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**EVANGELIZATION AND
CHURCH GROWTH**

NEW WORLD OUTLOOK

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Cover Photo: Mike DuBose/UMCom. A young girl served by the Family Ministries preschool, a ministry of The United Methodist Church, Philippines Central Conference.

Making Disciples

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...."

(Matthew 28:18-19)

Jesus Christ's Great Commission gives rise to the first two goals of the General Board of Global Ministries, the mission agency of The United Methodist Church. These goals are expressed in verbal imperatives: "Witness to the Gospel for initial decision to follow Jesus Christ" and "Strengthen, develop, and renew Christian congregations and communities." Though all GBGM units work in constant support of these goals, they are particular responsibilities of the program area called Evangelization and Church Growth (ECG).

In the opening article of this issue, Robert Harman observes: "As we have acted on our commitment to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ across the full spectrum of mission, more emerging churches have been established, more people evangelized, and more outreach undertaken [during the last decade]...than at any other time in the 200 years of our church's life and witness." In fact, in the four years of its existence since the Board's 1996 restructure, ECG has been remarkably active in the development of new churches and the transformation, or revitalization, of existing churches—both reaching the unchurched and renewing present congregations.

In following Christ's commandment to *be* disciples by *making* disciples, ECG has discovered and employed many practical strategies, always emphasizing the importance of trained clergy and lay leadership. Often these innovative leaders have embarked on the Discovery Church Journey for congregational transformation, turning their churches from an inward to an outward focus. Many have used the "mother church" model for nurturing new-church starts. Some have relied on demographic studies and "ministry by walking around" to better know their neighbors. And more than a few have opened wide the church doors in welcome and moved out to witness in the streets. Whatever the circumstances, ECG provides practical and proven methods for energizing mission outreach.

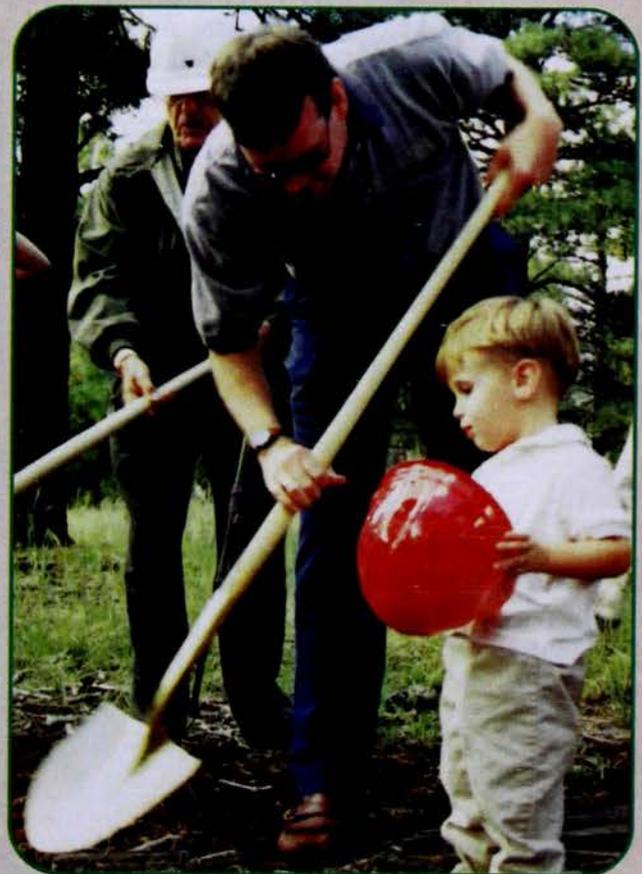
New methods have been needed to reach new, diverse constituencies that were not served effectively before. In the United States, these groups include underserved racial, ethnic, and multicultural populations; immigrant and refugee groups; people marginalized because of poverty; and people who respond to shorter, more informal worship styles. In other countries, new United Methodist churches have been started by refugees fleeing from war or by immigrants returning to their homelands—as well as by missionaries witnessing in lands long closed to Christianity.

Leading ECG over its first four productive years, Robert Harman has further advanced the work he carried on so faithfully as head of the former World Division. As he retires after 29 years of service with the GBGM, we dedicate this issue of *New World Outlook* to his evangelistic legacy.

—Alma Graham

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EVANGELIZATION IN A NEW MILLENNIUM

by Robert J. Harman

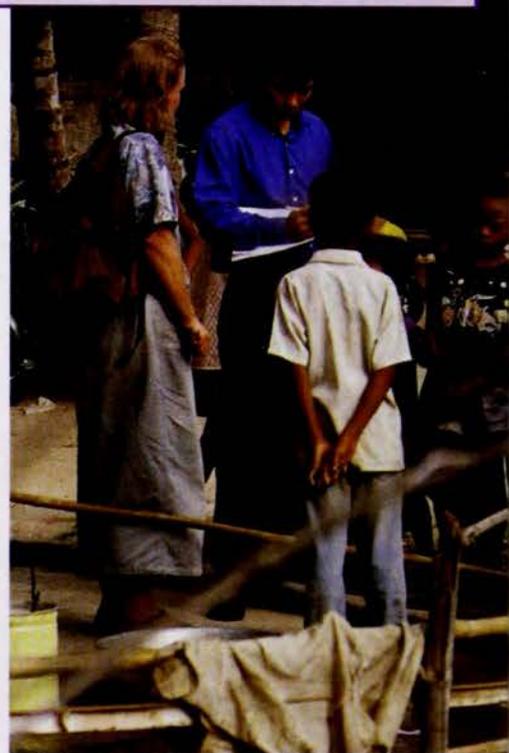
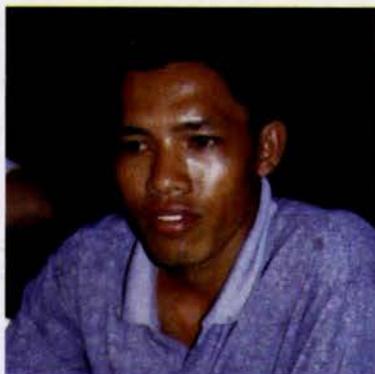
*LET THE REDEEMER'S NAME BE SUNG,
THROUGH EVERY LAND BY EVERY TONGUE.*

Isaac Watts (1781)

Isaac Watts gave poetic expression to a Psalmist's praise in one of the great hymns of our faith. Two centuries later, his words resonate among a host of witnesses who are engaged in the evangelizing task of our church's connectional mission.

United Methodists can heartily join in this doxology of praise because, through the General Board of Global Ministries and local congregations, we have just concluded the most active decade of global mission and evangelism in the history of our denomination. As we have acted on our commitment to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ across the full spectrum of mission, more emerging churches have been established, more people evangelized, and more outreach undertaken to fulfill Christ's promise of abundant life than at any other time in the 200 years of our church's life and witness.

At the dawn of a new millennium, The United Methodist Church is participating in the re-birthing of Methodist churches in nations of the former Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe. Evangelists from the growing United Methodist churches in Africa are enthusiastically taking the Gospel beyond their conference boundaries and planting churches in neighboring countries. The local congregations in the



Top: Sok Sovandy, a graduate of Phnom Penh Bible School, now a pastor in Cambodia. **Left:** The congregation of Siwongo UMC in Busia, Kenya, founded by refugees. **Above:** A new GBGM program, "In Mission Together," teams US churches with developing churches in other lands. Pastor Ouch Oeun of Chambok UMC in Cambodia receives US visitors.

Philippines are commissioned to establish outposts for ministry and organize churches in communities unserved by United Methodism. Methodist churches in Latin America are giving accompaniment to a growing number of new independent faith communities that choose Wesleyan Christianity because of its holistic Gospel. In Buddhist Cambodia, the Methodist Church was introduced by expatriate converts to the faith and is already the largest Protestant church in the country.

In every place where the sons and daughters of Wesley's movement introduce his doctrine of personal and social holiness, it is truly being received as good news. The promise of the Gospel's being celebrated "through every land and by every tongue" is being fulfilled in some untraditional ways. In the past, evangelization was primarily a missionary task until local leaders were recruited and trained. Today it is a calling warmly embraced by missionary congregations working in direct partnership with one another, with the enabling assistance of the mission agency of the church.

Mission Through Partnerships

Local United Methodist churches *with a heart for mission* are at the center of this movement. Hundreds of congregations have been recruited to join in the evangelizing work of the denomination in Russia, the Baltic States, and Eastern Europe. US conferences have formed partnerships with conferences in Africa and the Philippines. While witness to the Gospel is extended, a

deep bonding is the spiritual bonus from cultivating these church-to-church partnerships. Church members are presented with countless opportunities for intercessory prayer, financial support, occasional visits, and volunteer labor to enable and sustain the growth of other congregations in our growing global fellowship.

Many have admired this missional direction, though some still question its wisdom. For a mission administrator, there must be tolerance for the elements of confusion and miscommunication introduced by having so many hands at work in a common project. Direct management would be a lot simpler. Yet I am persuaded that there is more to this activity than is readily acknowledged.

Missionary congregations are introduced to the *global nature* of the church. The adjective *local* was never used by the New Testament church. It no longer defines our increasingly interdependent life in the global village. The economic community stamps its value upon the exchange of products in our global marketplace. Now churches can experience a value-added contribution to their faith through significant interaction within the

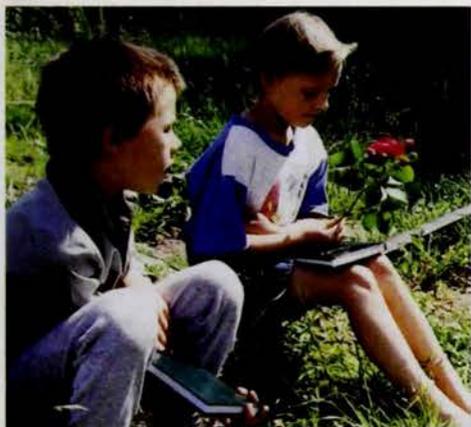
universal church. With every encounter, partner congregations are required to think their way into each other's contexts. With open minds and hearts, each receives the Gospel anew, enriched through the culture, language, and values of the partner's place and circumstance. A genuine mutuality in the evangelizing task is experienced. A member of one partner

church thanked his hosts after a two-week visit in their fellowship by saying: "You have given the Bible back to me."

A global mission relationship that is "local-to-local" in administration creates a greater appreciation for the fragile nature of mission and Christian community. Mission programs that are managed solely by

*"THE CHURCH IN THE
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OF THE 1ST CENTURY...IN
MISSION TO THE EXPANDING
WORLD COMMUNITY."*

ROBERT HARMAN 1995



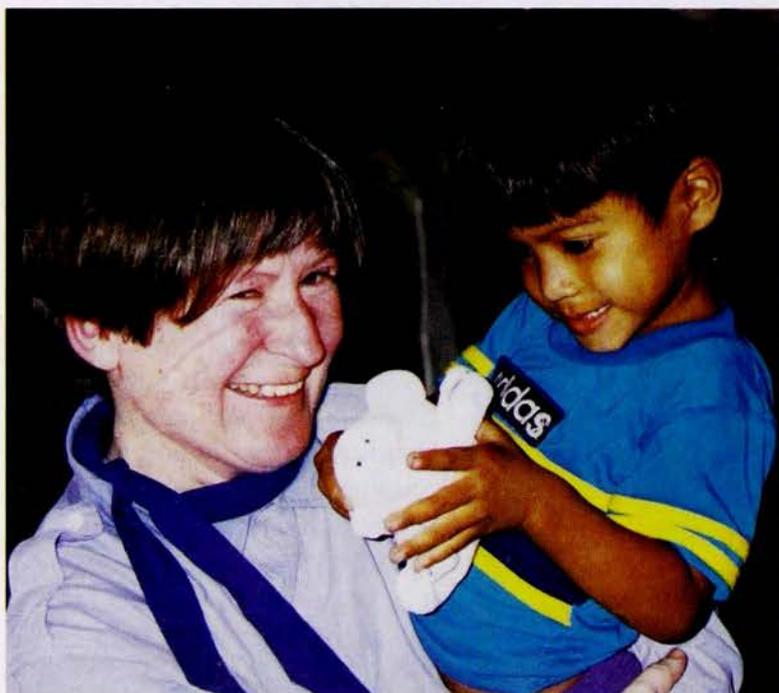
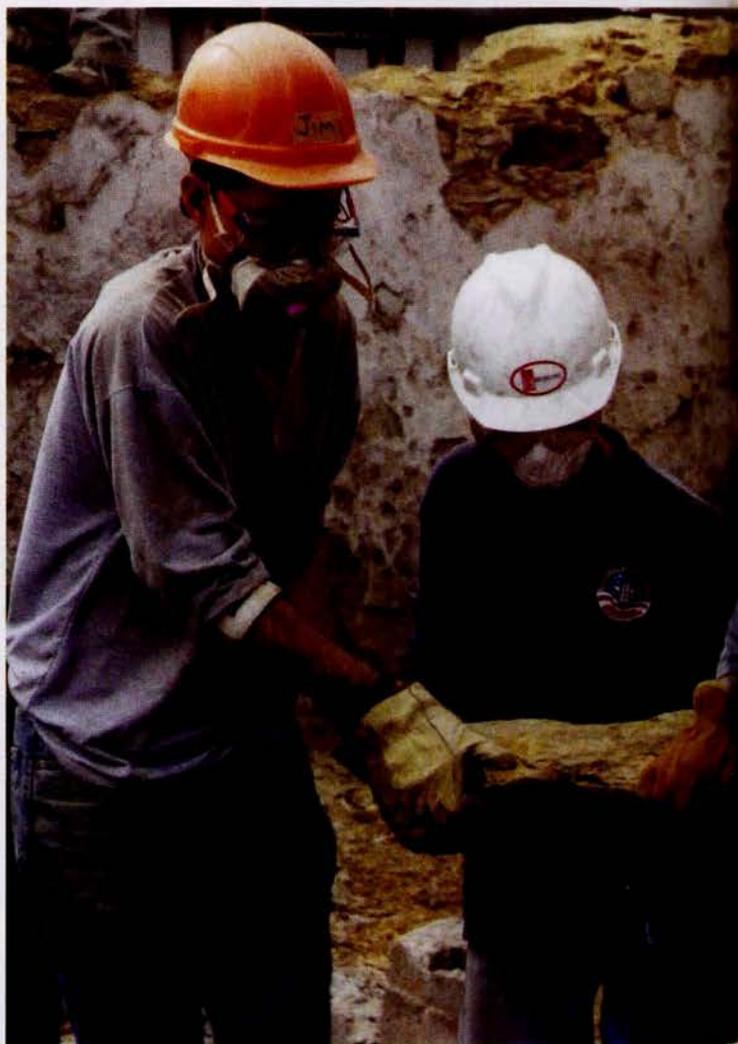
Top left: Children at an outdoor service in Lithuania hold the new Lithuanian United Methodist Hymnal. **Left:** Children in Cambodia.

denominational agencies on behalf of their constituencies protect members from the vulnerabilities of our mission together. In direct partnerships between churches, everything is exposed. Mistakes are not the private domain of the mission agency or the church bureaucracy. Human weakness is a shared commodity. In partnerships, responsibility must be mutually assumed for the various conflicts, failures, and frustrations that mark every mission engagement. There is no hiding from one another in a direct partnership. Churches engaged in mission together must embrace their weaknesses and move on by accepting God's forgiving grace.

Mission through partnerships moves forward and the grace of God impels it. Grace alone can account for the *enduring nature* of so many of the relationships. One of the longest-lasting partnerships in Africa has become the most innovative. Operation Classroom—supported by United Methodists in Indiana and in several other conferences—is in the second decade of its work with mission schools in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Throughout this period, both countries have been politically unstable, causing the good work accomplished to be destroyed or halted by military conflicts. Undaunted, the partnership finds new challenges in flexibility. The work is relocated in the refugee camps, where United Methodist churches are newly planted and schools are established in temporary shelters. Most important, the hope of the people is sustained.

Opening Methodism's Doors

In looking to local churches to lead in mission and evangelization, personnel recruitment goes beyond the traditional candidates for the vocation of missionary.



Top: Schools, hospitals, and churches destroyed during Liberia's civil war must be rebuilt. **Above, pp. 6-7:** A Volunteers In Mission (VIM) team works in East Germany. **Above left:** The Rev. Brigitte Keane works with the "In Mission Together" program in Cambodia.

One example is in Indochina, where United Methodist ministries are emerging because of the *recognition of the gifts* for ministry among expatriate personnel. United Methodists from Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos are leading the denomination back to their homelands to share the Christian faith. As refugees, these new United Methodists were not always welcomed by the structures of a church that failed to be sensitive to cultural differences. They were not treated as equals when sharing worship or program space in our local church facilities or seeking admittance into our institutions of learning or into the itinerant ministry. Nevertheless, these sisters and brothers are opening wide the doors of Methodism to their families



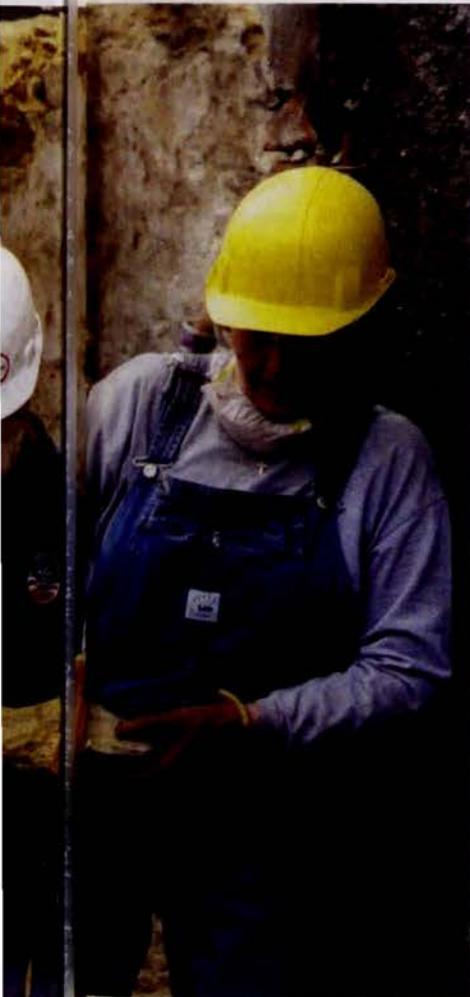
and friends in their countries of origin. The United Methodist witness to the Gospel is being extended to these lands and preached in new tongues only because of forgiving grace, with or without repentance.

Missionary Congregations

I am convinced that what the church is experiencing today, in the renewal of its evangelizing mission, is truly the power of God working for the redemption of the whole world. The theology, organizational structure, and vision of The United Methodist Church notwithstanding, we are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. How else do we explain the activity on so many fronts or interpret the unexplainable joy of congregations and individuals who are invited into direct participation in this mission? Are not missionary congregations a vital part of the transforming work of God in our world? They are seeing with their own eyes the formation of Christian lives, the reformation of church bodies, and the transformation of the communities touched by people of faith answering a call to global mission in the name of Jesus Christ. The Great Commission is being given a new manifestation by congregations stepping forward to lead the church into the new millennium, where all might see and celebrate the Redeemer's name sung in every tongue. □

*OPEN
WIDE THE
DOORS OF
METHODISM*

Robert J. Harman has served as a deputy general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries, assigned to Evangelization and Church Growth and Community and Institutional Ministries. He is now retiring.



Top left: The Rev. Robert Harman **Above, right:** The Cambodia Initiative Gathering held in June 2000 at the Community United Methodist Church in Jackson Heights, New York.

Trends in NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

by Clinton E. Parker



"It's my first time, so this church planting is very new to me," said the Rev. Kevin Deckard. His new congregation in a fast-growing section of Amarillo, Texas, began worshipping at a school in January 2000. That beginning for Westover Fellowship Church followed six months of recruiting members and of holding core-group meetings for visioning, discernment, Bible study, and planning.

With 50 members, Westover Fellowship Church averaged 70 in worship attendance over the summer, offering contemporary music,

A construction worker prepares cement for the new Grace United Methodist Church in Manila, Philippines.

an abbreviated liturgy, and informal attire. Deckard, a former small-business owner, preaches in a polo shirt and slacks. Although he hopes for more cultural diversity, for now he has a mostly White, upper-middle-class congregation, ranging in age from couples in their 20s to middle-aged baby boomers to a few folks nearing 70. Many members are active in Bible study, spiritual formation, and outreach ministries.

Despite overall membership losses in the denomination, the starting of new churches and faith communities¹ is becoming a dynamic trend in United Methodism across the United States. Annual conferences—stretching from New York and Florida to Texas, California, and the Pacific Northwest—are planning to start more than 300 new congregations in the coming decades. The Desert Southwest Conference initiated nine new-church starts during this past summer. And the Virginia Conference recently approved an \$8.5 million

campaign to establish 22 new congregations over the next seven years.

Why are we starting new churches? For the most part, new churches reach new people. Evangelizing new populations in new churches or communities of faith is an integral part of proclaiming the Gospel and carrying out Christ's Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." (Matt. 28:19a) During one recent year in the West Michigan Annual Conference, one out of every seven people who came to Christ on confession of faith did so in a new church. In North Georgia, more than 70 percent of the people who recently joined new churches had not belonged to any church in the past five years. For these and other conferences, mostly in the Sunbelt states, new churches are the chief contributing factor both in building up church membership and in increasing attendance.

It is easy to see how starting new churches and new faith communities is proving to be an effective method of evangelization. But existing churches can also reap new members, gain new excitement, and learn new outreach techniques when a conference emphasizes innovative new-church development. Moreover, new members generally attend worship more frequently than long-term members do and are faithful in providing financial support. What, then, are the key factors in effective new-church ministry?

Key # 1: Leadership

"I've read lots of books, attended workshops, and visited other new-church pastors to learn how to do this," said the Rev. Deckard of Amarillo. One venue that he found to be helpful was the School of Congregational Development. This is a week-long national training event cosponsored annually by the

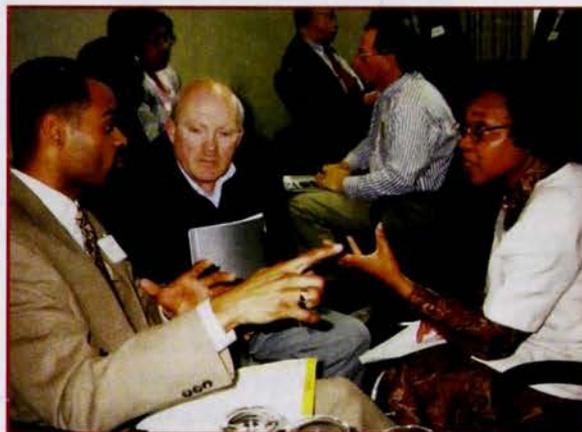
general boards of Global Ministries and Discipleship. More than 240 people attended two sessions during 1999—including clergy, laity, conference staff, and district superintendents. More were expected for the August 2000 school in Kansas City, Missouri.



The August 1999 school in Baltimore, Maryland, affirmed much of what Deckard knew, but it also taught him a few things. "I learned how to do a demographics study in order to understand and appeal to the residents in our target area," he recalled. "And I learned that I shouldn't be in a hurry to build our church facility. Others build too soon and then get into trouble. It's usually best to wait until the average worship attendance reaches 250 to 300."

School participants learn how to develop strong core groups, innovative church programs, community-based ministries, and marketing strategies. But they also learn that the first key to successful new-church development is capable leadership. Not everyone can start a new church effectively. Having a talent for it helps, but training and preparation make the difference.

At one time, many annual conferences would purchase land in a growing area, would recruit a young pastor—often just out of



Top: A small Westover UMC Bible-study group meets in a home in Amarillo, Texas. **Above:** An event promoting new church development in the African American community. **Above left:** The Rev. Clint Parker.

seminary—and would provide a thick book of local demographics. Some such church starts were successful, but many failed. The average new church started in the 1980s had more than three pastors within its first 10 years.

Now the trend is to place greater emphasis on identifying, training, and equipping leaders, both clergy and lay. More leaders are now learning a strategic process for church development *before* being sent out to gather congregations. For example, the Western Jurisdiction has invested in its own training academy, where 150 leaders have been instructed during the last four years, with support from



Groundbreaking for a new Family Life Worship Center at Trinity Heights UMC in Flagstaff, Arizona.

the Evangelization and Church Growth program area of the General Board of Global Ministries.

Congregational-development staff in the other jurisdictions also meet annually to network, share insights, and explore training possibilities. Many annual conferences have developed their own training initiatives. Several seminaries—including Duke University Divinity School and Boston University School of Theology—also offer new-church-development training opportunities. Even some large, successful congregations, having a reputation as teaching churches, hold seminars and training events on new church development and on church revitalization.

Perhaps the most important aspect of all these training opportunities is the beneficial networking that occurs. Participants seek out peer mentors and comrades—often from other conferences—for ideas, candid insights, and much-needed encouragement. Thus, across the United States, a pool of trained, committed leaders is emerging—

people able to apply their learning wherever they are in ministry.

Meanwhile, the 2000 General Conference decided to require a course on evangelism for all candidates for ministry. Even before this was voted, the Evangelism Foundation had successfully placed evangelism professors in most United Methodist seminaries in the United States and Europe and at Africa University in Zimbabwe.

Key # 2: Reach New People

The United Methodist Church has been described as largely an aging, White, middle-class, suburban denomination. In the past, new-church starts focused on finding and embracing new members very much like the old—the exception being a search for younger and middle-aged families in areas of population growth.

Now this pattern is changing. Reaching new people has come to mean reaching new, diverse constituencies. The expanding racial-ethnic population in the United States—especially among African

Americans and Hispanics—may turn Americans of European ancestry into a minority in just a generation. This fact has spurred some of the US annual conferences to start new churches among people of color in urban and suburban communities and among residents of poor and low-income communities as well. For many annual conferences, that type of intentional outreach requires

becoming more sensitive and responsive to the needs, concerns, gifts, and assets of people not ordinarily pursued for membership in the denomination. It also means dealing with justice issues within the community and the annual conference. The usual problem areas in the conference include conflicts in sharing facilities, inequitable salaries, difficult cross-cultural and cross-racial appointments, a lack of contextual leadership recruitment and training, unrealistic expectations, and inadequate support.

Moreover, many annual conferences realized only recently that churches need to be started not only in high-growth areas but in all demographic sectors. Over the past five years, in the great majority of ZIP-code areas in the United States, between 25 and 33 percent of the population has been made up of new people moving in.

Immigrant and refugee groups are also receiving increased attention from US churches. Some new arrivals bring with them the enthusiasm of their churches back home,

while others form new church ties here that some take back to their homelands. Several conferences have been engaged in ministry with Hispanic immigrants for some time. New United Methodist congregations and faith groups are also being born among Russians, Koreans, immigrants from many African nations, and other newcomers. In fact, Cambodian American United Methodist churches, most of which were started in the 1980s, have been of pivotal importance in the new Cambodia Initiative, which has birthed over 150 new faith communities in Cambodia itself.

What Lies Ahead?

Reaching out to all God's children requires leaders to go beyond existing church-start examples to explore new models that force them to think creatively. The "Churches Starting Churches" strategy uses a satellite model. A strong local church parents a new community

of faith that may eventually be chartered as a new church. Annual conferences such as Desert Southwest and West Michigan are helping to resource and guide such grassroots endeavors rather than initiating them.

Some inspiration for the satellite model comes from the United Methodist Church in the Philippines. It more than doubled its membership during the last decade, thanks largely to the evangelistic outreach of churches commissioned to go forth and start faith communities.

Three years ago, First United Methodist Church in the small town of Bend, Oregon, had a vision of starting a new congregation in the nearby town of Redmond. The First Church congregation responded through prayer, financial contributions, and shared leadership. Several members who commuted from Redmond agreed to be part of the new congregation. Momentum grew as they joined other residents

to mobilize a core group for Bible study and planning. Later, they began holding worship services. A laywoman from the parent church provided part-time leadership. This laywoman is now preparing to study for ordination.

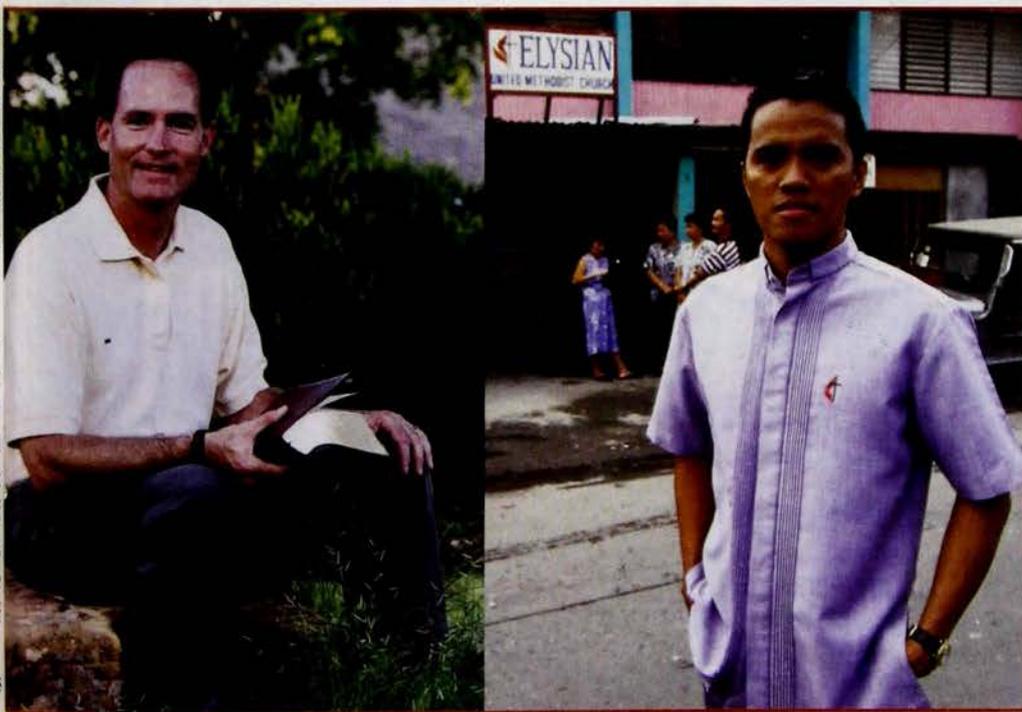
While still officially a part of First UMC, the new faith community contributes to its own financial support as it develops its own vision for ministry and mission. Last summer, the vacation church school attracted 25 children and several new families. The Pacific-Northwest Conference began to make small grants for assistance. Now the new faith community has decided to work toward becoming an independent, chartered church.

Across the United Methodist connection, new-church development is now considered a crucial part of the denomination's mission. Annual conferences and congregations are providing support. They are preparing pastors, providing needed resources, identifying new populations, and doing conference-wide planning.

Starting new churches in the right way—with the necessary support, training, and tools—enables congregations to fulfill Jesus' purpose as stated in John 15:16: "I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." □

1 A faith community is a fellowship of believers who gather for worship, Bible study, and other ministries but are not chartered as a full-fledged church.

Clinton E. Parker is executive secretary for New Church Development, Evangelization and Church Growth program area, General Board of Global Ministries.



Left: The Rev. Kevin Deckard of Westover Fellowship UMC in Amarillo, Texas. **Right:** Homer Letana, pastor of Elysian United Methodist Church in the Philippines.

REACHING THE UNCHURCHED



In Edgewater Village, a neglected community near Baltimore, a former army officer, the Rev. Charles Wilson, spends his days meeting residents and inviting them to

join the fledgling New Hope Christian Fellowship. He takes to heart the Baltimore-Washington Conference challenge to be "holy and bold" in sharing the Gospel and calling others to Christ.

Of the 8000 residents in Edgewater Village, more than a quarter are children, and two-thirds live on incomes near or below the poverty level, amid rampant crime, substance abuse, and violence. During one week last May, Wilson led his 12-member core group on a nightly "Jericho Walk" through the community—a witness to the participants' faith in preparation for an upcoming tent revival. Quietly carrying banners and flags, they came upon a crime scene where a murder victim's body had just been discovered by police. At their urging, stunned onlookers came forward and joined them in public prayer, kneeling on the ground as Wilson fervently invoked God's presence in the midst of a community in turmoil.

During the course of the seven-day walk, Wilson turned and saw about 40 more people, mostly children, marching with them. Other residents shouted from their doorways: "Praise the Lord! Thank you for praying for us!" On the seventh night, at the blowing of the shofar (ram's-horn trumpet), those who had gathered made a joyful noise to the Lord—just as the Israelites did at Jericho to signal the Lord's victory over enemy strongholds. During the following week, the sheriff leading the investigation at the murder scene came to the tent revival to worship with the New Hope Christian Fellowship.

Mission in an Open Field

"This place is a mission field that many other churches haven't shown much interest in, beyond basic outreach ministries," Wilson noted. "It wouldn't pass a feasibility assessment for a new-church start. But we feel called by God to plant this church here for members of the community and to stand up and speak out with them to bring about peace and justice."

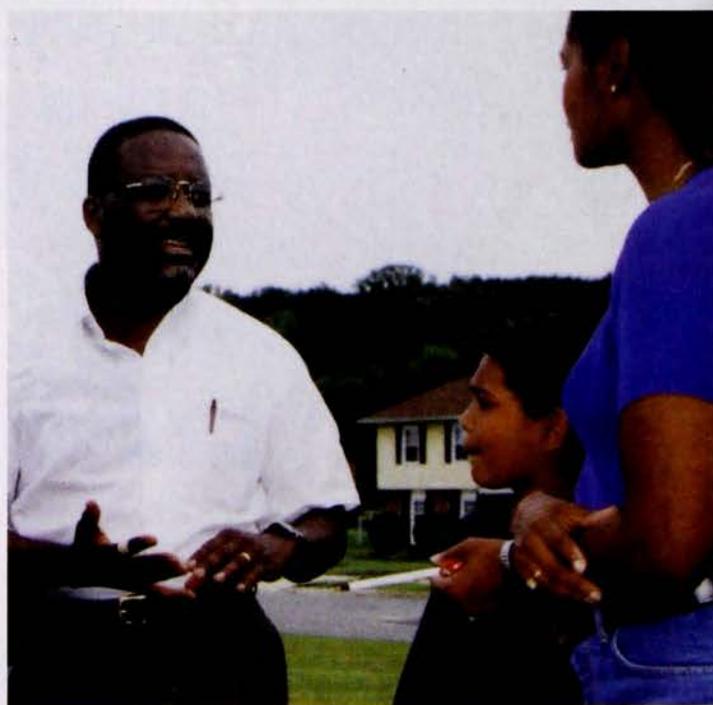
There are no schools, few stores, and no other churches in this fenced-in community. Using a sound system to draw attention, the fellowship holds worship services in the only convenient gathering place available: an open field. Wilson and others hold Bible studies in homes and offer Christian education, counseling, mentoring, and other outreach ministries. The growing acceptance they find inspires them.

"Whenever I come into this community," said Wilson, who lives minutes away, "I expect to be different when I come out, and I always am."

Pursuing Mission Initiatives

New Hope Christian Fellowship is one of 22 mission initiatives of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Led by Bishop Felton E. May, these initiatives represent an intentional effort to plant new ministries and extend existing ones into communities where significant unchurched populations reside. The conference Board of Congregational Life is providing moral and financial support, a committed cadre of volunteers known as Mission Disciples, and developmental expertise to help these promising initiatives reach their potential.

"Two-thirds of the population within our conference boundaries—3.4 million people—are currently not committed to any faith community," said the Rev.



Top: The Pathway Band plays for the first Sunday of worship at Pathway UMC. **Above:** The Rev. Charles Wilson helps Sherri Fuget sign up her son for Vacation Bible School.

HE the Baltimore-Washington Conference

by John Coleman

Edwin DeLong, associate director of church development. "We're helping ministries create new settings and strategies for reaching the unchurched."

Indeed, after decades of sporadic efforts, the conference has increased its annual budget for new-church development from \$30,000 to \$1.5 million and is clearly on a mission in this area. Working with district superintendents and district boards of church location and building, the Board of Congregational Life each year examines demographics, population trends, and other factors to identify "hot spots." Then it does feasibility studies and focus-group interviews in those areas.

The conference cabinet selects about four "hot spots" to pursue as mission initiatives in the coming year, with some emphasis on reaching people in poor and marginalized communities and in racial-ethnic neighborhoods. Then it appoints staff and commits to five years of funding support.

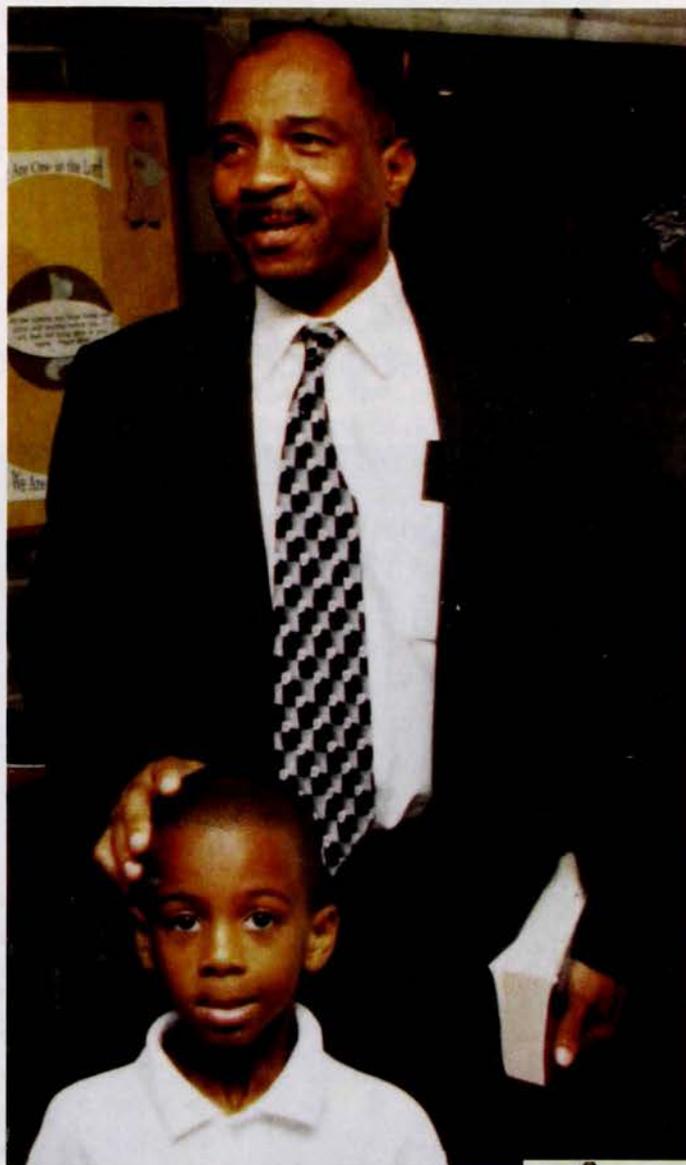
This year's mission initiatives are in urban, rural, and suburban areas of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. At least 14 of the 22 are new-church starts and faith communities, planted and growing fast in areas whose residents are of African, East Indian, European, Hispanic, Korean, or Russian descent.

Two mission initiatives involve community developers. One is helping to revitalize a Washington, DC, inner-city Shalom Zone. The other—in Urbana, Maryland—is exploring opportunities for developing a new congregation amid the construction of 3500 homes, a school, and a shopping center. In several other churches, new ministerial staff have been deployed.

Also important is the material and moral support that the pastors working in mission initiatives receive from one another. For example, Wilson—whose salary is paid by the conference but who is responsible for raising program dollars—relies on a supportive network of pastors and laity from other churches for advice, fundraising assistance, and volunteers.

Leadership Development

Leadership development and training are key to all these mission enterprises. So the conference sponsors frequent workshops that teach district and local church leaders how to discern where churches and new ministries are needed, how to access and use resources, and how to foster church growth and transformation. Of the conference training Wilson received for creating Communities of Shalom, he says: "We learned to approach everybody and everything as an asset for



Inset: *New Life United Methodist Church meets in the former Parkside United Methodist Church building. Above:* David Loudon is a "Mission Disciple" assigned to the church by the Baltimore-Washington Conference.



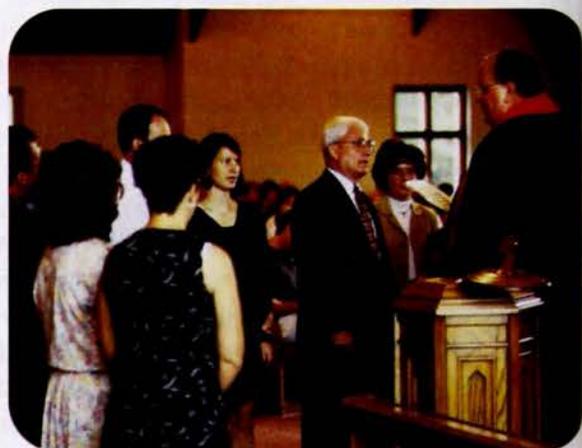
community development—local government and businesses, schools, community leaders, and especially the people. Shalom taught us that we are not bringing God to the community; we are coming to find God already there, already making a difference in people's lives." □

John W. Coleman is a freelance writer and communications consultant to the Evangelization and Church Growth program area of the General Board of Global Ministries.



CONGREGATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Through the Discovery Church Journey *by Deborah E. Bass*



The church is the only society in the world that exists for its nonmembers.

Those words were spoken in the early 1900s by William Temple, then Archbishop of Canterbury. They pose an awesome challenge to any congregation that wants to engage in evangelization: sharing the Gospel of Christ with the world. Evangelization calls for a life devoted to others rather than to one's own well-being, comfort, and self-esteem. Jesus Christ lived and died for others, but his example is hard to follow.

Somewhere along the way, many churches forget about their call to exist for nonmembers. They begin focusing their

Left and above: Members of the congregation of Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church worship on a Sunday morning. **Top right:** Herbierto Leon and Miguel Torres. **Above right:** The Rev. Warren Lathern (far right) performs a baptism at Mt. Pisgah UMC in the North Georgia Conference.

activities, concerns, and ministries inward. Pastors begin functioning as chaplains or caretakers of self-contained congregations. Members want more of their pastors' attention focused on the pews and less on the parish. As inward-looking Christians, they want to have their own needs fulfilled. Eventually, such inward-focused congregations lose their way. They cease to bear fruit and they begin to wither on the vine.

Seeking a cure for this all-too-common syndrome can be difficult. But restoring an outward focus is crucial to the health of our churches if we are to carry out Christ's Great Commission to go and make disciples. The Evangelization and Church Growth program area of the General Board of Global Ministries is a resource for church transformation and renewal. It is trying to help in that search by introducing a process of congregational revitalization called "The Discovery Church Journey." This four-part process calls for discernment, discovery, design, and decision. The process helps a church become aware of and responsive to its community. It guides a church in doing ministry from the outside in. Several churches are beginning to test the program this fall.

Finding an Outward Focus

Dick Wills, Senior Minister of Christ United Methodist Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, literally illustrates the way an outward focus transforms a church. He draws a picture of a person with arrows pointing toward the person's heart. This represents the way his church's members used to be—inward-looking, seeking the fulfillment of their own needs. But through a process of transformation, which took Christ Church years to accomplish, the arrows turned themselves around. They

began to point outward once church members changed direction and turned their attention to ministry and mission with nonmembers and the unchurched.

The life and health of the local church relates directly to the vitality of its ministry and mission. Ministry begins with the nurture of a church's greatest resource: its members. A vital, outward-focused church does not nurture its members merely by keeping them comfortable. Instead, it promotes their spiritual growth, directs them in discipleship, and helps advance their maturation as servants of Christ. This enables them to discover and realize their call to ministry, chiefly through a new involvement in mission.

Getting Involved in Mission

Mission is the congregation's ministry, through service and witness, to the community and the world. The church's charge is to proclaim the reign of God both within and outside the circle of the faithful, working through ministries that improve the quality of life for all.

A congregation in North Georgia began its process of transformation by offering to host an after-school program for children. Church growth paralleled this outward focus. First, the after-school program grew into a primary school. Then the primary school expanded, adding on a secondary school. Because the church was mission-oriented, addressing the needs of the community, it drew new people to its worship services. They came to experience the spirit and the vitality of this outward-focused church. In this way, over a span of 15 years, a small congregation was transformed into a large-membership church.

When a church fulfills its calling, it serves as an agent of change. It attends to congregation members'

needs in order to enhance their promise as ministers of Christ. And it attends to the needs of the community and the world in order to fulfill the promise of its mission. In a vital church, ministry undergirds mission, and mission infuses every aspect of ministry.

Seeking Those Outside

Jesus talked about seeking and finding those who were outside the faith community. He taught us the importance of finding the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost or prodigal child at all costs (Luke 15:3-32). When questioned about the company he kept, Jesus said that he had "come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Matt. 9:13b). The Discovery Church Journey teaches a church to exist for its nonmembers—to look and learn and live beyond its doors.

This journey engages a leadership team from a local church in a week-to-week process that analyzes what it means to be a church in North America at the present time. The team follows a curriculum of Bible study, prayerful discernment, community analysis, planning, and implementation to *discover* the mission to which God is calling the church today.

The Discovery Church Model for Congregational Transformation

- Helps a congregation move from an inward focus to an outward focus.
- Helps congregations "see" the mission in their midst—using demographic data, insight into trends, and self-assessment.
- Fosters hospitality and fellowship.
- Provides opportunities for conversations about faith.
- Leads people to discover God, their faith, their gifts, and the church's call to ministry.

Can you imagine what the church would look like if it existed for its nonmembers? Can you imagine being driven by the desire to serve the needs of others rather than having *your* needs satisfied? What would happen if not only you but the entire church believed that way, lived that way, served Christ that way? How would you act toward a visitor to the church if your whole focus of ministry were geared to nonmembers? How would you view the church's programs, property, and finances?

Passing on the Gift

As followers of Christ, we have the most precious gift ever given to human beings: the gift of fellowship with God through Jesus. It is a gift to us that we are meant to give away to others.

A church in Texas became revitalized through its involvement with relief efforts in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch. A steady stream of volunteer work teams from this church traveled to Central America to rebuild homes. Through the relationships that were built with the Hondurans in this cross-cultural experience, many church members

from Texas found their lives transformed. And, thanks to the church's new missional orientation, the attendance at worship quadrupled from 500 to 2000.

A church that exists for its nonmembers has a wide focus to its ministry. That focus includes unchurched people in the community. It encompasses visitors to worship services, Sunday school classes, and community events. It embraces the parents whose children attend the church's preschool but who don't attend worship themselves. It takes in those whom members come to know through outreach to the homeless, the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned, the lonely. Members of such a church view almost every ministry they undertake within the church as part of the church's outward mission. The musicians, the Christian educators, the ushers—all feel compelled to take their respective ministries out of the sanctuary into the community.

At a middle-sized church in the mid-Atlantic region, transformation occurred when a congregation whose members were of European descent began to welcome all who lived

in the church's community. Through a series of church gatherings that celebrated the different cultures in the area, the church learned not only to embrace ethnic diversity but to celebrate it in Bible studies, worship, and youth fellowship. Worship attendance grew by 60 percent.

In the Discovery Church Journey, every aspect of ministry is an opportunity for someone to encounter Christ, to discover the abundant life Jesus promised, and to develop a deeper spirituality. Some people are already a part of the Discovery Church revitalization process. If enough others come to embrace this model, the denomination will never again have to be concerned about membership growth, for God will add to its numbers daily. Nor does such a church have to be concerned about finances, for God will provide abundantly.

In helping churches turn from an inward to an outward focus, the Discovery Church Journey can lead them to become the kind of missional congregations that God is calling them to be. □

Deborah E. Bass is an associate general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries, assigned to Evangelization and Church Growth and to Community and Institutional Ministries

Classic Protestant *Model of Evangelization*

1. Presentation of the Gospel in a large worship service
2. Decision by the hearer soon after the presentation
3. Helping people belong so that they can believe
4. Fellowship

Discovery Church *Model of Evangelization*

1. Fellowship
2. Conversations and teaching in small groups
3. Inspired belief—then commitment over time
4. Helping people believe so that they can belong

Welcoming Seekers: Diamondhead Church

by Elizabeth Haak



Bert Wilson works on the floor of the new Diamondhead UMC gym.

In 1997, Barbara Greaves of Diamondhead, Mississippi, was on a spiritual search. "I was ready to get closer to God," she recalls. Barbara and her husband Ken had been raised Catholic but stopped attending church in their teens. Now in their 30s, the couple tried going to a nearby Catholic church. Barbara describes it as "beautiful on the outside but cold inside," adding: "No one spoke one word of welcome!" Then a friend took Barbara to a startup United Methodist church. She laughs now, noting that "the people were so kind, I thought something was wrong with them!" But Barbara kept coming back, and after a month, Ken came too. Soon, at Ken's suggestion, the couple joined the church.

"I welcome seekers," says the Rev. Jeff Pruett. When he was appointed in 1996, about 35 people were attending services held in a community center. This group had been meeting for several years, according to Jerry Chapman, cluster coordinator of the six-county Seashore District along Route I-10. As Chapman recalls, a pastor in the area believed that a United Methodist church was needed in Diamondhead, a planned community of upper-middle-class homes.

In this community of mostly Caucasian white-collar professionals, some residents are retired, but many commute to work at the NASA Space Center. Some even drive 60 miles to New Orleans. Pruett found that about 72 percent of the community was unchurched.

"The folks 50-years-old and under were missing," he reports. So Pruett convinced his small group of the faithful to think big. A 12,400 square-foot facility for 400 people was planned for a 7-acre site. Funding came in part from the Mississippi Conference. The groundbreaking took place on April 27, 1997, and six months later the Celebration Center was complete. About 80 percent of the work was done by "unpaid servants," including local members as well as folks from all over the country. The United Methodist Men of the Southeast Jurisdiction coordinated the volunteers' efforts.

Today, membership has grown to 150. The average age is the mid-

30s. Most members are married with children.

One reason for such growth is lay-empowered ministry.

In 1998, the church moved from an administrative-council format to five leadership teams, each with an unpaid lay pastor. The Evangelism Commission was abolished. Instead, each team and each small study group or prayer group has one empty chair at every meeting. As Pruett explains: "Members are asked who might be invited to fill that chair next time. Everyone is responsible for evangelism. Our responsibility lies with those who are not here yet."

Two different worship experiences are offered. The 8:00 A.M. Heritage Service is traditional, while the 10:00 A.M. Celebration Service is a high-energy multimedia experience, meant to engage people who may not have been raised in a church or who have been away for a long time.

Today, Barbara and Ken Greaves use their talents in many capacities at Diamondhead. But one of Barbara's favorite roles is being a greeter. "Now I'm the one who wants to make people feel welcome," she says. □

Elizabeth Haak is a freelance writer living in New York City.



Getting to Know the Community

by Joe D. Connelly

It is surprising that so many churches plan their outreach ministries from the inside out. Members meet at the church or at a distant retreat site to discuss what programs and services they want to offer their community. All too often, their decisions are based on casual observation, mere supposition, or—worse—their own limited interests, tight budgets, or busy schedules. While the results may be much-appreciated handouts of food and clothing, along with recreation and tutoring for youth, some crucial community needs and opportunities may easily be overlooked.

At Cornerstone United Methodist Church—which I formerly served in a middle-class section of New Orleans, Louisiana—we noticed that many people were coming to our food bank from low-income neighborhoods. They had to come by taxicab or in friends' cars because bus service was not available in their area. Thus, after doing a survey and demographic study of our community, we decided to close our food bank and to reopen it at a community center closer to the inner city. At Cornerstone, we started a food co-op service instead.

Research and Discovery

Some initial research to discover what people live in the church's surrounding community and what their needs, concerns, and capabilities are can help your church develop a more effective outreach ministry. One successful church where I went to talk about community-based ministry had already spent several years developing an impressive strategic plan. The church leaders had revamped their administrative structure and financial procedures. They had created vision groups and had empowered the laity to become "holy and bold" in their approach



Opposite, p. 18: Ella Broom and her son Lorenzo on the Anti-Drug Walk through the community, sponsored by Mt Zion United Methodist Church in Mississippi. **Above:** Joe Connelly introduces the Discovery Church Journey at Ben Hill UMC, Atlanta, Georgia.

to doing ministry. There was only one problem: Everything was focused on the needs, concerns, and convenience of church members. Few if any of them lived in the low-income, underdeveloped neighborhood adjacent to the church.

After some rethinking, church leaders are now doing a thorough community assessment to get to know their neighborhood. They are using demographic statistics, population profiles, survey questionnaires, and close observation. By studying demographics, church leaders can learn the typical age groups, education and income levels, family structures, occupations, leisure activities, consumer patterns, and churchgoing preferences among their neighbors. Knowing such facts can help a church recognize opportunities and obstacles as it seeks to plan realistic goals and strategies.

The church leaders I visited are also having face-to-face encounters with community residents and leaders, business owners, police officers, school administrators, and other service providers in their area. As a result, church members are beginning to know their church's neighbors: who they are, what they care about, and what gifts and assets they have to offer. Just as important, the members are learning what their neighbors think of them.

The next goal for some will be encouraging local residents to feel that the church welcomes them and is responsive to their needs. In fact, imminent plans to construct a gleaming new church facility are being reviewed with an eye toward also helping to develop area housing and small businesses. This would enhance the community as well as the church.

Ministry by Walking Around

Engaging in face-to-face conversations with neighbors from all walks of life can provide pastors and laity with important insights into a community's make-up, its range of views and experiences, and its hidden assets and problem areas. These conversations require going to the places people frequent, such as hair salons, barber shops, grocery stores, parks, gyms, and bus stops. It is a process I call "ministry by walking around." This term paraphrases the popular, hands-on model of business management. Even more, it resembles the *modus operandi* of Jesus of Nazareth.

The twofold purpose here is to observe and be observed. While actively looking at and listening to the community for enlightenment, church members should also be seen walking around the neighborhood, conversing with residents. Such visibility may inspire public acceptance, candor, and interest in the church's efforts. In addition, members may discover areas where unchurched people can be found and where target groups may be reached with special ministries.

The Unofficial Leader

While it is important to meet and engage local political, business, and religious figures, the most respected person in the area may be an unofficial community leader, such as a store owner, a teacher, or a public-housing resident. This may be someone who has cared for, counseled, and helped raise families—who sustains and interprets the community's cultural traditions—who knows its past and seems to know its future.

A church interested in doing vital community ministry should seek out the area's unofficial leader, get acquainted, and convey the church's vision and purpose. The congregation should cultivate the unofficial community leader, with the aim of forming a genuine friendship and providing mutual support.

From the Outside In

Ministry by walking around and demographic analysis are part of an outreach process that works from the outside in. The objectives of this process are to understand and show sensitivity to the community, to learn from the people, and to develop mutually supportive relationships that can lead to more effective ministry. □

Joe D. Connelly is a congregational development consultant for the Evangelization and Church Growth program area of the General Board of Global Ministries. He is pastor of Celebration UMC, a new-church start in Raleigh, NC. For demographic data, contact the Office of Planning and Research, GBGM, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 300, NY, NY 10115.

Ministry With All God's Children

by Janet Wolf



The Rev. Janet Wolf was pastor of Hobson United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tennessee, until June and is now on sabbatical. She chaired the Tennessee Conference Task Force on Ministry With the Poor and Marginalized. This article is adapted from a speech at a 1999 Global Consultation on Evangelization in Atlanta, Georgia.

By a unanimous vote in 1994, the Tennessee Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church declared that ministry with those who are impoverished and marginalized would be the conference priority. It was a priority deeply rooted in the Bible and in our Wesleyan heritage. It led us to undertake ministry *with* people rather than ministry *to* or *for* them.

A neighbor rests near Hobson United Methodist Church in Nashville.

The church is very good at doing things *for* people, but we are not very good at proximity and partnership. There is a big difference between dragging folks into your soup kitchen and simply hanging out with them on the street corner. There is a difference between bringing others into the church so that they can be like *you* and becoming immersed in someone else's struggle.

Things change for you when you hang out with people and become partners with them. Suppose you are tutoring children in a low-income neighborhood. When you begin to see that your

pupils are gifted, bright, talented children, yet realize that many of them are flunking out of school, it pushes you to challenge and change the public-school system. When you begin to know people's hopes and fears, dreams and struggles, you move into the fight for justice.

If you redefine everything in light of this new priority—being present with people and in partnership with them, being concerned with justice rather than charity—everything changes. Children's ministry becomes redefined as ministry with *all* God's children—the children hanging out on the streets, not just those that an adult brings to church. Trustees begin to ask: In a world where so many people are homeless and on the streets, what

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does it mean for churches to own all these buildings, keeping them clean and in good repair—but closed most of the time? As a result, new church development ceases to be about building new buildings for existing congregations. It begins to be about building community with people who are often *outside* the church—about hanging out in housing projects, in jails or prisons, in battered women's shelters—wherever the people are.

Why do we keep sending out pastors who have never been inside a jail to minister in the name of the One who was "sent...to proclaim release to the captives...to let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18)? How is it that, in the name of the One who had "nowhere to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20), we ordain people who have never even had a conversation with a homeless person?

In the Tennessee Conference, we have created partnerships between affluent congregations and congregations that are struggling but that are in places where a real opportunity for ministry exists.

Transforming Experience

The church I serve—Hobson United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tennessee—is in a part of the city that has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection, the highest adult and juvenile crime rates, the highest rate of kids put into state custody, and the highest high-school dropout rate. Two-thirds of all the children who walk in the door of the high school nearest to our church never graduate.

When I came to the Hobson UMC in 1993, the church was on the verge of closing. As was true of many urban, White, middle-income congregations, its membership had dwindled from a peak of 1700 in the 1950s to a worshipping congregation of only 30 people, all of them Caucasian and all but one over 65.

There were no children who were members of our congregation. Two other United Methodist congregations in our part of town—unable or unwilling to cross the lines of race and class—had been closed.

If you want to transform any church community, I recommend beginning with Bible study. The Bible has some wonderfully disruptive stories in it that make claims upon our lives. Once we started Bible study, we were discontent with being open only a short time

on Sunday mornings. Our first church building had been erected in 1851, before the Civil War. Even 100 years later, during the Civil Rights Movement, we were known for being an elitist congregation. We had a long way to go in understanding any kind of inclusivity and a lot of work to do just to get new people inside the front door.

So we invited community groups to come and be partners with us: the Black Children's Institute; Uhuru, an African dance



Trina, an addict in recovery who is currently incarcerated, is a member of Hobson United Methodist Church.



Some of the neighbors that photographer Queenie McEwan met on the street in Nashville.

"Evangelization in the Midst of Poverty: Being Present With God's People" is a major conference to be held at Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, TN, November 29-December 1, 2000, sponsored by the Evangelization and Church Growth (ECG) program area of the GBGM. Nashville Area Bishop Kenneth L. Carder will be the keynote speaker, and the Rev. Janet Wolf will lead Bible study and worship.

Workshop topics include racism and classism; welfare reform and perspectives on the poor; and congregational development ministries with the poor in urban, rural, racial-ethnic minority, immigrant, and multicultural communities. The event will offer focused tracks for local church leaders, district superintendents, and conference leaders and will feature visits to relevant ministry sites.

For more information, contact the Evangelization and Church Growth program area of the GBGM at 212-870-3860.

group; Habitat for Humanity; an organization doing advocacy for low-income health care; and the two largest 12-step narcotics anonymous groups in middle Tennessee. Suddenly there were hundreds of people hanging out on the grass in the churchyard. It was plain to see that this was no longer an all-White congregation only for the affluent.

Then, working with 30 organizations and 500 volunteers, we built five Habitat for Humanity homes on land we owned next to the church, adding a shared playground between our sanctuary and the homes we had built.

Our experience was transforming because it required us to let go. People drove by and saw that God was doing something new in this neighborhood.

Surprising Answers to Prayer

Because we were out there, with people coming and going, kids started showing up. Our members had prayed for children and new members, but their actual coming was a surprise. (Some people might

have decided to be more particular in their prayer life!) The children who came did not arrive with adults but showed up on their own and walked in by themselves, demanding that we pay attention. Imagine 30 White, middle-income people over 65 suddenly inundated with little kids who had never been part of a church before. These children wonderfully disrupted the service.

I remember the first time I had a response from the congregation during my sermon. At a dramatic moment, I asked rhetorically: "For what do we wait?" A 10-year-old child answered: "I don't know about you, but Santa Claus and Christmas are what I'm waiting for!" This unexpected reply did

what it was meant to do; it startled people and provoked us to change.

I used to ask the congregation: "For what are we thankful?" The adults sat in silence, but the children went on and on: "Thank you for sunshine"... "for rain"... "for lollipops"... "for spaghetti"... "for my sister...sometimes." It altered our worship life together.

We have prayer cards during worship. Each person writes or draws a joy or a concern, and someone else takes the card home to pray for whatever is on it. One day, 7-year-old LaPortia drew a body with blood coming out and a little girl standing next to it with tears running down her face. She said: "I want you to pray for my friend who died, and for me who almost died, and for all the kids who aren't dead yet." She was staying in a housing project when a friend of hers was gunned down in a drug deal. She brought to us her hardest hurts and deepest hopes, expecting prayer to change us and the world around us. This experience transformed prayer life at Hobson UMC.

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Ministry With All God's Children

Before children came to our church, we didn't even have an evangelism committee. One Sunday, I briefly mentioned evangelism during a worship service. The next Sunday, the population of children in church doubled because the children took the idea of evangelism seriously; they went out and invited others to come.

Our kids struggle with hard stuff—with poverty, with racism, with violence, with a school system that writes them off, with adults who are more often a source of hurt than hope. And yet they come—dancing and dreaming, laughing

and loving, singing and hoping and delighting in little things. Along the way, they are teaching us to be the church, teaching us to pray “thy kingdom come.” The goal is not *our* kingdom, which consigns these little ones to the edges of life, but *God's* kingdom, where they are cherished, and held safe, and loved.

Learning To Be the Church

We have learned to be the church from those who have come from the streets, struggling with mental illness, addiction, and abuse—folks who yearn for a God who promises to turn things upside down. If you want to hear the good news of the Gospel that the church has silenced for so long, take one of those passages that says that the prostitutes and tax collectors are going to get into

Left: Janet Wolf (center), former pastor of Hobson UMC in Nashville, with her parents.
Below: The Children's African Dance troupe at Hobson UMC.



the kingdom of God before the clergy and the bishops and all the folks who show up at the meetings. Church folks are slow to celebrate such news, but try reading it out loud on a street corner where there are prostitutes and drug dealers. Somebody's going to holler, “Hallelujah!”

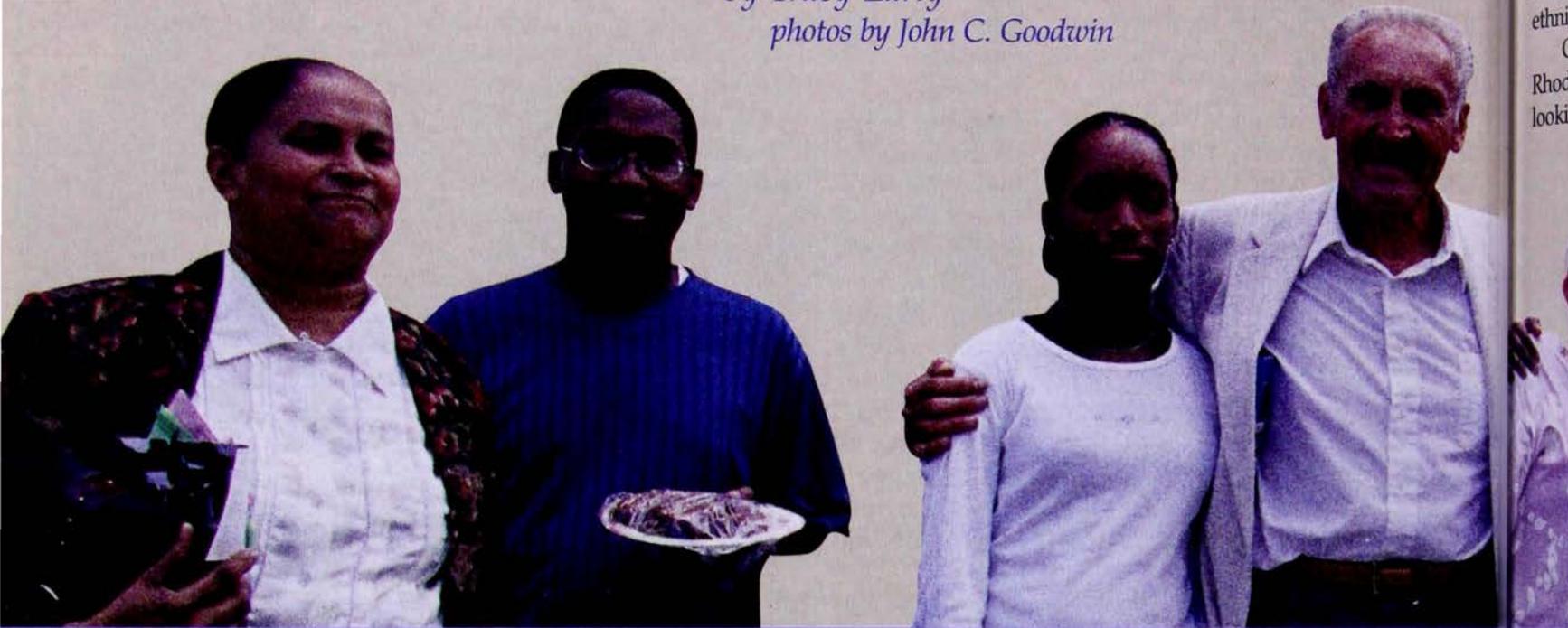
Understanding people as full partners is helping us discover who God is and how God works. Listening to and learning from people on the margins pushes you to do justice: to work for affordable housing, to create mediation as an alternative to jail, and to work for a health-care system where folks with money aren't the only ones who can afford what they need.

At the end of every worship service, we stand—now about 150 to 200 of us—holding hands in a circle and singing “Christ be your Shalom.” We are black and white and red and yellow and brown. We are rich and poor, old and young, female and male, gay and lesbian and straight. We are folks who are conservative and folks who are liberal, folks who have been in church forever and folks who have never sung a hymn before. We are retired military folks and retiring prostitutes and drug dealers. We are folks who can't read and write and people with Ph.D.s, folks with positions of power and folks who hang out on the streets. In a world where differences divide—where the walls of race, class, and sexual identity are so high and solidly built—we are learning to dance on the common ground of God's amazing, wondrous, world-transforming, and life-giving grace. We are learning to pray, with God's help, for *God's* kingdom to come on earth. We are learning to be the church along the way. □

CHURCH GROWTH IN Multicultural Congregations

by Tracy Early

photos by John C. Goodwin



Culmore United Methodist Church in Falls Church, Virginia—which is a suburb of Washington—is an example of something only recently noticed in United Methodist life. It is a congregation that is living and growing as a multicultural church. Its expectation is that it will not assimilate everyone to a single predominant culture but will continue as multicultural in membership, leadership, worship, and program.

Many churches have had a measure of cultural diversity for a time. However, most such congregations seemed to be “in transition” from one culture to another—often moving from a history as a White church to a new ministry as a Black church because of changing neighborhoods. But Culmore Church is not “in transition,” as the phrase is usually understood.

Established in 1952 as a typical White suburban church, it has

become multiethnic. Many of its White members have decided to stay, new Whites have joined, and these members now worship and serve alongside immigrants from the Philippines, Africa, and Latin America.

To serve as pastor of such a congregation is “very enriching,” says the Rev. Grace Ellen Rice. “I just love it.”

Rice, a second-vocation minister who formerly worked in Washington as a lawyer and lobbyist, was appointed to Culmore Church in 1999. She found, for one thing, that her sermon illustrations had to change.

“In my former church, I could refer to 401(k) retirement plans, and everyone would know what I was talking about because everybody had one,” she says. But Culmore Church is in “one of the poorest sections” of Fairfax County, and few people who live there have such

arrangements. So she relies more on biblical illustrations, finding that people of all cultures relate to the Bible’s message of deliverance.

A World Parish in Virginia

Rice says that Culmore Church has developed its multicultural character through two factors: the changing demographics of the community and the openness of the predominantly White laity to accept non-White immigrants.

Much of this change occurred during the pastorate of her predecessor, the Rev. Stephen A. Rhodes. He saw that something new was developing but found “few or no resources on how to pastor multicultural churches.”

In 1997, the General Board of Global Ministries sponsored a symposium at Culmore Church on multicultural ministry. Participants received a resource booklet, *The World Is in Our Parish*, supplied by

the Evangelization and Church Growth (ECG) program area of the Board. For people who communicate by E-mail, Evangelization and Church Growth has also established a *Multiethnic Net Circular*, which enables the people in multiethnic ministries to share ideas.

On a sabbatical from Culmore, Rhodes toured the United States looking for situations comparable to that of his church and for

where Rhodes could count 32 national backgrounds among the members and several among the lay leaders. In 1997, the Board of Discipleship gave him their Evangelist of the Year award.

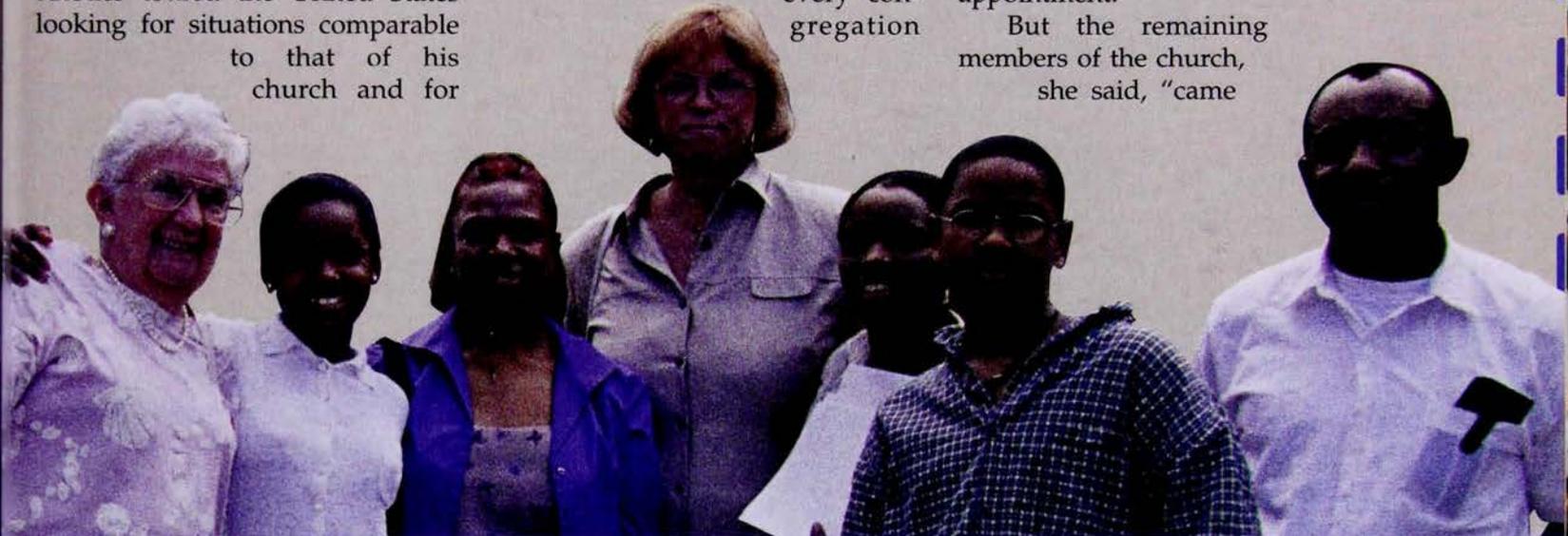
While extolling the multicultural church, Rhodes does not argue that every congregation

God's Face in New Jersey

At the Tenafly United Methodist Church in New Jersey, the Rev. Beth Whalley Mitchell arrived eight years ago to find the Sunday morning worship service attended by "10 or 12 people, all White."

"I said to God: 'This is not amusing. I asked for a normal appointment.'"

But the remaining members of the church, she said, "came



Members of Tenafly UMC in New Jersey. The congregation includes West Indians, Indians, Koreans, Hispanics, Japanese, and Chinese as well as Caucasians.

ideas about how such churches could serve. From this study, he wrote a book, *Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World* (Intervarsity Press, 1998). In it, he presented examples of "several churches, including Culmore, that chose to embrace the demographic changes in their areas and found new life and new ministry."

When Rhodes first went to Culmore Church in 1991, there was a possibility it might close, he reports. But with the congregation's openness to cultural diversity, Culmore began drawing new members—many coming as new Christians, others already Christian but coming from Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, or other non-Methodist backgrounds. It reached the point

should follow the same path. He himself now serves in a quite different setting: appointed to River Road United Methodist Church in an affluent, almost totally White section of Richmond. Although every church should be open to all people, there is no one model all congregations should emulate, he says, adding: "I am faithful to my call here as I was to my call in Culmore."

People in the church-growth movement often say that homogeneous congregations grow faster than those marked by diversity. Rhodes notes that predominantly Korean or predominantly African American churches often demonstrate great vitality. Each church should respond to the needs and opportunities of its own situation, he says. But in a growing number of communities, responding to needs means becoming multicultural.

face to face with their own mortality as a congregation, and this opened their eyes to the changing face of the community."

Whalley Mitchell says all the former members inclined to leave had already left, and those remaining had a lasting commitment. So they responded as she led them to develop a welcoming spirit and to consider the question: "What are the needs Jesus would meet?"

Today, she reports, Sunday morning worship draws 80 to 90 people. They come from several ethnic minority groups, but additional Whites have also been attracted. So she puts the congregation at about 40 percent Anglo, 20 percent English-speaking West Indian, 20 percent Korean, 10 percent Hispanic, and a miscellaneous remainder with ethnic backgrounds in Japan, China, India, and various other countries.

Many of these members have chosen deliberately not to attend a church of their own ethnic or language group, Whalley Mitchell says. Some Hispanics drive past Spanish-speaking churches to attend Tenaflly Church. "They want to be part of a wider group that is not limited to the culture they were born into," she says.

To draw new people, Whalley Mitchell also took steps to put new vitality into the life of the church. She streamlined the organizational structure so people spent less time in committee meetings. And she put the focus on a new daily service of morning prayer, on Discipleship Bible Study, and on a weekday gathering based on an approach to Christian nurture called *Logos*. This gathering included a meal, Bible study, singing, and fellowship.

Whalley Mitchell plays the guitar for singing at Sunday morning worship and leads a "blended" service including both traditional and contemporary elements. After church, there is a fellowship period when people sit and talk as they drink coffee and eat a light lunch.

A White native of New Jersey, Whalley Mitchell says nothing in her background prepared her for the multicultural ministry she has now. However, she married a man from India, the Rev. Robin Mitchell, who recently joined the staff of the General Board of Global Ministries, and she finds her work in a multicultural context "has enriched my life."

"It requires greater patience and understanding in learning who each of us is, and we have the same conflicts any normal church has," she says. She feels a lack of any community of pastors in similar situations who could give mutual support. But she has followed her instincts, and now she says that at Tenaflly Church "when you look around, you see the face of God."

Northwest Inclusivity

Across the continent, at Cedar Cross United Methodist Church in Mill Creek, Washington, a Japanese American lay leader reports a "concerted effort to be inclusive" in a congregation that is not fully—but is marginally—multicultural.

Called Joe Nishikawa, the lay leader says he was named Johbu and decided himself to add Joseph to his name. He was born in the United States in 1929, and at 13 he became one of the Japanese Americans placed in internment camps during World War II. "But I and most of my colleagues in the same situation are mindful of the fact that life is not fair," he points out. "Christ never said it was fair, and I'm able to accept that."

Now retired from a career as a Boeing engineer, he is comfortable worshipping in a church that is predominantly White but has a number of Asians and a few African Americans. "We accept each other pretty much as we are," he says. But suggesting a spirit of assimilation, he says that Asian Americans in the church are "comfortable with the predominantly Euro-American culture and values" and "would not propose that we have it any other way."

Of course, multiculturalism can exist among people of the same geographical region or race or ethnic group. Blacks from the many countries of Africa and from the Caribbean can differ from each other considerably in culture, and they can differ in culture from Blacks born in the United States. Similarly, Asians include people of many cultures—cultures often at odds with each other in Asia.

At Cedar Cross Church, the Japanese American lay leader who spent World War II in a US internment camp worships with a Filipino whose father was a survivor of Bataan and spent the war

as a young guerrilla resisting the Japanese who occupied his country. "He has come a very long way," Nishikawa says.

The Rev. Thomas Albright, who got a new appointment this year after six years as pastor of Cedar Cross Church, says the historic divisions of Asians from Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Filipino backgrounds were not visible there. His fellow Anglos, he says, took the Asian presence as a matter of course. "They were not wanting to be in an all-White church," he added.

In his judgment, the church had greater difficulty extending its multiculturalism to accept "poor people of any color." Some poor people may exhibit cultural differences in a different way, and some church members "do not feel comfortable with people that different."

How Life Is in Illinois

Yoshiya Takahashi is a Japanese immigrant in a different multicultural situation in Chicago: part of the clergy staff for a church that is largely Japanese American.

The Ravenswood Fellowship United Methodist Church was formed in the 1980s as a merger of a Japanese American congregation, an Indian-Pakistani congregation, and a White congregation made up of members largely of Scandinavian and German background.

"People think of us as a Japanese American church," says the Rev. Betty Jo Birkhahn-Rommelfanger, the senior minister. But the Japanese Americans are now all English-speaking, and they no longer feel a need for a service in Japanese. Many of them or their parents were interned on the West Coast during the Second World War and found a welcoming atmosphere in Chicago after the war.

Birkhahn-Rommelfanger says that the second-largest group at

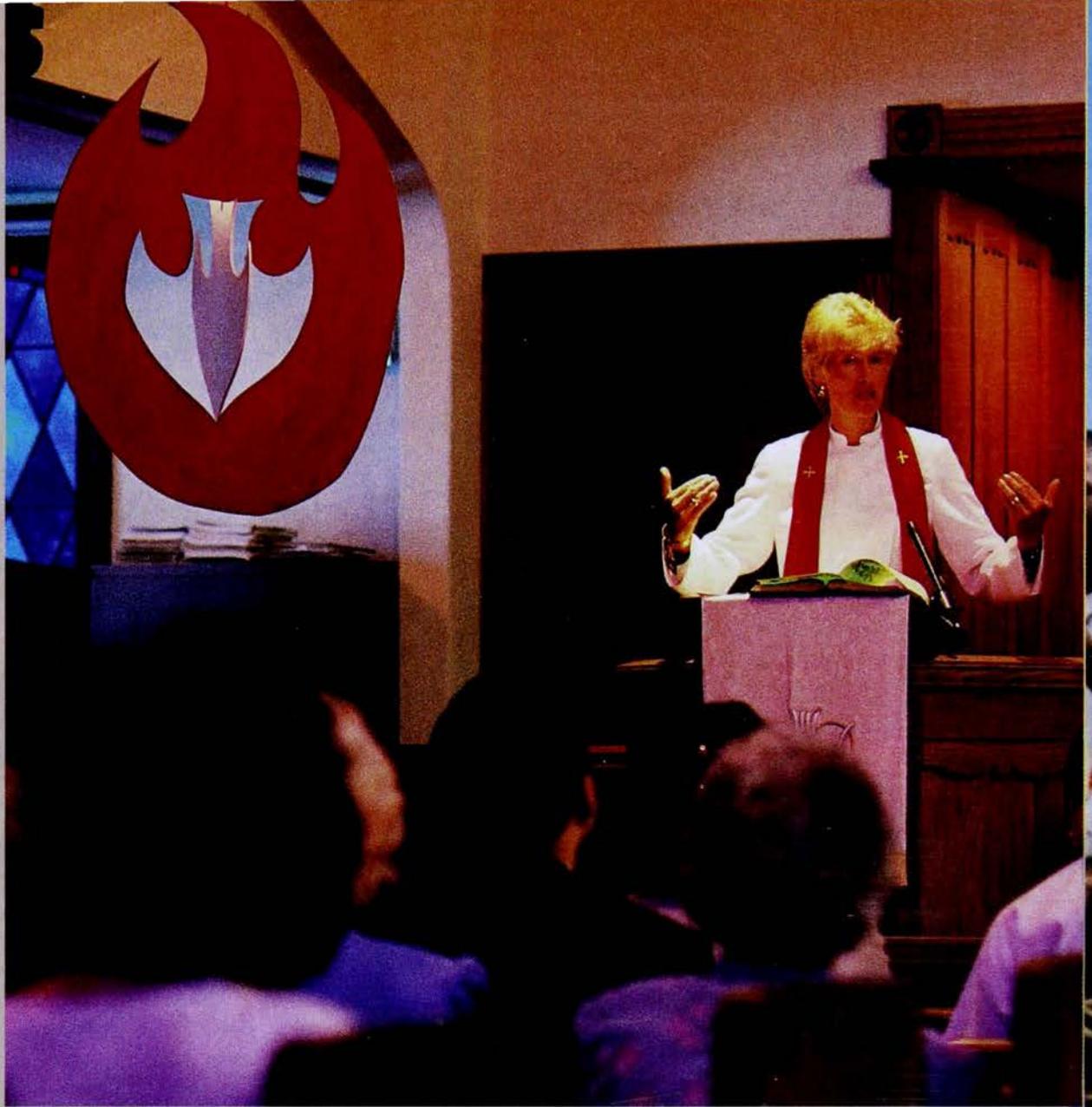
Ravenswood Church is the Indian-Pakistani congregation led by the Rev. Ernest Singh, a native of India. Despite the tensions between Pakistan and India, Christians from the two countries get along well in the church, the senior minister reports.

Within the United Methodist Church, as in other denominations, two or more congregations of different ethnic groups sometimes use the same building. But those who talk about the trend toward more multicultural churches do not include such cooperative agreements under that name. A multicultural church is understood as one that has people of diverse cultural backgrounds forming a single congregation. All operate under the same pastoral leadership even if there are separate services for the different language groups.

At Ravenswood UMC, the Indian-Pakistani group has its own service in Hindi and Urdu but joins with the other members for celebrations such as Christmas and Easter, for confirmations, and for Communion on first Sundays.

Born in Illinois and of German and English ancestry, Birkhahn-Rommelfanger says that her fellow Caucasians make up the third-largest group in Ravenswood Church. There are also a small number of members from places such as Honduras and Nigeria and, recently, a new family from Iran.

"It is a good church for people in mixed marriages," she says. And members of the younger generation "just take it for granted that this is the way life is."



The Rev. Beth Whalley Mitchell of Tenafly United Methodist Church in New Jersey. "When you look around [at the congregation]," she says, "you see the face of God."

Birkhahn-Rommelfanger finds preaching and other aspects of leadership in such a multicultural environment to be challenging. People coming from so many backgrounds can understand the Bible, Christian doctrine, and symbols in quite different ways, she has found. So, she says, "you can't take anything for granted."

"I often feel we don't do it as well as we should," she continues. She cannot report getting any special preparation for this kind of ministry and has not found a lot of resources. A graduate of Garrett Evangelical Seminary in nearby

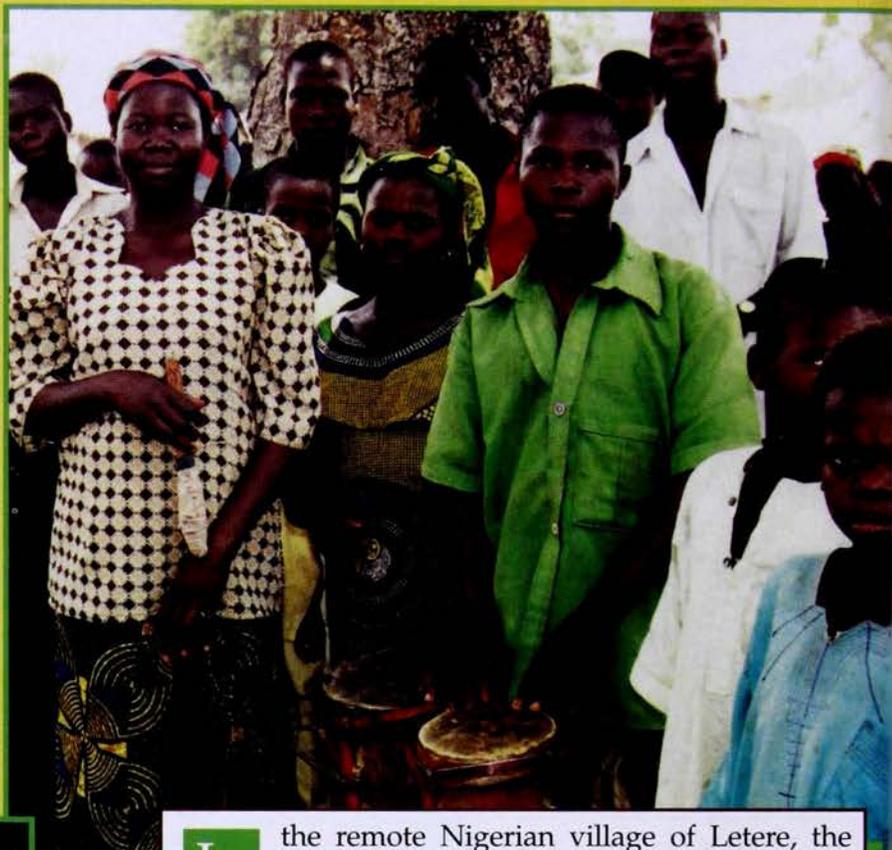
Evanston, Illinois, she returned for some cross-cultural study in an evening course there and found it the most helpful preparation so far. "I know some colleagues in multicultural ministry, but not many," she says. "So we struggle. But we're pioneering and figuring out how to fulfill our calling." □

Tracy Early is a freelance journalist based in New York City who often contributes to religious publications, including New World Outlook.

To subscribe to The World Is in Our Parish, E-mail ecgcm@gbgm-umc.org.

Offering Christ in the New Millennium

by John Coleman
and Keith Rae



In the remote Nigerian village of Letere, the Rev. Zachariah Nyadura and his helpers face a number of difficult challenges in their efforts to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and develop a United Methodist church. One is the dominant presence of Muslims, who make up half of the 114 million people in this West African nation.

Nigeria's fledgling democratic government, elected in May 1999, is secular. But in some northern areas, Muslims are attempting to use their political and social influence to create a state religion and impose strict Islamic laws—known as Shari'a—on entire communities. The resulting Muslim-Christian conflicts, instigated by both sides, have ignited into bloody clashes, taking thousands of lives and destroying numerous churches, mosques, and homes. Meanwhile, Muslims who consider converting to Christianity face severe consequences, from rejection by family and friends to persecution and death. Thus most converts to Christianity come from traditional tribal religions.

Those converts present another challenge to the church of Jesus Christ: the prevalence of cultural traditions that are incompatible with Christian teaching. Polygamy, superstition, idol worship, and oppression of women are practiced even among many converted Christians who retain indigenous

Left: Children at a United Methodist Church in Nigeria.
Above: People of the Letere community in Nigeria.

beliefs and customs. Moreover, ethnic loyalties and hatreds prevail among Nigeria's three main ethnic groups: the Ibo, many of whom are Christian; the Hausa, who are mostly Muslim; and the Yoruba, who practice both faiths, among other religions. Indeed, violence is more often sparked by ethnic rather than religious enmity.

A third challenge to sharing the Gospel cuts across religions and ethnic groups. It is the socioeconomic burden of rampant poverty, fueled by decades of government corruption, of inefficiency, and of exploitation in this oil-rich nation. Under President Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba and a "born-again" Christian, Nigeria is now unsteadily making the shift from military dictatorship to democratic government, but still it lacks the infrastructure to deliver basic social services. Thus it is burdened by high unemployment, an exodus from rural to urban areas, and escalating hunger, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, crime, disease, illiteracy, and school drop-out rates.

Making Inroads in Letere

With more than 5000 residents, the village of Letere struggles with many of these problems; but United Methodists are making significant inroads. Since 1997, the Nigerian Annual Conference has deployed 26 trained evangelists, mostly new converts themselves, to reach into untapped remote communities—some accessible only by foot—and develop new congregations. With modest support from the conference, Nyadura and his colleagues are taking a strategic relational approach to evangelization. "We visit residents in their homes, especially the sick and shut-in," he said. "We teach and play with their children, and we organize fellowship groups to sing and dance, to praise God, and to bring others to Christ."

They have visited and prayed with the village chief. One of his sons has converted and is being trained as an evangelist. Another convert and evangelist-in-training accompanies and interprets for Nyadura during home visits. "I saw there was no life in idol worship," he explained to us through an interpreter. "When I was taught what it means to be a Christian, the difference was clear. But I was like a tree standing alone in the forest. So I joined hands with the pastor to take his message to others."

Nyadura's wife and mission partner, Zenaria, whose name means "gold" in Hausa, works with village women to help them find solutions to their needs and problems. They must contend with poverty, hunger, and a lack of clean water and health clinics in addition to life-threatening diseases such as malaria, meningitis, river blindness, and pneumonia during flood season. However, their most difficult nemeses, in her opinion, are illiteracy and fear. "They are denied education, which keeps them in darkness," she said through an interpreter, "and many of them are afraid to accept Jesus Christ because their husbands might beat them."

Using Outreach Strategies

In Letere and throughout Nigeria and other African countries, United Methodists generate various ministries to improve life, promote evangelization, and manifest the love of Christ. They provide health care, education, youth activities, Bible study, job-skills training, and sewing enterprises to empower women. Churchwomen are usually in the vanguard of these mission efforts—although they remain unjustly oppressed and generally restricted from leadership roles. Even among the 310 ordained United Methodist ministers in

Nigeria, there are only three ordained women.

In the meantime, conscientious church leaders are using several strategies to reach out and relate to Muslims. They befriend them without applying any pressure to convert and identify with them in dress and other ways to demonstrate commonality. Some familiarize themselves with the Koran and the principles of Islam for the sake of dialogue. They also emphasize education and health care and make both available to all in church-run schools and clinics. While few Muslims take the risk of converting to Christianity, many nonetheless embrace its followers and the principles of their Christian faith.

Throughout Africa, churches involved in evangelization meet these same challenges and develop similar strategies. In Liberia, Muslim children are attending United Methodist schools, learning the Bible, and being baptized with their parents' consent, while many other converts turn away from their tribal religions. In Mozambique, the church is trying to improve literacy among women and girls, as well as provide health care, housing, economic development projects, and advocacy for the powerless. And in East Africa, where one annual conference comprises at least six different countries—Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania—the church must embrace and unify the many cultures, concerns, and voices of its diverse membership in a spirit of Pentecost.

Planning in Nairobi, Kenya

Leaders from these and other United Methodist conferences in East, West, Southern, and Central Africa met in Nairobi, Kenya, in June 2000, to share their wisdom, concerns, and visions for the future.



understand and communicate a theological foundation for evangelization, to nurture Christian stewardship and discipleship, and to develop urban and rural community ministries. Those leaders will then be expected to train local leaders in their own annual conferences. Subsequent regional academies in 2002-2005 will provide advance learning and leadership development.

Global Consultation

These ambitious plans are an outgrowth of the 1999 Global Consultation on Evangelization and Church Growth—a historic gathering of 75 United Methodist and affiliated Methodist church leaders from 27

countries. They came to the Mission Resource Center in Atlanta to hear presentations, enjoy dialogue and fellowship, worship God, and develop goals and strategies around the compelling theme: "Offering Christ in the New Millennium."

Participants from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and the United States shared reports and reflections on the problems and progress occurring in their own churches. They also considered the rich possibilities offered by the United Methodist connection in the name of Jesus Christ. They explored pioneer evangelism—introducing the Gospel to a society or community for the first time—and ways in which the church can optimize its various institutions and structures for outreach.

They also wrestled with thorny questions such as the following:

- How can we evangelize for Christ in the face of cultural and legal barriers that threaten severe punishment for those who proclaim and those who believe?

- What are the implications for mission in an interfaith society? Should we focus on dialogue, on conversion, or on both?

- How do we respect indigenous cultures, yet promote our Christian tenets and Wesleyan goals, when there are incompatibilities and when our faith is still identified by some with Western imperialism and colonialism?

- How do we proclaim Christ's Gospel in the midst of political, social, and economic forces that exploit, oppress, and even dehumanize poor and marginalized people?

- In a world where the gaps between rich and poor and between people of different races and perspectives is widening, how can we convey a credible message of unity and abundant life in Christ?



Top left: A child and younger sibling at a store in Mozambique. **Above:** A worship service held at Chicucue, Mozambique, for the Global Consultation.

Some had already begun to develop long-term strategic plans for evangelization in their respective annual conferences. The agenda for this meeting, however, was to plan regional academies for the next five years that will offer specialized training to share the Gospel effectively and to develop churches in places like Letere. In such places, the presence of other faiths, cultural traditions, and social, economic, and political problems can complicate mission efforts. The initial academies have been scheduled for November 2000 to June 2001. They will train lay and clergy leaders to

One consultation speaker—Dr. Lamin Sanneh of Yale Divinity School—questioned whether or not religious tolerance and non-proselytizing dialogue with people of other faiths serves our mission mandate to spread the Gospel of Christ. He warned against seeking a common denominator that would overlook religious differences. That, he said, is a form of “intolerance” that ignores important distinctions between Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, and people of other faiths.

A professor of Mission and World Christianity and a native of Gambia, Sanneh said that Christianity simply has no way to speak about salvation except in the language in which it is constituted—the language of faith in Jesus Christ. This does not shut the door to God’s living presence outside the church, he added.

Dr. Elizabeth Tapia, a professor at Union Theological Seminary in the Philippines, called upon her listeners to explore and respect other cultures with sensitivity, thus building bridges of friendship and trust. She further suggested that the Gospel changes those who proclaim it and those who receive it in the midst of cross-cultural interaction. “Will persons from cultures different from ours wonder what makes us tick?” she asked. “Will they ask: ‘From where do you draw your strength? What is your source of hope?’”

Several other speakers reminded the gathering that the church must respect history as well as culture when evangelizing in a particular society or community. That is true among the people of Russia and other formerly Communist

countries that once rejected organized religion and may still limit its growth.

Consultation participants clearly were enthusiastic about the promising possibilities and strategies shared for enhancing evangelization and church growth. They cited numerous priorities, including a greater reliance on indigenous leadership and resources and the production of Christian education materials that are culturally appropriate and relevant.

For African participants—many of whom also came to the June 2000 planning meeting in Nairobi—the subsequent training academies will be crucial to fulfilling those priorities. Similar planning events are occurring or being scheduled in regions of Latin America, Asia, and Europe.

In Nigeria, Indonesia, India, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the United States, tensions and conflicts are escalating between Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and the adherents of other faiths. Meanwhile, followers of John Wesley worldwide—like Zachariah and Zenaria Nyadura in Letere—are trying to spread the Gospel of salvation through Christ while offering a profound social witness

to that Gospel. But in doing so, they must find ways to promote dialogue and peaceful cohabitation with others. And they must find ways to deal with the incompatible beliefs and practices of indigenous cultures, while alleviating the damage done by social, political, and economic forces.

As Robert Harman of the General Board of Global Ministries put it in his keynote address to the Global Consultation: “The mission entrusted to the church of Jesus Christ is to take the Gospel to all nations and cultures. But in order to be effective in the global context of that mission means respecting spiritual, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic traditions and values in each society, while always faithfully presenting the challenge of the Christian message.” □

John Coleman is a freelance writer and communications consultant to the Evangelization and Church Growth (ECG) program area of the General Board of Global Ministries. Keith Rae is executive secretary for Church Development in ECG.

Participants in the Global Consultation held in Atlanta, Georgia, 1999.



"O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing!"

by ST Kimbrough, Jr.

"O for a thousand tongues to sing/my great Redeemer's praise!" The Rev. Charles Wesley, one of Methodism's founders, voices this heartfelt wish in the opening hymn of *The United Methodist Hymnal*. This Wesleyan dream was affirmed in the 1990s by the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) when it launched one of the twentieth century's most significant decades for United Methodist mission. Thanks to that global effort, which added countless new programs of evangelization and church growth around the world, the Gospel is resounding in more tongues today than the Wesleys could ever have imagined.

A THOUSAND TONGUES!—No one thought in 1989, after seven decades of Soviet rule in Eastern Europe, that the witness of Methodism would once again be widely heard in the Russian language. Only in Estonia did some Russian-speaking Methodist congregations survive. Yet, between 1991 and 2000, more than 70 congregations of the Russia United Methodist Church were established and sustained by the Russia Initiative of the GBGM and its partner churches.

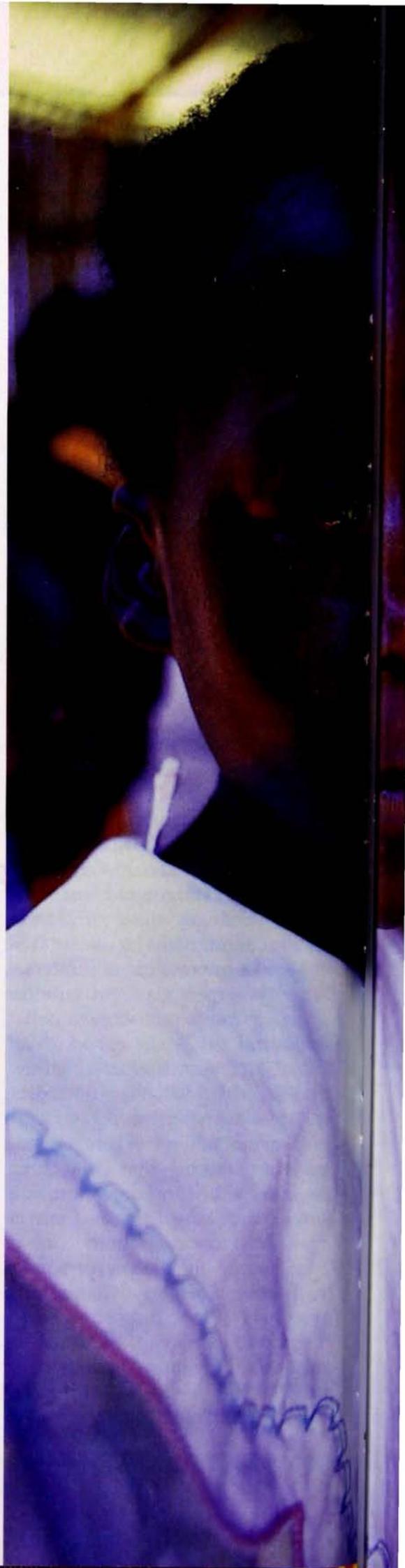
Through the Russia Initiative, the Russia United Methodist Seminary has been established in Moscow. In St. Petersburg, the Methodist Episcopal Church of Christ the Savior—begun in the late nineteenth century and registered in the year 1912—has been renewed through the establishment of four United Methodist congregations in that city. Faith communities have

sprung up all over the vast Russian landscape—in cities, in villages, even in prisons. And soon, through the support of the GBGM, the first hymnal of the Russia United Methodist Church will appear.

A THOUSAND TONGUES!—Soviet Communism had also closed the Methodist churches of Latvia. But in 1990, God opened the door for the rebirth of Methodism there. Within a decade, 10 congregations had been established and five church buildings reclaimed. Indigenous pastors now proclaim the Gospel in the Latvian language, and United Methodist missionaries have been assigned there.

A THOUSAND TONGUES!—Like their counterparts in Russia, Estonia, and Latvia, the Methodists of Lithuania suffered under the Soviet regime. Their churches were closed and they were often imprisoned, executed, or forced to flee for their lives. Here, too, since the fall of the Soviet Union, the GBGM has renewed Methodism's witness. In just five years—1995 to 1999—eight congregations were established in Lithuania and two church buildings reclaimed. United Methodist missionaries and indigenous lay missionaries are now proclaiming the Gospel in the Lithuanian language.

A THOUSAND TONGUES!—The refugee church is another sign of United Methodist mission evangelism. The African continent, so rich in diverse languages and cultures, has been ravaged in recent years by civil and regional wars. As a result, many of "the people called Methodists" have been forced to



flee their homelands. Liberians have sought refuge in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire; Sierra Leoneans, in Guinea; displaced peoples of Rwanda and Burundi, in refugee camps across the borders. In those camps and along the roads and forest paths, displaced members and clergy of United Methodist central conferences in Africa have spread the Gospel, aided by the GBGM's support.

A THOUSAND TONGUES!— A new mission opportunity has been opened for Methodism in the West African nation of Senegal. There, for the first time, United Methodist missionaries and indigenous believers are proclaiming the Gospel of Christ in the Walaf language. Meanwhile, United Methodists from Angola are witnessing in Namibia; those from Zimbabwe, in South Africa and Malawi; and those from the Southern Congo, in Zambia. The North Katanga Conference of the Congo has outreach in Tanzania, and a new East Africa Annual Conference has been established in Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan. Lives are being saved and faith communities formed as the Gospel is spread in languages of which the Wesleys had never heard.



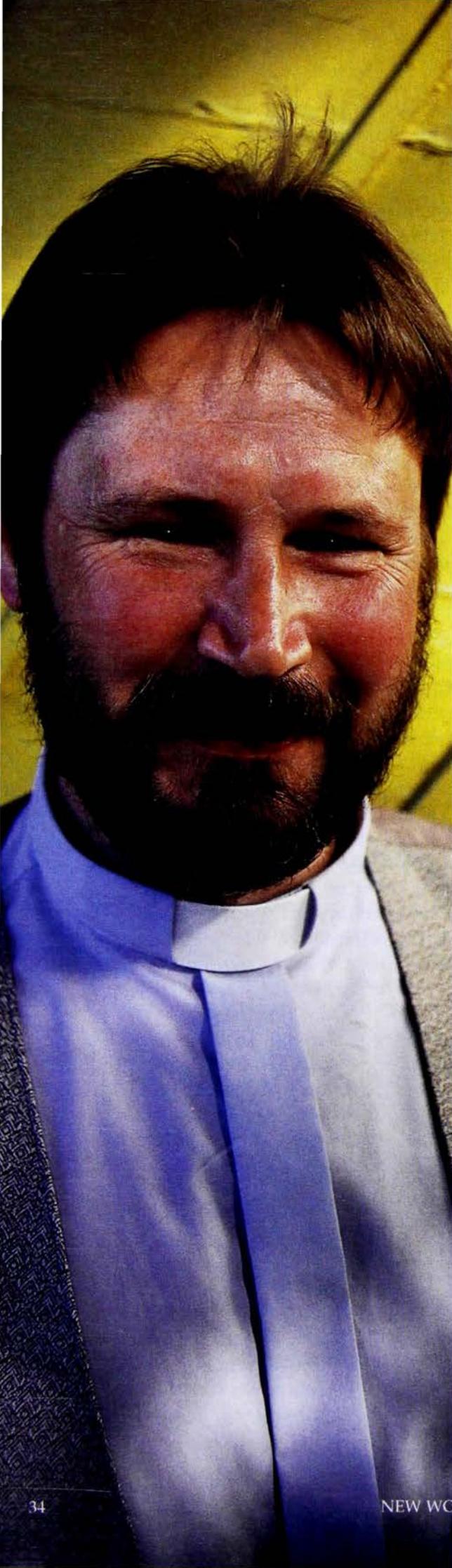
Left, pp. 32-33, and above: Members of the Wanyange United Methodist Church in Jinja, Uganda, during a worship service. The Uganda United Methodist Church is part of the new East Africa Conference.

A THOUSAND TONGUES!— The immigrant church is another remarkable story of the way God's mission is unfolding among United Methodists. World events occurring in the closing years of the twentieth century have moved populations in unexpected ways. These years have seen the extension of United Methodist witness among a diverse group of Asian immigrants to North America: Cambodians, Koreans, Laotians, Vietnamese, and people of Chinese origin from various countries. In many congregations across the United States, the Gospel is proclaimed in the indigenous languages of these peoples. United Methodist hymnbooks appeared during the last decade in the Vietnamese and Hmong languages, and one is forthcoming in Khmer, the national language of Cambodia. The GBGM, which has provided support for the hymnals, has been actively engaged in witness among these immigrants.

A THOUSAND TONGUES!— The growth of Spanish-language congregations across the United States is also a phenomenal story of mission. The National Hispanic Plan, administered by the GBGM, is at the forefront of this witness to Jesus Christ in North America.

A THOUSAND TONGUES!—

God is also working through United Methodist missions in South America. In El Salvador, the Gospel resonates in street preaching and services of praise. In Honduras, there are new, exciting ministries among children, youth, and adults. In concert with the autonomous Methodist churches of South America, United Methodists are proclaiming the Gospel



anew in word and deed. All over the continent, as people turn to Christ for salvation and guidance, Methodism is growing and new congregations are being formed.

A THOUSAND TONGUES!—One of the most phenomenal stories of United Methodist mission in the 1990s has taken place in Cambodia. Beginning in 1989, Cambodians living in North America, in Switzerland, and in France—who had become Christians through the witness of United Methodism—began to return to their Asian homeland to share the Gospel of Christ. The General Board of Global Ministries supported these efforts. For the first time in the twentieth century, four autonomous churches of the Wesleyan tradition—the Korean Methodist Church, the Methodist Church of Singapore, the Wesleyan Church, and the United Methodist Church in the United States, Switzerland, and France—joined together to form the Cambodian Mission. These four churches have cooperated in sponsoring an annual pastors' training school.

Thanks to the hundreds of Cambodians who have made commitments to Christ and the church, today there are more than 100

churches in Cambodia that follow the Methodist tradition. A landmark moment in this mission will be the coming publication of the first Cambodian hymnbook for use by Christians in the Methodist connection. This hymnal is to include more indigenous and global hymns than those found in traditional Methodist hymnbooks. So the Gospel will soon be sung in Cambodia in Khmer, a new tongue for Methodism, expressing old and eternal truths for a people whom God has always loved.

Throughout United Methodism's most active mission decade of the twentieth century, new churches and faith communities have been established all over the earth. They are found in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, in Africa and South America, in North American immigrant communities and among peoples who have been uprooted and displaced. In this ongoing mission outreach, we have added a thousand tongues to sing our great Redeemer's praise and "to spread through all the earth abroad the honors of [his] name." □

ST Kimbrough, Jr., is associate general secretary for Mission Evangelism at the General Board of Global Ministries.



Far left: The Rev. Urmas Rahuwarm of the Haapsalie UMC in Estonia. **Left:** A United Methodist Church in St. Petersburg, Russia.

ASESORES HELP LATIN AMERICAN CHURCHES GROW

by Anna Gail Workman

In June 2000, the Rev. Alicia Negrete Riedy journeyed from her home in Escondido, California, to spend two weeks in Cali, Colombia. There she shared her knowledge of Methodism with strangers who quickly became friends. She taught Methodist history, theology, liturgy, and other subjects to pastors, seminarians, and laity; visited mission sites; and preached in a handful of churches.

"The Methodist churches of Cali and surrounding areas are growing rapidly," she later reported. "The clergy and laity are highly educated and are motivated by the democracy of the Methodist theology and its empowerment of the marginalized. But they need strong leadership, better communication, and more education in Methodist doctrine and polity."

Since 1990, five Latin American countries—Colombia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras—have established new communities of faith in the Methodist tradition. Since 1999, the Evangelization and Church Growth (ECG) program area of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) has deployed teams of trained consultants, called *asesores*, to help the emerging and established Methodist churches of Latin America in their quest for development. This work is done in partnership with the Council of Evangelical Methodist Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean (CIEMAL).

As a GBGM consultant and a teacher, guide, and friend to an assigned partner church, an *asesor* (the masculine form of the word) or *asesora* (the feminine form) makes

an assessment and provides advice and instruction. In 1998, ECG solicited nominations for *asesores* from Latin American bishops and church leaders. This was the first time that international teams of this kind were recruited to help the GBGM provide services for partner churches outside the United States.



The Rev. Irving Cotto (second from left), an *asesor* from Camden, New Jersey, with fellow Methodists outside a church in El Salvador.

In May 1999, pastors and laity came to Miami, Florida, from autonomous affiliated Methodist churches in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Honduras, Panama, and Puerto Rico for an initial training session. Also included were several clergy and lay missionaries who, like Riedy, had already been trained as consultants through the United Methodist National Plan for Hispanic Ministries.

The *asesores* program has brought Latin Americans together to learn from one another in a rich exchange of ideas and expertise.

Since the program began, *asesores* in Honduras have conducted seminars and helped lead youth and young adults in a special summer program of creative evangelization. Other *asesores* have worked with partners in Bolivia, Peru, Nicaragua, and El Salvador to develop strategic plans for evangelization and church growth.

"Through this program we have been able to provide services reaching hundreds more people than we could have assisted using our staff members alone," said the Rev. Elí Rivera, an ECG executive and one of the staff trainers. "All the team members bring years of valuable experience and familiarity with the issues of this region," he observed. "Through them, we can help one another."

Asesores serve outside their own country. Thus they bring a fresh pair of eyes to a given situation as they provide organizational analysis, leadership development, and strategic planning for mission.

"We hope this program will serve as a model for similar resource teams in other parts of the globe," said Rivera. "There is a great need to provide our partner churches with training and leadership development—especially in Methodism and the Wesleyan heritage but also in preaching, worship, theology, pastoral care, and church administration." □

Anna Gail Workman is assistant general secretary for Resources and Services in the Evangelization and Church Growth program area of the General Board of Global Ministries.

Evangelization in the Philippines UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

With close to a million members, the Philippines Central Conference of The United Methodist Church has experienced phenomenal growth over the past two decades, primarily through new church development. In 1968 there were six annual conferences; today there are 17, located in three episcopal areas.

Much of that growth results from the popular "mother-church movement." This movement calls on local congregations to start new faith communities or satellite churches in key areas where the denomination is not already present and active. As part of this grassroots initiative, mother—or parent—churches are expected to support the offspring's development for up to five years through prayer, funding, volunteers, and other forms of aid.

The new-church starts typically occur in a Wesleyan fashion. Members of established congregations visit homes in unchurched areas. The residents who welcome them in and receive their message then invite their own neighbors for Bible study, prayer, and witness. A family-based house church and various outreach ministries often result. They lead to further development of a congregation and, in some cases, to the chartering of a full-fledged church.

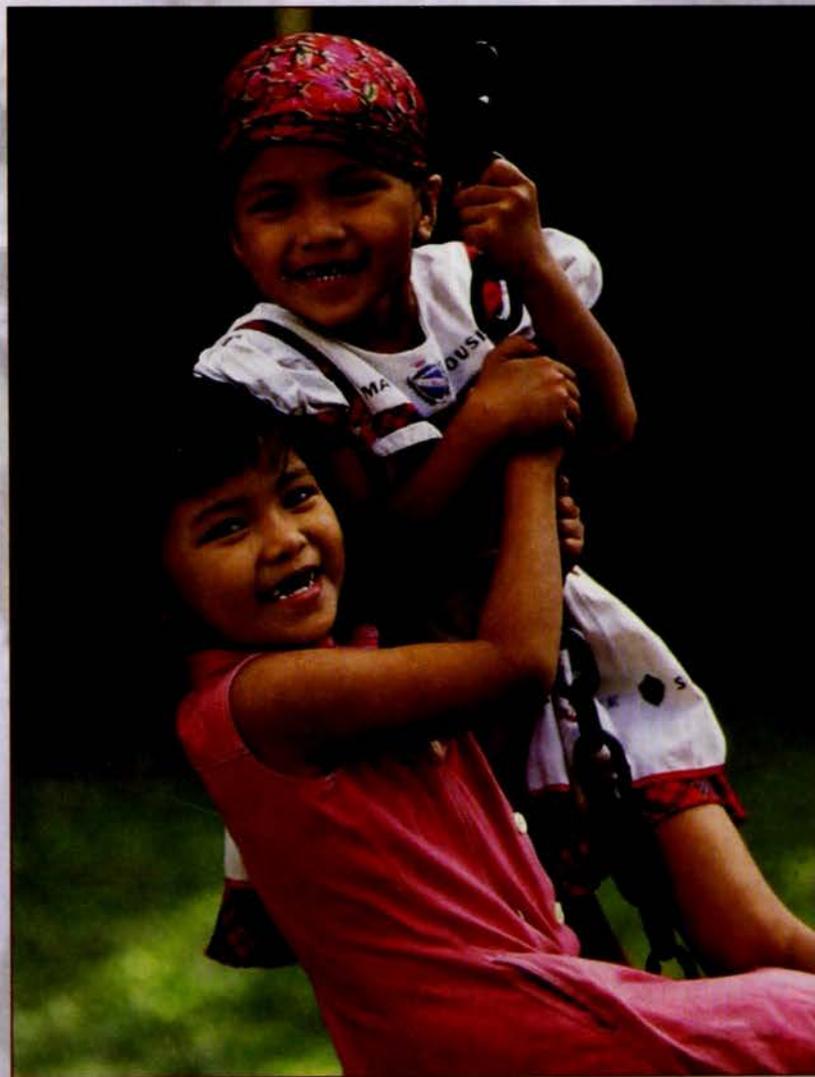
As superintendent of the Southwest Metro Manila District, the Rev. Bener Agtarap has played a major role in this movement over the past four years. Under the leadership of Manila Area Bishop Emerito P. Nacpil, churches in Agtarap's district have already birthed dozens of new congregations and faith communities. The Cavite province near Manila had only two churches



when Agtarap arrived. This year, Cavite became a separate district with more than 32 chartered congregations, all started by mother churches. Supported by leadership development grants from the Evangelization and Church Growth program area of the General Board of Global Ministries, the mother-church movement has encouraged many lay members to become mission evangelists. Through their efforts, United Methodism in the Philippines is being strengthened by new home Bible-study groups, new candidates for ordained ministry, new deaconesses and other mission workers, and growth in financial stewardship, outreach ministries, and Christian education.

The following article is an excerpt from Agtarap's most recent report to his annual conference, combined with remarks he made on the "Churches Starting Churches" model of new-church development.

Above: The Rev. Bener Agtarap.



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The Challenges We Face by Bener B. Agtarap

For the past 20 years, the Manila Episcopal Area of The United Methodist Church has focused its mission-outreach initiatives largely on rural areas. Our projection and goal has been that, by the turn of the century, The United Methodist Church would be the largest Protestant denomination in the Philippines in terms of churches, church workers, and lay members.

Church leaders pursued programs that vitalized local churches for mission. Clergy and lay members were reoriented toward a more intensive evangelistic outreach in areas where there is minimal Methodist presence. The human and material resources of organized city churches were poured into church-planting ministries in the unreached suburban and rural areas. Each local church adopted mission outposts and supported these new church units. The "mother churches" helped buy building lots for these mission churches.

The empowerment of the church for mission in rural and suburban areas reached its peak during this time of fervent evangelistic outreach. With the heightened awareness of evangelism and its related ministries among clergy and lay leaders, mission churches were organized in various towns and villages at a very fast pace. This resulted in the creation of new annual conferences and districts. In just five years, the Southwest Metro Manila District gave birth to a new district in the Cavite province, which many years ago was only a mission-outreach area for city churches.

Meanwhile, cities and urban centers were undergoing radical changes. Rapid urbanization led to overcrowding, poor housing, rising unemployment, and increasing crime. Yet people refused to be dissuaded from moving to the cities in search of better opportunities. This migration has created social problems that the government alone cannot handle. Thus cities provide a new mission for the church.

Urban Mission Initiative

Accordingly we have responded by launching the Urban Mission Initiative, a complement to the active mission outreach now focused in rural areas. The Urban Initiative is a five-part program. In the Leadership Training and Education segment, we are assessing what we know about urban mission, then recruiting

Page 36, bottom: Sisters Maria Ester and Christina Anog at the Kapatiran Kaunlaran Foundation, a ministry of The UMC in the Philippines. **Top right:** Pastor Myrna V. Olpindo at the Trece Martires City UMC. **Right:** Crowded conditions in Manila.

good prospects and developing skilled leaders through use of a required training curriculum. In the Research and Documentation area, we are developing a detailed demographic sketch of urban life in Metro Manila and its suburbs.

In our focus on Urban Mission and Ministry, we are designing programs that better equip us for ministry with the urban poor and the city's low-income workers. Our urban programs will also establish new faith communities in the city. These will include satellite congregations that will become model local churches, doing ministry in both an urban and a global context.

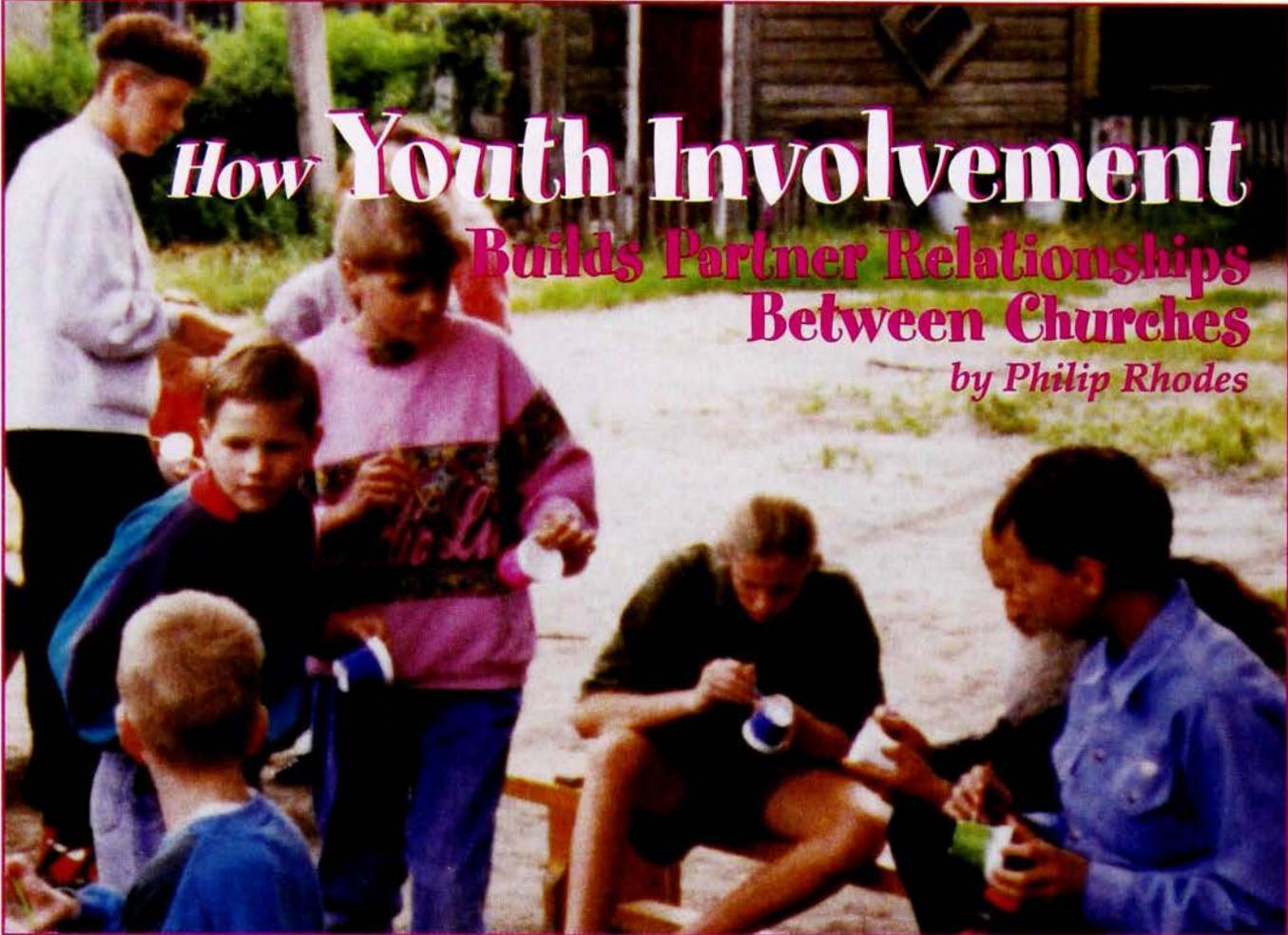
As we pursue the goal of Networking and Alliance Building, we will take advantage of our church's conformational nature by linking up with related agencies and ministries in our district. This will help us develop a referral system among ecumenical urban-mission groups that share our concerns. The result may be an exchange program that trains church workers.

Our actions in evangelization are based on our belief that there are three categories of sin: sins of commission, sins of omission, and the sin of no mission. I am confident that we can meet the challenges before us and do great things for God as long as we remain faithful to our calling, nurture our fellowship, and work together to achieve our goal. □



How Youth Involvement Builds Partner Relationships Between Churches

by Philip Rhodes



First of all, let me say that there is a disappearing gap between planning a project and doing it. First United Methodist Church in Green Bay, Wisconsin, knows this better than most churches. In February 1997, we didn't know what we were going to be doing for our youth mission trip that summer. Yet by July of the same year, 18 high school students and six adults were in mission together with the people of Kaunas and Pilviskiai, Lithuania.

By December 1997, the Green Bay church had entered into a partner relationship with the church in Pilviskiai. Since the initial visit, two other groups have journeyed from Green Bay to Pilviskiai, and one group of Lithuanians has traveled to Green Bay. The partnership continues to thrive and grow.

There are some key themes in youth ministry that allowed this partnering process to happen so quickly and effectively.

Key Theme: Relationship

Few things, if any, are more important to teens than their relationships. One of the key ingredients in building a successful partnership is the ability to look beyond tasks and develop relationships with other people—simply because they are people. In the United States, we live in one of the few cultures that thrives on the relationships which develop out of a common task.

Teens of First UMC in Green Bay, Wisconsin, make crafts with their counterparts at Kaunas UMC in Lithuania.

Once the task is completed, the relationship may or may not continue. More often than not, the relationship ends with the completed task.

Most other cultures thrive on relationships that exist for their own sakes. Tasks are often accomplished *because* of the relationships that are in place. The similarity between teen culture and these other cultures is a great asset for churches to tap into. It was instrumental in developing the healthy relationship between the church in Green Bay and the church in Pilviskiai.

Three years after the initial trip, students from Green Bay and students in Pilviskiai continue to correspond, frequently sending small gifts, Christmas cards, or just a quick hello. This can be attributed to the trip's having been relational and not task-oriented. Ask any youth director what happens after a work-oriented trip. Most will tell you that their students do not maintain this type of contact because the focus is on the work and not the people. Teens are relational and not task-oriented. They need to be in relational ministry for the experience of the trip to stick.

The students in Green Bay have led the church into a new way of being. They have laid the foundation for tasks to be accomplished out of the relationships that

are in place. This is an effective way for cross-cultural and intercultural missions to impact everyone, because the mission is born out of relationship first and not out of need. Too often in mission we focus on the others' physical needs and on how *we* can help *them*—without recognizing that *we* have needs that *they* can meet. Having a relationship helps us to identify *our* needs as well as *theirs*.

Key Theme: Flexibility

Because the focus of a partner relationship is relational and not task-oriented, there is no pre-set agenda of things to do. At the end of an initial visit there won't be pictures of what was accomplished. There will be pictures of *people*.

Teens are remarkably flexible with respect to agendas. One of my favorite phrases on the initial trip to Lithuania was "I don't know!" About the only real certainty I had was that we would arrive and that we had plane tickets home. Everything in between was flexible.

I have had a theory for years that Jesus' disciples were teenagers. If they had been adults, they would have had to have the plan from Jesus for lodging, eating, the journey, and the payoff before they would have dropped their jobs and followed him. Only teens would drop everything in favor of a road trip with no destination!

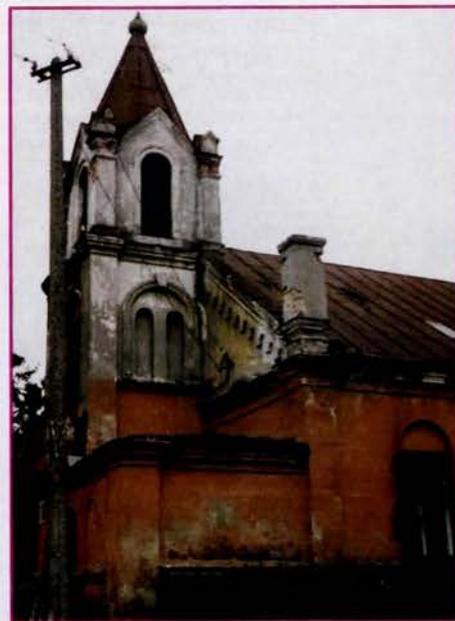
On our second trip, when we were getting ready to take a group of adults over to Lithuania, I had the teens do the training on flexibility because they understand it much better than I do. Teens quickly grasped the fact that, when they were flexible, they didn't have to worry about getting tasks accomplished. Instead, they could focus on people and on trying to see what God sees. They taught our church about *being*, not *doing*.

Key Theme: Authenticity

When we will do authentic ministry and mission with teens, it will change lives—not only theirs but those of the people with whom they come into contact. We trained these teens to be in mission as a way of *being*, not just as a way of taking a trip for a week. And they are still at it! In the past three years, I've watched more people's lives being touched as a result of these teens' being in mission than as a result of any other trips or retreats I have been part of over the past decade. The teams have had a lasting impact.

Any member of the church in Pilviskiai would point to this partnership as a real joy and life-giving force in their church community. Many at the church in Green Bay would say the same thing. At the Lithuania Initiative meeting in Chicago this past year, many students from Green Bay were a source of great inspiration to other churches and to representatives of the General Board of Global Ministries. In youth ministry, we have known for years that we have to be authentic to make a difference in lives. This type of relational partnership offers an authentic experience for students that becomes a source from which they draw for a lifetime.

I left the church in Green Bay in the spring of 1999 to become the youth director at a church in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. It was a difficult good-bye but a good one. The students in Green Bay were understandably saddened by our parting, but they were not tied to me nearly as much as they were tied to the experience



Right: The United Methodist Church building in Kaunas, Lithuania. **Below:** A group of senior citizens in a retirement home in Kaunas proudly sing their national anthem.

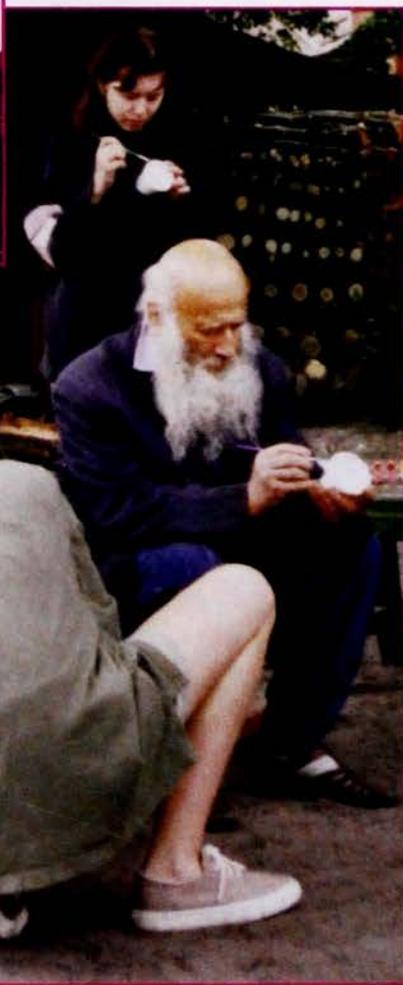


of being in ministry. They took another youth trip to Pilviskiai in the summer of 1999 without me. And they continue leading the way in the mission partnership in Green Bay.

Training Students for Mission

Preparation is the key to any successful trip. I have trained teens for mission projects in a variety of ways. We have tried training every Saturday for a month, in 3-hour blocks of time, and training on various nights. The biggest problem is participation. Obviously, I want all participants to be prepared, so the training is mandatory. But our students are so busy that doing the training over a month is really hit-or-miss with respect to having all attend.

Then I remembered all those times working at camp when I thought that Monday was going to kill me because the campers were all so unruly. But by the time Thursday rolled around, they had come together and our worship was meaningful. The memory gave me



Above: The Green Bay youth help with Vacation Bible School at the Kaunas church. **Inset:** A medieval fort in Kaunas. It is part of the original city.

an idea. Why not do training in the same way—in a concentrated block of time?

I have just completed the third mission trip of my summer and have tried this style of training. It works, and you can complete it within a night and a day (about 24-30 hours). It gives your teens that lock-in they have been bugging you about, and it has a purpose! Design it however you want, but be sure to include the key ingredients below.

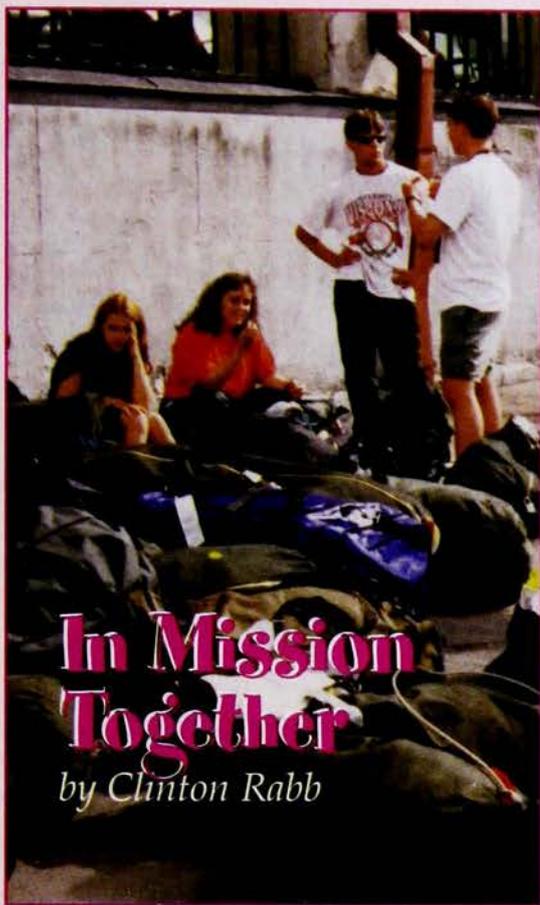
- Publish the training dates along with the mission-trip dates, and make sure the youth hear the word *mandatory!* I published all the dates in February at an informational meeting for summer mission trips.
- Do the training a week before you leave. This keeps it fresh and generates a ton of enthusiasm. (Note: Your parent meeting happens months before!)
- Make training a mandatory condition for going on the trip.
- For worship, pick songs that reflect a heart for mission and make them your songs for the trip. Do at least three worship segments during the training.
- Cross-cultural and intercultural training are important. Your teens must understand and identify their own culture before they dive into another culture. You must do your homework on the culture you are going to enter. Discuss stereotypes and preconceived notions. This is as vital as Bible study and worship to the success of your trip.

Nuts and Bolts on the Trip

- On the trip, do at least three sessions of Bible study. I focus on vision, trying to see what God might see, avoiding snap judgments and knee-jerk reactions, and becoming a part of what God is blessing.
- Over the course of the event, have the participants pair up with different people three or four times for discussion. They tell where they think they are in their faith journey, offer what they think is worth sharing about their faith, and ask each other: "How is it with your soul?"

During our journey, we eat our meals together, closing with worship and prayer. Of all the things on the list above, teens enjoyed the pairing up and discussing hard questions the best. Why? Because these activities are relational! □

Philip Rhodes is the youth director at First United Methodist Church in Hurst, Texas. He also serves the GBGM's In Mission Together program as Consultant for Youth Initiatives.



Wisconsin youth in Kaunas, Lithuania.

"In Mission Together" is a program designed by the General Board of Global Ministries to encourage participation by local congregations in global mission and evangelization. Serving a facilitating function, the program can help an established church engage in shared mission with a developing congregation in another part of the world. Or it can help an existing church start a new one by developing a relationship that can lead to a new congregation.

"In Mission Together" has partnered United Methodist churches with approved projects of the Millennium Fund for Mission in such parts of Eastern Europe as the Czech Republic, eastern Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine. Church-development projects are also available in Cambodia and Italy, with projects in other geographical areas to be added in the future. A program called "Youth in Mission Together" is also under development.

Establishing a relationship through the "In Mission Together" program requires congregations or faith communities in different countries and cultures to make a commitment to one another. They must promise to listen to each other, become sensitive to the other's culture, suspend judgment, share resources, and open themselves to God's transforming power through participation together in God's mission. This shared ministry is meant to be holistic, approaching the spiritual and material needs of a community through an integrated approach and emphasizing the development of indigenous leadership and resources. When congregations from different cultures and contexts participate with one another in common mission, there is a synergistic effect that leads to the health and

vitality of all partners involved. This experience is not only transforming for local churches but it also changes the lives of the individuals involved.

United Methodist congregations, districts, and annual conferences may receive assistance from "In Mission Together" in determining and developing the scope and structure of their shared global-mission programs. The General Board of Global Ministries offers such assistance through consultants specially trained in the development of mission partnerships in specific countries and contexts. Each consultant is prepared to do the following, as needed: consult with a congregation or other organization in the development of its missional life; present mission opportunities available through "In Mission Together"; establish communication links; facilitate the creation of a shared mission with a developing church; negotiate the human and financial resources to which the participants will commit; interpret the culture of the partners to one another; monitor the health of the partnerships; and assist with travel arrangements and opportunities for visitation.

Currently, consultants for "In Mission Together" are assigned to the following areas: Czech Republic—Dick Arnold; Latvia—Gita Mednis; Lithuania—Bill Quick; Hungary—Jeff Markay; Italy—Paola Benecchi; Cambodia—Ron Tompkins; eastern Germany—Gisela Gildemeister. Lynne Alley Grant is responsible for promotional materials for "In Mission Together" and Philip Rhodes is the consultant for youth initiatives.

To learn more about "In Mission Together" and potential projects and opportunities, contact Congregational Mission Initiatives, General Board of Global Ministries, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1525, New York, NY 10115. Telephone: 212-870-3677; Fax: 212-870-3895; E-mail: crabb@gbgm-umc.org □

Clinton Rabb is executive secretary for Congregational Mission Initiatives in the Evangelization and Church Growth program area of the General Board of Global Ministries.

MISSION MEMO

27 Young Adults Commissioned

On August 6 and 13 in Atlanta, Georgia, the General Board of Global Ministries commissioned 27 young adults for mission service as US-2s and mission interns. The 15 new US-2s, representing annual conferences from Florida to Alaska, are undertaking two-year leadership-development ministries in the United States. Their assignments range from "40 Acres and a Mule" in Kansas City, Missouri, to the Gum Moon Women's Residence in San Francisco.

The 12 mission interns—representing the Virginia, North Georgia, Alabama/West Florida, Southwest Texas, Eastern Pennsylvania, Northern Illinois, West Ohio, Missouri West, Iowa, Oregon-Idaho, California-Nevada, and North Central Philippines annual conferences—will serve three-year terms in peace-with-justice ministries: 15 months of work/study in an international setting and 16 months of action/education in their own countries. Their initial assignments will take them to Latin America (Honduras, Brazil, Uruguay), Europe (Northern Ireland, Italy), Africa (Senegal, Zambia), and Asia (Israel/Palestine, India, Japan). One—Global Justice Volunteer Michele Johns, was featured in *New World Outlook*, Nov.-Dec. 1999.

UMCOR Alerts and Appeals

Several categories of legal immigrants—those who entered the United States after 8/22/96; older people not yet 65; and most non-elderly, non-disabled adults regardless of when they arrived—are not eligible for food-stamp aid should they need it. UMCOR urges all concerned about this inequity to call or write their members of Congress, asking them to cosponsor the Hunger Relief Act. In the Senate, this bill is (S. 1805); in the House of Representatives, it is (HR 3192). It will base food-stamp eligibility purely upon need and will increase federal support for emergency food programs.

UMCOR has received requests from the United Methodist conferences in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for grants to assist victims of war. In Liberia, people are striving to recover from years of conflict. In Sierra Leone, the church is working to provide relief and begin recovery in the midst of continuing violence. And in the D.R. Congo, where invading neighbors Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi now occupy nearly half the country, the church is providing refugee camps and feeding centers

to aid those displaced by ongoing warfare. Donations to provide relief may be made to D.R. Congo Emergency: Advance #198400-0; Liberia Emergency, Advance #150300-7; and Sierra Leone Emergency, Advance #181205-1.

To help with relief and recovery in New Jersey after the floods caused by Hurricane Floyd, give to Domestic Disaster Response, UMCOR Advance #901670-1, designating your gift "New Jersey Flood Relief." Volunteers to help rebuild may call 1-800-918-3100.

Both monetary gifts (designated for "Africa Famine Relief, Advance #101250-4) and Medicine Boxes (Advance #982630-3) are needed for the drought-stricken Horn of Africa. And gifts to Advance #982350-4 will provide relief for "Hurricanes 2000."

Corrections/Comments

In our May-June issue, the photo appearing at top right on page 30 was incorrectly captioned. The inventor of the vehicle for amputees was not US missionary Tom Algieri but Earl Miner of Marshfield, MO. The vehicle is called a PET (Personal Energy Transportation) and is now manufactured by Mr. Miner's son, Rodney Miner of Darby, MT, who refined the front drive unit. /In July-August, page 24, the photo directly below the caption block shows Angela Brown (sitting) and Alice Ann Glenn (standing) of the California-Nevada Conference. / See page 47 for news of "Primetimers," a new GBGM program of education and service for older adults.

DEATHS **Alfredo Suazo**, retired home missionary with 18 years of service at McCurdy School in New Mexico, died November 17, 1999....**Ola Lee Barnett**, retired deaconess with 33 years of service in Kentucky and North Carolina, died March 5, 2000....**Ki Hwa Jin**, born in Korea and active missionary in the Philippines since 1988, died March 13, 2000, at the age of 61. She had secured funds to build the Harris Seminary chapel (1989) and the Kasille UMC (2000), and she also established Kardona Bethel UMC (1989), Morong Bethel UMC (1990), and Bethel Missionary Training Center (1992), which she managed until 1999....**Bertha Ratliff**, retired missionary with 5 years of service in Korea, died March 16, 2000....**Esther G. Palmer**, retired deaconess with 28 years of service in the southern United States, died May 10, 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.

Hispanic Ministries at Mt. Pisgah UMC

by John Coleman, Consultant, General Board of Global Ministries



Many of the people who come to Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church near Atlanta, Georgia, are Hispanics from the area. Not only has the congregation started a ministry among the growing Hispanic population in its own area but it is also helping to establish Methodist churches in Venezuela.

During a mission trip to Central America several years ago, the church was invited by Bishop Luis Palomo, resident bishop of Costa Rica, to help him introduce Methodism to Venezuela. A delegation from Mt. Pisgah was sent to Venezuela in 1996 to visit pastors and churches of other denominations. Tragically, the delegation members were killed in a plane crash on their return trip.

At that time, the Rev. Miguel Torres took over the fledgling Hispanic ministry at Mt. Pisgah. Since then, the church's Hispanic membership has increased to more than 200. These members, mostly from Central and South America, worship on Sunday afternoons—occasionally gathering with the English-speaking congregation for joint worship and events.

The church also reconnected with Venezuelan pastors through Bishop Palomo several years ago and, since 1999, has been supporting church development in Venezuela. Thus far, the new Evangelical Methodist Church of Venezuela has more than 1000 members and close to a dozen churches. A missionary—the Rev. Adin Huerta—is working there, supervised by the bishop and by Miguel Torres as district superintendent. Mt. Pisgah UMC provides all of Huerta's missionary support. Its congregation is now trying to build support among other churches to fund additional staff and church construction in Venezuela.

The United Methodist Church in Mission

How a New Church Was Built in Downtown Detroit

By Elizabeth Haak, Consultant, General Board of Global Ministries



In 1997, as church developer Colon Brown recalls, the Detroit Annual Conference wanted to provide a spiritual center for young African American women working in downtown Detroit, many of whom were raising children alone. The Rev. Bernardine Daniels had successfully revitalized an existing

inner-city church. So in July 1997, the conference asked her to plant a new church, promising both moral and financial support.

Daniels says she spent a lot of time in prayer. "I kept asking God," she said: "How am I going to build a church?" One day, focused on Peter's affirmation of Jesus in Matthew 16:15-18, she heard the answer in her heart: "I sent you to preach, teach, and demonstrate that I am the Christ. If you do that, I will build the church."

So Daniels set about teaching, preaching, and demonstrating from her parsonage. The four or five people she invited to come for intercessory prayer on Sunday mornings grew to a group of 50, overflowing into the kitchen and onto the stairs. Her Bible study group increased from 12 to 15 to 70. From these groups, she trained a core of lay leaders to start home-study and prayer groups. She also led members through the community, where they asked those they met for prayer requests. By Easter 1998, when the combined groups had their first worship service together, members and guests totaled 400 people.

On July 2, 2000, the new Exousia Ministry Center was dedicated—its name meaning "power." It is a place where, the pastor says, "we invite people to experience God's power in their lives."

Mt. Zion: A Small Church Discovers a Big Ministry

by Elizabeth Haak, Consultant, General Board of Global Ministries

When Pastor Rosemary Williams began her appointment at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in DeLisle, Mississippi, she thought perhaps she was in the wrong place. She saw no children. Although she had retired after 33 years of teaching school, she believed she would always be called to work with children. So she questioned God: "Are there children here?" The reply was: "Oh, yes. There are children. But you'll have to go out and find them."

So Williams asked every child she met on the streets of the small Gulf Coast town: "Do you go to Sunday school?" If the child said, "No," Williams contacted the parents and invited their child to Sunday school at Mt. Zion. When necessary, she picked children up in her car. Soon she was filling her family's van.

Then she had to ask the church to buy a larger, 15-seat van. The trustees hesitated. "They had never been actively involved in outreach ministry before," Williams explained, "and they didn't understand how it worked." So she offered to forgo her salary if the church couldn't make the monthly van payments. She got her van without missing a paycheck. Missional involvement had caused the church's revenues to almost double—even before the membership grew from 35 in 1996 to 100 by the summer of 2000.

Now Mt Zion is bursting at the seams, with 65 to 70 folks from age 7 to 70-something in regular attendance. And the Mississippi Conference has contributed \$200,000 toward the purchase of 28 acres. On this land the church can expand to accommodate its growing ministries with children.



Making Disciples at Mt. Pisgah UMC

by John Coleman, Consultant, General Board of Global Ministries



Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church—founded in Alpharetta, Georgia, north of Atlanta—has grown from 250 to 5000 members in the last 17 years. But senior pastor Warren Lathem, who has presided over that growth, would rather talk about the 10,000 nonmembers who benefit from this 170-year-old church's various ministries. "We're a mission station," he asserts. "We want to be a church that exists not for ourselves, but for others."

Lathem defines Christian disciples as "people who have had a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ. They are engaged in fellowship with other Christians who are growing in the faith. They are developing an inner life through the practice of spiritual disciplines. They are engaged in a service ministry. And they say: 'I have received this gift not just for my own sake but for the sake of others.'"

Now, thanks to Bible study and a special curriculum for faith formation, 60 to 70 percent of the people who join Mt. Pisgah do so on profession of faith rather than transferred membership. There are many ministries for members and nonmembers to work in, including food and clothing distribution, a psychological counseling center, recreation, substance-abuse-prevention programs, Habitat for Humanity and Volunteers In Mission work projects, and pioneering ministries for AIDS victims and women in crisis.

"Many of the people we serve will never come to Mt. Pisgah," Lathem said. "But by serving their needs in critical ways, we gain the right to be heard in the community. Meanwhile, those who are going through crisis or transition and find significant help here will share that experience with others who may come to our church."



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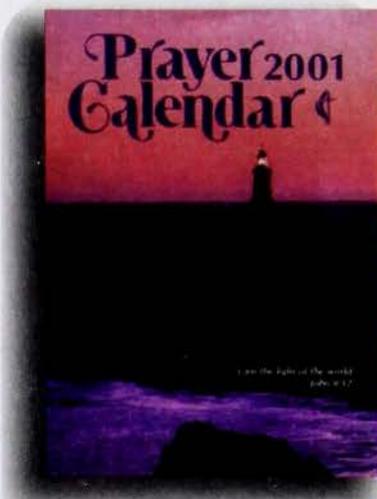
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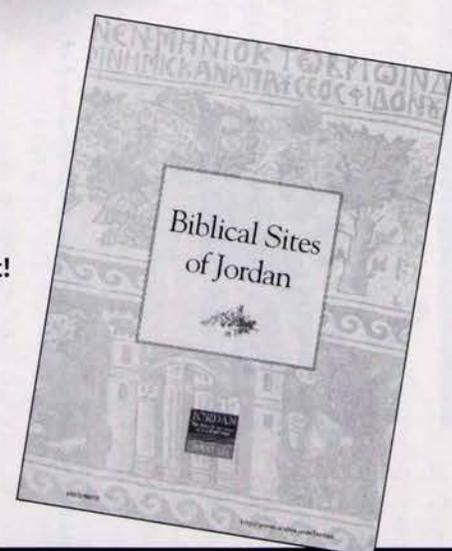
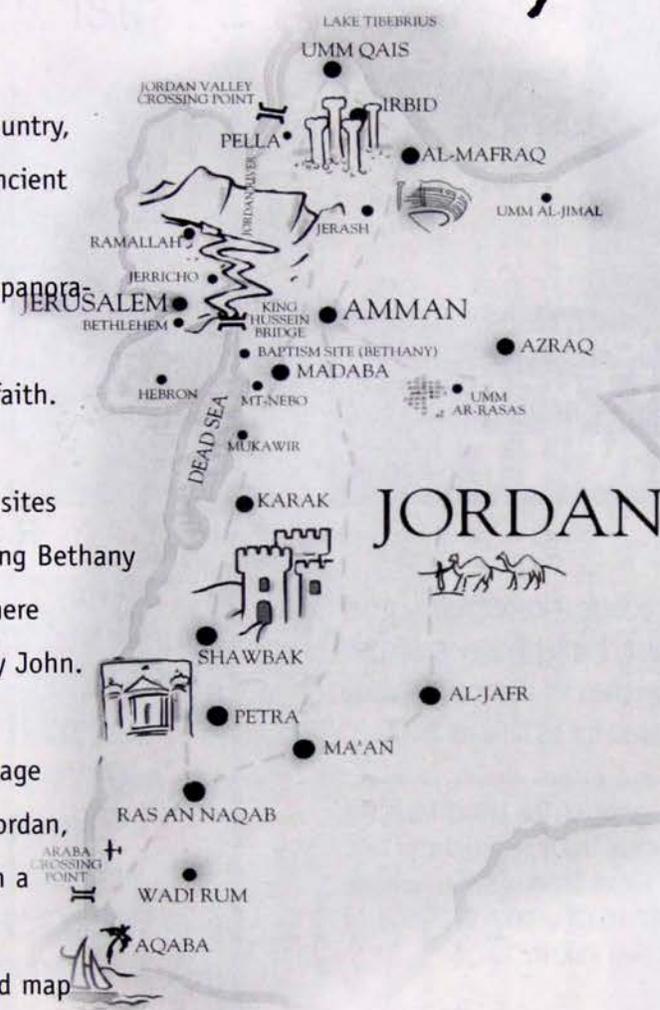
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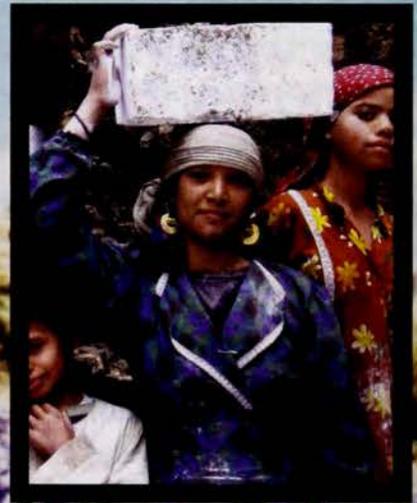
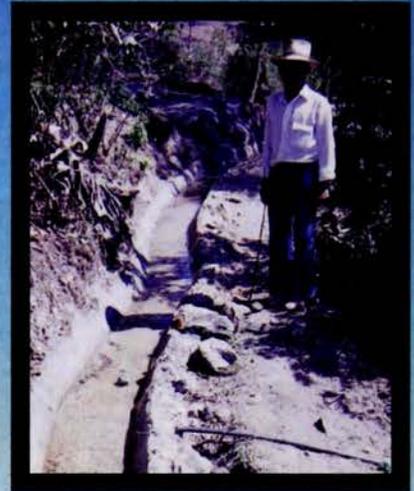
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