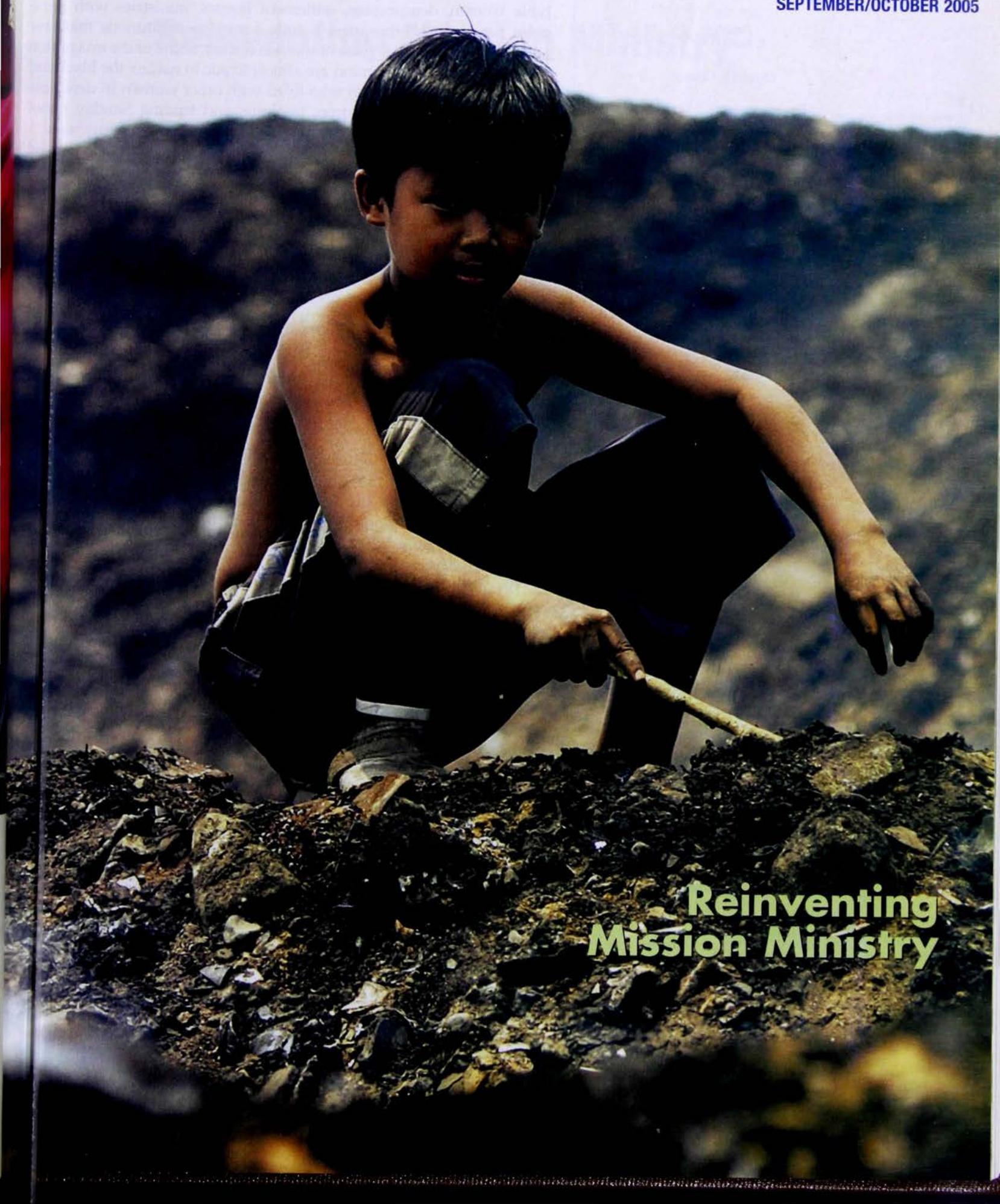


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**Reinventing
Mission Ministry**



NEW WORLD OUTLOOK

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Cover photo: by Paul Jeffrey. A child picks through a mound of garbage searching for items of value at the "officially closed" Smokey Mountain dump site in Manila, Philippines. The dump remains a resource for people whose only means of income is selling the items they retrieve.

Photo credits: See page 7.

Old Traditions Become New Again

Bible Women, deaconesses, settlement houses, ministries with immigrant populations—this issue is full of mission institutions that have helped people over 100 years of mission history. Some of the images that the institutions bring to mind are almost iconic in nature: the black-clad deaconess, a single woman who lived with other women in deaconess homes, working with children, teaching, and leading Sunday school classes—the Protestant equivalent of the Catholic nun, in many ways.

Today, the deaconess movement, after near extinction, has evolved into a dynamic movement among Protestant women. Though some of their roles are the same—many deaconesses still work with children, teach, and lead Sunday school—deaconesses today may be single, married, mothers, and grandmothers. They also perform many different kinds of services inside and outside of the church, serving as editors, translators, counselors, nurses, mission coordinators, and much more.

Likewise, Bible Women may draw upon images etched in history: indigenous women taught by white missionary women to read the Bible and evangelize within their communities. Today, women gather together to learn from each other and to study topics such as primary community-based health care, sound nutrition, women in the Bible, and literacy. They still spread the Word and the love of God to women of their own community and to other communities nearby.

Many of today's United Methodist mission institutions in the United States were founded about 100 years ago as settlement houses and centers to help immigrant communities climb out of desperate poverty and integrate into American society. Some of them still work with immigrant communities in new and different ways. Others have changed over time, meeting the needs of new populations as their neighborhoods grow and change.

We celebrate the anniversaries of two missions, the United Mission to Nepal (50 years) and the Methodist Church of Lower Myanmar (125 years). So much has changed in both these missions since they were founded. The United Mission to Nepal was founded by white Protestant medical missionaries who always envisioned that their mission would one day be handed over entirely to the Nepalese people, and that goal is close to being met. In lower Myanmar, the church founded in Burma by early Methodist missionaries is now self-supported and run entirely by the Myanmar Methodists.

We also look at the last phase of an amazing project started by UMCOR in Senegal three decades ago. The land in the Gambia region was deforested desert, dry and barren; but today, thanks to an UMCOR project managed in close partnership with a local Senegalese agency, the region grows 80 percent of Senegal's banana crop, and United Methodist funding and support is no longer required.

Christie R. House

To Give to the Advance:

For United Methodists: Make out the check to your local church and write the Advance name and code number on the check. Give your gift to your church treasurer so that your local church and annual conference can receive Advance credit. **Outside UM channels:** Make the check payable to "Advance GCFA" with the project name and code number on the check. Send the check to Advance GCFA, P.O. Box 9068, GPO, New York, NY 10087-9068. To contribute with a credit card, call 1-888-252-6174. All Advance projects are also eligible for Supplementary Gifts through United Methodist Women's giving channels. Supplementary Gifts are given through the UMW treasurer. The Women's Division will honor the designation.

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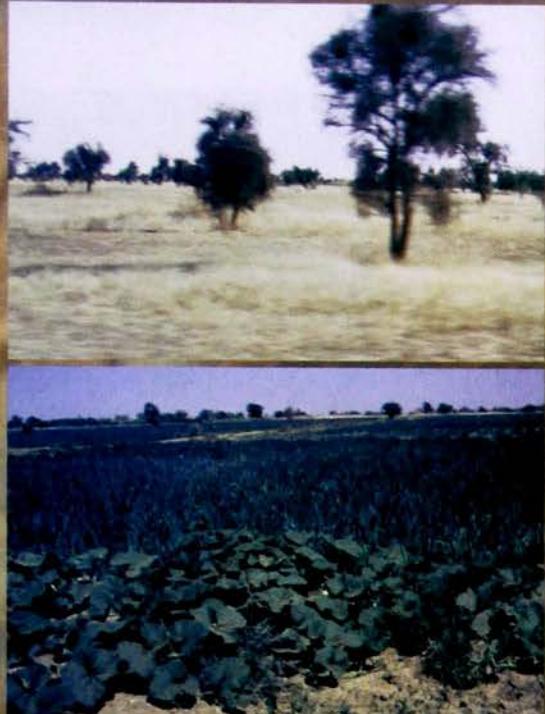


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In the Gambia region of Senegal, an irrigation system built with support from OFADEC and UMCOR helps transform the desert into productive farmland.



Inset: The once-barren Mafre desert (top) has been transformed into fertile land (above) as a result of the Senegal Project begun in 1977.

A Forest in the Desert

by Cassandra Heller

Imagine water rising from desert ground, trees scenting the dry air, sand turning into fresh earth, producing abundant crops—created out of a land previously struggling with starvation and death. Now imagine that Christians and Muslims worked side by side to pump water into the desert, grow trees, and cultivate crops. This small miracle happened in Africa, in a place called the Gambia region of western Senegal—home of the Senegal Project.

The Senegal Project was born after a five-year drought in the 1970s that spread from the Sahara Desert southward to the western region of Senegal. During the drought, a million head of cattle and about 200,000 people perished from thirst and famine in Senegal alone. The drought added further suffering to a population already encumbered by illiteracy, health and water problems, high rates of unemployment, and a lack of school programs.

In response to the drought, OFADEC (Office for Development

and Cooperation in Africa) was established in 1977, and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) stepped up to offer its support to aid the people of the region. Over the last 30 years, the two organizations turned a barren desert into acres of productive farmland, which provided much of the income necessary to advance the region out of starvation and into the modern marketplace.

The aid that OFADEC and UMCOR provided did not stop there. They decided to take an integrated approach to a variety of

problems in the Gambia region. OFADEC used the income earned from the crops to restructure more than 20 villages. Now more than 1500 families have access to clinics, schools, farming education, and agricultural skills training.

Phase I: The Beginning

The dream of turning the desert into a place of life and abundance was Jean Carbonare's, founding director of OFADEC. Supported by UMCOR, Carbonare implemented the first program (Phase I) in the northern Tambacounda region in two villages: Wassadou and Bantantinty.

At first, some experts believed Carbonare's project would fail. The US State Department agronomists had told Harry Haines, chief executive officer of UMCOR (1966-1986), that Carbonare's dream of growing food in the desert would be difficult, if not impossible. "But Carbonare," wrote Harry Haines, "had a conviction that the impossible could be achieved if one inspired enough people to believe it and then do it." (*New World Outlook*, Jan.-Feb. 1999, p. 23)

With the tremendous relief efforts sponsored by various governments, the United Nations, and ecumenical agencies such as Church World Service and the World Council of Churches, a diesel-fuel water pump was installed in a 200-meter well near the Gambia River.

By March 1985, in a small village called Mafre in northern Senegal, gallons of water were pumped into the desert earth. In only four months, village people were able to plant seedlings, plow farming plots, and begin herdsmen-training programs to enhance the villagers' ability to raise animals.

In 1985, 314 families enrolled in the program and 2500 acres of former desert land were under culti-



Green banana crops flourish in northern Senegal on land that was once desert. The cost of crop irrigation is supported by the sale of produce from village women's individual fruit and vegetable gardens. From their gardens' proceeds, the women also collectively pay for community schools and clinics.

vation, reclaiming a total of seven villages. Local villagers, encouraged by the process, joined the program enthusiastically. Knowing the feasibility of banana production and the potential for income generation from banana crops in the region, the local villagers decided that bananas would provide the income they needed to reverse poverty.

OFADEC and UMCOR implemented a project that would not only focus on income from agricultural production but also help set up health clinics, hire teachers, and start job-training courses.

Ten years after Carbonare's vision, 444 acres of working banana crop land produced bananas for Senegal's urban areas. United Methodist Rev. Deane Williams, who has visited the program every two years for the past 12, recalls the reaction to the first shipment of banana crops to urban areas: "The high point of the trip was the festival to celebrate the banana harvest. Most of the crops had been shipped to the market. Dancing, costumes, and hearty foods were served to the visitors and the community. The success of the project was evident in the well-being of the community."

Phase II: A New Life

The second phase of the program, now supported by Development and Peace (an international development agency of the Canadian Catholic Church), encouraged people to work independently.

In order to ensure the independence of local farmers, OFADEC set

up an irrigation training program, which included teaching the use and maintenance of agricultural machinery. Education in environment protection was also a key component of the program. Mamadou Ndiaye, General Director of OFADEC, stated, "OFADEC chose an integrated approach to solving problems, taking into account several dimensions of the program, including food production, education, health, environment, and skills training." The program's integrated approach provided key components that helped farmers become independent of outside funding.

By 1986, 1493 farmers (including 716 women) were producing 2611 tons of bananas per year, 30 percent of Senegal's banana consumption. Rev. Williams recalled that during his 2004 visit to Dakar, Senegal, near the banana farms, village women kept their own garden plots of vegetables and fruits. Gardens were designed to improve the daily rations of families and also to provide extra income from sales at the local market. The large growing area was divided so that each family could grow enough extra food to pay for irrigation water and garden supplies. Each family could also contribute to funds for community improvements such as schools, clinics, and wells that produced water for home use.

Because of improved conditions in the community, more people were able to work, and the annual income per household increased

from \$200 to \$600. To battle illiteracy, 10 schools were built. New health centers helped reduce malnutrition in the region from 47 percent to 1.5 percent, and 1075 children received immunizations for the first time.

In July of 1991, the entire management of the project was transferred to the local farmers. Independent of any organizational aid, the local participants formed a group they called the "Federation of Farmers." A year later, the federation independently reached a yearly production of 4000 tons of bananas per year.

The diesel fuel pump had turned a small garden into productive crop land capable of competing with other large markets. "The little project we visited in 1985 had just a few farmers," said Rev. Williams, "but now there are many towns with small villages nearby."

Phase III: Independence

Finally in 2001, 1111 acres were actively cultivated for banana production, at first covering 45 percent of Senegal's banana consumption. Today, the project supplies more than 80 percent of Senegal's banana consumption.

Today, local residents take responsibility for implementing their own projects. Each week, community councils convene to discuss major projects. They assign residents who volunteer their time and resources to complete the projects that are needed. In this way, community leaders organize people to work together, ensuring that the desert does not return to its previous state of 30 years ago.

"Our return trip in 2004 was an opportunity to see the desert bloom," Rev. Williams wrote. "Tilled land covered many hundreds of acres of vegetables, bananas, rice, and millet, and other crops were abundant."

Currently, eight working schools provide up to eight years of education. "Education was not known when we arrived in the area; there were no schools at all," Ndiaye stated. "But we built schools, sent kids to school, and started literacy training for adults." In addition to basic education, agricultural techniques and marketing management classes were added to training programs for farmers.

Because of the training programs and independent federation, the Gambia region of Senegal has become prosperous. "At the end of 1999, we withdrew from the project," Ndiaye stated, "and the Federation of Farmers conducts the program. They are increasing the surface they cultivate and their production and revenues."

Ndiaye sees continued improvement in health and education revenues. The Senegal Project

supports schools that teach local residents how to become community nurses. They can now take care of their own community health needs rather than relying on outside sources.

The Senegal Project turned the Gambia region around from importing 100 percent of bananas consumed to producing 80 percent of Senegal's banana crop. Because dreamers from UMCOR and OFADEC kept their faith in the project over the past 30 years, the lives of 1500 families are better and 20 villages are stronger. The Senegal Project has saved thousands of people from starvation and will enable the Senegalese people to forge a better way of life for generations to come.

Cassandra Heller is a New World Outlook intern and a student at Boston University studying English and Philosophy.

For more information on OFADEC, contact:

Office for Development and Cooperation in Africa
Mamadou Ndiaye
General Director
Email: ofadec@sentoosn



Senegalese women package grains produced in the once desert-like Gambia region.

mission memo

Famine in Niger

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has partnered with Swiss Interchurch Aid (HEKS) to provide seeds, cattle fodder, and staple foods in the southern region of Niger. Drought combined with the worst locust invasion in 15 years has caused an acute humanitarian crisis in the region. Advance #101250, All Africa Drought and Famine, Niger, will help church agencies to provide additional emergency assistance.

Earthquake Recovery in Chile

In response to a 7.9 magnitude earthquake in northern Chile last June, UMCOR sent relief funds to assist the United Methodist Church of Northern Chile, which is providing aid. To help with UMCOR's recovery efforts, give to Advance #982450, International Disaster Response.

Hurricane Dennis Recovery

Hurricane Dennis took 38 lives in Cuba and Haiti and left many uninsured homes damaged in the United States. UMCOR released emergency funds last June to assist Haiti's recovery. In the CAYES area alone, at least 200 homes were damaged, 30 were completely destroyed, and 700 livestock were lost in the storm. In Cuba, the 150-mph winds nearly wiped out entire communities and several Methodist churches and home churches were destroyed.

Your gifts to UMCOR Advance #982523, Hurricanes 2005 Global, will help those affected by Hurricane Dennis in the Caribbean and the United States. Flood buckets are needed. For assembly and shipping instructions, call UMCOR Sager-Brown: 1-800-814-8765, or visit the UMCOR website at <http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/print/kits/>. You may also give a financial donation to UMCOR's Material Resource Ministry, Advance #901440. If you would like to volunteer to help in hurricane recovery, call the Volunteer Hotline toll-free at 1-800-918-3100.

Darfur Peace Step Evokes "Cautious Optimism"

Ground rules to resolve three years of conflict in Darfur, Sudan's troubled western region, have drawn "cautious optimism" from United Methodist mission executives. The ground rules were announced July 6 in Abuja, Nigeria. UMCOR opened operations in Al Ferdous earlier this year, where aid workers have been constructing a reception center, family shelters, and sanitation facilities at a 200,000-resident displaced person camp. UMCOR's head, the Rev. Paul Dirdak,

expects the Darfur project will be long-term. To contribute to UMCOR's work in Sudan, give to Advance #184385, Sudan Emergency.

Urgent Response in Zimbabwe

President Mugabe of Zimbabwe has instituted a government program of mass evictions and demolition of settlements deemed illegal. The estimated number of people left homeless by the government's effort to clear "illegal" vending sites and homes is about 1.5 million. The displaced people are living in inadequate shelter and lack clothing, food, water, sanitation, and health care.

General feeding programs, supplementary feeding for children, blankets, tents, sanitation, and psychological and social support will be provided through a coordinated response by faith-based agencies in Zimbabwe at 12 sites.

Advance #199456, Zimbabwe Emergency.

Vellore Tour

The USA Board of the Vellore Christian Medical College announces its 2006 India Tour, February 4-19. The tour includes Delhi, the Taj Mahal, historic and cultural sites in South India, and a visit to the Vellore College. For more information, e-mail: usaboard@vellorecmc.org, or call 1-800-875-6370.

DEATHS **Mary O. Rice**, retired missionary with more than 15 years of service in China and Pakistan, died on June 7, 2005...**Mildred Bellamy**, a retired Church and Community Worker with more than 28 years of service in the United States, died June 12, 2005...**Edna Zech**, a retired missionary with 25 years of service in Puerto Rico and other parts of Latin America, died on July 10, 2005...**Eugene M. Westley**, retired missionary with 17 years of service in Nigeria and Red Bird Mission, died July 12, 2005.

Photo Credits: 4-6—Fred Rowles, B. Dunlap-Berg/UMCom • 4 (top inset)—J. Harry Haines/UMCOR • 8-12, 15—Paul Jeffrey • 13—Tammi Mott/CWS • 14—Mary Beth Coudal • 16—Mike DuBose/UMNews • 17-18—Courtesy Deaconess Program Office/GBGM • 20—K. Kirjavainen • 21 (lower right)—Norma Kehrberg • 21 (top), 22-23—United Mission to Nepal Archives • 24—Nelson Navarro • 21 (inset)—Courtesy Gum Moon Residence • 25—Courtesy Crossroads Urban Center • 26-27—Courtesy InterServ • 27 (top)—Courtesy Wesley Community Center, Phoenix • 28-31—John Fleming • 32-33—Courtesy Lorna Jost, North Central Jurisdiction UMVIM • 34—Fred Koenig • 35 (top)—Courtesy members of the Car Care Ministry, McEachern UMC • Courtesy Western Jurisdiction UMVIM • 36-37—Beryl Goldberg • 38-39—Courtesy Equal Exchange • 42-44—George W. Gish, Jr. • 45 (left)—ProLiteracy Worldwide • 45 (right)—Courtesy Atlantic Street Center • 46 (left)—Courtesy Carmen McFadyen • 46 (right)—Richard Lord.



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THE GOSPEL ON SMOKEY MOUNTAIN

A United Methodist Congregation in Ministry

story and photos by Paul Jeffrey



Top: People gather at the entrance of the United Methodist Learning Center. One of Smokey Mountain's new five-story housing units can be seen behind the center. *Above:* The children of Smokey Mountain help recycle materials taken from the dump near Manila.

Janet Sapiro's husband comes home about 4:00 A.M., having worked through the night plucking recyclable materials out of the garbage dump by flashlight. Sapiro quickly fixes a simple breakfast for her children and walks to the dump where, as the sun rises and the first garbage trucks of the morning begin to rumble in with their loads of rotting waste, she takes her turn coaxing scraps of copper, plastic, and broken glass from the rubble. She keeps at it all day, often jostling with other scavengers to gain access to a new load of garbage. A scar on her arm testifies to the sharpness of the hooks they wield in pursuit of profit. About 5:00 P.M., she sells her harvest for about \$2, a bit more if some of her children have come along to help, and then walks wearily home. It's her husband's turn once again.

Sapiro, 32, has been working in the dump since she was 10 years old. She first labored on the infamous Smokey Mountain, but after it was closed a decade ago, she moved to a new dump a mile away, where Manila's refuse inexorably pushes back the sea.

She would like to find another way to make a living.

"Although it's all I know, I really don't like it here," she said. "Maybe I could get hired as a street sweeper. That's a regular job that pays 280 pesos [about \$5] a day. But I didn't make it past grade school, and I don't know how to read very well."

Sapiro has added to her already long day a literacy class at the

Smokey Mountain United Methodist Church, where she's a member. Although she works in the dumps, she has dreams.

A History of Struggle

It was once a small village by the sea, the houses of fishing families connected by wooden walkways, a place for children to gather mussels, oysters, and starfish from Manila Bay. Then 50 years ago the burgeoning city of Manila started dumping its garbage there, the fishers became dump scavengers, and the bay turned into a poisoned lagoon.

By the 1970s, the site became the city's primary dump site and a magnet for peasants fleeing poverty and war in the countryside. If the new migrants could find work nowhere else in Manila, they could always launch themselves into the mounting pile of garbage to tease out scraps of metal or glass that they could sell for cash. They built their homes—using materials they rescued from the dump—beside the dump, and even on top of it. Occasionally the mountain of trash would collapse on their houses, or the smoldering fire would ignite dozens of shanties at a time. Their lives were so intertwined with the dump that they became indistinguishable from the garbage, disposable people generated by an increasingly consumerist society.

By the early 1980s, what someone had dubbed "Smokey Mountain" had become an international embarrassment for the regime of President Ferdinand

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Although Smokey Mountain has been discontinued as a dump site, a new site has opened nearby, where thousands of people earn their living retrieving sellable and recyclable materials.

Marcos, whose wife Imelda was busy collecting thousands of pairs of shoes in the Malacañang Palace. In 1982, Marcos ordered the relocation of the often barefoot scavengers. Smokey Mountain, he decreed, would become a seaside golf course or a park for the middle class. Bulldozers demolished the houses of the poor as soldiers stood guard.

The new housing site—some 25 miles south of Manila—had government-built latrines, yet no water, no electricity, and no employment. Within weeks, the scavenger families began to return to the old dump site, refusing to die quietly of hunger in an out-of-sight neighborhood. As the People's Power movement gained momentum, eventually overthrowing Marcos, the scavengers, with encouragement from the Catholic Church, organized and pressured the government to let them stay and develop the dump site into a viable community. Their struggle paid off. In 1988, President Corazon Aquino ordered a feasibility study for a low-cost



Smokey Mountain dump site still remains a resource for children and their families who tease items of value out of the mound of garbage.

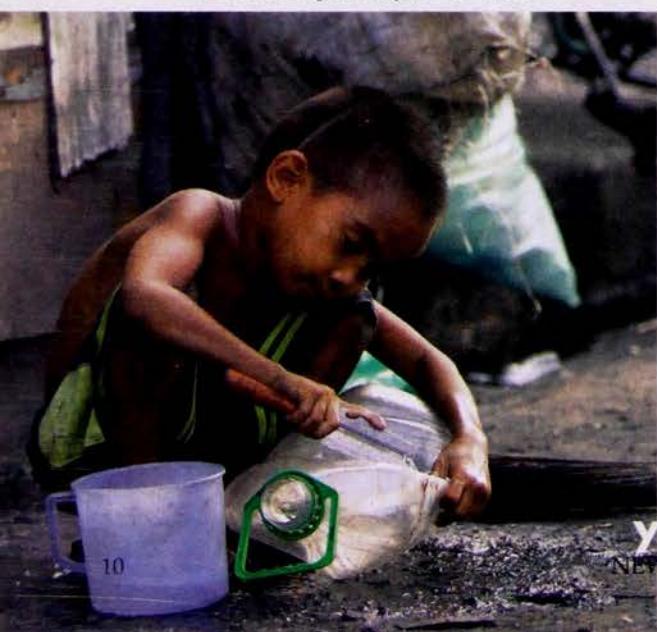
housing project alongside the dump.

In 1995, the dump was closed, though a new site was opened just a mile away. The residents were moved into temporary housing (three-story pavilions) and the dump itself was reduced somewhat in size. It nonetheless remains, not a golf course, but an actual smoking mountain of old garbage that towers over the surrounding neighborhoods.

The government housing authority began construction of five-story apartment buildings. Corruption and bureaucratic delay took their toll, but residents were finally able to move into the new structures in 2004. Several families received grants from the United Methodist Committee on Relief to help put tile floors over the rough cement of their new homes.

The "temporary" housing they moved out of is not unoccupied, however. Some families couldn't meet the minimum \$8 a month mortgage payments on the new apartments, or afford the monthly payments for water and electricity. So they remain in the primitive temporary shelters, which are free, and they have been joined by new residents who've migrated from other parts of the city.

A child recycles a plastic bottle.



A Better Future

The Smokey Mountain United Methodist Church was organized in 1985. For the last two decades, it has accompanied the people of the dump as they've struggled to survive with dignity at the edges of modern Philippine society.

The congregation currently holds

weekly worship and Bible study classes in a small room underneath several of the new apartment buildings. The church also sponsors a kindergarten program; 39 children were enrolled last year, and this year the congregation is planning to expand by adding a nursery program.

According to the pastor of the congregation, Noel Masinba, working with children has given the congregation an open door to working with parents, including offering skills-training and literacy programs.

Concerned about what would happen with children from the kindergarten as they moved up through the grades of public school, the congregation decided to sponsor more than 30 scholarships for children of the community, funded by an Advance Special.

Sun Sook Kim, a United Methodist missionary in Manila said: "People here want to get an education as a way of building a better future, but they have a hard time earning enough to buy the rice and fish they need to survive. And although education is supposedly free through high school, in reality, there are costs for school supplies, uniforms, and transportation. When a family has sev-

Support for the Smokey Mountain Project can be given through the Advance to Smokey Mountain Community Development, Advance #11830N.

See p. 2.

eral children, those costs become impossible to pay."

The scholarship program assists students through college if they continue studying.

Overcoming Stigma

Helen Demesa received help all the way through nursing school. Now 32, Demesa grew up in Smokey Mountain. Her parents had moved to the dump site shortly before her birth because no one charged them rent to set up a shack on top of the waste heap. Demesa spent her afternoons scavenging with her grandmother, giving the money she earned to her mother. Later, when she went first to midwifery school and later to nursing school, Demesa worked nights in the dump and attended classes during the day. Although she'd bathe and put on clean clothes, Demesa said other children would make fun of her because she nonetheless smelled like garbage. The stigma of living at Smokey Mountain wouldn't wear off easily.

She recalled: "You couldn't get the smell off you, and sometimes people would look at you as if they were looking at garbage. I felt ashamed."

Although she moved into the new apartments at Smokey Mountain last year, Demesa said she'd like nothing better than to leave. She said the apartments are noisy, violent, and dirty. And there's always the mountain just outside the window, still smoky.

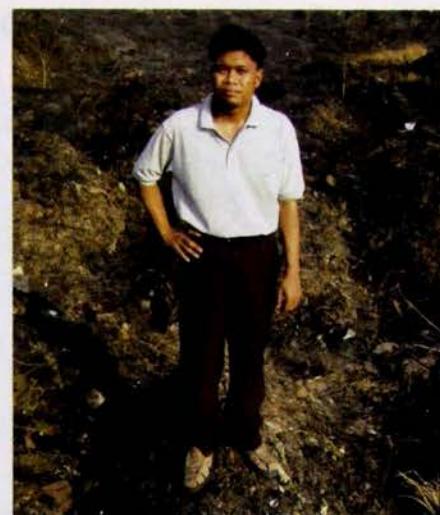
Vanessa Simbah also dreams of leaving. Like many young Filipinos, she's the product of government policies that mask the lack of democratic economic development with programs that encourage people to migrate overseas and send their earnings home. The 16-year old, who was born on Smokey Mountain, just graduated from high school and is entering nursing school. She wants to be an

overseas contract worker, one of millions of Filipinos who have made the Philippines the third largest recipient of family remittances in the world.

She said: "When we lived in the temporary housing, it was chaos and I couldn't study well. Now that we've moved into the permanent housing, it's better, but there are still a lot of drug addicts around, and it's still noisy. I want to go somewhere else and earn a salary in dollars, but come back here to the Philippines for my vacations."

Whether they go away or remain on Smokey Mountain, the struggle of the dump's residents over recent decades has equipped them with a new sense of self-respect that has broken down some of the stigma that long plagued them. Much of that is symbolized in the new housing units; as imperfect as they are, it's obvious that the people of Smokey Mountain have come a long way.

"They haven't made the mountain into a golf course yet, nor into a park. And if they do, it's unclear whether it would be for the rich or



Noel Masinba, the pastor of Smokey Mountain United Methodist Church, stands on the garbage dump on Smokey Mountain.

for us," said Vanessa Simbah's mother, Vilma. "But what they do know is that they're never going to kick us out of here again. People are aware now and we're well organized. We'll fight to keep our homes. As awful as it is, it's our home, and we're not leaving."

The Rev. Paul Jeffrey is a United Methodist missionary and photojournalist. He lives in Eugene, Oregon.



Thousands of people earn a living collecting refuse at a new dump site.

In India, a village man and woman listen as an indigenous Bible woman shares a story from the Bible.



An Open Spirit of Sharing on a Dusty Road

Bible Women in the 21st Century

by Mary Beth Coudal

More than 100 years ago, Bible Women (identified without names in the mission record) trudged over unpaved paths for days to be with women to whom the male missionaries could not minister. The women carried Bibles, journeying beside women missionaries.

Mission-minded women in the United States supported these Bible Women pilgrims because they believed in their mission—to evangelize and provide education and health care to women and chil-

dren. The Bible Women translated languages and interpreted cultural contexts for the missionaries.

Today, Bible Women again walk side by side with missionaries and their mission-minded supporters in the United States. They are local women carrying Bibles along dusty paths, going to places the men and entrenched church groups will not go. Their mission is simple—to educate the women to read, share Bible stories with them, and teach skills. As volunteers, they travel alone or with

missionaries. Even more today than in the past, the women are determining their own paths and leading the way to Christian partnership and witness.

Bible Women Training

In an online article, "The Story of the Bible Women," Ruth Prudente, a consultant for the Bible Women's program and a former Women's Division staff member, wrote: "The model of pioneering female missionaries training women to become Bible Women to bring

Good News to the poor, sick, and hungry is still a relevant model for today. The local issues might be different, but indigenous women were still the ones to identify the issues and work collaboratively to develop the spiritual and knowledge base to address them—and to do the primary outreach work."

Dr. Glory Dharmaraj, Women's Division staff, has prepared the



August, a literacy student in Angola, writes on a blackboard as the ProLiteracy training instructor looks on.

Bible Study curriculum for about a dozen trainings in India, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, and soon in countries of Africa. She sees the Bible Women's program as a way to be open to mission in a spirit of exchange among women who share their deep Christian faith. A spirit of openness is moving and reigniting this historic Women's Division program.

In Malaysia, thousands of women have received training from hundreds of Bible Women in literacy, small business development, community-based health care, domestic violence, substance abuse, and peacemaking. Karen Prudente, whom many see as the person responsible for the reinvigoration of the Bible Women's program, said:

"We believe that the thousands already trained have trained thousands more. The good work just keeps multiplying in ways we cannot even begin to assess."

Since its reemergence in 2000, the Bible Women training has taken place in India, the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Samoa, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Laos, Northern India, Vietnam, and East and West Malaysia.

Sharing Faith and Hope

One missionary who attended the Bible Women's program in Cambodia was Karimi Gitobu. According to her online missionary biography, on the journey home she chatted with Nem Saran. Gitobu said: "She sat next to me on the bus as we traveled from the province where we had spent five days attending the Bible Women Training. She said that this verse [Jeremiah 33:12 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: In this place that is waste, without human beings or animals, and in all its towns there shall again be pasture for shepherds resting their flocks."] had given her a lot of hope and encouragement as she and other women strive to restore their country. The women showed us their simple way of life in a world that is totally different from the kind of comfort zone we live in. They showed us how they embrace each day with a positive attitude."

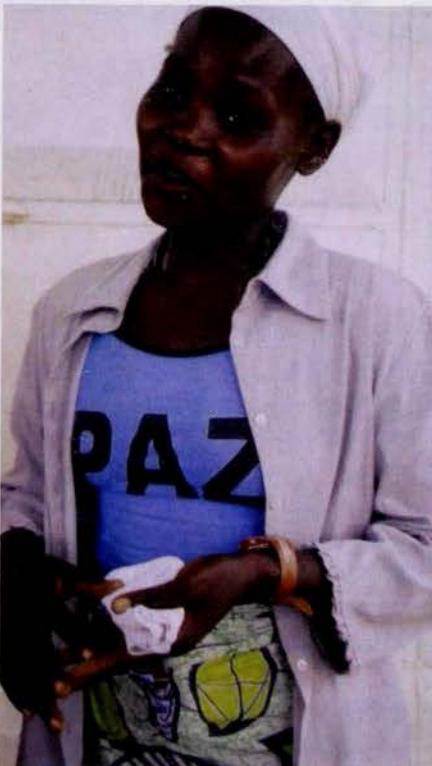
Two women on a long bus ride home sharing faith and hope is an apt image for the Bible Women's program. Regional missionary Emma Cantor, who has led many Bible Women's programs, said: "The program teaches women to love themselves and feel indeed that they are God's children. Being God's children is sometimes a difficult concept to experience and

teach, especially in a multifaith community where Christianity is a minority, where systems, policies, and structures are restrictive and unfriendly. The program uses processes to encourage the women to know who they are and learn to express their silenced voices—in the end, knowing that they are a very important part of creation in God's image. The program teaches them traditional spirituality through new ways of meditation, reading the Bible, and getting inspiration and strength from the Scriptures, especially from the women of the Bible."

Dr. Dharmaraj says that the sharing is based on reciprocity, not on domination. "It is a sharing from South to South, and we have much to learn."

Beating Illiteracy in Angola

In Angola, a country in which 70 percent of the women are illiterate, Bible Women are about to take to



Delfina, a literacy student in Angola, talks to a group about health issues.



Top: Indigenous Bible Women in India teach other women how to read. Above: The Revs. Deolinda Teca (left) and Josephina Sandemba (center) with CWS executive Tammi Mott in New York.

the streets, teaching literacy and sharing Bible studies. They want to make sure that Angolan women have the opportunity not only to read and grow spiritually but also to exert their rights as citizens and vote in next year's elections.

In 2006, Angola will hold its first elections since 1992, when elections sparked more bloodshed in an ongoing civil war. Since the war began in 1975 until its end in 2002, it is estimated that more than 1.5 million people were killed and 4 million became refugees.

Since the 2002 peace agreement, many of the displaced Angolans

are returning home from neighboring South African countries, like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Zambia. The Bible Women plan to greet the returning refugees, especially the women and children—always the groups most victimized in times of war.

The Bible Women want to share strategies for peacemaking, learned in partnerships with church women in Africa through the Angolan Council of Christian Churches (CICA) and ProLiteracy Training

Angolan women pastors sponsored by CWS who visited church workers in the United States to raise awareness about the need for literacy training in Angola. While in New York, the women met with staff of the Women's Division and the General Board of Global Ministries.

Karen Prudente, executive of the Women's Division, introduced the two Angolan pastors to the Bible Women's program. Prudente saw the Bible Women's program as a way to strengthen the Departamento da Mulher (the Women's Department) of CICA. At the same time, the Angolan church's effort to spread literacy could result in increased voter participation and peacebuilding in the coming election year.

An Increase in Literacy Classes

Tammi Mott, an executive of Church World Service, said, "For the Bible Women program, Karen [Prudente] saw the direct link in building the capacity of the organization, CICA, instead of building a separate literacy program....The unity of literacy on a national level will strengthen all denominations."

The connection began in March 2005, when ProLiteracy trainers facilitated a workshop in Angola. The Bible Women's program has worked with ProLiteracy since 2000, when the division revitalized the Bible Women's Program.

Originally, CWS and CICA staff planned 34 literacy classes in towns and churches throughout Angola. However, with the eagerness of participants who attended the March meeting, the church groups will offer 70 classes, five of which will be offered through Methodist connections, such as the Methodist Church in Angola and the Women's Department of the Methodist Church.

In 2006, the Women's Division, through the Bible Women's program, plans to sponsor 20 addi-

(formerly called Laubuch Literacy), and financially supported by Church World Service (CWS) and the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries.

"How can we make the elections peaceful?" said the Rev. Deolinda Dorcas Teca, Director of the Department of Justice, Evangelism, Reconciliation and Cooperation (DJERC) of CICA. "It means helping to see voting is a right and everybody can participate for social change."

The Revs. Teca and Josephina Sandemba, from the Evangelical Congregational Church, were two

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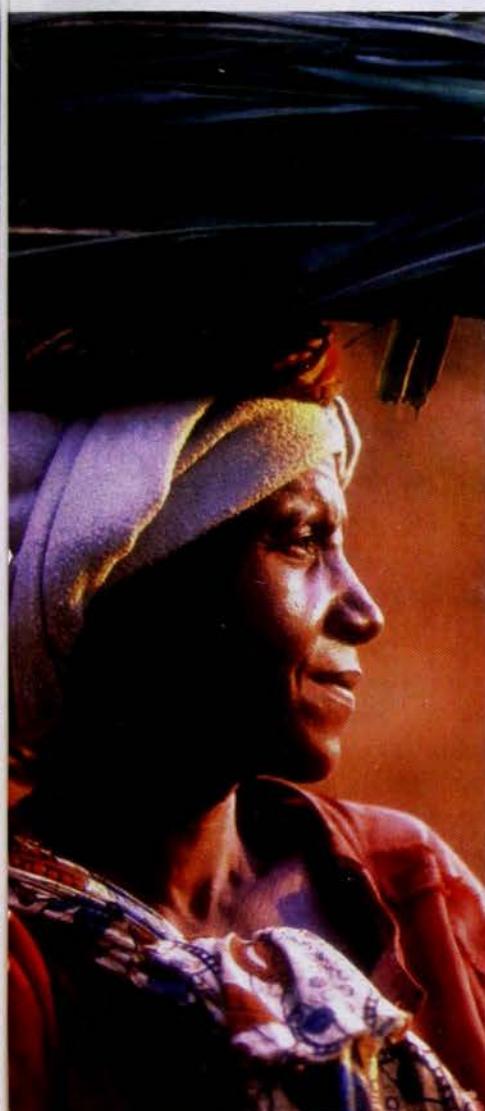
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tional literacy trainings for women in Angola, trusting that the peaceful elections, to which the women will have contributed, will in turn stabilize the country and end the history of violence against women and children.

The Bible Women program is funded by the undesignated gifts of United Methodist Women in the United States and from endowments set up many years ago.

Mary Beth Coudal is the staff writer for Communications at the General Board of Global Ministries.



In Angola, women return to their destroyed villages after years of civil war.

A FLOWER BLOSSOMS WITH MEANING: THE FAMA METHOD

by Mary Beth Coudal

November 2000, on the third day of the first training for the Bible Women's program, Karen Prudente, Women's Division staff, feared her dream of reviving the program had failed. After all, the several dozen participants at the Malaysian Theological Center in Sabah were not opening up to one another. No one was talking. The women from the United States were becoming uncomfortable with the silence.

Dr. Glory Dharmaraj, staff of the Women' Division, and Karen's mother, Ruth Prudente, former staff, had traveled from the United States to share literacy techniques learned from ProLiteracy in Syracuse, New York. They were worried. (Later, Dharmaraj acknowledged that we must learn to be comfortable in silence, that often silence is a cultural norm.) In the room where the women gathered, Dharmaraj looked up in exasperation. She noticed the beautiful banner the women had painted to mark the event. Then she lit on the idea of using the images from the banner as a "code" in the ProLiteracy training technique.

A code is a symbol that may appear as a simple line drawing, photo, word, or article. The group looks at the code and discusses questions about it in large or small groups. The facilitator does not interject, judge, or critique but asks questions and elicits group responses.

This questioning method is called FAMA, an acronym for "Facts, Associations, Meaning, and Action." It refers to the kinds of questions that a facilitator asks.

Facts—What do you see here? What else do you see?

Associations—How does this make you feel? Have you ever had experiences with this?

Meaning—Why do you think this is important? What do you think this means?

Action—What can you do with this? What can we do together?

The Bible Women's training program has used many of ProLiteracy's training manuals, for example, *Women and Health*. (ProLiteracy is the largest nonprofit literacy organization in the world.) In addition, the Women's Division has provided funding to have ProLiteracy training manuals translated into many additional languages, including Tamil.

The Bible Women's program has also drawn from the FAMA technique to parse meaning from the stories of women in the Bible. Questions that arise from the stories of biblical women include: What do you see in the story of the women who traveled with Jesus? Can you associate with the story? What does it mean? What action can we take together from this story?

The women, free to determine their own meaning and action, become energized about the possible courses of action. The stories of women in the time of Jesus are platforms upon which to jump into deeper Christian discussion and social engagement.



The Modern Deaconess

Answering God's Call to Mission

by Cassandra Heller

I serve neither for gratitude nor reward, but from gratitude and love; my reward is that I may serve.

Deaconess Motto

The life of a deaconess is an answer to God's call to Christian service under the authority of The United Methodist Church.

Like the first deaconesses in 1888, modern deaconesses trace their roots back to Phoebe, the woman whom Paul describes as a "helper of many." (Romans 16:1) Although their outward appear-

ance may have changed over time, deaconesses still work toward the same goals of social justice that were part of the deaconess movement in The United Methodist Church tradition that began more than 100 years ago.

Today, deaconesses continue to advocate for social justice and, according to Becky Dodson Louter, Executive Secretary of the Deaconess Program Office, have "brought the ministry into their vocations while living a balanced life." You'll find deaconesses in various professions, where they feel

called by God to work. Current ministries include, but are not limited to, issues related to prisons, environment, refugees, immigration, health care, education, homelessness, women and children, youth and families, senior adults, peace with justice, the working poor, and a wide variety of church and community ministries.

The modern deaconess brings her faith and her theological knowledge to people who would not otherwise be exposed to the church. "Their daily task of serving and empowering is, for dea-

conesses, a visible symbol of the link between the church and the world." (*Theology of Mission*, p. 2 [the Deaconess Statement of Mission]) They have continued the mission of their predecessors: to be workers for Christ in society.

The Beginning

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints . . . for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.

Romans 16:1-2

In 1885, Lucy Rider Meyer, seeing the unmet social needs of her day and responding to the requests of young women who wanted to be in service, founded the Chicago Training School, the first training school for deaconesses. The first three women who became deaconesses in the Methodist tradition graduated from the Chicago Training School. The Office of Deaconess was officially recognized in the Methodist Episcopal Church by the General Conference of 1888. Dr. James Thoburn, a missionary to India at the time, was a strong advocate for the deaconess movement. As part of his advocacy, he brought the preface of the Mission Committee to the General Conference, which stated, "We believe that God is in the [deaconess] movement, and the church should recognize this fact." (As *Among the Methodists* by Elizabeth Meredith Lee, p. 36)

In 1939, when the three branches of the Methodist Church merged, 1026 deaconesses served in a wide variety of ministries with those who were marginalized and in settings such as settlement houses, hospitals, clinics, orphanages, and homes for immigrant women.

There were many challenges ahead. The deaconess movement

went through a transition during World War II. Even after World War II, the deaconess movement failed to allow women to marry and continue in the deaconess relationship. At the same time, American society insisted that only marriage and family could fulfill a woman's psychological and emotional needs. This became a stumbling block for women who wanted to lead a balanced life with a family and were called by God to ministry in relationship with the church.

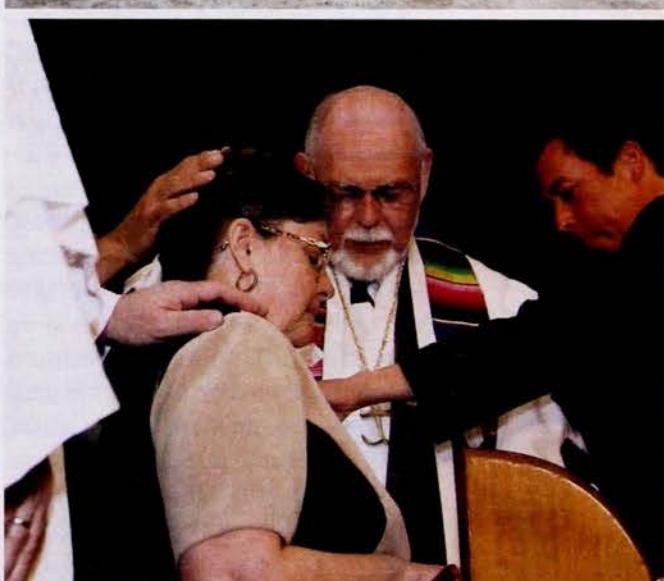
Women Activists

The early deaconess movement of the United Methodist tradition was built on a strong heritage of activism and social renewal in denominational work and in partnership with secular organizations.

(From: *The Theology of Mission*, the Deaconess Statement of Mission.)

The deaconesses upheld civil and human rights, even when doing so went against tradition. Beginning in 1945, the Office of Deaconess decided to remodel the program to keep up with the times. According to Mary Dougherty's book, *My Calling to Fulfill: Deaconesses in The United Methodist Church*, a policy developed that would integrate the all African-American Central Jurisdiction into the jurisdictional Deaconess Association. The arrangement contradicted contemporary segregationist beliefs in the Methodist Church at large. It took years to finalize. In 1963, the Methodist Church's Commission on Deaconess Work decided to incorporate deaconesses into "overlapping associations."

Also discussed in 1945 was the role of the married deaconess. It took more than a decade to change the sentiment against married deaconesses. In 1958, married women were finally accepted as deaconesses.



Top: Deaconess Fran Lynch (back row, 2nd from left) with members of her ministry at Willow United Methodist Church in Willow, Alaska. **Center:** Deaconess Fran Lynch serves the Alaskan Native American villages, Anvik and Grayling, accessible only by plane. **Bottom:** Jeanne Chaney is commissioned as a deaconess of The United Methodist Church.

p. 16: During mission outreach at a camp for tsunami-displaced people in Bateilik, Indonesia, Deaconess Kyung Za Yim, Women's Division President, shares a digital photo with children and young people.

Deaconesses, according to Becky Dodson Louter, continue the tradition of being on "the cutting edge of ministry" and continue to be activists in The United Methodist Church. Where Christian service was concerned, they accepted no limitations, defying the idea of a purely domestic role for women. As a politically and socially active organized community, deaconesses proved women could help transform society outside the home.

"Although the deaconesses have no idea of becoming a 'feminist' movement," Betty Friedan wrote in her 1963 bestseller, *The Feminine Mystique*, "they are greatly concerned about the status of women around the world." The deaconess role allowed women to lead successful and influential lives in many fields of endeavor.

Other ways that the deaconess movement has influenced or helped shape ministry in the church included the development of what is now known as the US-2 program, which originally prepared young women for mission work in the United States (and today includes young men as well.) In reaching beyond The United Methodist Church to connect with the diaconate around the globe, deaconesses also became involved early on with DIAKONIA, the World Federation of Diaconal Associations and Diaconal Communities, which served further to "energize deaconesses in The United Methodist Church." (Dougherty, *My Calling to Fulfill*, p. 255)

The Road to the Future

Deaconesses are professionally trained persons who have been led by the Holy Spirit to devote their lives to Christlike service under the authority of the Church.

The Book of Discipline, 2004, ¶ 1313.2

In 1964, organizational restructuring in the Methodist Church trans-

ferred deaconess work to the new National Division of the Board of Missions. With the union in 1968, the deaconesses of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church made up what is now the Office of Deaconess in The United Methodist Church.

In 1988, a study authorized by the General Board of Global Ministries stated that "the role of deaconesses is an essential and vital part of the mission through the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church."

Initiatives mandated by General Conference afforded new opportunities for deaconesses to serve on the frontiers of mission, such as the National Plan for Hispanic Ministries, Shalom Zones, HIV/AIDS ministries, substance abuse and related violence, ministries with the homeless, and prison ministry/prison reform.

To continue to adapt to the new challenges of these frontiers, deaconesses were given the opportunity to hone their technical skills for the contemporary world, to continue to be on the "cutting edge

of mission" (as part of the General Board of Global Ministries), to serve where they are most needed, and to serve with the support of the church. (*The Deaconess in The United Methodist Church: Presentation to the Committee to Study the Ministry of the Council of Bishops*, 1993.)

The Modern Deaconess

I have received more from those I have served with than I could ever give.

Becky Louter, Executive Secretary of the Deaconess Program Office

Following the completion of "The Study of The Ministry in The United Methodist Church," which lasted for a quarter of a century, the Office of Deaconess was reaffirmed by the Church and in 1996 extensive efforts to renew the Office of Deaconess began. The deaconess community wondered if the office would be closed, since at that time only 66 deaconesses were serving under active appointments in the program.

The church's recognition of the Office of Deaconess helped the community to grow. Currently, there are 126 actively serving dea-



(Left to right) Deaconesses Betty Ruth Goode, Barbara Campbell, Thelma Stoufer, Lucy Gist, Gladys Campbell, Peggy Vreeland, and Betty Letzig. (Back left) Home Missionary Dick Vreeland. At the time this photo was taken, all were staff members serving the General Board of Global Ministries.

conesses, 117 retired, and a growing number in training. In 2000, only 67 women were serving and 40 more were in training.

Another factor that has attracted more women to the community is the newly established educational opportunity that enables women to complete the core study requirements. In 2001, deaconesses were able to take intensive courses as a candidate group in various subjects for one or two weeks at a time.

The women come from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, even different theological philosophies. "The greatest strength is the diversity of our community," commented Louter. "Together we form a supportive community in which the individual can feel less isolated in the work that she does. But no matter what our differences, we are bound together by our calling to a servant ministry where we treat each other with love and respect."

The deaconess community is made up of a diverse group of women. Unlike the early days of deaconesses, when they lived together in deaconess homes, no physical community now exists outside the biennial convocation coordinated by the National Association of Deaconesses and Missionaries (NADAM). However, they support one another through the Internet, e-mail messages, newsletters, correspondence, telephone calls, jurisdictional and local gatherings, as well as prayer suggested by the *Prayer Calendar*, a guide to praying for United Methodist missionaries, deaconesses, and mission personnel serving around the globe.

Deaconesses have served as a force of kindness, strength, and aid to those in need. They have built bridges for people on a national and global scale and every day

Steps to Becoming a Deaconess or Home Missioner

- The applicant completes and returns the Personnel Information Form (Standard application form for all mission personnel through the General Board of Global Ministries. See GBGM website http://gbgm-umc.org/who_we_are/mp/documents.cfm)
- The Personnel Information Form is sent to the Deaconess and Home Missioner Program Office for review and distribution to the Conference Committee on Mission Personnel for recommendation. A letter is sent to the applicant regarding the action of the Personnel Services staff team.
- Upon the recommendation of the Personnel Services staff team, the applicant receives a staff interview and a psychological evaluation. A letter regarding the final action of the Personnel Services staff team following the interview and psychological examination is sent to the applicant.
- If approved, the applicant moves to the candidate stage and begins or completes Core Studies. Upon completion or near completion of Core Studies, the candidate participates in orientation/preparation training as scheduled by the Deaconess Program Office.
- Arrangements are made for the approval of the candidate's appointment to a full-time ministry (at least 21 hours or more per week) in a church-related or helping profession.
- The candidate is commissioned by the General Board of Global Ministries as a deaconess (lay woman) or home missioner (lay man). The approved appointment is made official by the bishop of the annual conference in which the deaconess or home missioner will serve. Deaconesses and home missioners under episcopal appointment must hold local church membership in the annual conference in which they serve; they are lay members of the annual conference with full voice and vote.

For more information, contact:
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475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 320
New York, NY 10115
Telephone: 212-870-3850
Email: deaconess@gbgm-umc.org

The 2006 *Prayer Calendar* is available through the United Methodist Service Center, stock #3655, \$9.50.

continue to be faithful workers of The United Methodist Church. "Deaconesses don't serve to people but *with* people," said Louter.

Cassandra Heller is a New World Outlook intern and student at Boston University, studying English and Philosophy.

50 Fifty Years in God's Hands

by Norma Kehrberg



Married women and girls walked along mountain paths in Nepal to attend literacy classes.

On March 4, 1954, in response to an invitation from the Methodist Mission of India, eight interdenominational and international missions united to work in Nepal. Differences in nationalities and theologies were left at the border.

In its first 50 years, the United Mission to Nepal (UMN) grew to 39 missions from 17 countries. In the 1990s, on any given day, over 2000 Nepali staff were employed or associated with the UMN in its four hospitals, eight companies, and 47 projects in 14 areas of the country. Six nights a week, 8000 women walked along mountain paths for home-based functional literacy classes, 2000 patients were seen each day in hospital outpatient departments, and the expatriate missionaries and their families increased to over 400. Most of the work was established in isolated mountain areas where there were no roads and where development came slowly to the formerly forbidden country. Walking and living without electricity and running water were still the norm in the remote regions. These inconveniences did not concern the Nepali or missionary staff, who wanted to make a difference in the lives of the people.

The opening of Christian mission where Hinduism was the protected religion presented unique opportunities for faith sharing. Christian missionaries were allowed to work within a profession but not as full-time Bible teachers or preachers. They did work full-time in sharing their faith.

Birds of the Himalayas

Nepal, today a landlocked country of 27 million people, is nestled among the Himalayas.

With its wall of Himalayan snows on the north and its malaria-infested border on the south, Nepal was not an inviting place in

the first half of the 20th century. Circumstances of geography and political rule made life difficult. There were neither schools nor medical care. Ordinary people, close to 95 percent of the 13 million population in 1954, survived at subsistence level. Too many children died. Surviving was not easy and life expectancy was less than 40 years.

Nepalis who crossed the border into India came in contact with mission workers, who, learning of the conditions of the people, yearned to enter Nepal to work among its people. That goal seemed impossible because, until the early 1950s, Nepal was closed to foreigners and Christian missionaries were not permitted.

In the late 1940s, Dr. Bob Fleming, ornithologist and mission teacher of the Methodist Church in India, requested permission to enter Nepal to study the birds. Permission was granted, and Bob and his team, including Dr. Carl Taylor of the Presbyterian Church in India, spent three months in October 1949 trekking in the mountains and treating medical needs. In December 1951, on a second expedition, Bob was joined by Bethel, his wife, and Carl Friedericks, another Presbyterian missionary, both medical doctors. For six weeks, the physicians held medical clinics in Tansen, in western Nepal, and treated more than 1500 patients.

Walking in a United Way

The villagers and officials they met entreated them to begin medical work in Nepal. Upon their return to India, Bob Fleming, on behalf of his mission, wrote a letter to government officials in Kathmandu.

Eighteen months later, a letter from the government of Nepal granted him permission to start a hospital in Tansen and women's clinics in Kathmandu. The opening was given to Fleming's Methodist mission in India, but they knew that the response could not be theirs alone. An invitation was quickly extended to the Christian mission groups working along the border to join the work in a united way.

Faith mission groups expressed concern about how they could work with large denominational mission boards. The United Presbyterian Church stated it would not join at all if other mission groups were not involved. All were convinced that the only way to enter the newly opened country where Hinduism was protected was to enter together in the unity of Jesus Christ.

A third group was composed of Nepali Christians domiciled in India who felt called to "open the doors of Nepal" to the gospel. Soon after the mission started, they moved to Nepal to start the church. Their vision was to establish a church unencumbered by external influences, denominations, or missions. The Nepali Christians invited and encouraged expatriate missionaries to join in worship. The missionaries did not attempt to establish a separate mission church.

Early Work of the Mission

As soon as Dr. Bethel Fleming arrived in Kathmandu in early 1954, she began medical work. Within two years, Shanta Bhawan, an old palace in Kathmandu, was converted into a hospital. Ballrooms became wards; stables, the out-patient department; and staff lived in the servants' quarters. In June 1954, Dr. Carl Friedericks and his family arrived in Tansen to build a medical team and hospital. He started by training local Nepalis.

Before 1950, only elite Ranas could attend school. Jonathan Lindell, an American Lutheran, arrived with a passion for children's education.



Top: Patients too sick to walk to the first clinics and hospital in Kathmandu were transported to the hospital cradled in a hammock "ambulance." Above: Women's awareness-raising classes were a part of the history of the development of the United Mission to Nepal.



Dr. Bethel Fleming examines a patient.

After 70 visits to government offices, the Gorkha project started as an education project, but medical and development needs could not be ignored. A small dispensary opened in 1963, followed by a farm project, and in 1969 the dispensary was replaced with Amp Pipal Hospital. It operated as a mission hospital until 2001.

Odd Hofton, a Lutheran missionary from Norway, responded to a call to build Tansen Hospital. While trekking along the Tinau River to the border for supplies, he envisioned harnessing the fast-flowing Himalayan rivers for hydropower based on tunneling techniques used in Norway. Permission was granted to develop a technical school to train Nepalis and to develop small-scale industries. The agreement included building a hydropower plant in Butwal. UMN's industrial work led to the establishment of six private companies with public offerings to shareholders. Four of the companies continue to operate in 2005 under Nepali leadership and management.

Each sector of UMN work evolved over 50 years. Clinics became community health programs where the most fragile in society, mothers and their children, were assisted. The programs used local resources to provide solutions and made a difference.

Within two generations, the infant mortality rate decreased from over 200 deaths per thousand live births to 30-35 deaths in areas where the program operated.

Over the years, God often called the mission workers to initiate new approaches in unknown and unexplored areas. Some change came as a result of external circumstances such as government policies. Though disappointing at the time, the changes allowed for even more effective and expansive ways of working with and serving the people of Nepal.

The Indigenous Church in Nepal

In 1956, to share the gospel was difficult because it was against the law to change one's religion. Punishment was jail, and expulsion from family and often the community was common.

Missionaries deepened their faith as a result of witnessing the courage and depth of commitment of those who became followers of Jesus Christ. They participated in the dynamic growth of the church from an estimated 100 baptized Nepali Christians in 1970 to over 1 million baptized Christians by 2003. The church grew exponentially after the establishment of democracy in 1990, when religious laws were less restrictive.

The noninterference policy of UMN, the government, and early Nepali Christian leaders was providential. The church developed indigenous, often consulting with missionary brothers and sisters, but never dependent on their advice or resources.

As the 1990s ended, some pastors with ties to religious groups in the West began to identify themselves with specific groups, often nondenominational church groups. Some began to claim denominational affiliation.

Leadership Development

UMN-trained Nepali headmasters and teachers in the schools associated with UMN. Directors of the various companies were Nepali after their initial development stage. In the health sector, schools for nursing started almost immediately, and many of the early graduates received scholarships for graduate and post-graduate training. By the third decade of UMN work, the schools of nursing and the heads of the hospital departments were increasingly led by Nepalis. By the end of 2000, all project leadership positions were held by Nepalis except for some in the hospitals.

Features of 50 Years of UMN

1. All work was under specific agreements with the government of Nepal and its functional ministries.
2. The initial letter from the government stated that the UMN should develop leadership of the Nepali people as a component in all work.
3. UMN did not own property.
4. Official separation of UMN and the indigenous church was maintained at the request of the early Christian leaders, allowing the church to grow under indigenous leadership.
5. By design, UMN was an interdenominational and international mission group united to work in Nepal.
6. The united way of working became a model for other mission organizations in Asia, Afghanistan, and Mongolia.

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the UMN Board discussed the future leadership of the mission. The positions of executive, finance, and personnel directors were held by expatriate missionaries. What would UMN look like in the 21st century? Some senior staff in UMN envisioned that it would become a registered organization in Nepal staffed and led by Nepalis.

Nepal is predominantly Hindu and the majority of UMN staff over the years has not been Christian; therefore, the skilled Nepali staff qualified to lead UMN and its programs were mostly non-Christian. What would this do to the concept of "Christian" mission?

Into the 21st Century

By the mid-1990s, the Board of UMN adopted a vision to work intentionally toward a time when all leadership of UMN would be in the hands of Nepalis. This meant gradually divesting control over directly managed programs, but changes in the government of Nepal in 2001 made it necessary to evolve rapidly. Thus, the 50th year of UMN marked the start of a new way of working. UMN would no longer implement work through its staff of Nepalis and missionaries.

The government encouraged UMN to register in a country other than Nepal. Then UMN, under a new agreement and like other external charities, could provide support resources to Nepali nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Even before registration of UMN in the United Kingdom in 2005, many of the former programs of UMN registered as independent NGOs. The most difficult transition to manage continues to be the two remaining UMN hospitals. (Patan Hospital, the successor to Shanta Bhawan, was a quasi-government entity from 1983.) In 2005, it is expected that the first registered Christian NGO in Nepal will take over leadership for Tansen and Okhaldhunga Hospitals.

Political Situation in Nepal

In February 1996, villagers in western Nepal presented 36 demands to the democratically elected government, requesting attention to needs of marginalized people as well as a change in governance. The political leaders in Kathmandu ignored the demands and continued the political infighting that has resulted in 12 changes in government over the past 15 years. The insurgents, called Maoists (no ties to China), increased threats and began acts of extortion, kidnapping, and militia recruiting.

When King Birendra of Nepal and his family were killed in a massacre in 2001, his brother King Gyanendra took a more direct approach, using the Nepali army to put down the insurgency. With increased arms on both sides, over 11,000 Nepalis have now been killed in the nine-year insurgency. Despite two ceasefires, fighting continues. King Gyanendra suspended the elected government in 2002 and on February 1, 2005, called a state of emergency resulting in the arrests of politicians, journalists, activists, and students. Negotiations have failed thus far. Vast areas of rural Nepal are under Maoist control and no place is safe. All agree that a military solution will not work, but there is no viable plan to bring the conflict to an end.

Norma Kehrberg



Bob Fleming with a Nepalese bird.

UMN continues to be administered in Kathmandu by a core staff with support services to seven program areas such as food security, women and children, and peace and conflict resolution. A General Assembly meeting biennially is the forum for associate mission organizations to give general direction to the new UMN and to elect the 13-member board of directors that meets every six months.

UMN in the 21st century looks much different than it did in the 20th century. However, in the past, whenever change occurred, new opportunities arose for work in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ. It is the prayer of all those close to Nepal, its people, and the church that this will continue, particularly at this time of unrest in Nepal. (See sidebar at left.) It is also our prayer that the progress made in the lives of people during the past 50 years will not be lost during this time of political instability.

Note: The title of this article comes from the 50th anniversary celebration of UMN in Kathmandu.

Norma Kehrberg, a former Associate General Secretary of the United Methodist Committee on Relief, has been associated with Nepal for more than 30 years. She worked with UMN education programs as a missionary of GBGM.

Changing Needs, Changing Ministries

by Wendy Whiteside

From the 1880s to the present, the ministry of our national mission institutions has kept evolving to meet the needs of the community and those who are at the margins of society.

The beginning of each institution grew out of an identifiable human need and the ability of concerned Christians to respond. The intersection of these two realities is the place where mission happens.

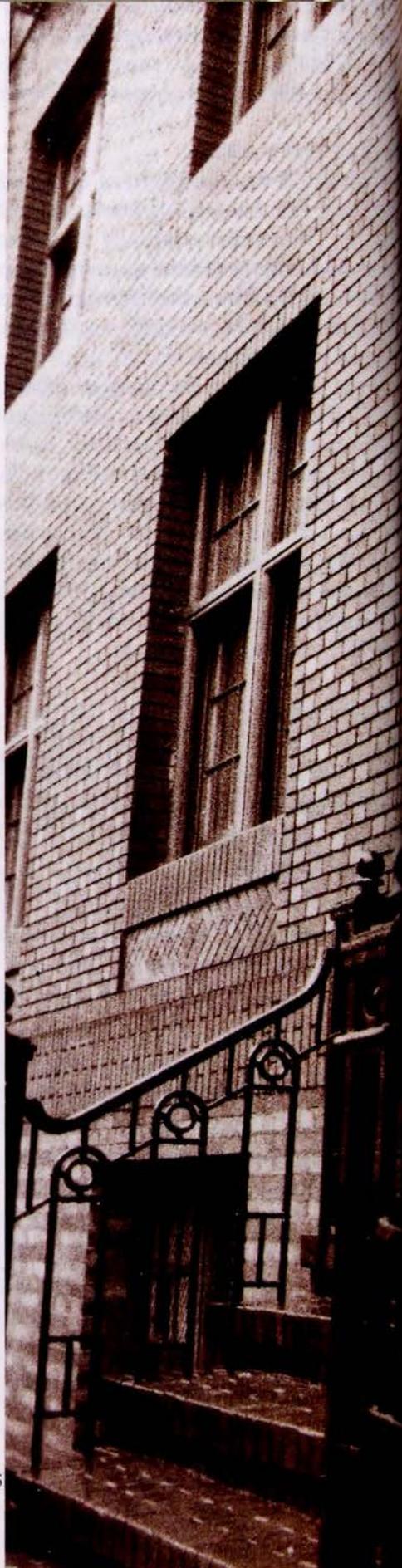
It is very hard to imagine any of our institutions beginning without the leadership of Methodist women. Virtually all our national mission institutions were formed from the vision and energy of women from one of the predecessor organizations of United Methodist Women (UMW). Today, the Women's Division (the administrative body of UMW) owns much of the land and buildings used by the national mission institutions.

No one could have predicted the amazing changes and new directions these mission institutions would take 10, 20, and even 120 years later.

Gum Moon

The San Francisco Bay area was a powder keg of social unrest and racial bias in the mid-1800s. People from around the world were drawn to California during the "gold rush" years looking for wealth or at least a job. The Chinese were no exception (*Immigration: The Journey of America*, Thinkquest.org). The resulting clash of cultures erupted in violence and segregation in the 1870s. The response of the Woman's Missionary Society on the Pacific Coast resulted in the establishment of the Chinese Home, now known as Gum Moon Residence (*Expressions of Faith*, Betty Letzig).

Gum Moon Residence Hall is still serving the Asian immigrant community today, more than 125 years later. Originally, the primary residents were young, single Chinese women working or studying in San Francisco who needed a safe place to live and transition into a new life and culture. Today, the average resident has changed only slightly. She is in her mid-thirties, working and studying, or in transition. Approximately 25 percent of the residents are battered



range to Gum Moon Residence Hall in San Francisco, California. Gum Moon has been a place of refuge for Chinese women in transition since the late 1800s. Inset: Chinese families are assisted by Gum Moon's Asian Family Support Project, which includes programs for children.

spouses who seek refuge from abusive situations.

The difference between 1870 and today is the community outreach program. Opportunities for cross-cultural experiences, self-improvement, and leadership development are now open to all members of the community. Programs include English classes, citizenship classes, a parent-child development program, summer school and after-school tutorial programs for elementary school children, and more.

For more information on the history and current programs of Gum Moon, go to <http://www.gbgm-umc.org/awrc>.

Crossroads Urban Center

Crossroads Urban Center celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2006. However, it was originally established in 1881 as the Eliza Given Davis Deaconess Home. This building was the home base of deaconesses who traveled the state of Utah ministering to miners or reaching out to the people in the Salt Lake City area. In 1937, the name was changed to Davis-Esther Hall and it became a boarding house for up to 14 young women living and working in Salt Lake City. In 1965, Davis-Esther Hall closed.

Recognizing that the needs of the community had changed, the board overseeing the property, all Methodist women, gathered to decide how to use the property. Crossroads Urban Center was dedicated in February 1966. The name was chosen to describe the location (Salt Lake City is often referred to as the crossroads of the West) and the purpose was to reach out to the youth and young adults of urban Salt Lake City. In the early 1970s, Crossroads made two important commitments that still guide its work today: to be ecumenical in nature and approach, and to

address the root causes of poverty and injustice.

The first program Crossroads developed in 1966 was a youth drop-in center. A free school was attempted. These programs lasted four or five years, but the two drug rehabilitation centers that started in the late 1960s are still functioning today as the Cornerstone Counseling Center and Odyssey House, respectively. These centers are just two of the many programs developed by Crossroads that have spun off to become vibrant, independent organizations. Other spin-offs have been the Wasatch Community Garden; Utahans Against Hunger; Disabled Rights Action Committee; and Justice, Economic Dignity, and Independence (JEDI) for Women.

Crossroads provides direct services, with the busiest food pantry in the state, and a free/low-cost thrift store. It also works on the root causes of hunger and poverty, including community organizing and advocacy for people with disabilities and people of color. As a community resource center, it provides a safe place for people to gather and talk about the issues they face.

Crossroads has a broad base of support in the Salt Lake City area. The Church of Latter Day Saints



Left to right: Crossroad's Anti-Hunger Action Committee Board Co-Chair, Darla Ball; member Laine Gardinier; Project Director Bill Tibbits; member Ursula Hernandez (front in sweatshirt); Congressman Jim Matheson (in red tie); member David Hughes; community organizer, Bill Germundson.

(Mormon) is the largest faith group in the state. There are fewer than two dozen United Methodist churches in the state of Utah. Christian denominations and other faith groups have developed a high level of ecumenical cooperation to have a missional presence and impact in their state. Presbyterians, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Catholics, and other Christian denominations, Baha'i members, the Jewish community, and many unchurched people lay claim to Crossroads and provide it with financial, volunteer, and prayerful support.

At a recent press conference at the Crossroads Urban Center, the Rocky Mountain United Methodist bishop, Warner Brown, joined the area Episcopal and Catholic bishops as they spoke against the federal budget cuts that threatened programs and assistance being provided to the most vulnerable—the people served by Crossroads.

For more information on the history and current programs of Crossroads Urban Center, go to www.crossroads-u-c.org

InterServ

Although best known for being the home of the "Pony Express," St. Joseph, Missouri, rivaled Kansas City as a destination for cattle drives in the early 1900s. Stockyards were booming and needed employees, so St. Joe (as it is affectionately known by its residents) became a destination for immigrants seeking employment and a home for their families.

A group of women from the Methodist Episcopal Church saw the needs of this new population and asked, "How do we welcome the stranger? How do we help people participate fully in society?"

Their answer was the 1909 opening of Wesley House, which offered

citizenship classes and other direct services to immigrant families.

Over the years, the programs and the name have changed, but the two questions that guided the women to create Wesley House continue to guide the work of InterServ in the St. Joseph area.

InterServ has a reputation as being a leader in identifying and building a response to critical community issues. InterServ established one of the first elder-nutrition programs in the state. Today, Mobile Meals is the largest in the area, serving over 74,000 meals to homebound seniors each year.

Recognizing the need for children and youth to have a safe place for activities, InterServ developed the summer "Playground." This program has grown to include after-school activities throughout the year. The most popular of these activities is weightlifting. Two boys from this program have qualified to represent the United States in the Olympics, one in 1992 and the other in 1996.

The stockyards and packing



Katie Hudson holds a plaque awarded for her performance in an InterServ weightlifting exhibition at the 2004 USA Olympic Trials for Weightlifting. With her is her mother Kathy Hudson.

houses that left town many decades ago are planning to return to St. Joe. With them will come a new population with different needs, and the community will need help finding a way to embrace this diversity.

InterServ has taken the lead in bringing the faith community together to prepare for anticipated changes. The resulting dialogues have given rise to the possible development of an immigration center.

InterServ's preparation includes repurposing one of its buildings to house the coordinator, social services, and immigration service programs. With the help of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and the Justice For Our Neighbors program, InterServ has been able to hire an immigration worker certified to represent families in immigration courts.

The board and staff of InterServ continue to hold the questions of the founders in their hearts and minds as they approach 100 years of service with their community.

For more information on the history and current programs of InterServ, go to www.inter-serv.org

Wesley Community Center

The city of Phoenix was founded in 1868, 40 years before Arizona became a state. Mexicans were welcomed into Arizona and specifically the Phoenix area as migrant workers. Over time, some purchased land and became permanent residents and US citizens, while others continued to follow seasonal agricultural work.

In 1950, the local unit of the predecessor organization of United Methodist Women saw a need for activity and education for the migrant children. The women developed a summer school. The program was such a success that the community asked the UMW to continue. Thus began the Wesley Community Center (WCC) in downtown Phoenix.

The first WCC building was dedicated in 1953. The programmatic emphasis was children, with after-school programs and classes in cooking, sewing, music, folk dancing, woodworking, even rollerskating. WCC was one of the few facilities in the Latino neighborhood of Nuestro Barrio that was surrounded by cement so the neighborhood children could rollerskate around the building for hours, day after day. Rollerskating

A member of InterServ's weightlifting team demonstrates discipline toward achievement.



is a favorite memory of alumni.

WCC was the catalyst for community development in the 1960s and 1970s. Neighborhood associations were organized and seminars and workshops on personal growth, leadership, and community building strengthened the residents. The center continued to grow to meet the needs of the community (approximately 20,000 individuals), adding an administration and multipurpose building in 1979 and a gymnasium in 1987.

Two significant changes in the community during the late 1970s and early 1980s required WCC to adjust its programming. People migrating to the Phoenix area came to live permanently in the United States—to find a way out of poverty for their families.

The second change was the construction of Interstate 10 through downtown Phoenix, right through the heart of the barrio, followed by the expansion of the airport. This resulted in the relocation of approximately 7000 to 8000 people to another part of Phoenix. The airport ran out of money for its expansion, sparing Nuestro Barrio.

WCC presently serves the last remaining part of the Latino neighborhood from the 1950s, and even this community continues to change rapidly. Ten years ago, WCC served a mixed group of which about 50 percent was undocumented. Economic changes have resulted in fewer homes and more rental property, many without floors or running water. The clientele is now nearly 90 percent undocumented.

The center's focus on children and youth remains strong, with an emphasis on keeping kids in school. WCC also does a brisk business in emergency food and clothing. A health center was opened to serve low-income, uninsured individuals, and classes in sewing and gardening are offered



A lot in the Latino section of Phoenix, Arizona, is vacant after the house that stood on it was demolished to make way for the Phoenix Airport expansion.

to senior women.

The next challenge for WCC is another airport expansion. By 2014, the residents of Nuestro Barrio will be relocated, moving voluntarily to better accommodations. WCC is doing strategic planning to be a community center without a community, aiming to serve a widely dispersed, highly vulnerable population.

For more information on the history and current programs of Wesley Community Center in Phoenix, go to www.wesleycenterphx.org

Where Mission Happens

It is a tribute to the staff and boards of these institutions that they have changed and grown with the communities they serve. It is the responsibility of concerned Christians to be the embodiment of Christ in every corner of the world.

Today, national mission institutions continue to be places where mission happens.

Wendy Whiteside is the Assistant General Secretary for Communications at the General Board of Global Ministries.

Servants in Faith and Technology

story and photos by John Fleming

In the green hills of northeast Alabama, where cell-phone signals and radio stations fade, next to Mad Indian Creek stands the headquarters of SIFAT.

Informally, SIFAT stands for Servants in Faith and Technology. The Southern Institute for Appropriate Technology is its formal name. Both names are accurate. An organization that sweats to spread the word of God, SIFAT is also deeply dedicated to creating sustainable development in some of the most impoverished areas of the world.

What SIFAT tries to accomplish is as old as mission work itself. And there are as many organizations dedicated to sustainable development out there as there are kudzu vines in rural Alabama. What is unusual is SIFAT's focus on simple appropriate technologies and work with foreign nationals in developing and implementing those technologies in a worldwide bid to improve the lives of millions.

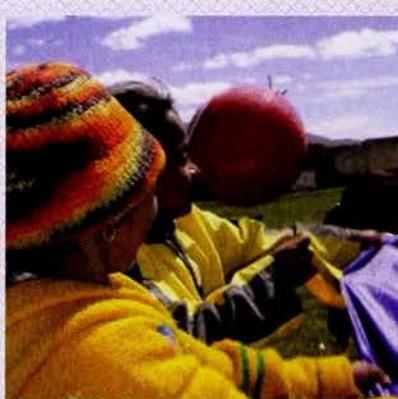
Sharing Technology

You can see SIFAT's philosophy in action down by the creek banks where Benjamin Paredes, a community organizer from the highlands of Bolivia, is showing off a grist mill he recently built. It is something familiar to the high Andes but unknown to other parts of the world. So it's his job to teach scores of others from

the developing world how to introduce such technology into their home countries.

"This technology I am familiar with," said the 65-year-old Paredes, "but a lot of other technology I had never seen before I came to SIFAT. I bring what I know here, and other people from different parts of the world learn from it and take it back to where they live. Then I learn from them and take what I learn back to Bolivia."

His community is a place called Qusimpuco, about a day's drive on a bad road from La Paz. About 125 families live there, but there



SIFAT provides structured child-care activities for parents participating in self-help programs in Quito, Ecuador.

are about 60 other communities in the vicinity, all of which benefit from the work of SIFAT.

Paredes, known as "Benho," is SIFAT's main coordinator in Bolivia and stays quite

busy furthering the organization's work there. He is also the director of a hospital, a boarding home, and the town's school. For the Bolivian authorities, says Tom Corson, the executive director of SIFAT, Benho is a force to be reckoned with. "Benho used to be a Trotskyite," said Corson. "That Marxist background gives him the knowledge of community power. He knows how to badger the local government into making improvements. He can stir people up and make things happen."

Indeed, armed with knowledge about solar and wind power, courtesy of SIFAT's Alabama operation, Paredes returned to Qusimpuco a few years ago to set up a wind-and solar-powered generator at the local hospital. Then, after it was up and running, he went to the municipality and basically shamed them into action, according to Corson.

"Benho took a group of people to the municipal leaders who were about six hours away," said Corson. "He told them they hadn't done anything for his community, that the people had started solving their own problems. Before you know it

they had a commitment to run a power line into the area, and recently the government has helped expand the school and other construction. Qusimpoco is no longer being ignored."

Simple Solutions

Downstream from Paredes' grist mill is SIFAT's "Global Village," a laboratory set up to try to solve some real-life problems. People from all over the world come to learn in an environment that reflects rural life in Latin America, the Himalayan highlands, the lowlands of Asia, village life in West Africa, and the slums of the Caribbean. Houses on stilts, thatched huts, stone houses, and a shantytown are scattered around a patch of northeast Alabama red clay.

The village is also used by SIFAT to give a glimpse of the developing world to school children. On any given day, one can find a cluster of kids attending workshops.

On a recent spring morning, it was filled with 10- and 11-year-old gifted elementary school children from Odenville, near Birmingham. They watched Arthur and Ester Miamen of Liberia grind corn and make meal. They saw Paredes make bricks. They learned a traditional Philippine bamboo dance from Manila native Yolanda Concepción. They took a tour of a shantytown, not unlike what one might find in Port-au-Prince, led by Marie Almonor of Haiti.

But where mission and development work hit their stride is with the low-technology transfer that spreads from the village to remote places around the world. Almonor, for example, will complete training here and then return to Cap Haitien, where she plans to implement skills and technology into everything from nutrition to irrigation.

"I've been learning about some



Benjamin Paredes, also known as "Benho," wears traditional Bolivian attire and plays a charango, a traditional Bolivian musical instrument.

very simple methods you can use to overcome some very difficult problems," said Almonor as she took a breather from leading the children on the tour of the mock-shantytown. "These people at SIFAT have taught me some tricks to use with PVC pipe and gravity

that will pull water from a creek to water a hillside. This kind of thing can be very beneficial to places where I will be working in Haiti."

You will find a lot of simplicity at SIFAT, technology that occurred to people in one part of the world years ago, but is still unknown else-



Two girls attend a child-care program in Ecuador.

where. When you spread that knowledge around, says Tom Corson, and add it to the specialization that SIFAT can supply, then you can more often than not whip troublesome technological problems.

Sharing the Burden: Self-Help

In addition to Tom Corson, his sister Kathy Bryson, and sister-in-law Sherrill Corson, the Alabama operation employs nine full-time people. The founders (and parents of Tom and Kathy), Sarah and Ken Corson, are retired but still heavily engaged in the operation. All of the Corsons are veterans of years of mission work in Latin America, including an assignment in Bolivia's Alto Beni in the 1970s, where infant mortality was one in

four. They know the tough life.

Formed in 1979, today SIFAT, with 58 employees abroad, works all over the world but has some especially effective and sustainable programs in the Andes. In a place called Atucucho, for example, in one of Quito's (Ecuador) impoverished neighborhoods, Tom Corson recently took a minute from his logistics planning for a mission team's work to explain SIFAT's philosophy and its commitment to sustainability. "Development work is hard; mission work is hard," he said. "People often ask if they can give money to help these people. Yes we can always use money, but we are not trying to be sugar daddies here, we're trying to promote self-help. You have to find a way to

meet the need without it looking like: 'Hey, look what we are doing for you.'"

Self-help is a notion echoed by other members of his family and everyone at SIFAT. Kathy Bryson said, "At SIFAT, we believe deeply in people's potential to change their plight, to join together and address basic human need."

SIFAT's effectiveness is largely due to the Corsons' collective drive as well as their understanding of the subtleties abroad. In South America, that means knowing not only the politics but also the culture, including the labyrinth of government bureaucracy. Tom Corson sometimes sounds like a professor of Latin American studies, displaying a far better understanding of the lay of the land than many American Embassy officials.

It is also interesting to consider SIFAT's awareness of the amazing rise of the indigenous movement in the Andes and the growing power of women there. That kind of "power to the people" shift can make most North Americans uneasy. But SIFAT is taking advantage of it by working with the women's movement and integrating development projects into the Andean Indian concept of *minga*, roughly translated as "sharing the burden." If the community needs a new water system, for example, and the government ignores the problem, then everyone in town works together to dig the trenches and lay the pipe.

Tom Corson can also be scathing in his criticism of poorly thought-out mission projects and ill-conceived adventures. His deep understanding of the ingrained challenges to improving lives in the developing world is light-years ahead of that of a lot of well-intentioned development organizations. Some drop into a village for a day to treat parasites among the children and never return, while the

parasites do.

SIFAT also employs a number of engineers and often calls on specialists from places such as nearby Auburn University, with its world-class engineering department, to overcome problems.

Walking through the SIFAT campus, you are likely to find a workshop on the use of solar ovens, a group clustered around Paredes' grist mill, or a few people admiring a deep-water well made up of no more than a bicycle rim and a nylon rope.

Purifying Water at Low Cost

Simplicity recently paid off in a major way when Kathy Bryson took a team to Southern India in the wake of the tsunami to run as many workshops as possible on how to set up and run portable water-purification systems.

One system, invented by a SIFAT partner named Duvon McGuire—the son of missionaries who himself almost died as a child from drinking contaminated water in Ecuador—consists of a car battery, wire, a solar panel, table salt, and a few other items. It can purify enough drinking water for 10,000 people per day.

Another system is made up of only a couple of two-liter soda bottles that use ultraviolet rays to kill deadly bacteria.

McGuire's device can be constructed for just a few hundred dollars and shows great promise for saving people from deadly diseases, not only in the wake of disasters, but in the long run. The soda-bottle method costs virtually nothing and requires only that people put the bottles out in the sun for a designated period of time and separate out any sediment before drinking.

"A lot of the time, you hear people say, 'just boil the water, that'll do the trick,'" said Kathy Bryson. "But that's not so easy when you



Benho examines a grist mill used for grinding grains, such as corn, and wheat.

have a scarcity of resources and you need clean, safe water very quickly. These simple methods can save a lot of lives, not just during disasters, but all the time." She passionately points out that some 30,000 kids die each day around the world from preventable diseases.

Back in the Global Village, Yolanda Concepción is tidying up the lowland Asian village, complete with a bamboo hut on stilts. She's been with SIFAT a long time now, having gone through the organization's 10-week program a few years ago.

"SIFAT is effective," she said, "not only because it is so good at the technology aspect but also because it fosters leadership. People come here and they learn and then go back home and implement what they have learned. That often eases them into a leadership role. That can make a big difference in people's lives."

If there is anyone at SIFAT who understands the importance of that, it is the Miamens from

Liberia. After finishing up a workshop on grinding grain, they take a moment to talk about how SIFAT makes a difference in their war-torn Nimba County in Liberia.

"Because of the problems in Liberia, you can't imagine how difficult life can be there," said Arthur Miamen. "The work that SIFAT does can give our people hope."

Ester Miamen nodded in agreement, then added: "These people help us a lot. But you know what they mostly do is help us to help ourselves, and that is the key."

John Fleming has worked as a journalist in Africa for five years and has traveled to Latin America more than a dozen times to work in and write about the region. He lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

 See p. 2.

The Southern Institute for Appropriate Technology (SIFAT) can be supported with gifts to Advance #982812.

Reinventing the Role of Volunteers

Volunteer ministry has always been vital to the life and work of the church. The act of volunteering presents a concrete way to express God's love and at the same time extend God's love to others. Today, the traditional volunteer ministries—individuals and small groups that help children, adults, and seniors in community ministries, work teams that build houses or church buildings, medical or technical personnel who lend their professional skills in times of need—are still very important ways to serve in the name of Christ. In addition, volunteers are developing new kinds of ministries that break through the old ideas of what volunteers can do. The stories below represent a snapshot of some innovative volunteer ministries.

Can You "Justify" the Cost?

by J.P. McGuire

About 10 years ago, I was presented with a mission opportunity that seemed to be a once-in-a-lifetime event. I was asked to bring a UMVIM team to the South African township of Umlazi to build a Methodist Church. I thought everyone would be excited for us, but the words of one individual at my church burst my bubble.

"Why should we spend so much money to send a small team of individuals all the way to South Africa when we could send the same amount of money and tell the people there to use it to hire the work out?"

I gave all the "right" answers:

- UMVIM isn't about the "construction of buildings" but rather the building of relationships.
- How do you promote the "connectionalism" of our church by merely sending a check?
- If we start a campaign to raise the money equal to the cost of this team going to South Africa, do you think we would raise it? (We both knew we wouldn't.)

In the years that followed, I have



Children gain self-esteem from self-sufficiency skills taught by mission volunteers.

seen, firsthand, better answers to his question.

Two factors that made this particular opportunity unique were:

- 1) The Umlazi township had a population of 100,000, but the Methodist church would be only the second Christian church ever built there (the first, a Catholic Church, was a year old).
- 2) The location of the Folweni Methodist Church in Umlazi was on the road

that marked the dividing line between the Inkarta and the ANC political parties that were fighting.

Factor 2 meant that the team would have to stay in a separate community at night. Each day, we would make the 18-mile journey into the all-black, poverty stricken, and turmoil-ridden township of Umlazi; and each night we would return to the all-white, upper-middle-class, "safe" suburb of

Amanzimtoti ("Toti"). The VIM director in South Africa, Richard Bosart, stated that it was his desire for us to stay with Methodist families in Toti because he knew we would talk with them about why we do UMVIM work. The Methodist Church in South Africa did not have a history of volunteering; he hoped the families would listen to us.

Our team built the Folweni Church—digging the footings, pouring the foundation, building all the walls, and setting the windows. We did not have time to put the roof on. When we left, we assumed that some other UMVIM team would eventually come to South Africa to complete the building. However, what the VIM director had hoped would happen did happen. The Toti church folks went to Umlazi and finished the church. Today, the VIM program is alive and going strong throughout South Africa. That would not have happened had we merely sent a check.

Today, just 10 years later, there are 25 Methodist churches in Umlazi! I visited one that had been "built by the youth" (constructed by the local community, aged 25 to 35, through their own fundraising efforts) with a membership of 300. I visited another church dedicated a year ago that now has a membership of 800.

The spirit of the Umlazi people ignited the desire to have a Methodist church in their community, and the team of nine volunteers from the United States built the church. The presence of that church promoted the phenomenal growth that has created about 25 Methodist churches in 10 years. A simple check could never have accomplished what the labor of volunteers was able to do.

J. P. McGuire is the UMVIM coordinator for the California/Nevada Conference.

Hey Mon! ["Hey there"]

by Lorna Jost

Our UMVIM trip in May 2005 was designed to explore how to introduce the teachUM program of the North Central Jurisdiction into Methodist-related schools in Jamaica. A lot of work was also accomplished on the Eccleston Methodist Church, which suffered extensive roof and water damage from Hurricane Ivan last fall.

The Rev. Michael Graham, of Brownstown, Jamaica, invited our group of 16 volunteers to sand and varnish the church and conduct some sewing and beading classes at the nearby Methodist-related school for girls, grades four to six. Armed with sandpaper, sanders, and paintbrushes, eight people from our group and nine people from the local congregation worked together to refinish the fine woodwork. This project was a wonderful example of cooperation between the local congregation and the mission team.

Meanwhile, working with five donated sewing machines, scads of material, and sewing and beading supplies, the rest of the team spent time in the Eccleston and Aboukir primary schools teaching sewing to fourth, fifth, and sixth graders and making sure that at least one of the local teachers could take over sewing instruction when the team left. The students each sewed a book bag, and some even went on to make skirts, shorts, and pants. The boys, in particular, creatively used pinks and bright colors, adding ribbons, rickrack, and pockets! It was great to see the proud smiles on the faces of the students. Nearly 100 bags and 10 more advanced projects were completed.

A guest speaker and former school principal, Mr. Clark spoke to us one evening about the educational system in Jamaica. As team leader, I spent one morning at the Bensonton Primary School (where we had worked previously) seeking information on specific needs. We will develop a plan for the teachUM committee of the North Central Jurisdiction to consider in the fall of 2005, and, we hope, an announcement of a teachUM



North Central Jurisdiction UMVIM team members.



Students at the Methodist-related Eccleston Basic School in Aboukir, Jamaica.

team to Jamaica in March 2006 will be forthcoming! Individual tutors are needed in every subject, including arts, drama, computers, and health instruction, but especially reading. Some teachers would be welcomed as guest instructors, especially before the comprehensive exams in the spring.

We also tested the waters for bringing in teams to conduct Christian sports camps. There are some interesting possibilities for soccer, basketball, and volleyball!

Lorna Jost is the UMVIM coordinator for the North Central Jurisdiction.



Arturo Elias, from Mexico, at Jesus es el Camino church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

Cape Girardeau

by Fred Koenig

It is not unusual for Volunteers-In-Mission trips to connect United Methodist churches in the United States with churches in Mexico. In April 2005, a group of volunteers made the 24-hour drive between Missouri and Piedras Negras to help Latinos who are facing challenging times. Only this time, the volunteers were going northbound.

Pastor Sergio De Hoyos Rivas has worked with many Volunteers In Mission from Missouri in Piedras Negras, Mexico. He and several other church members felt called to return the favor, extending their ministry to the United States with a Volunteer-In-Mission trip modeled after the Missouri trips to Mexico.

Barbara Stone, VIM coordinator for the Missouri Conference, said the group fully comprehended the spirit of mission trips. "They paid for the trip and even brought \$1000 for the project," she said. "Sergio wanted to be sure he was doing everything right."

Twenty-six hours before they

were scheduled to leave, the district superintendent was driving the van they were to take and had an accident. He and his wife were bruised, but there were no broken bones. The van, however, was a total loss.

Without the van, the volunteers had to cut back their number from 12 to 6. They took De Hoyos's pick-up from Piedras Negras into San Antonio, Texas, and then borrowed a Ford Expedition from a brother-in-law of volunteer Juan Luis Rodríguez Frias.

When they arrived at Jesus es el Camino in Cape Girardeau, they went to work on the second floor of the church. They removed carpet, installed new doors, patched walls, and put up trim. They painted the whole area.

On Wednesday night, the group led worship at the church, which included special music and several skits. At the conclusion of the service, the volunteers thanked the congregation for their hospitality. "We came here with one purpose: to serve. But instead, you have served us," said Rodríguez Frias.

Fred Koenig is the editor of Missouri Conference Publications.



McEachern United Methodist Church Car Care Ministry

by David McCoy

In many parts of the country where mass transit is not yet available, automobile ownership is not a luxury, it's a necessity. At John N. McEachern Memorial UMC in Powder Springs, Georgia, a mission-minded group of people are trying to help those in need with car repair expenses. The Car

Care Ministry (CCM) meets in a horse barn on church property once a month to perform repairs and routine preventive maintenance for people in the congregation and surrounding community.

About six to eight cars receive repairs each month. The initial target groups were senior citizens and single parents in the congregation. Customers now include many outside the church walls who are referred to the CCM by the local Family Mission group. A second group of "mechanic missionaries" now utilizes the facility on a second Saturday each month.

One Saturday last year, a woman arrived with very bad brake problems on her car. She had received an estimate of \$400 to \$500 for her repairs—money she



Members of the Car Care Ministry repair a car—a necessity for its owner in Powder Springs, Georgia, where public transportation is unavailable.

did not have. CCM repaired her car for less than \$200. Customers are asked to pay for parts if they can, but when they can't, the cost of parts is covered by the ministry. In addition to repairs, cars have been donated to CCM and given to people who need them.

David McCoy, an aircraft technician in Powder Springs, Georgia, is a member of John N. McEachern Memorial UMC.

Tales of a Nonmedical Person Serving with a Medical Team or "What's an electrician doing on this health-care team anyway?"

by Kurt Kaiser

My first medical-team experience was in (then) Zaire in 1994, when we entered a refugee camp filled with amputees from the war. The medical needs were tremendous. The state of the limited supplies and available equipment generated thoughts of the American Civil War: a one-room cement structure

for operating (amputating), no light save for the small stream of sunlight through the tiny window, a stash of boxes in the corner with basic dressings and instruments. How did they sterilize them? The instruments were placed in a metal bucket, covered with alcohol, and set on fire. When the alcohol burned off, the instruments were deemed safe to use again!

In one corner of the dimly lit room, I spotted an intriguing piece of equipment: an autoclave, used for sterilizing medical instruments. It had been donated but broke when it arrived and no one had repaired it. I spent the afternoon dismantling the autoclave, cleaning tiny parts, and restoring it to working condition.

I saw tears in the eyes of the local doctor as I gave it back to him to sterilize his instruments. What skill he has, what dedication to his people. I was glad to assist in one small way.

Since that day in 1994, I have volunteered on numerous health-

care UMVIM teams. I've dug freshwater wells to get clean drinking water to people so that they won't need treatment for worms and other diseases. I've swabbed arms with alcohol prep pads in the "vaccination assembly line" where we inoculated 200 kids in two hours. I've rocked a small



A new friend in the DR Congo.

Russian boy to sleep in the orphanage he calls home. Should nonmedical people join medical teams? Of course!

Kurt Kaiser, an electrical contractor, and his wife Jan are the UMVIM Coordinators for the Western Jurisdiction.

Girdwood Chapel United Methodist Church near the Alyeska ski resort in Girdwood, Alaska.



IN AND OUT OF THE BOX IN ALASKA: **GIRDWOOD CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

story and photos by Beryl Goldberg

Pastor Jim Doepken is an out-of-the-box minister because, as he says, "I have to be." While Alaska is part of the continental United States, a lot separates it from the lower 48 states. While native traditions run deep in much of Alaska, it is a nontraditional place with special challenges caused by its environment, history, the people who live there, and the people who are just passing through. Alaska has the second-highest percentage of church non-affiliation in the United States, and that number is even higher in Girdwood, where only about 15 percent of the population attends church.

Other factors designate Alaska as a United Methodist Missionary Conference. The cost of ministry is high. Only 2600 United Methodists gather for worship on any given Sunday morning across the whole state. And several of those Methodists are gathering in remote, or at least interesting, places.

Ski-Resort Church

Girdwood Chapel UMC is one of those interesting places. A growing community about 35 miles south of Anchorage, Girdwood is a spectacular location surrounded by the Chugach National Forest, the northernmost temperate rainforest in the world. Girdwood is perched at the base of a mountain with a large ski resort as its main landmark. A thousand new homes, many of them weekend homes, will be built in the coming years.

Much of Girdwood revolves around skiing. Because the slopes open at 10:30 A.M. on Sundays, church always has competition for people's time and energy. It has a young population with a major "hippie" influence and a lot of transient residents. Nearby mountains and streams provide many opportunities for outdoor activities. There is a lot of light in the summer and darkness in the winter. And, as Pastor Jim says, "Many in their quest to be as open as possible to all beliefs would rather not have the name of Jesus men-

tioned." At the time of this writing, the town of Girdwood has just one church—Girdwood Chapel.

Beyond Chapel Walls

Pastor Jim Doepken is reaching out with a number of programs to attract new "chapelites," as he calls them. There's Bible and Brew, Work and Wieners, and the more typical Blessing of the Animals. "I'm expanding the flock and also going out to meet people who may never come to church. I'm bringing the presence of Christ to the community." With Bible and Brew, Pastor Jim is "going where the people are." Starting in December 2004, one day a week "I go to a coffee shop in the morning and a bar at night and have a Bible study with whoever's interested in talking. There are people I've never seen before and people I know from the community."

Work and Wieners is a weekly gathering every Wednesday for the people in the community to help build the church. It's a way for people to put in some "sweat equi-

ty" (to use the Habitat for Humanity phrase).

In one sense, according to Pastor Doepken, the "box" that ministry occurs in and out of is the chapel building itself. It's a 31-foot diamond-shaped building with a portable restroom outside. Part of the community for 40 years, it has been the site of many services and programs. But since the town and church have grown, a larger facility is needed. New property was purchased, and work teams have been lined up for 2005 and 2006. Funds are being raised through the **Advance Special Program (#931007)** with the hope of reaching \$250,000 over the next three to four years.

See p. 2.

Ministry Within the Walls

Meanwhile, ministry continues. Fourteen youth participated in a World Vision "30-Hour Famine Program." The children, aged 11 to 15, spent the night in the chapel talking about hunger relief, singing, and playing games. Pastor Jim challenged the youth to raise \$720 for hunger relief. After they raised a grand total of \$1100, he shaved his head in honor of their accomplishment.

The annual Blessing of the Animals is a popular event in a community where residents say, "if there are 2000 people, there are 4000 dogs." This past year, 30 animals were blessed, including hamsters, fish, rabbits, cats, a bird, and a chicken, although "the chicken did not want hands laid on."

Because Pastor Doepken is the only full-time resident pastor in Girdwood, many pastoral roles fall to him: counseling and performing

marriages and funerals. "I've provided care when someone is killed on the highway or in Alaska's icy waters, where death comes quickly." He is president of the Lions Club and chaplain to the Fire Department. His spouse, Julie, works in the local school and teaches Sunday school.



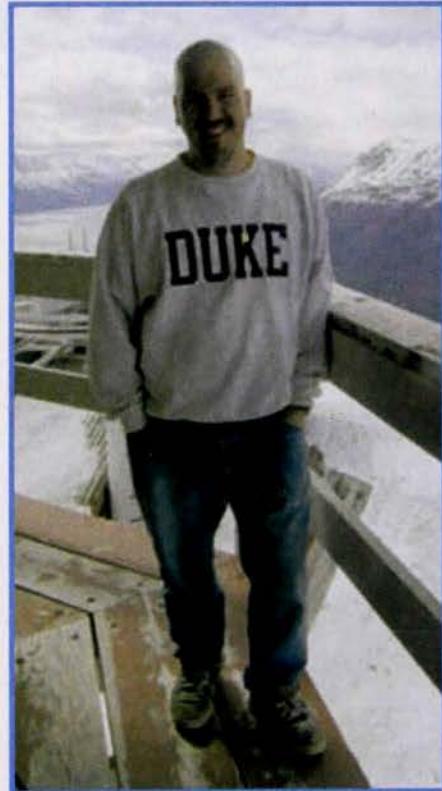
Members of the Work and Wieners project build a church that will hold a growing membership.

Pastor Doepken grew up in a few different places in the lower 48: Massachusetts, New York, and Indiana. In 1990, he was a Volunteer in Mission in Nome. "I was struggling with the call to ministry and wanted to get away from it all. Nome looked like it was away from it all. I fell in love with the state and wanted to come back and be with the Alaskan people. I was first in Kenai for

three years as pastor of the United Methodist Church of the New Covenant, and then I was asked to come to Girdwood in 2001."

The chapel at Girdwood started in 1951 with a circuit pastor and no full-time preacher, with about 15 to 20 people in attendance. In 1996, a full-time pastor, Chuck Frost, arrived from Mississippi. In May 2003, the small church was moved to its present site. It's a young congregation: sometimes on Sundays, 50 percent of those in attendance are under 10 years old.

Pastor Doepken said: "Girdwood Chapel is a fun place to worship. A year ago, we had a guest preacher who preached a sermon with dogs as the main illustration. At the end of his sermon, he howled for effect. What he didn't count on was everyone howling back. It was a holy howl. Well, we don't howl regularly at worship, but we do have fun with communion every week, and every worship ends with a shout. After singing 'On Eagles Wings' in a circle, I say 'And all God's people said...' and everyone shouts back 'AMEN.'"



Pastor Jim Doepken

Beryl Goldberg is a freelance photographer and writer based in New York City.



Fair Trade Chocolate: **CONACADO** and the **UMCOR** Coffee Program

Cacao pods must be painstakingly individually harvested. Machine harvest would damage the chupon (productive branches) and prevent the tree from producing more pods.

The west coast of Africa produces the largest cacao exports, the United States buys the largest amount of raw cocoa products, and the Swiss and Austrians consume the largest amounts of chocolate per capita, but chocolate has its roots in Latin America. The ancient Aztec and Mayan cultures discovered the value of the cacao beans, using them to produce a drink they called *xocoatl*. Chocolate was the food of the gods, used in religious ceremonies honoring the god Quetzalcoatl, and chocolate consumption was reserved for the ruling elite.

Today, chocolate made from cocoa butter and cocoa powder is tied up in a complex web of global dependencies. The cacao trees grow only in hot, humid climates close to the equator, including Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, and Malaysia. These countries sell low-grade and minimally processed cocoa products, with the first steps of processing (separation from the pods, drying the beans) completed on plantations or small farms. The major chocolate producers in Europe and the United States refine the cocoa, making many different kinds of cocoa and chocolate products.

Most of the commercial chocolate available in US stores is made from a mixture of beans from several different countries. In general, it is not possible for retailers or consumers to know where the cacao beans come from or who picked them.

The Darker Side of Chocolate

All cacao production is not the same. Some of the farms in west Africa, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire, the world's top producer of cocoa, use child labor. Worse still, accusations of child slave labor in the harvesting and processing of the cacao beans have surfaced in recent years (*Trade Environment Database Case Studies*,

#664, by Samlanchith Chanthavong, 2002). Boys between the ages of 12 and 16, many of them from neighboring Mali or Burkina Faso, are lured into the industry by professional traffickers who sell them to farmers in Côte d'Ivoire. Save the Children in Canada estimates that as many as 15,000 children work as slave labor on some of Côte d'Ivoire's 600,000 cacao farms. Living in deplorable conditions, the children are underfed, forced to work long hours, and locked up at night to prevent escape. If they are caught trying to escape, they are often severely beaten.

Slavery is illegal according to Côte d'Ivoire's constitution. If caught, the farm owners may be jailed and fined to pay the children for their labor. In addition, the children are sent back to their homes. Exploitation continues because the abuse is hidden and enforcement nearly nonexistent. Large companies that buy cocoa do not send representatives to visit the many rural farms that grow the cacao beans in remote areas.

Côte d'Ivoire farmers questioned about child labor insist that the children are salaried, that their parents were not paid to send them, and that dire economic conditions at home have driven older children to the cacao farms. Most of the laborers on the plantations work as paid day workers, but their wages are so low that their families cannot break the cycle of poverty. Salaried children working in cocoa production often do not attend school, earn subsistence wages, and do not work or live close to home. Farmers have been forced to cut costs and increase efforts to find cheap labor because cocoa has been a weak commodity in the world market in recent years.

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, which published the report *Child Labor in the*

Cocoa Sector of West Africa in August of 2002, reports that the growth of small-scale farmers in the cocoa industries of West Africa is a good first step toward economic stability. However, the income generated by the small farms needs to be balanced with proven methods of sustainable rural development. Local and national governments need to work with the cocoa industry to ensure that the revenue from cocoa is sufficient for real human development, particularly for the children working on the farms. Investment in education for the children would greatly improve their development and increase their chances of forging better lives for themselves as they become adults. Ultimately, cocoa farmers and their communities need to earn more from the cocoa they export if the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment is to be broken.

Chocolate Alternatives

It is possible to purchase chocolate and cocoa products that have been

fairly traded and whose harvesting and production do not exploit children. Although the Fair Trade market for coffee is better known, a nascent Fair Trade chocolate movement is gaining momentum. Fair Trade chocolate products that have met the standards of certification bear the Fair Trade trademark symbol on their wrappers.

Equal Exchange, a worker-owned cooperative specializing in Fair Trade products, based in Massachusetts, has instituted interfaith Fair Trade coffee programs with a number of US denominations, including Lutheran, Church of the Brethren, Quaker, Mennonite, United Church of Christ, Presbyterian, and United Methodist churches. The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Coffee Program is open to any United Methodist Church. Recently, fairly traded baking cocoa, hot cocoa mix, and three kinds of chocolate bars became available through the UMCOR program.

The difference between the

Workers remove beans, or seeds, from cacao pods. The beans are used to produce cocoa and chocolate.



world-market cocoa industry, where cocoa is bought "blind" through importers and brokers, and Fair Trade certified cocoa, is that in order to meet Fair Trade standards, fair-trade cocoa har-



Cacao tree farms in the Dominican Republic were downed by Hurricane Jeanne in September 2004. UMCOR granted CONACADO \$10,000 to help farmers repair their crop damage.

vesting and processing must be monitored by independent, non-profit certifying organizations. In order to sell to Fair Trade buyers, the cocoa cooperatives must adhere to the International Labor Organization Conventions on child labor and forced labor. In addition, Fair Trade cocoa is bought directly from democratically controlled cooperatives of small-scale farmers. Farmers receive a fair share of the profits and have a say in how common funds are spent. The co-ops supply-

ing Equal Exchange are paid at a minimum \$1950 per metric ton of organic cocoa, more if the world market price spikes higher. The market price, which fluctuates, recently dropped as low as \$640 per metric ton.

This year, the farms in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana have experienced drought and a low-yield season. Prices may rise because of decreased supply, but farmers will have fewer beans to sell.

Fair Trade in the Dominican Republic

The Fair Trade cocoa for Equal Exchange is supplied by two producers in Peru and one in the Dominican Republic. In the Dominican Republic, the Confederación Nacional de Cacaocultores Dominicanos (CONACADO) is an umbrella cooperative for 9000 small-scale cacao growers. The farms are divided into nine regional districts, forming about 400 small base associations. Founded in 1988, CONACADO has developed a niche specialty in the production of high-quality and organic cocoa. It is now the leading producer of organic chocolate worldwide.

Abel Fernández, the export manager for CONACADO, says that 10 percent of the crop is now sold as Fair Trade cocoa. CONACADO would like to sell more, because of the higher price on the Fair Trade market, but at this point there are too few Fair Trade buyers. When cocoa is sold to Equal Exchange, the higher price allows CONACADO to set aside a percentage of the proceeds for community development projects. Last year, 1200 tons were sold to the Fair Trade market. Representatives of the co-ops themselves decided how the community development money would be spent.

The Fair Trade profits also allowed the small-scale farmers to invest in further refining their

product. In the past, 100 percent of the cocoa had to be sold as low-grade product because the farmers had no means to ferment the beans. Today, 30 percent of the product is being fermented on the farms, producing a more desirable, higher-grade cocoa product.

Supporting the Small-Scale Farmers

Fernández wants to raise awareness among interfaith consumers that cocoa production often creates a "belt of misery" for people in rural areas. "A bar of chocolate often represents a lot of sweat and abuse for people all over the world," said Fernández. "Many people live without access to basic services. Doing without becomes a way of life."

UMCOR has supported the CONACADO farmers in a number of ways. The UMCOR Coffee Program introduces consumers to Equal Exchange's products, which allows Equal Exchange to buy more cocoa.

In addition, UMCOR provided a \$10,000 grant to CONACADO after the Dominican Republic was hit by Hurricane Jeanne in September 2004. About 1600 of the farmers were affected. Equal Exchange helped raise an additional \$12,000 from other sources. CONACADO is using the grants to buy food to distribute to the farmers so that they can remain on their farms to repair the damage to their crops. Otherwise, they would have to leave their farms and work for other cacao producers in order to feed their families. CONACADO estimates that it will take the farms three to four years to recover the crops lost in the hurricane.

The Power of Chocolate

Recent studies have suggested that dark chocolate may have a number of health benefits. It contains antioxidants called phenols that help prevent cholesterol from causing

Producers that benefit from the sale of Equal Exchange cocoa and chocolate

- CONACADO (National Confederation of Dominican Cocoa Producers), a cooperative with 9000 small-scale farmers, 1/4 of the cacao growers in the country.
- CACVRA (Cooperative Agraria Cafetelera del Valle Rio Apurímac) and El Quinacho, two cooperatives of 1500 small-scale coffee and cacao growers in southern Peru.
- Four cooperatives of small-scale sugar-cane farmers, three in Paraguay (the Montillo, Arroyense, and Manuvira cooperatives) and one in Costa Rica (the Asoprodulce co-op in Jaris).
- The Organic Valley Cooperative of Family Farms, 600+ organic farmers across 18 US states who produce their own brand of organic dairy products, soy milk, meat, eggs and orange juice. Equal Exchange uses the co-op's organic dried milk powder in the hot cocoa mix and milk chocolate bars.
- La Siembra, a worker-owned cooperative dedicated to Fair Trade, based in Ottawa, Canada. La Siembra coordinates ingredient sourcing and production of various cocoa and sugar products.
- UMCOR receives a percentage of all sales through the UMCOR Coffee Program, designated for sustainable agriculture projects.



Equal Exchange co-op member Rodney North with cacao farmer Luis Díaz Aylas, a member of the CACVRA cooperative in Peru.

plaque build-up in the arteries. The saturated fat found in cocoa butter is made up in part of stearic acid, which does not raise the bad cholesterol level in the blood. Chocolate, even dark chocolate, has far less caffeine than coffee.

But what other powers can chocolate have? The CONACADO farmers have leveraged the proceeds from the fairly traded chocolate to:

- provide a mobile medical clinic—bringing doctors, medical

supplies, and treatments to rural communities that have no clinics;

- build and staff a permanent new medical clinic;
- send children in rural communities to school by providing the shoes, uniforms, and school supplies that they need;
- build new schools;
- provide small nurseries to help small-scale cocoa producers diversify and grow more nutritional foods for their families,

Where can I get Fair Trade chocolate?

Retail: Check in natural-food stores and select supermarkets. Look for the Fair Trade label.

Online: You can order from the Equal Exchange retail store by going to <http://www.equalexchange.com>.

UMCOR Coffee Program: Ordering by the case at wholesale prices is easy, just go to the Interfaith Orders section of the Equal Exchange website, or call directly to set up a church account, 1-774-776-7366. Order by phone and receive shipments within 10 days. Some congregations open up the ordering process to individuals and families when they place the monthly order for Fair Trade coffee for fellowship hour.

Fair Trade chocolate bars make a great fundraiser!

such as avocados and oranges;
• build wells to bring clean, potable water to villages.

That's powerful chocolate!

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

125th Anniversary of the Methodist Church in Lower Myanmar

story and photos by George W. Gish, Jr.

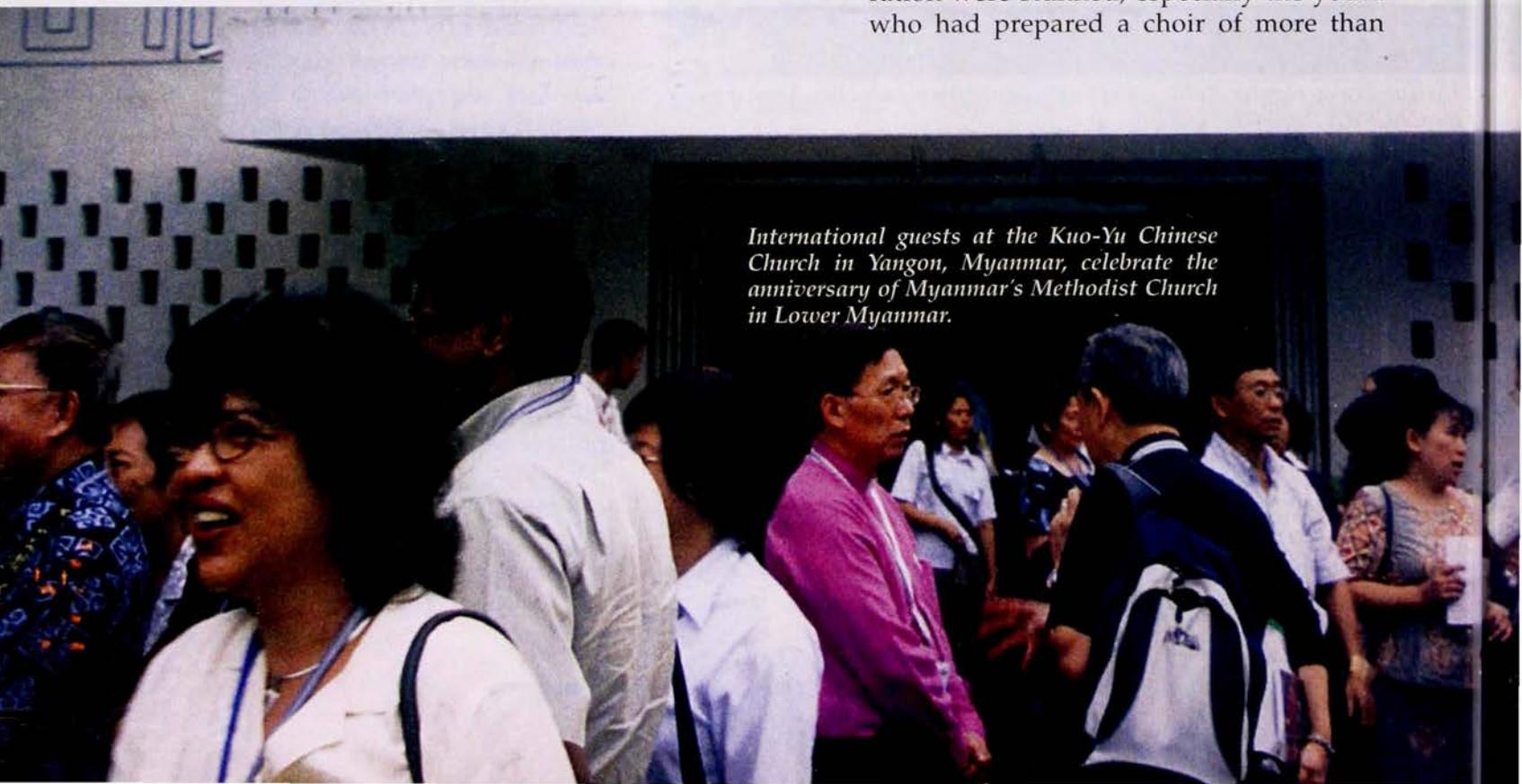
The Rev. Zothan Mawia, Bishop of the Methodist Church in Lower Myanmar, visited with Japanese church leaders in April 2004 on his way to attend the United Methodist General Conference in May. He issued an open invitation for participation in the 125th Anniversary Thanksgiving Celebration of mission work in Burma founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Japan Biblical Theological Seminary responded by sending Professor Suzuki Shûhei, who is in charge of its international exchange program, and me to represent the United Church of Christ in Japan (KYO-DAN) as a United Methodist Mission Volunteer.

A Change of Plans

As guests began to arrive, there was concern over the sudden change in government and the house arrest of the Prime Minister, who had been scheduled to give greetings to the assembly. Because of some unfortunate internal circumstances relating to a long-standing conflict in the church, one small faction requested that the government withdraw its permission to hold the public observances as scheduled. Notice of the retraction came as final preparations were being made the day before the celebration was to begin.

Needless to say, those who had put in so many hours, days, and weeks in preparation were stunned, especially the youth who had prepared a choir of more than

International guests at the Kuo-Yu Chinese Church in Yangon, Myanmar, celebrate the anniversary of Myanmar's Methodist Church in Lower Myanmar.



125 voices along with special music and liturgical dance performances. With guests already arriving, Bishop Mawia made the decision to change the program from the originally scheduled special events to an exposure bus tour that would include Methodist churches and related work in the Yangon area and the next major city to the north, Bagu.

This decision was well-received. It enabled the overseas guests to observe firsthand the work of local churches and see the new Methodist Theological School campus in the Yangon suburbs in its embryonic stage. It was also a chance to see some of the countryside, the contrast between the Chinese ethnic churches and the local Burmese congregations, and the difficult circumstances of the Indian and minority indigenous groups.

Of equal significance was the chance for local members to interact with the overseas participants and share in many aspects of the program that would not have been possible in the original plans.

The Celebration

There were more than 100 guests from overseas, with the largest groups from Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and the United States. One or two representatives from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan represented northeast Asia. The President of the World Methodist Council, His Eminence Dr. Sunday Mbang, along with Bishop Roy Sano from the United Methodist Council of Bishops, gave powerful messages that were both moving and challenging. The morning after the celebrations, the two bishops met with the small dissenting faction still occupying the old headquarters in a gesture of reconciliation that had the support of all the participants.

Sunday, October 24, was the climax of the celebrations. In the



Church members prepare for the 125th Anniversary celebration at the Methodist English Church in Yangon.

morning, guests broke up into small groups to attend many of the surrounding churches, where some of them spoke from the pulpit. Following the worship services, everyone shared a fellowship meal with the local congregations. Since it was Sunday, the government gave permission to hold regular Christian services inside the church. So in the afternoon, everyone gathered at the large Methodist English Church in downtown Yangon for a special performance by the 125-voice youth choir, along with other music and dance by the local church youth. John Ang, who conducted the choir, had made several trips from Singapore at his own expense to coach the singers and

rehearse for the celebration. The preaching and worship were all filled with joy and hope, reflecting the theme of Zechariah 4:6, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit" says the Lord of hosts." This was the same text often used by Dr. James M. Thoburn, the American Methodist missionary from Calcutta, India, who, in 1879, was instrumental in opening Methodist mission work in Rangoon, Burma, and subsequently in Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

On Sunday evening, a Friendship Banquet took place at the Grand Plaza Park Royal Hotel. Recognition was given to representatives of the many overseas delegations as well as leaders of the ecumenical partner churches and

organizations in Myanmar. There was a deep sense of mutual love and renewed commitment to their continued Christian witness and solidarity in the face of obstacles and adversities. Among those sharing in the closing event were three representatives from the General Board of Global Ministries who had arrived on the final day of the ceremonies after flying directly from their board meeting. Words of appreciation and encouragement came from Youngsook Kang, Deputy General Secretary for Mission Contexts and Relationships; Edith Gleaves, Deputy General Secretary for Mission Personnel; and Rebecca Asedillo, Mission Contexts and Relationships Executive Secretary for Asia/Pacific. All three spent the following two days in consultation with Myanmar Methodist leaders, combined with exposure trips to various church projects, including the new seminary campus.

Common Roots, Common Goals

As a missionary who comes out of the Methodist missionary tradition, I was gratified to see the present-day cooperation of Methodist lay and clergy members from the churches in south and southeast Asia who shared many the same historical roots. Today, the Korean Methodist Church is sending several missionaries and providing a significant portion of the support of the Methodist churches in Lower Myanmar, having just recently purchased the land for the new seminary near Yangon. Churches in Singapore and Malaysia are also providing major support for church programs and the training of present and future leaders of the Methodist church in Lower Myanmar, which at present has about 3000 members, with a constituency of around 5000.

During our days together, we



Worshippers pray at the Methodist English Church's anniversary celebration.

had the opportunity to hear Bishop Mawia share some of the recent highlights of the church as well as its vision for the coming years. Although the church is headquartered in Yangon, it has some work in the northern parts of the country, especially among Chinese communities in the Lashio area, as well as new work among some of the tribal groups in the mountainous areas. One exciting development is among the Wa tribal community, where more than 500 new members have joined in the past two years, following the pioneer work of a recent seminary graduate from the Wa ethnic group. Over 100 were baptized at Christmas in 2003, and a similar number on the following Easter.

The challenge of serving the needs of youth and children in this new area is a major concern. The new program of theological education in Yangon will train leaders for the future development of church work among many diverse and needy groups in Myanmar.

Another area of hope is the recent movement toward closer cooperation with a sister Meth-

odist church in Upper Myanmar. Headquartered in Mandalay, it was the center of the former mission work of the British Methodist Church. Its membership is now close to 15,000 with a constituency of about 28,000.

Both churches are part of the larger Protestant ecumenical family represented by the Myanmar Council of Churches, which includes the dominant Baptist and Anglican churches. All of them face the same challenges of meeting the needs of diverse ethnic groups as well as reaching the majority Burmese Buddhist population with a message of hope in the midst of political and economic hardships and uncertainties. It is hoped that churches in Japan as well as those with Methodist roots in other parts of the world will find new and meaningful ways of relating to the small and struggling Methodist Church of Lower Myanmar.

George W. Gish, Jr., is a retired GBGM missionary who continues to work as a Mission Volunteer with the KYODAN in Japan.

Bible Women Spread the Word Throughout Asia

Kelly Martini is the communications executive for the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries.

Erlincy Rodríguez, a pastor, deaconess, and Bible Woman, travels to five rural communities in Davao, Philippines, to instruct rural women on health issues. She also conducts three-day seminars on HIV/AIDS in Western Visayas. Rodríguez says, "I belong where I am needed," which is at home, in the Philippines.

Through training, Bible Women learn about HIV/AIDS prevention, community-based health care, microcredit economics, and overcoming domestic violence. They address issues based on the most urgent needs of the women in their rural areas. Together, they study the Bible, specifically focusing on Jesus' ministry of healing and transformation, as well as his challenges.

Because many women Erlincy visits cannot read, she teaches from manuals translated into various Filipino dialects and illustrated with corresponding cultural images. Literacy techniques are incorporated throughout the educational sessions so that women can learn to read. As part of their instruction, they receive HIV/AIDS prevention education and are taught to use indigenous plants as medicines and in soaps that they make to sell.

In Malaysia, their work has already reached more than 3000 people in the rural villages of Sarawak and the remote towns of Sabah.

Other Bible Women work in Cambodia, East Malaysia, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands, southern India, and Indonesia.

The actions of the Bible Women demonstrate how some of the greatest evangelization takes place when people live out their faith.



Women in the Tondo district of Manila, Philippines, learn to read as a result of Bible Women training sessions.

The United Methodist Church in Mission

Atlantic Street Family Center Guides Single Father and His Daughter to Positive Growth

Sidney L. Carter is a volunteer at the Atlantic Street Center in Seattle, Washington.

I first learned of Atlantic Street Center in 1998 when I became involved in a custody dispute concerning my daughter LaToya, who was then seven years old. I was living in Holly Park—now known as NewHolly—and having great difficulty navigating the state systems. I was very angry and frustrated and needed someone to talk to, but I didn't know where to turn.

Then I met Sue Sigenthaler, manager of Atlantic Street Family Center. Sue and the rest of the staff at the center stepped in and gave me the support I needed at a critical time in my life.

I enrolled in parenting classes and joined a fathers' support group. The staff took the time to help me find my way through the system and gave me hope that everything would work out for the best. Most importantly, my involvement with the center opened up opportunities for my daughter. LaToya enrolled in a counseling program and joined the Youth Development Program, with which she went on field trips and educational outings. Now she is an honor student, a member of Team ALIVE, the youth leadership group, and a member of the Sweet Mahogany Drill Team.

Atlantic Street Center gave us a community, and gave me the help and encouragement I needed to raise LaToya in an environment not always supportive of single fathers raising children. I was awarded final custody of my daughter, and we both volunteer at Atlantic Street Center whenever we can.



Sidney L. Carter and his daughter LaToya have improved their lives through the services of a caring community-center staff.

Why Go to the Democratic Republic of Congo?

Carmen McFadyen is a retired registered nurse who lives with her husband on Whidley Island in Washington State. She has served with United Methodist Volunteers-in-Mission teams in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

After my first Volunteers-In-Mission visit to Congo in May 2002, I decided to return. I was fortunate to be chosen to participate as a registered nurse in a United Methodist Volunteers-In-Mission trip to Congo. The original mission was to provide medical care to refugees from war-torn Congo and in villages where medical care was nonexistent.

A woman too weak to walk on her own was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer. All we had to give her was Tylenol for her pain because we had no controlled substances or prescription drugs available. I thought of treatments and medications available for this disease in other countries, and I realized that this woman would die in excruciating pain.

Another patient, a 15-year-old girl, came for treatment of tuberculosis on her face. Throughout her treatment, the girl never complained. In the United States, she would have had better opportunities for treatment and cosmetic surgery.

In hospitals in Congo, patients must bring their basic supplies, except for mattresses. There are no linens, no food unless it is brought by the family, no medicine unless the family can afford it, and no nurses except for a minute or two a day.

However, there is beauty in the country, in the tropical flowers, the sunsets, and the people, who have unbelievable faith and hope for a better future. The suffering, faith, and beauty are why I returned. There are many ways to help our brothers and sisters around the world. This way is my choice.



Congolese patients wait outside a clinic to receive medical care.

I Am Glad that God Is with Them

Tiffany Yang wrote about her experience traveling with her mother, Kady Herr-Yang, to train Bible Women from Laos in Thailand. After the training, they traveled to Laos, Kady's native land.

On our trip with a Bible Women's trainers' group to Laos and Thailand, my sister Jessica and I crossed the Mekong River to Laos with our mother and other trainers from Wisconsin.

The Saturday before Easter, we traveled along dirt roads to two Hmong villages. The roads were steep and bumpy. Along the way, we stopped at the new United Methodist community in Lao Kang village to distribute school supplies to the children and their teacher. The children's faces lit up with smiles as they were handed the supplies.

On Easter Sunday, we went to a church in Vientiane, a major city in Laos located on the Mekong River. The "church" was in the pastor's house. Jessica and I worked with the children during the service, helping them make prayer booklets and bead necklaces and showing them how to make origami figures. Afterwards, we stayed for the youth gathering to worship and pray for people. Even though some of the families we met were more fortunate than others, they all had one thing in common—they had God in their hearts.

God bless all the families and individuals that we visited in Laos, watch over them as they serve, and give them hope—especially the children.



Unlike many children in the United States who do household chores for an allowance, Hmong children in Laos work to help the family survive.

States who do household chores for an allowance. Hmong children in Laos work to help their families.

"We have felt alone and without help. Through MJOR, now we see hope."

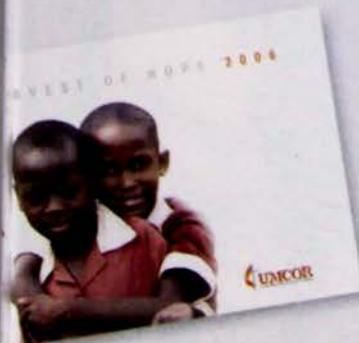
—A tsunami survivor in Sri Lanka

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The *Prayer Calendar* offers daily scripture readings to guide your meditation, lifts up the individuals who are giving their lives to mission service on their birthdays, and promotes the prayerful support of mission projects at home and abroad.

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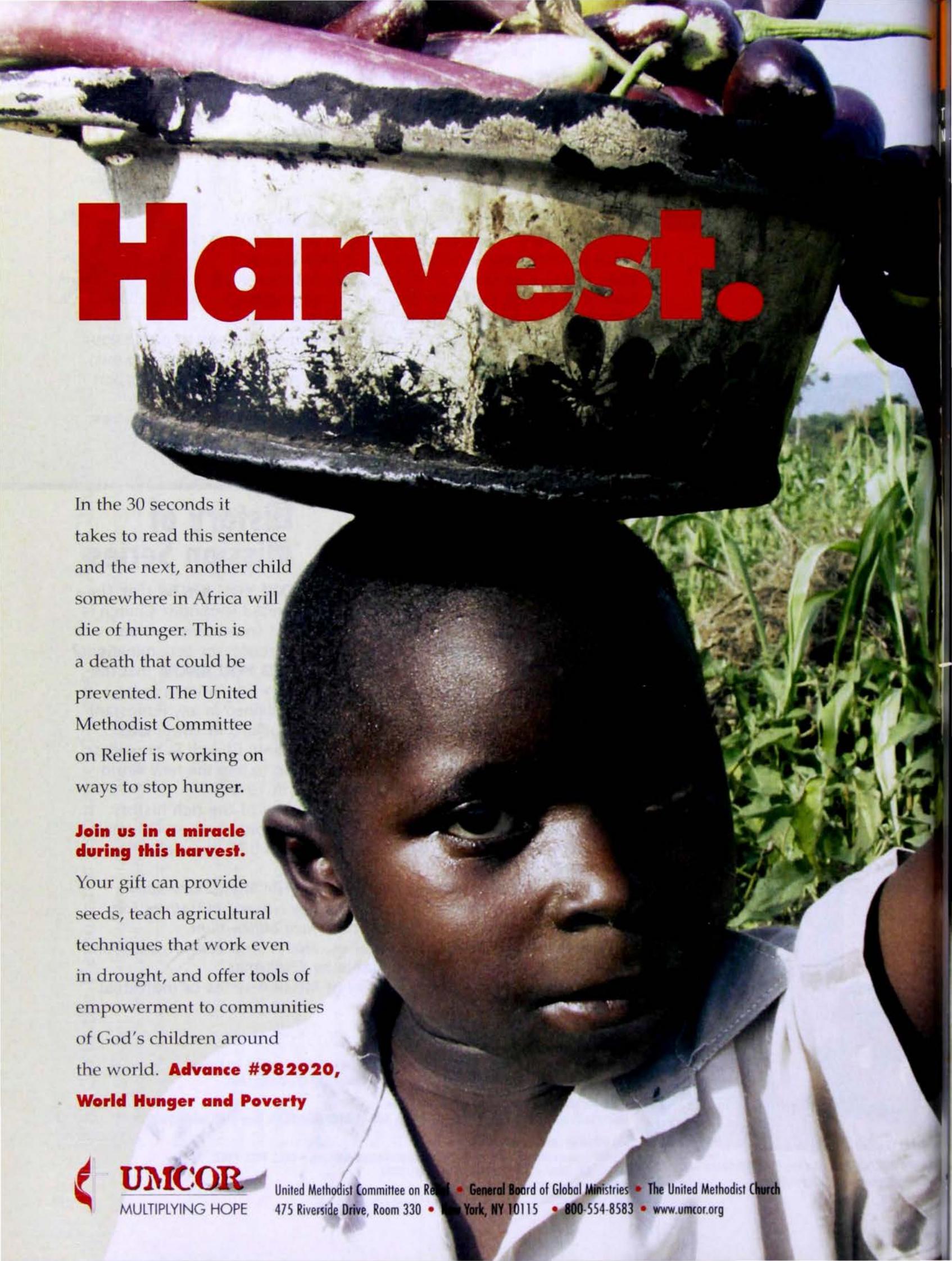
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