlier." In addition, the local bank and hardware store help out a lot.

The tool shed at Hinton Rural Life Center.

The youth learn basic skills every day on the site. It's the first time some of them have ever handled power tools. One full-time staff member at Hinton—Steve Long, a construction supervisor—goes out with the teams. In the evenings, the groups return for dinner at Hinton and gather around for devotions. Then there is always time for a dip in the lake, hiking through the woods, or a game of basketball or volleyball up on the Hinton parking lot. So the Green Street teens will have lots of stories to tell during the next long winter in Maine. ❑



Andrew Dowler of Green Street UMC, Augusta, Maine.



Empowering the Young Women of India

by J. S. Murthy

A black cat ran across the road in front of our jeep. Immediately, the driver stopped the vehicle and asked his helper to run alongside the jeep for some distance. Then, as he drove along, he explained: "That was the only way to nullify the evil effect of the black cat." This animal is regarded by villagers as a bad omen, especially during travel.

Recently, a case of human sacrifice was reported in the newspapers. A young boy was offered as a sacrifice by his family members to appease a goddess in an ancient city of northern India.

In the state of Rajasthan, 22-year-old Rupkanwar was forcibly tied to her husband's funeral pyre and burned alive with her dead husband—a practice known as *sati*.

As such examples illustrate, traditional taboos and superstitious practices are still alive in indigenous communities and other rural areas of India. Lacking education, untrained in scientific reasoning, many rural people believe that much of the physical world is controlled by the spirit world. Long ago, such beliefs gave rise to customs and rituals performed in rural communities to placate the gods.

Fortunately, the rural-based young people of today desire to learn and to acquire formal education—particularly the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The Santhal indigenous women and youth of Bihar, for example, are now eager to learn how to read and write. The seeds sown by pioneer missionaries are beginning to germinate in rural areas of India on a large scale.

Women's Literacy

Today, the Santhal indigenous women of the Saraidhala village in the Pakur district of the state of Bihar have been influenced by the "outside" civilization in cities and towns beyond their horizons. This

trend has emerged following efforts by the state and central governments to bring rural people into the mainstream of national life. Government action was spurred by studies indicating that rural women were the poorest of the poor. These women deserved attention and were accorded the highest priority, with education seen as a critically important tool in their development.

The literacy rate for women in India has remained low. The rate is even lower for poor rural women and members of indigenous tribes. The 1991 census data showed that women's literacy in rural areas was only 30 percent—less than half the literacy rate of 64 percent for women in urban areas. The national literacy level of both men and women combined was 52 percent. In this context, where almost half the population is illiterate, education is the only key that will open the door to a decent life for individual Indians while also promoting national development.

Mission Schools and Projects

Since 1947, it has taken nearly 50 years for India to plan to provide educational opportunities for underprivileged women, children, and youth in regions like Pakur's. Missionaries like Isabella Meik and Alma Jacobson had realized the importance of imparting education to rural youth as early as 1887. That year, they opened the Isabella Meik Home and Orphanage and the Alma Jacobson Keventer School at Pakur—institutions now known collectively as the Jidato (Zealous) Mission. Funds for the mission house and adjoining buildings were raised through offerings given to the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society by Scandinavian women in the United States. The school was divided into separate Bengali-, and Hindi-language schools in 1911. Today, the school buildings are in poor shape but they are still used for teaching purposes. With no benches or desks, the students sit on the bare floor even during severe winter weather.

Female leaders that the Pakur Jidato School has produced include Indu De (now the manager and secretary of the Ushagram School at Asansol), Asha Paul, Purnima Ghosh, Premi Lee, Champa Marandi, and others who head the district women's work in the Bengal Conference of the Methodist Church in India. One of the male leaders is the Rev. Soren, district superintendent of the Pakur district, who is an alumnus of the Bishop J. R. Lance Boys' Home in Pakur, established in 1977. The influence of the Pakur mission schools—which were among India's earliest institutions in rural education—has penetrated to distant Santhal villages.

Ruth Eveland, a pioneer missionary, laid the foundation for women's work among Santhal indigenous women and children. More than a century ago, she and other missionaries traversed the unfriendly terrain either on foot or on horseback. Their only objective was to share the Gospel of love with indigenous people who had never heard about the saving grace of Jesus Christ. They also carried out social work in the fields of primary education, health, and hygiene. The poorest of the poor were provided a home at Pakur Jidato Mission Home. There, the children learned to read the Bible and to sing and pray. Women were trained as Bible women, their mission being to visit homes and to proclaim the love of God.

Many rural people were converted to Christianity following their experience with the friendly missionaries. At Sangrampur, which is

Opposite, p. 38: *A Santhal indigenous woman studies the Bible. Her studies are made possible by extension work of the Ushagram School in Asansol, a project of the Methodist Church in India.* ***Above:*** *Santhal children in the state of Bihar, India.*

Regular prayer meetings are held in the church for indigenous village women.

an interior village, for example, half the Muslim population accepted Jesus Christ and now attend church services and other Christian activities. The change in their faith is not resented by their relatives. Instead, the new Christians continue to live as part of extended families, celebrating both Christian and Muslim festivals with much fervor. Besides Ruth Eveland, Mrs. Beacon and Mrs. Ferguson extended the mission work among Bengali-speaking women and children. Asha Paul is now in charge of the Bengali School and the Jidato Mission Home.

In the town of Pakur, which recently acquired the status of a district, the local administration is determined to improve the condition of the people through various welfare projects. The Pakur deputy commissioner was so impressed with the performance of Pakur's Bengali Girls' School that he granted funds that enabled the mission to construct an open-air stage for the children. The children have won cultural, debate, music, painting, and sports competitions. The school has prizes and trophies on display.

About 30 kilometers from Pakur is Chandrapura, where the Theodori Rural Development Project (TRDP) functions under the Methodist Church in India. Located on a sprawling campus with lush green vegetation and flowerbeds, the center is directed by a dedicated Santhal couple, Amelia and Emmanuel Marandi. They have shaped the center into a model success story. Their three-pronged approach to rural development includes the establishment of a church, a school, and a hospital to meet all the needs of the indigenous community.

Children of the Asansol Bengali day schools.

Neetu, an alumna of the Jidato Mission School, is senior vice-president of the Student Christian Movement in India.

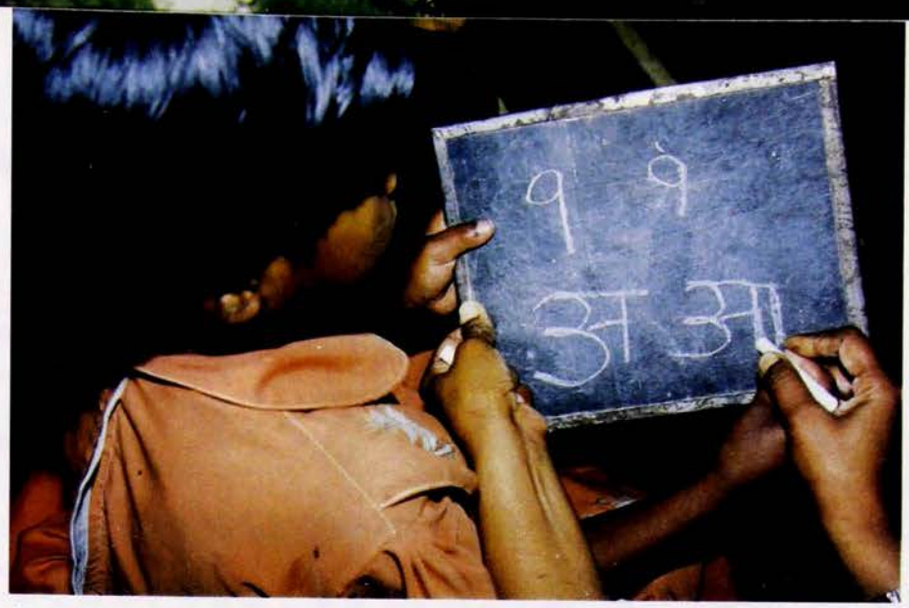
Youth's Aspirations

The youth of these areas have high hopes and aspirations for their lives. Smriti, an eighth-grade student, wants to become a scientist. Her friend Ela would rather be a computer engineer. "Computers fascinate me so much that I want to learn not only to operate the keyboard but also to develop some software," Ela says with an air of confidence.

Both girls are enamored of the images they watch on television. They seek to emulate female leaders in various fields—contemporary women such as Bachendri Pal, a successful Himalayan mountaineer; or Arundhati Roy, a prizewinner for her book, *The God of Small Things*; or Kalpana Chawla, who in 1997 became the first Indian woman to go into space as part of the Columbia space-shuttle mission. Leaders of the older generation are also role models for youth—women such as Indira Gandhi, Mother Teresa, or Dr. Ida Scudder, founder of the renowned Vellore Christian Medical Center in South India.

With such role models, it is no wonder that girls aspire to reach

the top of the ladder by pursuing suitable careers. Neetu, who graduated from the Pakur Jidato Mission School, says: "There is a great need for dedicated medical doctors in these areas. The rural folk do not have easy access to medical care. I would like to become a doctor and serve my community. I face tough competition at the entrance exam, but I can only study hard and, God willing, hope for the best." Neetu is the senior vice-president of the Student Christian Movement of India and the president of the Methodist Youth Fellowship. She is also a gifted guitarist.



A young girl learns the Hindi alphabet.

Irene, another alumna of Jidato Girls' School, is now a teacher there. She wants to continue her studies and earn a master's degree in mass communications.

A New Young Woman

Undoubtedly, a new kind of young woman is developing in India. No longer behind the veil, she has come out into the open to face the challenges of gender bias, unequal treatment, and old atrocities fueled by ignorance. She is assertive and demonstrates her ability to share the cultural, economic, political, and social world with men. She has already changed the traditional family pattern. Now the extended family system in towns and cities is giving way to a nuclear family model. Through her own empowerment, then, the young Indian woman of today is becoming a partner in the larger context of nation building.

Nearer Calcutta, in Asansol, women's work is another success story. There, the school and girls' home—with 2000 students—are living memorials to three pioneer missionaries, Ms. Rachael Carr and Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Byres. In 1872, they started the womens' work in the Asansol district. It was then called the "Zenana Mission" (women's mission). Asha Bari (Faith Home) had been established earlier as the first girls' school in Asansol. Rechristened Ushagram (Village of Dawn), it is still considered a prestigious institution. Its manager and secretary, Indu De, a native of Bangladesh, was converted to Christianity as a teenager. Many indigenous girls from distant villages are proud to be enrolled at Ushagram.

Much has been done by the pioneer missionaries to liberate Indian women from their age-old plight of illiteracy, gender bias, harassment, and exploitation. Some significant changes are in evidence. But bringing about social change among nearly half of India's population of 950 million requires a gigantic effort. Dedicated women are needed to lead and participate in the crusade. The struggle for gender justice and the ultimate empowerment of women in India is an issue that needs to be tackled at the grassroots level in an atmosphere that builds confidence.

It is gratifying to note a tribute paid to the contribution of early missionaries in India by an eminent writer, Khushwant Singh. Describing a now-distant era, he said: "Some foreign missionaries who spent the best part of their lives working among [indigenous peoples who were] totally neglected by others have been expelled. This is unfair and smacks of ingratitude toward people who have given us the best of schools, colleges, and hospitals. If Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh missionaries have the right to convert people to their faiths, so also have the Christians—who do much more in the way of social service than all other communities put together." ❑

Dr. J. S. Murthy is a guest lecturer in Indian philosophy at Leonard Theological College, a Methodist-related seminary in Jabalpur, and in communications at Rani Durgavati University, Jabalpur.

Mission Education

Suggestions for Mission Leaders

by Faye Wilson

Youth Soup It Up - To Fight Hunger

Despite new kinds of fertilizers, despite irrigation, despite expanding technology, hunger still continues to be a major problem for the world as we approach the twenty-first century. Hunger and hunger-related diseases claim the lives of thousands of people, especially children, every year. What can be done?

An innovative program was developed especially to engage the energies and spirit of youth—so that young people could and would do something to ease the pain that hunger and its related maladies bring. Called the "SOUPER BOWL," this program asks each person for a donation of at least a dollar for an offering that is taken on Super Bowl Sunday. The offering is then given to a project or ministry that is helping to fight hunger.

The Souper Bowl began in 1990 in South Carolina, with one youth group seeking to make a difference in the lives of hungry people. Pastor Brad Smith asked his congregation to help nourish people who couldn't afford even a bowl of soup on Super Bowl Sunday—a day when a single minute of television advertising can cost a million dollars. Since then, the Souper Bowl has become an international program. In 1998, through the efforts of 8600 congregations, the program raised $1.7 million. United Methodist congregations helped raise $306,000 of that total. So start planning now to be part of Souper Bowl '99.

The Souper Bowl Game Plan

Huddle

- Obtain permission to collect an offering on January 31, 1999.
- Go on line and visit www.souperbowl.com to find out more about Souper Bowl '99. Order promotional materials (newsletters, a video) on the Souper Bowl by calling 1-800-358-SOUP or by writing: Souper Bowl, 125 Sparkleberry Lane, Columbia, SC 29229.
- Publicize the offering. Develop an eye-catching flyer. Include a paragraph in the church newsletter. Set up a "soup" display in the narthex, placing cans of soup, pots, bowls, and spoons on a table.

Line Up

- Select a hunger project to which you'll send your offering. You may use the monies locally or choose an Advance project from the current *Partnership in Missions Catalog of General Advance Specials.*
- Choose youth "players" to develop publicity ideas.
- Give a minute for mission at least two Sundays before taking the offering. Here is a sample mission minute: "Hunger has a cure—and we are part of it! We can give our money to support a United Methodist project that is working to end world hunger. We can donate food to a local food pantry. We can prepare or serve meals at a soup kitchen. We can write letters to our senators and representatives in Congress, asking them to ensure that families receive the assistance they need to purchase nutritious foods. On Sunday, January 31st, our youth group is hosting "Souper Bowl" Sunday. We're asking each person to give a dollar and one can of food toward an offering that will help end world hunger."

Kick Off

- Collect an offering on January 31st. Have youth stand at the church doors, holding large soup pots and tureens to receive the gifts.

Score

- Count the money and call in your total to 1-800-358-SOUP.
- Give your offering to your selected project.

Recap

- Place a note in the church newsletter thanking all participants.
- Begin planning for Souper Bowl 2000!

You may use the next four pages as bulletin inserts about mission. Remove this page; duplicate it freely, printing front and back; fold it in the middle, along the black line; and slip the copies into your Sunday bulletins.

Mt. Chiremba, Where Africa University Began

By Chomingwen Pond, a United Methodist missionary who taught for three years at Africa University in Zimbabwe

The weekend before I left Mutare, I climbed to the top of Mt. Chiremba, the highest peak in the area. Susan Henthorn and I met our guide, theology student Solomon Kupa, early on a cloudy Saturday morning. We set off through Old Mutare United Methodist Mission Center and up the mountain, long regarded as a sacred site.

Kupa assured us he was choosing "the long, easy route" up the side of the mountain, but to me, it felt straight up. If there was a path, we never found it. Kupa hacked our way through long grass, short scrub, and thorn trees. After more than two hours of climbing, we reached the top. In the distance we could see Christmas Pass. Beneath us stretched the rich valley with cultivated fields, a Shona village or two, Old Mutare Mission, and Africa University.

The top of Mt. Chiremba is where Africa University began. A century ago, when the routing of the railroad necessitated moving the village of Umtali (as it was called then) to the other side of the mountains, Methodist Bishop Joseph C. Hartzell obtained the buildings at Old Umtali from Cecil Rhodes and the British South Africa Company for use as a mission station. Not long after, Bishop Hartzell made the climb to the top of Mt. Chiremba. There he knelt and prayerfully offered the valley to God for the spreading of the Gospel. And there he received a vision of young people from all over Africa running to the valley, schoolbooks under their arms.

Among the first institutions to be established at Old Umtali Mission were a primary school and an "industrial" school. Hartzell High School followed. Africa University—with its programs in theology, agriculture, management, and education—is the latest educational offering in fulfillment of Bishop Hartzell's vision.

The United Methodist Church in Mission

Badara Ba

By Glenn and Darla Rowley and their nine-year-old daughter, Chayla, United Methodist missionaries in Dakar, Senegal

Badara, a two-year-old boy from Lambaye, came into our lives during the summer of 1997. His mother—who was only 14 when her first child, Khadim, was born and 16 when she had Badara—had abandoned both both boys a year earlier, leaving them with their father.

Badara's father, Sidy, was without work. The rains came late in 1997 and were not sufficient for planting crops. Thus the villagers of Lambaye had very little food available to them. Many of their children were suffering from kwashiorkor (severe protein malnutrition).

When Badara was brought to us, he looked like a frail human skeleton with skin stretched taut over his too tiny frame. He had no hair. Sores covered his head and body. Since he could no longer walk, his 18-year-old aunt, Astou, had to carry him. Badara cried pitifully each time anyone tried to move his brittle, emaciated body. He was suffering not only from bronchitis and lack of protein but also from the lack of a mother's loving care.

Darla treated Badara's sores, his kwashiorkor, and his bronchitis. Then, every week or so, Badara's family brought him back for more medical care and for food supplements such as milk powder, Gofio (high protein grain-based powder), and fresh fruits. Darla also talked to Sidy about being both father and mother to his children.

Three months later Badara was well on the road to recovery. Sidy had carefully followed the instructions Darla had given him. If Badara had remained in Lambaye another week without medical care, he would have been another under-five mortality statistic. Now, Badara's eyes sparkle when Darla offers him a banana.

Glenn, Chandra (away in school), Darla, and Chayla.

Thank You for Caring

By Merrillyn McNary, a United Methodist missionary who serves with the Amity Foundation in Nanjing, China, teaching at the Jiangsu Institute of Education

Last fall, Caroline, a second-year student at the Jiangsu Institute, came to my apartment for her third conference about her term paper in English. Toward the end of the session, she asked if she could tell me something private. She had received a phone call from her mother saying that her grandfather had been diagnosed with cancer and was in a hospital for seriously ill people in Shanghai. She wanted to go to him immediately. But, as a member of the Youth League at the school, Caroline had to help make preparations and assume responsibility for a two-week-long Arts Festival. She couldn't get permission to go home, and she was afraid her grandpa would die before she could see him again.

Then God sent me to the kitchen to get half a glass of water. I set it in front of Caroline and asked: "Is the glass half full or half empty?" She smiled. "Half full, I think," she said. "See," I told her, "you will concentrate on all that you have and not worry about what you don't have." I watched her face open up and her shoulders relax. "Really?" she said. "Thank you, thank you!" As she gathered her papers to go, she said thank you at least 20 more times.

A month later, she called to tell me that she was at home with her grandpa, who was doing much better. "Thank you so much for caring about me...just for caring," she stammered, missing the words she sought but not the meaning. It's moments like this that make a loving difference in God's plan for us and everyone we touch.

"I Couldn't Live With Myself..."

By Judy Matheny, a United Methodist Church and Community Worker with the Bluewell-Keystone Cooperative Parish in West Virginia

Welfare Reform has decreased the amount of cash families have available to pay their bills and to buy cleaning supplies and extra food after spending their food stamps. As a Church and Community Worker, I have found numerous ways to share the miracle of God's love from the resources available to me. For example, last winter, I had the privilege of providing a used electric and coal stove for one young mother, plywood to fix a floor for another, and travel expenses for a third to drive to college classes.

During the summer and fall, I also helped laypeople from both parishes share God's love by working on a house. A group of four to five men replaced a floor in one room, replaced some window panes, built a porch, and made a doorway to the porch. A group of youth and their leaders scrubbed the walls and ceiling and painted one room. Earlier, when a leader had brought several of the youth to see the house so that they could decide whether or not to help paint it, one said: "I couldn't live with myself if I didn't help this family."

Three women and one woman's 21-year-old grandson painted the other six rooms and scrubbed the windows. One of the women was 80 years old. These women also got some of the family who lived in the house involved in the painting. When I went to visit the family after the painting was finished, the man said to me several times: "I never thought the place would clean up this well." To see this house before and after it was worked on was to see a miracle of what love and hard work can do.

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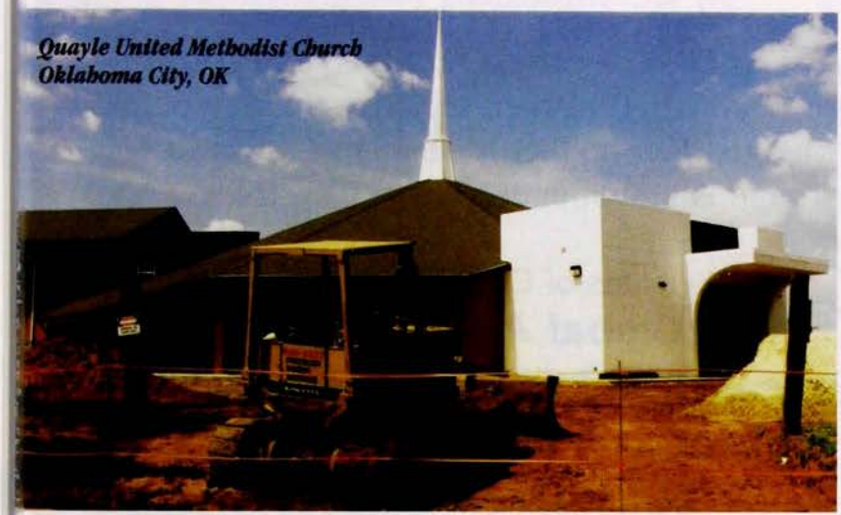

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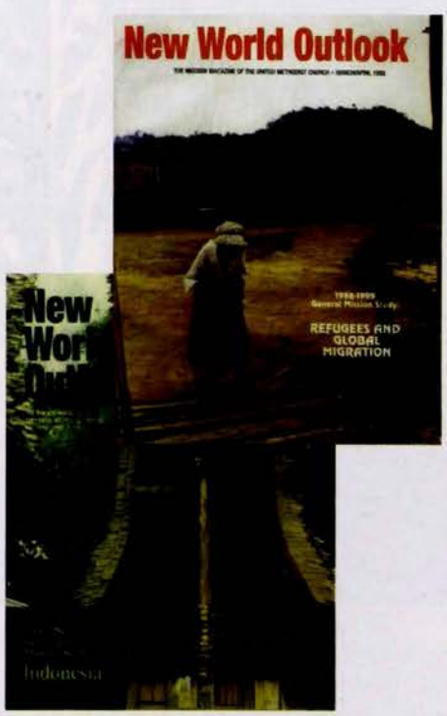

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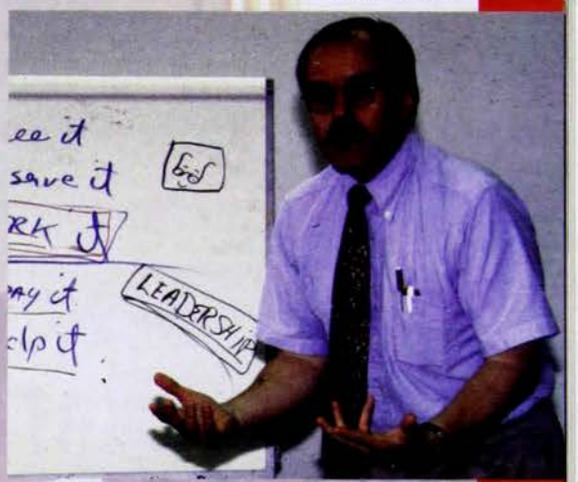

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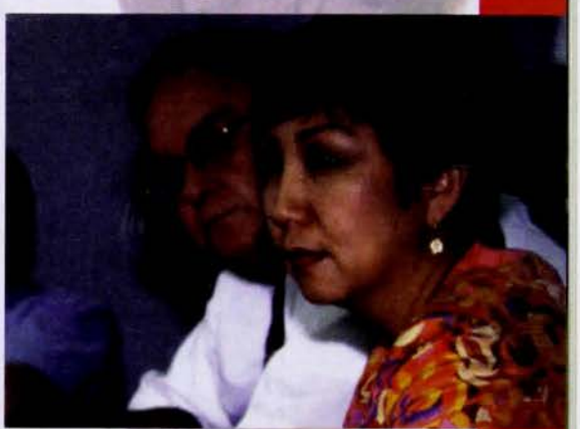

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