New World Outlook

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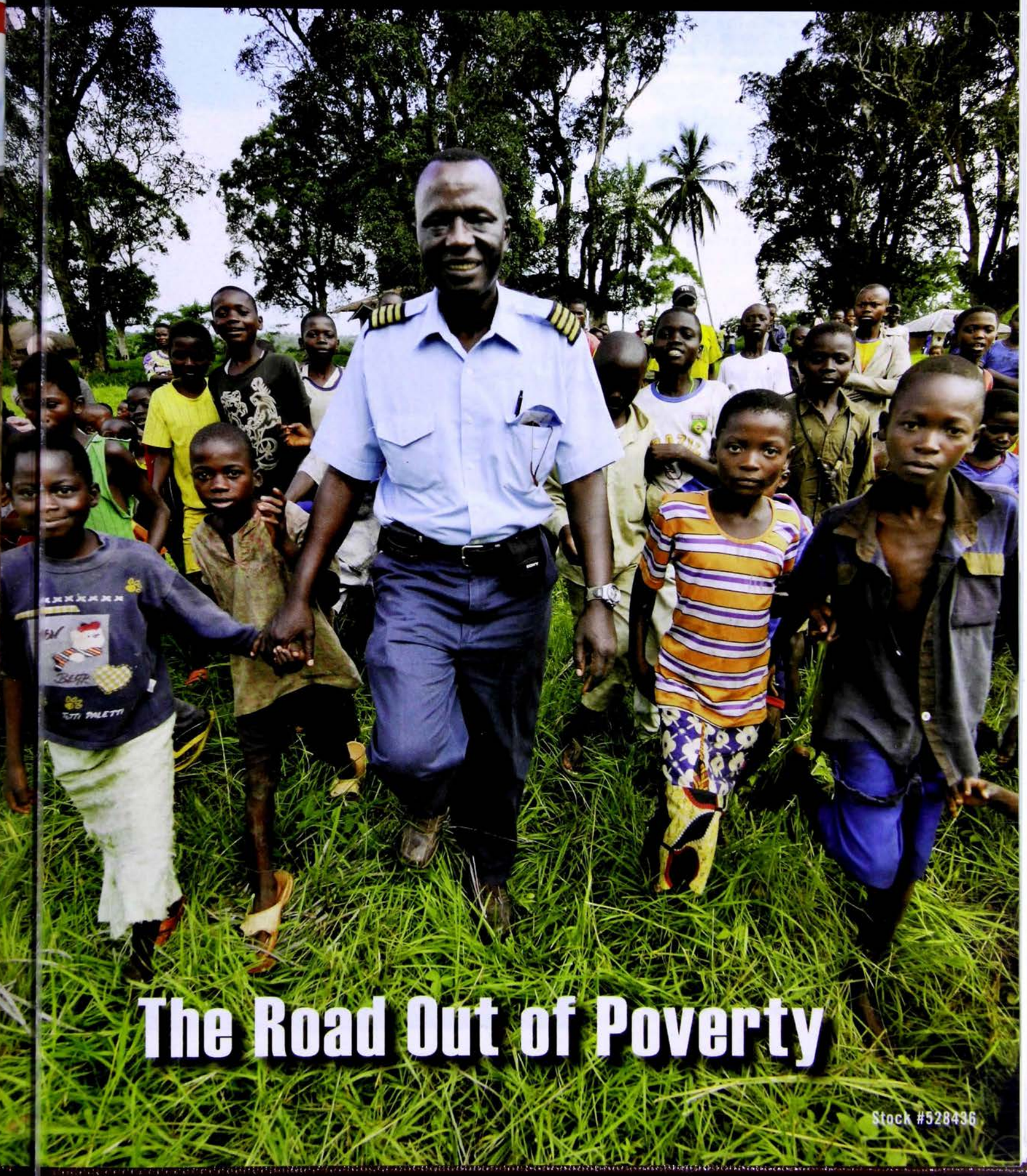

The Road Out of Poverty

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New World Outlook

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Photo: Paul Jeffrey

Cover Photo: Paul Jeffrey. *Jacques Umembudi Akasa, a United Methodist missionary pilot for Wings of Caring Aviation, a program of The United Methodist Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is welcomed to the village of Minga by children who ran to the airstrip to greet his plane.*

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Bulletin inserts can be clipped out of the magazine, copied back-to-back, folded, and slipped into the Sunday bulletin.

Ensuring that girls around the world receive an education is a long-term investment in alleviating poverty in all nations. The Sampaltivu Preschool, supported by YMCA of Sri Lanka, is part of the tsunami recovery project of ACT International.

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from the editor

FINDING THE ROAD

The road out of poverty is not always obvious or well-marked. As our cover story points out, sometimes the road out isn't even a road, it's a runway. The story of missionary pilots, Gaston Ntambo, Jacques Umembudi, and Rukang Chicomb of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, illustrates the church's will to empower individuals and communities to grow in their knowledge and skill as well as in their faith. The pilots' dedication to their aviation ministry inspires children across the conferences of the D. R. Congo to reach out beyond their confining circumstances and dream big dreams of the possibilities God holds for their lives.

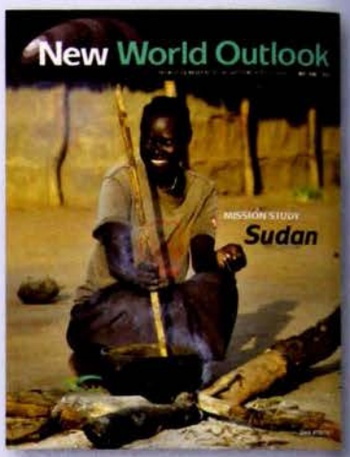
This issue presents some of the complex factors that make poverty so hard to combat. Generational poverty, debilitating diseases, war, refugee status, and famine all present different circumstances that lead to poverty. The way out of each of these life circumstances requires different responses on the part of the church and the international community, responses tailored to the needs of the communities affected.

Concerning the famine in the African Horn, missionary Jerri Savuto reports that since my article was written (*The Hunger Season*, p. 20), the rains have finally returned to Kenya and they are feeling a measure of relief. But the rainy season was shorter than expected, so the season of hunger is sure to return as well, sooner and longer than normal.

The United Methodist Church has rededicated itself, by action of the 2008 General Conference, to ministries that help communities and individuals navigate the roads out of poverty—one of four areas around which the church will focus its considerable resources. Global Ministries has long been testing its ministries to find the infrastructures that work best in different contexts around the world. Whether by refugee resettlement or economic development, microcredit loans or emergency relief, scholarships or other forms of training, better and more sustainable ways to grow food or the encirclement of one family with local advocates from within its own community—the church has opened many roads.

Jesus doesn't have a lot of good things to say about the rich. In the Book of Luke, he surprises the disciples by announcing: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled" (Luke 6:20b-21a). Likewise, he cautions the rich, for they have already received their consolation on earth. It is easy for the church to forget its mission if those who fill its pews are most concerned about their own fortunes. Again in Luke 12:16-21, Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool, who amassed such wealth that he had to tear down his barns and silos to build new and bigger ones, only to die before he ever got a chance to enjoy his bounty. These are strong words on how we should use the blessings we have received from God.

Christie R. House



May-June issue, 2009 Sudan

Dear Editor:

Why do you make it so hard to share your great journalism with others?

I repeatedly am amazed at how the global UMC (and that includes *New World Outlook*) makes it so difficult to easily share online content. Even your non-online stories would benefit from being able to download.

My most common desire is to use the web content for what I can not do with the hard copy—present a subset of a story, especially the photos, in a couple of media formats, such as 1. printed-out photos (often enlarged) with portions of the story (or sometimes the whole story) for the congregation to read in the fellowship hall, or in the narthex; 2. a slide show with portions of text (a sentence) describing the photos. I'd use slideshows with a three- to five-minute audio story in Sunday school or in worship for a mission moment.

I probably wouldn't want to pay a considerable sum in addition to the print magazine to have online content.

Best Regards,
Edward McDonald

Please watch for the Readers' Survey coming out online and in our September-October 2009 print issue. We encourage all our readers to make their opinions known about New World Outlook *so that Global Ministries may discern how best to serve its constituency.*
—Christie R. House

Letters from readers

Dear Editor:

I would like to congratulate you on the Sudan issue. It is outstanding. However, there is a very unfortunate error in Caroline Njuki's article (p. 16). The Holston Conference was led into mission in Sudan by God's powerful action not just by "a chance meeting" with the Lost Boys.

As Bishop James Swanson reports in the Holston newspaper *The Call* (http://www.holston.org/media/about/thecall/april_2009_page_2.pdf), God laid the burden of the needs of Sudan on the hearts of Bishop Swanson and Anita Henderlight, then coordinator of children's ministries, using a picture and a book. One weekend, Bishop Swanson saw a haunting award-winning photograph that showed a buzzard stalking a starving Sudanese child close to death. He couldn't get it out of his mind. The same weekend Anita Henderlight read *They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky* by Judy A Bernstein and three Lost Boys, Benjamin Ajak, Benson Deng, and Alephonsian Deng. Anita couldn't put the book down and was haunted by the needs of the children of Sudan. A chance encounter? I don't think so.

Bishop Swanson and Ms. Henderlight, profoundly moved by these experiences, shared them with the leadership of the Holston Conference. "What is God calling us to do?" they asked.

The Sudan Action Team was formed. All who were interested were invited to serve. We read the book and then we read more. We watched videos, learned about the political situation, and invited Lost Boys living in our area to come and meet with us. God used a book and a compelling picture to move us to become people in mission to Sudan in many ways. This was much more than simple chance. This was God's call for action, and the people of the Holston Conference answered.

The Rev. Mat Merker
Former member of the Sudan Action Team
Holston Annual Conference

Editor's Note: The correct Advance number for the Sudan Emergency is #184385. (May-June 2009, p.29)

Dear Editor:

I received the *New World Outlook* frequently while living in New Orleans, Louisiana.

After Katrina, I moved into a retirement home and combination assisted-living facility in Madison, Mississippi. As a senior citizen with limited income, my reading and information resources are limited.

I love to read *New World Outlook* and am appalled that it will be discontinued in favor of on-line accessibility. Please extend the life of this resource.

Mrs. Gwendolyn L. Walker
Madison, Mississippi

Editor's Note:

Mrs. Walker—we've made no such decision! While we are investigating many different avenues for delivering our magazine content to new readers, we have not decided that "print is dead." Please watch for the Readers' Survey coming out online and in our September-October 2009 print issue. We encourage all our readers to make their opinions known about this and many other issues so that Global Ministries may discern how best to serve its constituency.

—Christie R. House

Photo: Paul Jeffrey

MINISTRY WITH THE POOR
LOOKING POVERTY IN THE FACE

by Edward W. Paup

Late last April, during the 2008 United Methodist General Conference, a near disaster hovered over the poor of the world. The prices of global food commodities, especially grain, reached all-time highs, jumping 150 percent in a few months' time. Millions around the globe faced starvation. Yet General Conference went about business as usual, debating legislation and passing resolutions—including some on hunger and poverty.

It cannot be business as usual if we of The United Methodist Church intend to make ministry with the poor a central and serious part of our 21st century mission.

A priority focus on the poor is strong in our Wesleyan heritage and strongly identifiable now in our contemporary global outreach.

Poverty, says theologian Victorio Araya-Guillen, "is not a subjective, individual phenomenon; it is not a product of chance; it does not fall from heaven as God's will or God's punishment. Nor is it the result of insufficient technology or natural resources.... [P]overty has a human face and that face confronts us every day with the theological and ethical dilemma of the death of millions of innocent human beings." (From Meeks, Douglas M., ed., *The Portion of the Poor*, Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995.)

Our ministry with the poor calls us to look boldly at the face of poverty and to let the faces of poverty look boldly back at us. In many places, United Methodists are among the poor. Our denomination's roots are among the poor of 18th century England.

SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS

Jesus inherited from his Hebrew ancestors a strong sense of God's solidarity with the poor and a strong commitment to both mercy and justice for those lacking in material goods and social position. This theme is often sounded by the prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and it is also found in the Psalms. Proverbs 31:8-9 offers a stirring summary: "Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Throughout the four Gospels, Jesus feeds the hungry, heals the sick, comforts the marginalized, and castigates the rich for their neglect of the poor. "Blessed are you who are poor," he says in Luke's version of the Beatitudes. (Luke 6:20-22) In verse 24, the word is: "[W]oe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation."

Jesus identified himself as the messenger of good tidings to the poor in his first reading in the synagogue in Nazareth. As Luke reports: "He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'...The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'" (Luke 4:16b-21)

Further, in Matthew 25:35-40, Jesus provides an ethic for confronting poverty. He places himself among the poor and the outcasts when he tells the righteous: When you provide food, water, and clothing for the needy, care for the sick, and visit the imprisoned, you are providing these blessings to me.

WESLEYAN FOUNDATIONS

John Wesley also heard, accepted, and served the poor in ways powerful and controversial for his day. His career spanned the birth and growth of the industrial revolution. People were leaving farms and villages for factory jobs in towns. They worked for low pay in deplorable conditions and received no benefits. Frail children were put to work in jobs unfit for the heartiest adults.

Wesley's example of hearing, accepting, and serving the poor suggests four themes that can instruct the church in our global ministry today: embracing the poor as part of the family of faith; comprehending and confronting the economic system and its effects; going beyond charity in service; and understanding the links between poverty and health.

Photo: Adam Neal

Opposite: *Children receive food at a United Methodist-funded nutrition center in Kamina, Democratic Republic of Congo.*

Right: *Women participate in economic development programs at Accion Médica Cristiana, a United Methodist-funded mission in Matagalpa, Nicaragua.*

EMBRACING THE POOR

Wesley was suspicious of riches. He once told a colleague, "The poor are the Christians." (Letters of John Wesley, September 30, 1786) He was concerned for people's physical welfare but was even more interested in their spiritual vitality in knowing and loving God. Those on the path to perfection and sanctification would, out of their love of God, engage in acts of mercy—not only service to the poor but also association with them as candidates for salvation.

In "Visit the Poor," an essay in a volume by Richard Heitzenrater entitled *The Poor and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2002), Professor Randy L. Maddox of Duke Divinity School reminds us that works of mercy are indispensable in the Wesleyan understanding of salvation. Maddox offers a summary of Wesley's long-running correspondence with Miss J. C. March, a young woman of means who found it difficult to visit and make friends with the poor because of their supposed lack of good taste and good character. Wesley responded: "I have found some of the uneducated poor who have exquisite taste and sentiment....And they have (many of them) faith and the love of God in larger measure than any persons I know."

Photo: courtesy of Korean Community Church of New Jersey

In another letter he told her: "I am sorry that you should be content with lower degrees of usefulness and holiness than you are called to." Wesley's admonitions are strong reminders that embracing the poor is the necessary first step in ministry with them.

CONFRONTING THE SYSTEM

Wesley was a keen student of the emerging industrial economy of England in the 18th century. He and his brother Charles complained to public authorities about inadequate wages, insufficient economic safety nets, and the contamination of water, air, and soil. He railed against exploitation and dispossession of the poor. He lambasted colonialism and the slave trade. Concern for the poor became a litmus test for Methodist social witness in his day.

Do we have the same passion to understand the operation of economic systems far more complex than those of Wesley's time? We need to comprehend and, at times, challenge the economic systems that perpetuate poverty if we are to engage effectively in ministry with the poor.

GOING BEYOND CHARITY

Early Methodist services for the poor consisted primarily of alms. As the movement grew, Wesley organized the "Strangers' Society" for the relief of the "poor, sick, and friendless" beyond Methodist bounds. (John Wesley's Journal, March 14, 1790. *Works of Wesley IV.*)

Methodists soon realized that more than charity was necessary to provide for the needs of the poor among them and in the larger society. Employment for the poor was needed. Loans were needed to enable the poor to acquire tools and materials for small businesses. The poor also needed free health care and free schools for their children. Poorhouses for destitute widows and children had to be set up so that Wesley and other Methodist preachers could live among the poor, maintaining solidarity with them. (Summarized by Jennings, Theodore W., Jr., in *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990)

In Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: A volunteer from the United Methodist Korean Community Church in Englewood, New Jersey, shares a tearful goodbye with a Mongolian Bible School participant.

Wesley became increasingly committed to long-term solutions not dependent on financial handouts. Basic literacy was a gift both to adults, through class meetings, and in Methodist Sunday schools organized for children who had to work six days a week.

The global United Methodist Church already has in place outstanding examples of *empowerment* ministries that help people find and develop their vocational interests and talents. These ministries include business and job creation, credit unions, loan funds, and community economic and housing development.

POVERTY AND ILL HEALTH

John Wesley clearly grasped the linkage between poverty and ill health. In his day, doctors lacked knowledge of bacteria, antibiotics did not exist, and surgery was dangerous.

Wesley knew that the poor had no access to even the limited health services available to the rich. In response, he organized a book of home remedies called *Primitive Physick*. This book went through multiple expanded editions, becoming the best-selling English-language self-help book of the 18th century. Methodist circuit riders carried this health resource in their saddlebags. (The 1747 edition of *Primitive Physick* can be read online at the Global Ministries website, new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/primitive-physick.)

Left: *Children in Virginia benefit from Global Ministries' Church and Community Workers Program.* Photo: Rachael Barnett. ***Center:*** *Children at the Amity Foundation in China:* Photo: Matt Morgan. ***Right:*** *Palestinian students at Hope Secondary School in Beit Jala, West Bank, Israel.* Photo: Courtesy Hope Secondary School.

We would not want to self-treat from *Primitive Physick* today. But we can still benefit from Wesley's insistence that clean water, clean air, and uncontaminated food are essential for good health and that alcohol and tobacco are harmful. We should also listen to his insistence that the poor should have access to the best health services available.

One of our four new focus areas is "combating the diseases of poverty by improving health globally." This focus points primarily to preventable diseases, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. But Methodism has always been engaged in health ministries. Methodists in America founded scores of hospitals and clinics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Our missionaries have set up formal and informal health facilities and have launched medical education in many regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Advancing our health ministries with the poor in keeping with current health standards has been a goal at Global Ministries for at least two decades. This means updating existing facilities in Asia and Africa, organizing more health education, and increasing community-based health initiatives that stress prevention. Though United Methodists constitute only .002 percent of the world's population, as a global denomination we need to build closer ties with international governmental and nonprofit health programs. And we need to take our place at the tables where health policies and programs are planned.

FOCUSING ON MINISTRY WITH THE POOR

How will The United Methodist Church be changed—re-formed—by focusing on ministry with the poor? First, we must *study* the Bible more intently, recognizing the reality of poverty and the place of the poor in God's plan of salvation. Various study guides will be created during the quadrennium. Meanwhile each congregation can organize introductory courses using one of the four Gospels as the text.

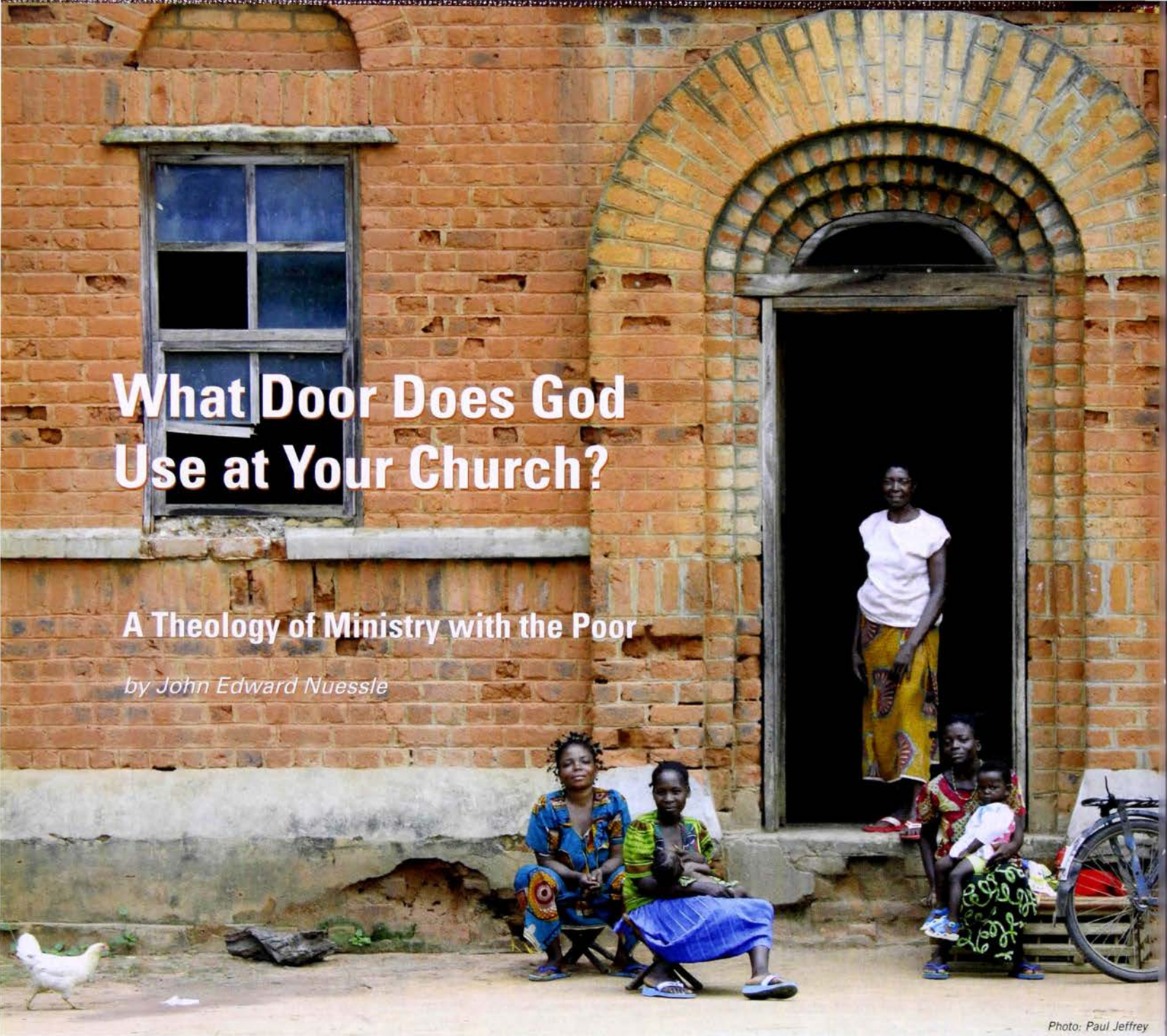
Second, we must take *action* based on our studies. The study of public education has led to much greater involvement of local churches and United Methodist Women's units in local action for high-quality schools. Study of interfaith issues leads to more contacts across religious lines. Study of poverty and the living conditions of the poor will motivate us to greater listening, acceptance, and service. Yet another type of action will be the development of more congregations within communities blighted by poverty and greater outreach to bring the poor into existing local churches.

Third, we must increase our social and economic *diversity.* Serious ministry with the poor will result in our membership looking more like the diverse human family, with people of many nationalities, races, ethnic cultures, and economic conditions working together to glorify God and make disciples for the transformation of the world. Many of the poor today are from racial and ethnic groups that have not been well integrated into society or our denomination.

Fourth, we must use our *resources* more responsibly. How much do we spend on non-necessities that we might otherwise use to serve the poor? That is a question that every individual, congregation, annual conference, bishop, and general agency should ponder in deep prayer. To hear, accept, and serve the poor will require us to change at least some economic habits. For example, could we adults stop the practice of giving our siblings and friends Christmas gifts they may neither need nor want and give the money to UMCOR for poverty ministries instead?

Fifth and finally, this heightened ministry with the poor will increase our *closeness to God.* Like Jesus, John Wesley understood that the poor have a preferential place in God's grace and that the community of faith has a duty to incorporate and assist them. We see Christ when we look at the faces of the poor. And John Wesley believed that the Methodist movement had a special responsibility to the poor as God's beloved. In accepting and serving the poor, we express our love for God.

The Rev. Ed Paup is General Secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries. (This text is excerpted from a speech originally delivered at the quadrennial training event for annual conference leaders, Jacksonville, Florida, January 31, 2009.)



What Door Does God Use at Your Church?

A Theology of Ministry with the Poor

by John Edward Nuessle

Photo: Paul Jeffrey

Patients wait at the doorway of the United Methodist hospital in Tunda, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

How does God get into your church? Through the front door, with the worshipers? Through the side door, leading to the food pantry? Is the church's front door open during the week? Is it not through the side door—or even the back door—that people enter for a community meeting or come looking for assistance? When God comes in the back door, is there a place to sit down and be received?

Finding God among impoverished communities happens when we offer hospitality to people. In their presence we see God, as in the story of the risen Christ, encountered but unrecognized by two followers on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32). It was in the hospitality of a simple meal that the disciples' eyes were opened to God's presence in Jesus.

The prophet Jeremiah understands that when we are present in impoverished communities, we encounter the divine presence. ("'Is not this to know me?' says the Lord." Jeremiah 22:16).

IMPOVERISHED COMMUNITIES

Poverty is not essentially a personal problem, though it may be a personal tragedy. At its heart and soul it is a socioeconomic and political problem—for communities as well as the whole world. So it requires socioeconomic and political solutions.

Poverty exists because of a breakdown in the cultural institutions that are required to care for the needs of all people in a particular society. It is a symptom of the worldwide economic realities that now impact every aspect

of human life. Communities most often become impoverished over long periods of time. Individuals who lack financial resources, and thus lack the basic necessities of life, may not necessarily be classified as "poor." Poverty is pervasive over time and generations and is community-based.

To eliminate poverty, the wider society—or perhaps the worldwide community of nations—must engage the impoverished community in economic development. Economic development begins when a community's leaders create the social infrastructure that enables and empowers people to care for one another. The church can be an essential institution in enabling the leadership development on which any socioeconomic and political solutions are based.

A Christian theological statement about poverty, with a call to be in ministry with the poor, has at least three theological doors, or perspectives. They are not mutually exclusive, but all indicate the direction in which the church needs to go to engage in ministry with impoverished communities in God's world.

WALKING WITH THE MARGINALIZED

Who are the poor? In biblical terms, they are the socially marginalized. They are those pushed to the edges of society, kept out of sight and out of the channels of power and resources that would enable them to live fully. Traditionally, the poor were widows (poor women without connections), orphans (poor children without connections), and sojourners (people outside their natural circles of support). The Scriptures state that the measure of community faithfulness is how the marginalized are cared for by the mainstream members of society. Conversely, the covenant is broken when the community does not care for the poor (cf. Jeremiah 22). In Ruth, chapters 1-4, Ruth and Naomi tell a story of such solidarity with the marginalized.

By being present in impoverished communities, we are open to the realities of life among those who live in poverty. We need to work from the bottom up—from within the context of the marginalized community—to understand and relate to what poverty really is. Beyond the lack of financial resources, poverty is a complex network of negative social relationships that cause individuals to be excluded from access to basic life services. To "hear the poor," we need to do more than open our church doors and welcome them into our midst. We need to go out and be in partnership with them in their own communities.

Mark 12:42-43 and Luke 21:2-3 tell of a widow making an offering at the temple. "A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then [Jesus] called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.'" She was unwilling to accept her poverty as the determinate factor in her life. She rose above her economic circumstances to be fully present to God.

Jesus pushed the edges of the mainstream community, widening it to involve foreigners, outcasts, women, and children. The widow's mite is a model of faithful discipleship by one outside society's power structure.

When there is an increasing gap between rich and poor, God is not pleased. The barometer for our faithfulness is how we care for the poor. This essentially involves a partnership with those oppressed by the political and economic systems of society.

Luke 6:20 reports: "Then [Jesus] looked up at his disciples and said: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.'" The Kingdom is essentially coming for the poor. By our solidarity with them, we have earned the right to join in the Kingdom celebrations.

Luke 14:13 advises: "[W]hen you give a banquet, invite the poor, the

Photo: Paul Jeffrey

A boy stands in front of government-constructed temporary housing for residents of Smokey Mountain, an impoverished area of Manila, Philippines.

crippled, the lame, and the blind." Luke 14:16-24 is a parable in which the invited wedding guests give excuses not to come. "Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.'" To proclaim the reality of the Good News is to seek out the marginalized of our world—not to wait for them, but to invite them into our lives. This is how we "hear" people who are trapped in impoverished communities.

John Wesley wrote of the spirituality of fasting as a benefit to those in need. By putting ourselves in a place of intentional scarcity, we are preparing ourselves to connect with those who fast involuntarily.

Jesus comments on the use of resources in Matthew 26:6-13 (and Mark 14:3-9, John 12:3-8). Upon seeing a woman anoint Jesus with a costly ointment, his disciples tell him: "[T]his ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor." But Jesus' response, "[Y]ou always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me," is a statement of solidarity more than a commentary about the use of wealth. In respectfully highlighting God's presence in the world, we give witness to God's power over the unhealthy powers of the political, social, economic, and ecclesiastical worlds.

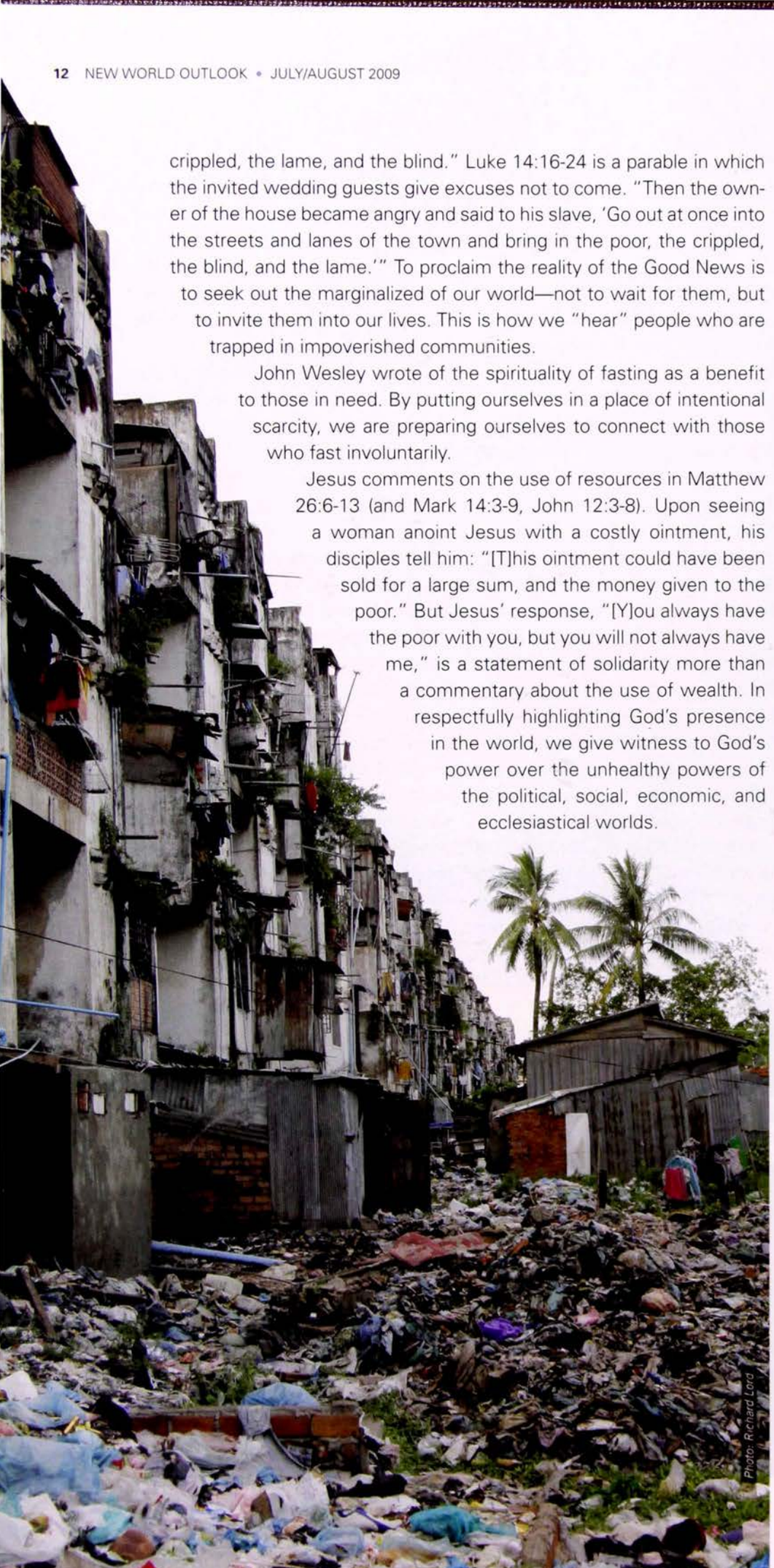


Photo: Richard Lord

MINISTRIES OF ADVOCACY AND ORGANIZATION

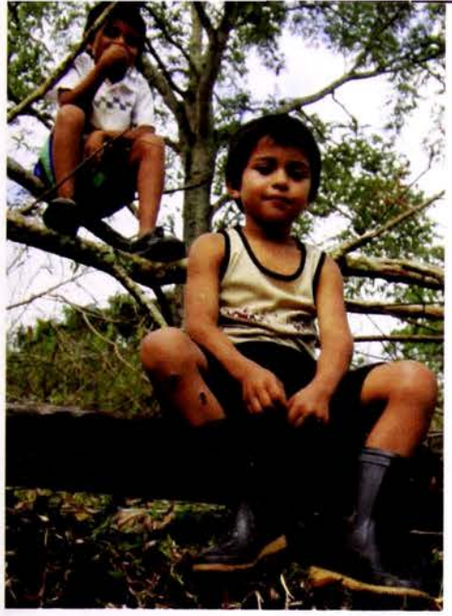
The church can make a significant contribution in impoverished communities by empowering individuals who live there to be in ministry in their own communities. Opening the doors of the church—both figuratively and literally—changes the way things work in the world. In effect, this changes the status quo from the inside, with the long-term benefit of enabling people to cope with the situations they face. The key is for the church to proclaim the Good News of abundant life among the poor and use its avenues to power to open doors for the marginalized.

Jesus' advocacy for the poor is stated in Luke 4:18a, where he quotes Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor...." God's spirit is with all those who proclaim Good News to the poor. By advocating for the poor, we place their lives at the center of the world's attention.

While not specifically related to the poor, the feeding of the five thousand (Luke 9:10-17) tells of a group whose members are empowered by using their own, seemingly meager, resources for everyone's benefit. Our advocacy for and with people in impoverished communities and our organizational work to bring about positive change lead us to fully comprehend the realities of living on the margin.

Nehemiah chapter 5 speaks of people rising up against oppression in their midst. With the power of God, people can move against oppressive powers that surround them and that keep them from achieving full and abundant lives.

Left: *An impoverished section of Boding in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.* ***Opposite Top:*** *Children and their families living in Matagalpa, Nicaragua, participate in economic development programs of Accion Médica Cristiana.* ***Opposite Bottom:*** *Through the AREGAK program in Armenia (acronym for "sun" in Armenian), this woman received a microcredit loan to start her own business, thereby increasing her income and standard of living.*



In the same way, in Matthew 11:5, while commenting on what his ministry evokes in society, Jesus states, "the poor have good news brought to them." The Good News is an empowering spirit that encourages people in poverty to embrace their own abilities and to question the systems that deny them abundance and keep them poor.

By working in impoverished communities to bring about real change in people's lives, we also engage with them in God's preferred world. In I Corinthians 1:27, we learn that "God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong." The poor have an inherent power before God, which they do not always perceive. It is a theological mandate for the church to proclaim this Good News to the poor and to the seemingly powerful world that oppresses them.

THE SHARING OF RESOURCES

The classic Christian response to poverty is for Christians to use the economic resources at their disposal to seek positive changes that affect the lives of the poor. To share what we have in a way that brings health and wholeness to God's people is an essential Christian ministry. Responsible consumption is at the heart of Genesis 1. The stewardship of "The Garden" involves caring for all the earth and all of its inhabitants. Wesley's great statement on Christian economics amounts to this: Make all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.

For those of us who are well off—and even in the current economic climate, that still includes most Americans in relation to the world community—what we do with what we have is of prime importance to our spiritual life. Luke 16:19-31 tells the story of a rich man in relation to poor Lazarus. Clearly, we will be judged by how we care for those in physical need. Sharing what we have is a theological issue more than merely an economic one. The Russian theologian Nikolai Berdyaev puts it most succinctly, saying: "The question of bread for myself is a material question, but the question of bread for my neighbors, for everybody, is a spiritual and a religious question....Society should be so organized that there is bread for all, and then it is that the spiritual question will present itself... in all its depth."

Jesus said to the rich young man in Matthew 19:21: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." Does all our wealth weigh us down, keeping us from being engaged with those in need? The rich young man was weighted down by the resources at his disposal, yet he could not bring himself to share them with the poor. Material wealth can be a major barrier to a full spiritual life. The sharing of all we have is at the core of being spiritually whole and becoming Christian disciples.

We care for God directly when we care for the poor. Writing from the crucible of a Nazi prison, Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated: "The church is the church only when it exists for others." This is the same theological principle that Jesus expressed in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46), by saying: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). The church is called to exist for others just as God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, came into the world for the sake of the whole world (John 3:16-17).

These are the spiritual and theological clarion calls to us as we seek to be in ministry with the poor in today's mission age. Our task is to bring a real message of hope for the people of the world, both rich and poor. We are called to be present with one another in new ways of incarnation—to be the Body of Christ with and for all people and communities.

How does the incarnate God enter your church? What doors are open to God who comes with and as the poor in our communities, in our nation, and in all nations of God's world? We must open the doors and welcome God by welcoming our sisters and brothers who come from impoverished communities. In this intentional action, we will all be enriched.

The Rev. John Edward Nuessle is an Assistant General Secretary with Mission Education, Evangelization and Church Growth, and Mission Contexts and Relationships. He's the author of Faithful Witnesses: United Methodist Theology of Mission.

Photo: Zaven Khachikyan

WHAT DO WE BRING TO THE TABLE?

An Activity on the Theology of Ministry with the Poor

by David Wildman

Illustration by Evan Polenghi

This simple exercise can be an effective consciousness-raiser. It demonstrates how easy it is for us to see the highly visible people who participate in society (the haves) and to overlook the virtually invisible people who do not (the have-nots). You will need a leader, a group of people, two active participants, and a sturdy table large and high enough for a person to lie under.

David Wildman is Global Ministries' Executive Secretary for Human Rights and Racial Justice.

Leader: To help us see what we can do to realize the goals stated in Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3-4, I need two volunteers. I would like Participant #1 to stand on top of this table. And Participant #2, would you please lie down underneath the table. Participant #1, take a look around the room and tell us what you see.

Participant #1: (Participant describes surroundings)

Leader: How does it feel to be standing up there?

Participant #1: (Participant responds)

Leader: As you look around the room, can you see everyone?

Participant #1: Yes.

Leader: Are you sure? *(Most volunteers will forget about Participant #2 under the table.)*

Participant #1: Oh, except for Participant #2.

Leader: Now, #1, how long have you been standing on top of the table?

Participant #1: About a minute or so.

Leader: Please do not take this personally, #1, but notice how easy it is to overlook someone who is under the table. This exercise has been done with many groups, and in almost every instance the person who stands on top of the table (whether young or old, male or female, white or black, rich or poor, conservative or liberal) forgets the other volunteer—the person under the table. We don't want to continue to overlook #2, however. So #2, will you please tell us what you can see.

Participant #2: (Participant describes view)

Leader: Can you see everyone in the room?

Participant #2: No.

Leader (to the whole group): Here are two volunteers who are both in the same room at the same time, part of the same group, yet they have different descriptions of what they see in this room. What makes for those differences?

(Group discussion)

Leader: I want us to keep the image of these two persons and this table in mind as we continue to study our ministry with the poor. This table exercise offers participants four guidelines for ways the church can act in relation to impoverished communities and to all the peoples in our world community.

1. We need to identify where each of us is located. In what ways have I experienced being on top of the table in my own life? Economically? Politically? Socially? When have I experienced being under the table?

2. What each of us sees and experiences in the world depends on where each of us is positioned.

   Ministry with the poor involves hearing and telling people's stories about being marginalized. It means being with the people under the table.

3. We all are positioned in relation to one another.

   This exercise helps us visualize and embody power relationships in our world community.

4. When we gather *around* the table, we move toward a more just and peaceful ordering of our world community.

   If the two volunteers in the exercise want to talk with one another, what might they do?

Now read Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) with someone on top of the table and someone underneath. Ask both to share how they felt listening to this text based on where they were. Discuss the ways in which God calls us to give special attention to the voices of the lowly—those persons and communities who are under the table in our world today.

Circles to Break the Poverty Cycle

by Mary Beth Coudal

At age 32, Sonia Holycross has "been there, done that"—lived in a broken home, joined a gang, acquired a rap sheet. But through the Circles™ Campaign,* Holycross, a single parent of five and now an Americorps volunteer, has patched her life together, becoming stronger in the broken places. "The Circles Campaign is like mending a broken foundation with fresh cement," Holycross says.

Sonia Holycross's family forms one of 13 Circles in Troy, Ohio, participating in a Circles Campaign through Partners of Hope, an outgrowth of the Troy Council of Churches. Two of the 16 churches of the council are United Methodist—First United Methodist Church and Richards Chapel.

The United Methodist Church will be launching a pilot ministry—like the one in Troy, Ohio—to target poverty on two sites in three North Carolina counties: Anson, Wilkes, and Yadkin. The General Board of Global Ministries, partnering with the denomination's Western North Carolina Conference, has set a goal to help 75 families climb out of the cycles of poverty that have affected them for two or more generations. Using the Circles™ poverty-elimination model and training developed by Move the Mountain Leadership Center in Iowa, Global Ministries is launching the first of five global models of ministry that seek to eliminate poverty. Global Ministries expects to launch four other models in different countries and settings around the world.

"Circles is a partnership that, from what I've seen, absolutely can eradicate poverty," says Jerald McKie, a Global Ministries' associate general secretary working with community and institutional ministries. "It isn't a sweeping program—it goes family by family. A family in poverty that lacks the means to change becomes a Circle leader. Three to four Circle allies support the family. The process calls for allies to give of themselves—sometimes through material giving but more often through sharing the access to resources that the middle and upper classes take for granted but that poorer people lack. This model in the Western North Carolina Conference will develop 25 circles in three parts of the conference, which is led by Bishop Larry Goodpaster. These three sites may become training centers for United Methodist community ministries in the rest of the United States."

The North Carolina sites were a good choice for the pilot program because United Methodist community networks already operate in the con-

Opposite p. 16, left: *Tiffany, Nancy, and Kelly form a Springfield, Ohio, Circle;* ***right:*** *Deborah Diggs, Cathy Zanon, Latoya Bagley, and Nick McCornish attend a Circles meeting in Columbus, Ohio.* ***Clockwise from upper left:*** *Circle leaders Scott McDonald, Tracie McDonald, Mike Lafoe, Asia Davis, and Sonia Holycross, in Troy, Ohio.* Photo: Allison DeHart. *Jessica and Chris are Circle leaders in Sedalia, Missouri; Circle leaders Kristin and Karin in Springfield, Ohio; Asia Davis (in white blouse) and allies (left to right) Karen Beagle, Shauna Jackson, and Doug Jackson in Springfield, Ohio.* Photo: Allison DeHart. *A Circles meeting at Broad Street Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio.* Photos Courtesy Move the Mountain Leadership Center.

ference. Global Ministries became involved in the campaign through one of its former directors, Dr. Alan Rice, director of Rural Ministry and Community Development and the RFD Community Development Corporation for the Western North Carolina conference. The Circles Campaign is set to become an integral part of United Methodism's churchwide antipoverty focus.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Sonia Holycross is a survivor of generational poverty, a kind of entrenched poverty that might take three and a half years to alleviate. Another kind, situational poverty, happens as a result of job loss or a medical emergency and can usually be alleviated in one and a half years, according to Circles research. The strategy behind the Circles Campaign is to empower and connect people living in poverty through the currency of social capital.

The term "social capital," first coined in 1961, refers to social relationships as a means through which individuals and groups can access resources from other classes or social networks. Anthropologists have studied the existence of social capital within cultures around the world.

"If we can learn to stay connected to others, especially when problems come up that we were taught to solve by ourselves (like problems with money), then we can solve the problems more efficiently, while keeping our sense of humor intact," says Scott Miller, co-founder of Move the Mountain Leadership Center.

IT'S WHO YOU KNOW

Those seeking a way out of the poverty cycle are the heart of the Circles Campaign. As Circle leaders, they are the hub of the wheel, the place from which new connections and directions can radiate. Circle leaders do research, identify roadblocks, and direct their family's movement away from the grasp of poverty.

Circle allies volunteer to provide support, opportunities for networking, references, and other forms of assistance to Circle leaders. Circle leaders participate in a 13-week training course, for which they receive a stipend; they learn how to assess their needs, develop goals, and acquire resources. Circle leaders then meet weekly with Circle allies and community members. Through support from Circle allies, attendance at training events, and

weekly meetings, Circle leaders are empowered to make changes and transform their own lives.

Successful Circle leaders become allies in other circles.

BREAKING OUT OF THE ISOLATION

Having to face any problem alone compounds its misery. The Circles Campaign encourages community members to empathize with one another, alleviating the isolation that can cause and perpetuate poverty.

In March 2009, Mike Inscore, Mayor of Wilkesboro, NC, attended a Circles Summit on Poverty and Suffering held in Conover, NC, and partially funded by Global Ministries. "During the presentation," he said, "I identified with those less fortunate and realized that, if not for the many adults who intervened in my young life to break my cycle of poverty, my level of success would have been far less." The mayor was among 300 North Carolinians who came to be trained as Circle allies, learning about the complexity and practicalities of living in poverty.

One exercise from the training that prompted lively discussion was the question of whether a middle- or upper-class person would have the resources or stamina to live in poverty. For example, the trainers asked, "Could you pack all your belongings and move to a new shelter in a matter of hours?" Most admitted they could not.

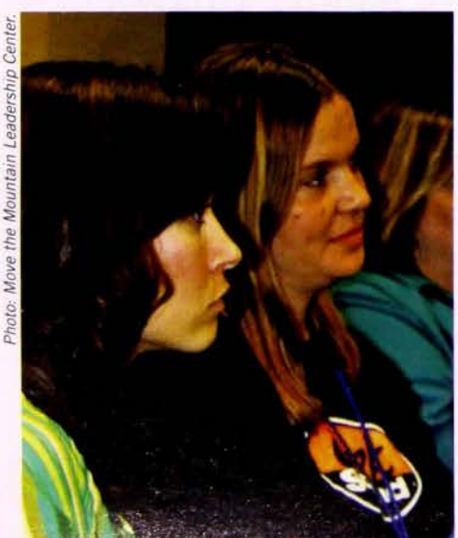


Photo: Move the Mountain Leadership Center.

Photo: Move the Mountain Center.

Circle assistants with participants' children in Springfield, Ohio.

When people become part of a group whose members care about one another, they feel less isolated and desperate. If people can get help from others in handling short-term challenges, such as transportation or child care, they have more time to pursue long-term goals. One way to solve entrenched problems is to ask other people for help or advice. As Sonia Holycross put it: "I wanted help. But being in poverty is like screaming in the middle of the ocean. You want to change, but you stay in the same situation. People in that situation are like crabs in a bucket—they pull each other down."

CIRCLE ALLIES

Circle allies contribute to their Circle leaders' lives by "journeying with" them, not "doing for" them. Those who live within middle- or upper-class communities have resources and social capital to spare and share.

Mary Beth Robertson of Troy, Ohio, was one of Sonia Holycross's four Circle allies. "When we went through the Bridges Out of Poverty training," Robertson said, "we allies were often told, 'You are not supposed to take on the role of authority or parent.' Even though I was told that, I thought, 'Surely they're mistaken.' But they were right. Sonia became my friend."

"Sonia and I are at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of socioeconomic perspectives," Robertson added. "Yet we have so many similarities. Our dreams, our sense of humor, even many of our life experiences are similar."

Holycross agreed. "We grew close," she said. "Her life has not always been easy. She's been, at times, a single mother. She and my daughter are very close." One of the Holycross children has chronic health problems. Robertson is helping the teenager manage pain by teaching her yoga techniques. Circle allies often work in surprising ways.

Another example of how allies contribute to the Circle is a used-car dealer who donated a car and mechanical servicing for two years so that a Circle leader did not have automotive concerns while gaining her foothold in society. "A lot of people get where they are because they know somebody," Holycross observed.

Shelly and Marlo attend a Circles meeting in Ohio.

THE ROLE OF CHURCHES

Circle leaders and allies create long-lasting relationships that help bridge the gap between the poor and the middle class. As Circle leaders and allies connect across the divide between them, they discover that they have a lot to teach each other. That discovery undercuts the prejudices and biases that they may have had about one another.

Churches often contribute space for weekly Circle meetings, and initial training often takes place in churches. In addition, church members can serve as Circle allies.

After a self-assessment, Partners of Hope discovered that, though it was helping people cope with poverty, it did not develop long-term relationships with clients to help them escape entrenched poverty and transform their lives. Allison DeHart convinced the board to launch the Circles campaign in 2007. "It's so simple and yet so profound," DeHart observed.

"In the past, through our other programs and outreach, we had brief encounters with people in poverty," DeHart continued. "But the Circle families are a part of our community, and we're a part of theirs. We've increased their employment, encouraged them to finish their secondary education, and helped empower them to get pay raises and GED degrees. But the biggest gain is in their social capital—the connections and community support that the Circle families have."

"The systems we have—governmental systems and even mercy ministries—don't eliminate poverty," Jerald McKie explained. "My hope would be to have a thousand families lifted out of poverty through the Circles Campaign and to have that accomplishment make some headlines—make a splash! I'm really impressed with the potential for transformation."

Scott Miller co-founded Move the Mountain Leadership Center with Dr. Ruby Payne. Dr. Payne is the author of books on the aha! Process of understanding poverty. The Circles Campaign came out of the founders' 30 years of experience working with the poor.

At the Summit in Conover, NC, Miller summed up the motivation behind the Circles Campaign in just five words: "Poverty is immoral and unnecessary."

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

CIRCLES™ Campaign Expanding

by Elliott Wright

Move the Mountain Leadership Center, the originator of the Circles™ Campaign, was organized in 1992 with a long-term grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. It was originally founded by Scott Miller and Ruby Payne. Miller continues as the director of Move the Mountain Leadership Center and Dr. Ruby Payne went on to found another corporation, the aha! Process, Inc. Move the Mountain, headquartered in Ames, Iowa, has the goal of helping people become economically self-sufficient and, thereby, eliminating poverty in the United States.

Circles has a network of 40 communities in 18 states, with relatively few in the Southeast. The North Carolina project is seen as a springboard for more Circles sites in that region.

United Methodists are involved or considering involvement in several other locales, including Syracuse, New York, where University United Methodist Church is a program center for a new Circles partnership with Housing Visions Unlimited, which itself grew out of the congregation.

Funds for the North Carolina pilot beyond what Global Ministries and the conference can provide are still being raised from foundations and church sources. A small staff is expected to be in place by July.

Elliott Wright is the information officer of the General Board of Global Ministries.

For more information about Move the Mountain Leadership Center, visit the website: www.movethemountain.org.

*Circles™ is a trademark of Move the Mountain Leadership Center.

THE HUNGER SEASON

Famine Looms Over Africa's Eastern Horn

by Christie R. House

The hunger season—that time that begins when all the stored grain has been eaten and continues until the new grain has been harvested.

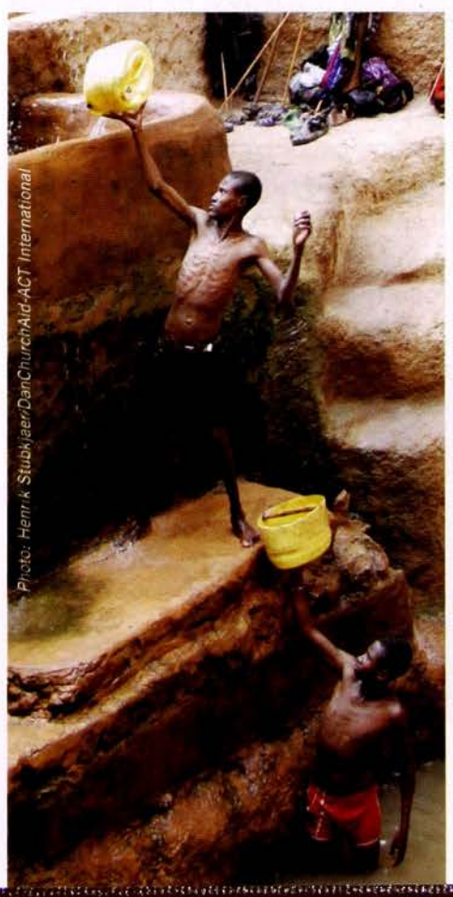
Kalthoma, a grandmother in Mandera, northeastern Kenya, lost her livestock to drought. Now she cares for her 10-month-old grandson in Mandera District Hospital, where he is being treated for ailments resulting from hunger and difficult living conditions caused by drought.

In the industrialized societies of most developed nations, the experience of a hunger season—a period when the entire population goes hungry—is an uncommon occurrence. But in much of the developing world, which still depends on subsistence agriculture and animal herding for food, this time of scarcity comes every year within the cycle of planting and harvesting.

At one time, the hunger season was a common human experience. In some regions of the world with temperate climates, planting and harvesting depend on temperature and seasonal changes. In other regions, the timing of rainy and dry seasons dictates what and how much is harvested. Certainly, indigenous populations the world over were familiar with this time of scarcity.

European settlers who came to the Americas also experienced hunger seasons. Much of a woman's life centered around how to get the family through the winter. Home activities of canning, drying, salting, and curing—skills that today are almost completely lost in the daily lives of Americans—filled the days of all family members, even into the 20th century, in the United States. Today, some women still carry on these traditions, but generally out of choice, not necessity. Industry now cans, cures, packages, and imports food, and eating is not considered a seasonal activity.

Yet, for much of the world, the hunger season still exists. For some regions, particularly in Africa, there can be more than one hunger season in any given year. In times of famine, the hunger season never seems to end. According to the United Nations and a number of international humanitarian agencies, the Eastern Horn of Africa is now headed for a long and devastating hunger season that has already begun.



Young men in Ethiopia work to extract water from a 400-year-old well for women to gather for their families and for cattle to drink. It is the only well within a 31-mile radius in an area that has had no rain for three years.

BEYOND THEIR CONTROL

John Holmes, who heads the United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), released an alert in September 2008. It warned of a severe famine that will put 17 million people living in the Eastern Horn of Africa including 3 million children, at risk of death by starvation. The nations affected by the famine are Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Kenya. "In the Somali region of Ethiopia, where the rains have failed for the third successive year," Holmes said, "people talk to me in desperation about the worst situation *since 1928*, when all of their livestock died." Most people living in this region are pastoral herders—no livestock, no food.

If the story of hunger and starvation in Ethiopia and Somalia seems familiar, it is because Africa's Eastern Horn has experienced many devas-

tating famines throughout the 20th century. The area no longer receives enough rain to support the farms and herds that its population needs to survive. But this year's famine stands out. For the first time, according to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), the food crisis in the African Horn is being driven by three external factors beyond the control of any of the affected nations.

FACTOR 1: DROUGHT

Drought is a major cause of the present emergency. Nomads with herds in rural Djibouti had adapted to dry seasons in their extremely arid environment. Today, however, pastures and water sources have dried up, stranding the herders around the few water sources that still exist. Their animals have died, they live in worsening sanitary conditions, and they lack transportation to get to the cities to find relief. They are literally sitting and waiting for a miracle.

In a recent interview, Bishop Stephen Kanyaru M'Impwii, of the Methodist Church in Kenya, reported: "Most everyone in Kenya is affected by the famine and the drought. It is very, very serious. Our president, Mwai Kibaki, has declared all of Kenya a disaster area. Because there was no rain, people have no food. Because they have no food, church

members have no money to support the church. Some of our pastors are going without salaries." As with most catastrophes, the famine affects the poor more than anyone else.

Though the rural areas are in desperate need, Bishop M'Impwii said, there is little relief in the cities. In Nairobi, Kenya's capital, people are going hungry. In the city slums, people living on the edge are not making it through the hunger season.

"You can go to Nairobi, where people are hungry, but nobody will know," said the bishop. "You can go to the slums of Kibera and Mandera, where people have no food and very poor housing. To make matters worse, a lot of parents have died of HIV/AIDS and left their children with their old grandmothers and grandfathers, who are not able to care for them."

Photo: Henrik Stubkjaer/DanChurchAid-ACT International

A woman stands in the entrance of the home she shares with her seven children. Because there has been no rain the cattle have starved to death and there is no milk and nothing to eat.

FACTOR 2: THE INCREASED PRICE OF FOOD

Another factor that has put the African Horn at risk is the downturn in the global economy. There has been a dramatic increase in the price of staple foods, especially grains and cereals, in the international market. This has affected East African nations' ability to buy food and has limited the international community's ability to provide relief. Cereals, which provide 70 percent of the food intake for the poor in the affected countries, are currently priced too high for the poor to afford. An August 2008 report released by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization tracked the rise in cereal prices for the five affected countries in the African Horn. While Eritrea had 45 percent and Kenya 80 percent increases, Somalia, with its hyperinflation, saw a 365 percent increase in cereal prices last year. The International Rescue Committee says that one reason for the increase in piracy off Somalia's coast is that people without food are desperate.

Given the rise in global food prices, the amount of grains and cereals that relief agencies can buy is much less than what they could provide with the same funding 18 months ago. US Aid reports that global food prices have risen 43 percent over the last three years. International aid agencies must ask donors to give almost twice as much to provide the same amount of food. This does not account for the increased needs of nations in distress, such as those in the African Horn. And the major donor nations, such as the United States, are now pumping billions of dollars into their own economies just to shore them up.

FACTOR 3: FUEL COSTS AND AVAILABILITY

All the countries affected by the impending famine import oil to transport food. When we were paying $4 per gallon for gasoline, transportation services in poorer countries simply stopped. Farm products did not get to market; fertilizer and seeds were not delivered for the next growing season. Although prices have fallen over the last year, the damage was done. Aid organizations are often prevented from delivering food aid because of disruptions in transportation, high fuel costs, and fuel unavailability.

When industrial fuels are unavailable or prohibitively expensive, local populations turn to a traditional fuel—wood. Overuse of wood leads to deforestation. Jerri Savuto, a United Methodist missionary serving at the Maua Methodist Hospital in Meru, Kenya, says: "We have cut down too many trees in our area since 99 percent of the population uses wood to cook. Our hospital kitchen uses wood because gas is too expensive. Most staff living on the compound, even those with gas or electric cookers, cook over wood; they feel the food tastes better. It is our prayer that there are enough trees left to bring us rain this year."

The Horn of Africa Food Crisis

Donations for the Methodist Church in Kenya for famine relief can be sent to UMCOR by using the International Disaster Response Advance #982450 and designating the gift for famine relief in Kenya.

Contact your congressional representatives and senators and urge them to support efforts to address humanitarian needs in the nations of the African Horn.

AID SLOW IN COMING

In general, when *New World Outlook* publishes a story about a crisis, we try to present the church's response with the hope that many victims will receive the aid they need. But it has been difficult to find that response in the Horn of Africa. Both the Methodist Church in Kenya and The United Methodist Church's East Africa Conference stand ready to distribute relief through their networks. UMCOR has agreed to send donations designated for the church in Kenya, using its International Disaster Response number, Advance #982450. But few Methodist networks exist in the other countries of the African Horn.

The lack of current news from these areas—other than Western news reports about attempts to crack down on Somali pirates—does not bode well. US Aid, the United Nations, and the IFRC all issued alerts a year ago predicting what would happen if the international community did not respond immediately to the threat of famine. But very little news coverage has been devoted to the affected populations. A paragraph from an IFRC report has stuck with me:

"In the past, the world has waited for graphic footage of starving African children to appear on the evening news before it reacted. The IFRC recognizes that, once again, millions of people are on the brink and [we] cannot allow that to happen again. The warnings are clear and action is needed now. Millions of people in the Horn of Africa are depending on our collective support." (Position Paper for IFRC Horn of Africa Food Appeal, September 2008.)

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

NO RAIN, NO WATER, NO FOOD

by Jerri Savuto

I am writing this email to ask you to continue your prayers for rain in Kenya. The lack of rain, the lack of water, and the lack of food are becoming more critical every day. We are admitting approximately 40 people a day to Maua Methodist Hospital. Half of them are babies or children who are suffering from malnutrition or starvation.

The number of people who are starving in Kenya seems to increase daily. Our pediatric ward continues to have so many starving, emaciated children admitted. A few weeks ago, I met a nine-year-old boy, Felix, admitted with severe TB. He weighed 20 pounds and was about three feet in length. He is mentally challenged. As I watched him struggle to breathe, I couldn't imagine what his nine years must have been like. How hungry, alone, and desperate he must have always been. I reached out, touched him, and smiled at him. His eyes met mine and his little face broke into a smile. He gained weight at the hospital and seemed to be doing much better, but he died after four days.

Martin is quite tall for a four-year-old, which means he had received food in the past. Now his family has nothing and he was admitted with malaria, pneumonia, severe anemia, and starvation. We can help these children recover from their illnesses and even gain weight, but then we have to send them home to the same situation. The hospital has started a program to send food home with families of children like this.

A recent copy of *Nation* (the major Kenyan newspaper) stated that it will be at least October 2009 before Kenya could have a good rainy season and a good crop (our next rainy season should be mid-March through May.) So many around us will not make it to the end of February—much less October.

We need your help. Please pray for us and please remember the hungry everywhere. You may not see them, for often they are invisible, but they are there, standing quietly, pleading with God to help them. I know God hears them.

Jerri Savuto and her husband, Bill Savuto, are United Methodist missionaries serving Maua Methodist Hospital in Meru, Kenya. The above stories are excerpted from their February and March 2009 newsletters to their covenant churches.

Support Maua Hospital by giving through the Advance • Maua Hospital Service Fund #09613A • Maua Hospital Maternal and Child Health Program #140159

Cattle carcases lie where once there was grass for grazing in El Wak, Mandera district, northern Kenya.

Photo: Kirsten Engebak/Norwegian Church Aid-ACT International

Photo: Rachael Barnett

The Millennium Develo

The United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration in 2000, a pledge by the international community to "spare no effort to free our fellow men, women, and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty" (Millennium Declaration).

The United Nations defined eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015—as a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions.

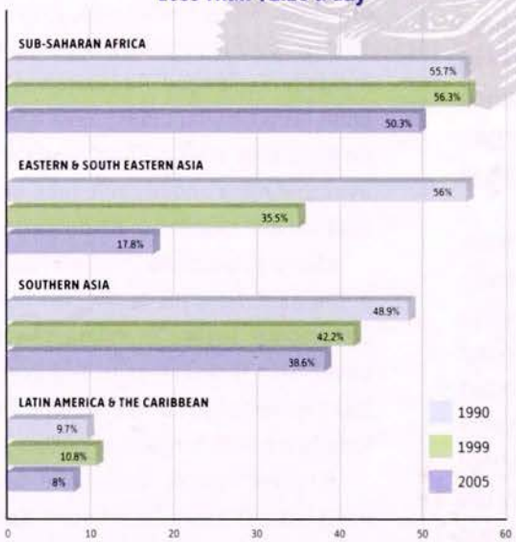
We are now more than half-way through the time period for reaching the Millennium Goals. How is the world doing?

GOAL 1: Poverty

Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

The World Bank's latest estimates show that 1.4 billion people in developing countries were living in extreme poverty in 2005.

Proportion of People Living on Less Than $1.25 a day



GOAL 2: Education

Ensure that, by 2015, children girls alike, will be able to com primary schooling.

Globally, 570 million children are in primary school enrollment in dev 88 percent on average, up from

Total Net Enrollme in Primary Educa

GOAL 6: Combat Dise

Have halted by 2015 and begun d of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of mala diseases.

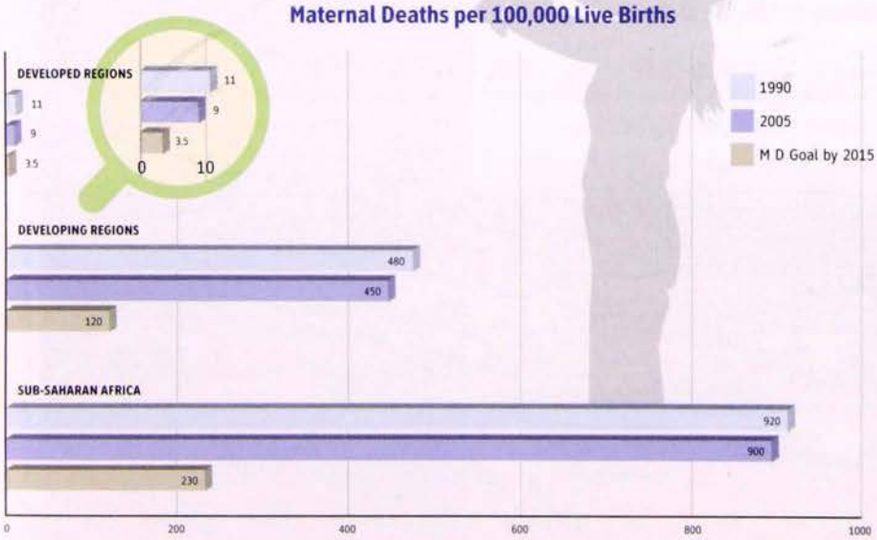
Every day, 5,500 die from AIDS. Gl million people were living with HIV/AIDS in 1 million people annually, 80 percent of wh e in sub-Saharan Africa.

GOAL 5: Maternal Health

Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

Estimates for 2005 show that, every minute, a woman dies of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth: 500,000 women annually.

Maternal Deaths per 100,000 Live Births



GOAL 7: Environment

Integrate the principles of sustainable developme into country policies and programs and reverse th losses of environmental resources. Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable acce to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Achie by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of least 100 million slum dwellers.

Some 1.6 billion people have gained access to safe drin ing water since 1990. At this rate, the world is expected meet the MDG target on drinking water. But about 1 bil lion people still do not have access to safe drinking wa and 2.5 billion lack access to basic sanitation services

NEW WORLD OUTLOOK • JULY/AUGUST 2009 24–25

ent Goals

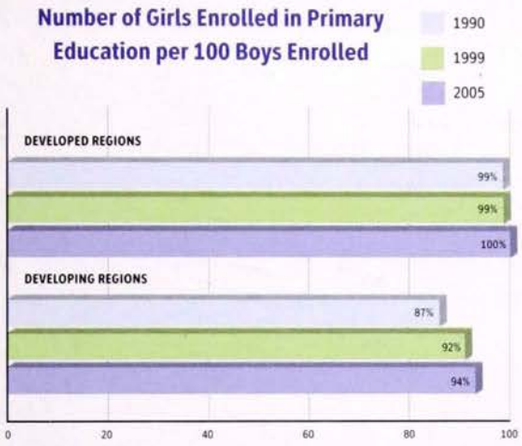
Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

GOAL 3: Gender Equality

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015.

Girls account for 55 percent of the out-of-school population.

Number of Girls Enrolled in Primary Education per 100 Boys Enrolled

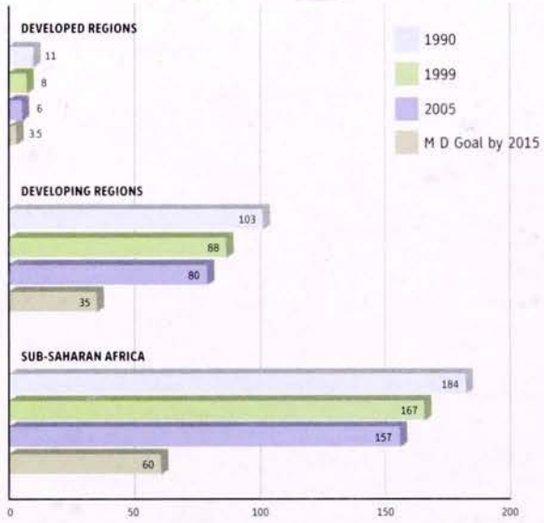


GOAL 4: Child Mortality

Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for about half the deaths of children under five in the developing world.

Under-Five Mortality Rate per 1,000 Live Births



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Sh lder the Burden for Co cting Water

an Girl Boy

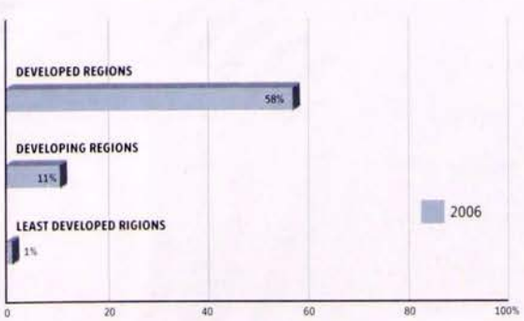
Photo: Paul Jeffrey

GOAL 8: Global Partnership

In partnership, wealthy countries working with developing countries can create an environment in which rapid, sustainable development is possible.

Official development assistance (ODA) continued to drop from an all-time high of $107.1 billion in 2005, to $103.7 billion in 2007. Aid flows need to increase by $18 billion per year to meet the promise made by the G8 in 2005 of doubling aid by 2010.

Who Has Internet Access?



Goals and their target figures come from the Millennium Development Goals website: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals. Statistics for the charts come from the Millennium Development Goals Report 2008 (found online at http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel/pdf/newsroom/MDG%20reports/MDG_Report_2008_ENGLISH.pdf).

**"Developed regions" in these charts refer to North America (with the exception of Mexico), Western Europe, Scandinavia, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. "Developing regions" include Latin America, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and most of Asia.*

Photo: John Gordon/UMNS

AVIATION MINISTRY

by Stephen Quigg • Photos by Paul Jeffrey

The world's biggest head of broccoli—that's what my passengers saw when they first looked down on the canopy of virgin rainforest covering much of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The forest, stretching for hundreds of miles across DR Congo's equatorial belt, is huge by any standards. Over the remoter parts, one could easily fly for more than an hour without seeing a single road, clearing, river, or house—nothing but thick, deep, impenetrable forest.

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airplane land.

Welcome to the world of the United Methodist Church of Central Congo. To be sure, only 30,000 square miles or so of the Central Congo Conference are covered by rainforest. The other three-quarters of the territory is a mixture of undulating savannah, patchy forest, and meandering river. If you looked long and hard enough, you could spot several hundred villages, a few sprawling towns, and even a city or two of notable size. But outside the limits of those cities, the number of miles of paved road could be counted by a competent first grader. That is as much a significant problem as it is a relevant symptom of underlying issues.

A MISSION OF ACCESS

One of the most incongruous sights in that expanse of wilderness is the arrival of a single-engine Cessna aircraft with the church's Cross and Flame symbol emblazoned on its tail. United Methodist planes have been flying in the Congo since the early 1960s. But even now, the sound of an airplane overhead is a siren call for a crowd of onlookers to gather at the airfield. And why not? The plane's arrival is bound to be the most exciting thing that happens all day, or perhaps all week. There will undoubtedly be mail from friends and family. There might be a new professor arriving to teach at the seminary. A sick relative might be coming back from the hospital, or maybe visitors are arriving from the United States.

Often the plane brings supplies for the school and medicines for the hospital. Sometimes there are even long-awaited salaries finally making their way into the bush. Regardless of what comes in on the plane, its physical presence is a reminder that there is an outside world beyond the confines of the village—the reassurance that, if things get really bad, there is a way out.

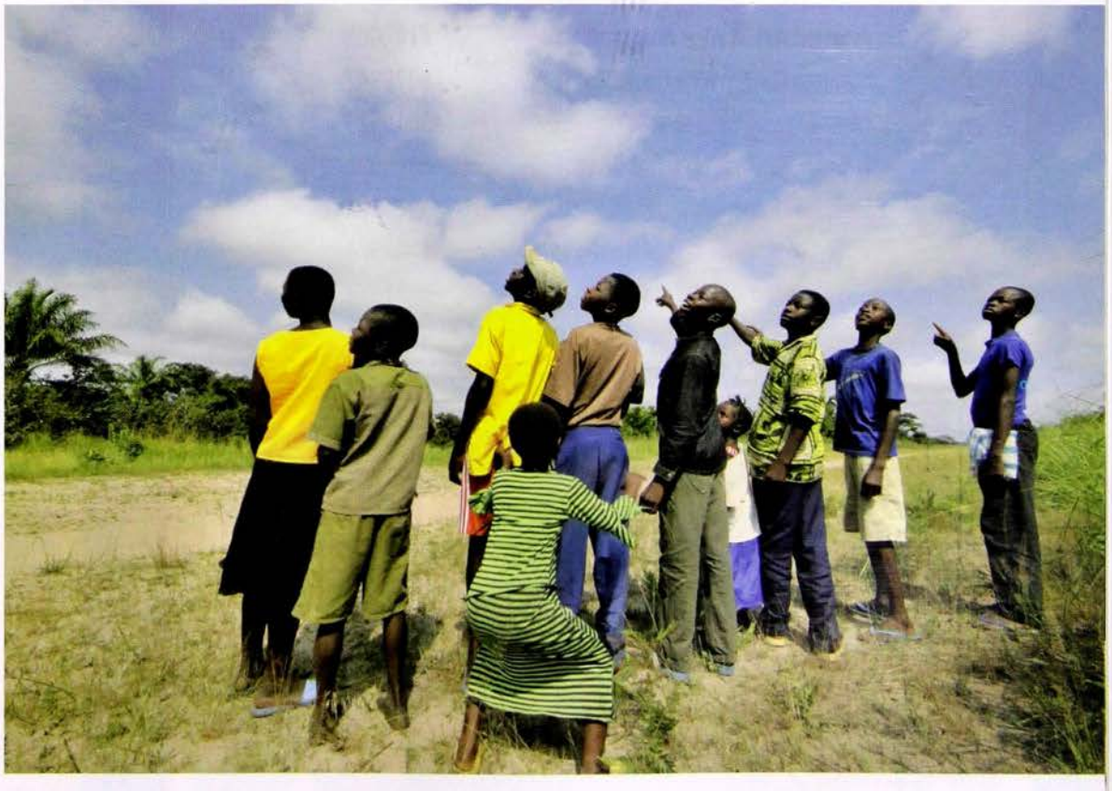
However, the most important thing that arrives in the plane is not in the cargo pod, the mail sack, or the passenger compartment. It is the person at the controls. Out of every United Methodist aircraft operating in DR Congo will emerge a Congolese United Methodist pilot. To a villager, that pilot is "hope" personified. In the African context, no professional—be it a doctor, lawyer, banker, or engineer—is held in higher esteem than a pilot. To a life lived in the midst of despair, nothing speaks hope louder than seeing one of your own walking down the path wearing a pilot's shirt with captain's bars.

LIVING IN ISOLATION

If you're reading this while sitting in a comfortable chair in the midst of Western society, there is little chance that you could even begin to comprehend what it means to live in an isolated village in DR Congo.

Still, perhaps a few illustrations might provide some insight into life in DR Congo's vast interior.

- Flying over a small village, you realize that a simple case of appendicitis is a death sentence—the nearest surgical care being days away.
- Taking one of our planes on a 90-minute, 200-mile flight to bring a driver to a town where he'll take delivery of a Toyota SUV, you know that, if all goes well on the return drive, he'll average only 20 miles per day, arriving home a full 10 days later.
- Knowing that the local doctor's wife and her four children—all under age 12—had to walk 200 miles through the forest in two weeks, with whatever they could carry on their backs, to escape the encroaching rebel army.
- Seeing a 100-pound sack of newly harvested rice sell for as little as $1 in the



Opposite Top: *Jacques Umembudi Akasa, a United Methodist missionary pilot for Wings of Caring Aviation, flies a plane over the Congo from Tunda to Kanaga.*
Opposite Portrait: *Gaston Ntambo, missionary pilot for North Katanga.*
Right: *Youth watch a United Methodist airplane land.*

The Aviation Resource Department

A unique feature of the United Methodist Aviation Ministries' (UMAM) work in the DR Congo is this: the programs are completely nationalized. Although the aviation ministries started out as missionary endeavors of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church of the DR Congo fully supported the early missionary efforts and worked toward national staff involvement. Today, the Congolese UMAM staff brings an entirely Congolese flavor and effectiveness to its work.

However, Western missionary pilots typically brought with them large support networks formed through the contacts they made in the process of their technical training and their raising of funds for support. They could tap into those networks for technical advice, spare parts, special funding, and training. The Congolese pilots lacked a comparable support system until Global Ministries created the Aviation Resource Department (ARD) in 2001.

Today, advice about an engine repair is an email away. Video equipment is available for speaking at supporting churches. Spare parts are ordered at discount prices. Safety seminars are held on location. Operations manuals are available and in use. New safety equipment has been installed in the aircraft, and technical training is becoming a regular event. Steve Quigg is a Global Ministries' missionary who flew in Nigeria and DR Congo for 20 years. He helps to coordinate the ARD activities and manage the funds coming in through the Aviation Assistance Program Advance Special. The ARD support network includes a wide variety of friends and experts who believe in what UMAM is doing and want to ensure that it succeeds.

United Methodist Aviation Ministries—
Related Advance Projects

Aviation Assistance Program	#14260A
Stephen Quigg, ARD Coordinator	#07994Z
UMCOR Aviation Project	#3019626
Wings of Caring (Central Congo)	#08595A
Jacques Umembudi, Central Congo Pilot	#14020Z
Wings of the Morning – North Katanga	#08597A
Gaston Ntambo, North Katanga Pilot	#14177Z
Southern Congo Wings of the Morning	#08596A
(Rukang Chikomb, Southern Congo Pilot)	

To Give to the Advance: Make the check out 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 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.

village, you know it could have easily brought $50 in the city. However, the ferry broke down in the last decade, no trucks have passed through in years, the road has virtually disappeared, and the farmer has no means of getting produce to market. The goods in the city (cloth, oil, soap, matches, pots, shoes, kerosene) stay in the city. The foods grown in the country (rice, corn, sorghum, cassava) stay in the country.

- Hearing delegates to annual conference tell of walking a week each way to get to and from the 4-day event.

In the midst of all this, The United Methodist Church is alive—perhaps not always well, but definitely alive. Its pastors preach, teachers educate, doctors heal, and midwives bring new life into the world, even as its parishioners help usher the dying on to life eternal. In any village on a Sunday morning, the local church is the place to be. There is exuberance in the choirs' singing, joy in the women's dancing, and inspiration gleaned from the pastor's preaching. It is obvious that the Holy Spirit is moving in mighty ways.

Worship isn't limited by time; it simply lasts until it's over. While many Western churches wonder how to do worship and ministry without proper funding, many Congolese have found that a life stripped to its most basic form is where God and believers can experience the most precious and intimate fellowship.

Yet the context in which most Congolese United Methodists live and worship is incredibly difficult. Since most parishioners have little or no money, church offerings are pitifully small and pastors' salaries are proportionally minimal. Clergy have to make their living in some other way—most often as subsistence farmers—and be pastors as time permits. While church-sponsored clinics and hospitals may have qualified and caring personnel, supplying things as basic as a clean bed or a sterile bandage can be a real struggle.

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Children in the v

Teachers usually have classrooms, sometimes have chalk, rarely have desks, and never have textbooks. Their government-paid salaries are equally rare, so parents typically scrape a few dollars together to supplement the teachers' income to keep them in the classroom instead of out on a farm.

SCARCITY IN THE LAND OF PLENTY

Tragically, the poorest of the poor in DR Congo live in the midst of incredible wealth. A list of the country's major resources is like a shopping list of some of the world's most sought-after assets. DR Congo boasts enormous reserves of copper, diamonds, cobalt, uranium, gold, tin, coltan (colombo-tantalite ore, an essential ingredient in cell phones), timber, wildlife, and hydroelectric power. So, if it has such world-class resources, why isn't Congo a world-class country?

There is more than enough blame to go around. Colonialism, years of rule under a ruthless dictator (Mobotu Sese Seko), local warlords, well-intentioned but poor-performing aid agencies, greedy multinationals, invading armies—all played a part in DR Congo's poverty today.

By contrast, the three Congolese pilots of the United Methodist Aviation Ministries are doing their best to change what they can. Jacques Umembudi, Gaston Ntambo, and Rukang Chikomb continue a proud tradition started by missionary pilots nearly five decades ago—ministering to the needs of the Congolese people.

THE PATH TO INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

Following World War II, thousands of military pilots and airplanes entered the civilian world. It wasn't long before missionaries realized what invaluable assets they represented. Planes were soon showing up all across the mission world, transforming once arduous travel into relatively short and simple flights. Methodist missionaries in Congo were among the early users of the new technology, and Methodist aviation ministries were quickly established and expanded in order to serve all of the Congolese church areas.

Unfortunately, two Methodist pilots, Burleigh Law and Stan Ridgeway, were martyred by rebels during the country's frequent uprisings, and rarely did a decade go by without a notable crash or two. Yet, in spite of the risks and challenges, Congolese youth started dreaming about becoming a church pilot.

Umembudi, Chikomb, and others began to work in the mission hangars. Their hard work won the approval of missionary pilots and church leaders. When the time was right, they traveled to the United States to earn their pilots' and mechanics' licenses.

Today, the entire United Methodist aviation ministry in the DR Congo is run completely by Congolese. Only a handful of church aviation ministries in the world can make that kind of claim. For The United Methodist Church in the DR Congo, it is a matter of intense pride and empowerment.

Children in the village of Luena, in the DR Congo, pretend to fly after observing a Wings of Morning airplane.

Left: *Steven Quigg makes adjustments to an airplane.* ***Center:*** *Pilot Jacques Umembudi Akasa works on a Wings of Caring Aviation plane in Kananga, Congo.* ***Right:*** *Stephen Quigg consults with Jacques Umembudi Akasa in the cockpit during a flight from Kananga to Kamina, DR Congo. (Paul Jeffery sits in the back seat.)*

NAVIGATING THE DR CONGO

As desperate as life may be in the Congo, money isn't a simple answer to the problem. The country is littered with the carcasses of projects deserted or gone bad. Sometimes the infrastructure became so broken that projects couldn't be adequately sustained. Sometimes, too, a project succeeded while a well-connected missionary was in charge, but there wasn't enough support or enthusiasm in-country to keep the project going when the missionary left. And sometimes the project fell victim to the old Congolese truism that any "successful" endeavor will be taxed or harassed into unprofitability by the local authorities.

What the church needs more than money are the prayers, involvement, and encouragement of faithful Christians across the broader connection who can provide a hand-up and not just a handout. Yet, without outside financial assistance from friends and supporting churches, the ministries would shrivel up and die.

Meanwhile, The United Methodist pilots more than hold up their end of the bargain, doing their own repair work and maintaining their aircraft to professional standards. They deal with daily hassles from government and local airport authorities looking for creative ways to tax or fine them. They take tropical thunderstorms and challenging radio communications in stride. They negotiate with villagers for airfield repairs and are consummate diplomats when dealing with too many passengers and too much baggage for almost every flight. They maintain relationships with US churches a world away and converse in at least five languages with their constituencies on any given day. The development of a new generation of church leaders like them pays dividends long after the latest and greatest aid project is reclaimed by the jungle.

The building of relationships with churches, individuals, and businesses that can invest training, prayer support, and equipment, is truly the order of the present day.

Why do these pilots serve the church so faithfully when they receive plenty of lucrative job offers from commercial airlines? They do it for their love of the Lord and the people. While United Methodist pilots in the Congo won't solve all the woes of their country or their church by themselves, it is certain that those problems won't be solved without them.

Stephen Quigg is a United Methodist missionary serving as coordinator of the Aviation Resource Department of the United Methodist Aviation Ministries. He served as a missionary pilot in the DR Congo and earlier in Nigeria for a total of 20 years.

UNITED METHODIST AVIATION: RAISING UP LOCAL LEADERS

by Rukang Chikomb

Better than doing something for other people is empowering them to do the job themselves. Congolese pilots are now serving their own communities—leading the way into the future.

I grew up and went to school in Kapanga at the United Methodist mission station. I remember how I used to go to the airstrip to help fill the holes in the dirt runway left by children digging for crickets. It was important to smooth out the surface for the next plane. In return, the missionaries paid for my school fees. I remember all of us praying for a patient who was being loaded into the plane by the pilot to be flown to the hospital in the big city of Lubumbashi.

Today, I am blessed to be the pilot doing that same mission work. I fly those patients, as well as medicines and church leaders, to and from the villages. It is a blessing to have become a church leader serving in the Aviation Ministry of The United Methodist Church.

Rukang Chikomb is a United Methodist pilot in Southern Congo Conference, DR Congo.

missionmemo

Global Ministries Board of Directors Meeting
April 27-29, 2009, Stamford, Connecticut

On April 29, directors of the General Board of Global Ministries approved recommendations for a restructure plan that will redefine program areas, restructure staff groupings, and may lead to staff reductions and changes in how the mission agency is governed.

An organization audit conducted by an outside firm, Management Partners, Inc., based in Cincinnati, Ohio, was discussed in executive session and approved by the board of directors. Since the April meeting, several task forces have been established to work on restructure plans and develop a new theology of mission statement. The current mission statement was approved and adopted in 1986.

Roland Fernandes, general treasurer of Global Ministries, presented the treasurer's report, which highlighted unrealized losses for investments and trusts totaling $23.5 million. Collins Pension and health plans administered by the board for retired missionaries dropped by $53.3 million, $25.9 million of that being unrealized losses.

Directors of the Women's Division approved a proposal to transfer oversight of United Methodist Women-supported national mission institutions, relationships with international partners, and regional missionaries from various Global Ministries units to the Women's Division. The Women's Division will also assume responsibility for the administration and funding of the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner.

The Rev. Edward W. Paup, Global Ministries' General Secretary, described the new structure as more flexible and better aligned with the realities of the church today. "Finances played a part in the decision to consider a reordering of our work, but thinking had been going in this direction for some time before the current global economic downturn. We want to be more effective and efficient in doing God's mission in the world," he said.

Earlier in the year, Global Ministries announced that it was cutting $4 million, or 7 percent, from its 2009 operating budget, which now stands at $53,683,921. Roland Fernandes reported that Global Ministries is increasingly dependent upon World Service funds, given the dismal performance of investments over the last year.

Also in this April session of the board of directors, the final report of the Independent Panel for the Review of Child Abuse in Mission Settings was received and embraced by Global Ministries' directors. The final report is available to the public and can be obtained from the Child Protection and Community Assistance Officer, 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 1549, New York, NY 10115, or by calling 212-870-3833, or emailing jreich@gbgm-umc.org. For a PDF version, visit http://new.gbgm-umc.org/about/globalministries/childprotection/finalpanelreport/?search=Child%20Abuse2 to download a copy.

DEATHS **Thomas Austin**, retired missionary with 3 years of service in the United States, died October 24, 2008...**Ivar Wang Jansen**, retired missionary with 11 years of service in Zimbabwe, died December 4, 2008...**Eleanor Heath**, retired missionary with 12 years of service in Brazil, died December 16, 2008... **Charlotte Janousek**, retired missionary with 7 years of service in Liberia, died May 1, 2008...**Vivian Woodyard**, retired missionary with 19 years of service in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria, died March 12, 2009...**Carlisle J. Phillips**, retired missionary with 35 years of service in China, died March 25, 2009...**Bienvenida Figueroa**, retired missionary with 1½ years of service in the Dominican Republic, died March 22, 2009...**James A. Morriss**, retired missionary with nearly 6 years of service in Bolivia, died March 31, 2009...**Samuel R. Smith**, retired missionary with nearly 5 years of service in Liberia, died April 2, 2009... **Edwin Temple**, retired missionary with nearly 11 years of service in Malaysia, died April 21, 2009.

Doris E. Hess, died January 13, 2009. After applying to the United Methodist Women's Division in 1951, she was sent to the Philippines as a missionary journalist to serve at Union Theological Seminary for literature and literacy work. Ms. Hess served as a Global Ministries executive for 26 years with the Women's Division and the former World Division.

Despite the Bad Economy, Refugee Programs Must Not Waiver

by Erol Kekic

The UMCOR Refugee and Immigration office works with Church World Service to find United Methodist congregations that are willing to assist refugee families with resettlement in the United States. UMCOR also provides funding and other kinds of emergency and relief support for refugee populations around the world.

The United States refugee program is based on early self-sufficiency for refugees who are resettled to the United States. The program supports newly arrived refugees with basic services for a limited time, expecting that they will find work and be paying their own way within a few months.

The program helps restore refugees' self-reliance and dignity by offering them the opportunity to become productive members of their new communities, earning their living and supporting their families. Employers benefit from their refugee employees' diversity and strong work ethic.

But in today's economic recession, refugee newcomers are having a harder time finding jobs, especially jobs that pay enough for them to cover the rising cost of rent and other living expenses.

Colleagues at local resettlement agencies are putting in more hours than their government contracts will reimburse to accompany their clients on more interviews with increasingly far-flung employers.

In addition, as months pass and refugees' modest "start-up" assistance runs out, growing numbers of them have no choice but to turn to their resettlement agencies and congregational cosponsors for extra help with such essentials as rent, utilities, and food. Their hosts must stretch their limited resources even further to cover these extraordinary needs.

WE MADE A COMMITMENT

Should the US government reduce or suspend its refugee program until the economy improves? Allow me to answer that question this way. The US refugee program is a rescue operation. Refugees are counting on us to save their lives. We must not waiver in our commitment to them.

No one can tell me we do not have enough money to extend safety and a new chance for life to refugees such as the following.

"A" is the sole support of her parents and two children. After being raped by her country's military and barred from work because of her ethnicity, she paid traffickers to take her to a neighboring country where a job was promised. The traffickers raped her on the way. She ended up in a makeshift jungle camp. The "host" country's police raided the camp, arrested her, and she was raped again. "I want to die," she says. "I'm just staying alive for my family."

"B" refused to join a local paramilitary force because he didn't want to hurt other people. "One day," he said, "they decided that because I wouldn't join, I had to leave town or they would kill me. They took me to a soccer field and cut me with a machete—all over my body, my hands, my face. I believed that they were going to kill me." He fled to a neighboring country.

"C" escaped her violence-torn country after her life was threatened because she was the "wrong" religion and ethnicity. This mother of four, now living in a refugee camp, says, "I was a respected high school teacher back home. Here, I have been turned into a fugitive. At any moment, I can be arrested for not having valid residency papers and detained or deported."

These refugees and hundreds of thousands more are in urgent need of protection. Their very lives are at stake. We cannot tell them to wait a few years until the economy improves.

WORLD POVERTY DEEPENS

I do not take lightly the deep, widespread economic distress in US communities and households. It will take both public and private resources to get us through this crisis—both government measures and extra-generous private donations to emergency food pantries, for example. The US refugee program, by design a public-private partnership, also will require extra resources, both public and private, to weather the recession.

Photo: Paul Jeffrey, ACT International

Opposite: *A Pakistani girl whose family has been displaced by fighting between the Pakistani military and the Taliban.* Photo: Ghulam Rasool CWS/ ACT International. ***Above:*** *In Goma, D.R. Congo, a woman cleans up after cooking a meal for her children. Her family has been displaced by fighting between the Congolese government and rebels loyal to Tutsi General Laurent Nkunda.*

For its part, as a global humanitarian organization working to end hunger, Church World Service (CWS) recognizes the recession as a global emergency that is leading to a deepening of poverty in the United States and around the world. CWS is challenging The United Methodist Church and its other members and supporters to respond generously as it targets resources to people most in need.

The CWS Immigration and Refugee Program, together with its participating denominations, member congregations, and local resettlement affiliates, already mobilizes massive private resources to help new refugee arrivals. Now we are seeking additional contributions to keep our refugee neighbors from falling into hunger and homelessness.

But the private sector cannot tackle this daunting task alone. The public sector must also do its share. CWS and other agencies are pressing their federal and state government partners to increase support for refugee resettlement and to adopt reforms that will strengthen the US refugee program for the long term. Our program's heart is in the right place, but the program needs restructuring as a whole after 30 years. In the meantime, I urge you to think creatively about ways to assist refugee newcomers now.

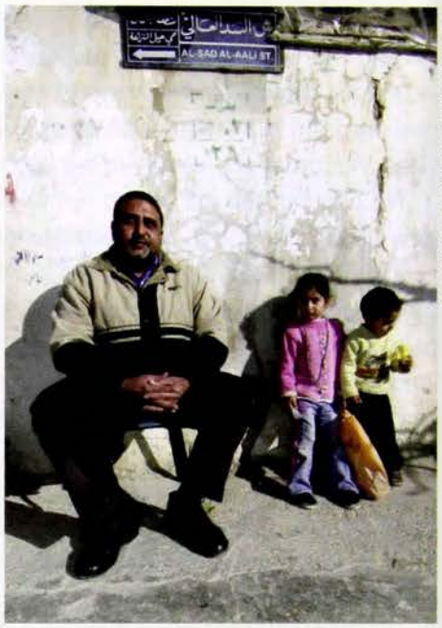

Photo: Phil Sands, Church World Service

An Iraqi refugee in Amman, Jordan, sits outside the CARE International aid office.

The US refugee program has survived previous recessions, waves of xenophobia, and attacks from anti–immigrant groups. It will survive this difficult recession too—and will be stronger and better for it.

Erol Kekic is the Director of the Immigration and Refugee Program at Church World Service. Founded in 1946, Church World Service is a cooperative ministry of 35 Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations. This article first appeared in the February-March 2009 edition of Welcome, *the CWS Immigration and Refugee Program Newsletter. The free newsletter is available on the Church World Service website, http://www.churchworldservice.org. Click "CWS in Action" from the top navigation bar and then click "Assisting Refugees" in the left-hand column.*

Verronica Kanane, age 75, takes refuge in a displaced persons camp in Nzulu, Eastern D. R. Congo.

Responding to Refugees in Need

For more information about refugee populations in the United States, ways in which United Methodists are helping refugees, and refugee resettlement possibilities for United Methodist churches, contact:

Naomi Madsen
Refugee and Immigration Ministries UMCOR
475 Riverside Dr., Rm 330
New York, NY 10115
212-870-3807
Email: NMadsen@gbgm-umc.org

Ways to support United Methodist refugee ministries through The Advance:

New Hope for Newcomers—Advance #901779
Supports refugee resettlement in the United States.

Refugee Response—Advance #982540
Assists refugees and internally displaced people around the world and responds to refugee needs as they arise.

US Resettlement Professionals Visit Refugee Camps on Thailand-Myanmar Border

Burmese demonstrators in the United States march to free the Burmese populace from an oppressive military government and to free Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League Democracy, who has been imprisoned or under house arrest since 1990.

Elizabeth Smith, Church Cosponsor Developer for PARA Refugee Services in Grand Rapids, Michigan, said a trip to the Thailand-Myanmar [Burma] refugee camps deepened her understanding of what a huge leap of faith refugees make when they sign up for resettlement. "They are not coming for economic reasons," Smith said. "They are coming because this is life."

When people point out that the United States is in tough economic times and ask, "Why are we bringing more people over?" her response is: "It's because there are no other options for these people. Regardless of whether they are from Burma, or Iraq, or Rwanda, they are grateful for the opportunity to resettle, but there's still a deep grief that they are not able to go home."

Smith urges Americans not only to volunteer with refugee resettlement ministries but also to press for a resolution to situations of conflict and oppression so that refugees can go home. "Write your members of Congress. Join an online advocacy group," she says.

Debra Virgo, Church Cosponsorship Developer for the InterFaith Works of Central New York Refugee Resettlement Program in Syracuse, agreed. She says, "I used to think resettlement would reduce the number of people in the camps. I learned there are as many people now as when the resettlement began. It seems the camps will remain as they are until there is a new government in Burma [Myanmar]."

Church World Service organized the October 2008 visit for staff members from five of its local refugee resettlement affiliates. They visited Karen people and other Burmese refugees now living in the Mae La Camp. They also met in Bangkok with staff of the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration, and the International Rescue Committee—each with its own role in refugee protection.

The trip offered the opportunity to talk both with refugees who want to resettle to the United States and those who have chosen to wait in the camps in hopes of an eventual return to Burma. "The camps are just across the river from Burma," Smith noted. They are just five miles from home.

But camp life means dependence on external food aid and lives of limited opportunity and mobility. And the decades-old oppressive regime the Burmese refugees fled appears unlikely to change anytime soon, leading some to see no choice except third-country resettlement.

"It was helpful to hear people talk about their decisions to stay or go and about the things they would be missing," said Heather Gomez, Sponsorship Developer for the Refugee Resettlement Program of the Virginia Council of Churches in Richmond. "The most important things are community and culture. How can I help provide community and culture for the ones who end up here in Richmond?"

"Those of us who work with refugees have to have performance standards and measures," Gomez continued, "usually based on self-sufficiency, but we don't measure 'Are you happy?' What can we do to make that a higher score for them?"

When people leave home for a refugee camp in another country and then undergo third-country resettlement, they must adjust to separation from their extended families and friends—and also contribute to their support, observed Samantha Briggs, Program manager at Exodus Refugee/ Immigration, Inc., in Indianapolis, Indiana.

"Our resettlement program is so focused on self-sufficiency through employment, but there is also much need back home," Briggs said. "Our refugee clients say, 'How can I eat a full meal here every day when my parents eat well only once a week?' They get jobs and earn money—but they send the money back home. If the refugees never settle themselves, they won't be able to help their families long-term."

The five affiliate staff members were accompanied by CWS's Immigration and Refugee Program Director Erol Kekic, and Associate Director for International Programs, Geraldine Owens. They were hosted by staff of the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium.

This story first appeared in the January 2009 edition of CWS Immigration and Refugee Program's Welcome newsletter. It is adapted and reprinted by permission.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF MALARIA AND POVERTY

by Margo Jacobs

Photo: Mike DuBose/UMNS

Malaria kills. It kills a child every 30 seconds in sub-Saharan Africa, and those that die are disproportionately poor. The anopheles mosquito that spreads this deadly, but preventable, illness does not distinguish between rich and poor. But the difference between life and death often depends on one's environment and ability to get treatment very soon after falling ill.

Mosquitoes breed in standing water, enter homes without screened windows, and bite children and adults unprotected by bed nets. The malaria they transmit may kill those who are not able to get immediate treatment—especially children and pregnant women. Ray Chambers, United Nations Special Envoy for Malaria, notes that if treatment for a child with malaria is delayed by more than 30 hours, there is a 90 percent likelihood that the child will die. Families living in poverty or in outlying rural areas may not be able to get the immediate care necessary to save their children.

When members of an already poor family seek medical attention or miss work because of illness, the family sinks even deeper into poverty. This is the poverty-malaria-poverty cycle that The United Methodist Church is working hard to end through its Global Health Initiative and its programs in Africa. Malaria costs the continent of Africa an estimated $12 billion each year in lost productivity and high medical costs. Imagine how many families those billions could pull out of poverty.

AN URBAN SNAPSHOT

The city of Abidjan in northwest Africa is a thriving metropolis in Côte d'Ivoire. Abidjan, a cultural center, is known for its high level of industrialization and urbanization.

Yet, in the poorest neighborhoods, stagnant water from overflowing sewers pools in low-lying areas—a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes carrying malaria. Bulldozing the areas where these stagnant ponds develop is costly and drains a community's resources, especially during the rainy season. Families too poor to move or to improve their communities are trapped in high-risk environments where malaria and other diseases run rampant.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Many people in sub-Saharan Africa contract malaria as often as Americans catch a cold. In a malaria-education workshop in Zing, Nigeria, participants were surprised to learn that malaria could actually be prevented. They saw it as common and inevitable.

In some areas of Côte d'Ivoire, people still hold mistaken beliefs about malaria—that it caused by witchcraft, or by too much sun exposure, or by consuming too much palm oil. Simply knowing that malaria is a parasite that is transmitted by mosquitoes can be life-saving.

In the past 50 years, a significant effort has been made to educate communities about the danger of malaria. The United Methodist Church, along with other church groups and humanitarian organizations has trained and supported hundreds of community-based health workers. These workers teach simple methods of prevention and treatment in remote areas.

Closing the doors and windows of a home at night to block the entry of nocturnal anopheles mosquitoes, emptying containers filled with stagnant water, and clearing brush away from homes are simple ways to prevent illness. When long-lasting, insecticide-treated bed nets are available and used correctly, the incidence of malaria drops even further.

POVERTY'S BARRIERS

Knowing how to prevent malaria is not enough. In formerly war-torn Sierra Leone, many communities know that malaria can lead to debilitating fever, can induce coma (possibly leading to brain damage), and, in far too many cases, can end in death. Still, pervasive poverty denies even knowledgeable people the resources to obtain a bed net or appropriate medical treatment.

Poverty-stricken communities do not have the resources to protect their residents from malaria. In the United States, a long-lasting, insecticide-treated bed net would cost about $10; a full course of malaria medications, only $5. But many people in Africa are living on less than $2 a day and can't afford to buy these life-saving items.

Impoverished urban communities and most rural areas in Africa depend on The United Methodist Church and other compassionate organizations to provide bed nets, malaria education, and treatment at little or no cost.

Over the past three years, United Methodists have saved approximately 750,000 lives through $7.5 million contributed to Nothing But Nets—a program, sponsored by the United Nations Foundation, that aims to cover all families in Africa with bed nets.

United Methodists have also worked to combat malaria through a Community-Based Malaria Control program. Since 2005, this program has provided nets, education, and medication through United Methodist hospitals and clinics across Africa.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP

Giving to The Advance, you can help end malaria by supporting United Methodist malaria programs such as Nothing But Nets and Community-Based Malaria Control. Write the Advance project's name and number on the memo line of your check: Nothing But Nets (#982015); Community-Based Malaria Control (#982009).

Offering For local church and annual conference credit, put your gift to The Advance in the offering plate on Sunday.

Online Go to: www.givetomission.org

Mail Make your check to UMCOR and mail to: UMCOR, PO Box 9068, New York, NY 10087

Phone Call toll-free: (800) 554-8583

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Like tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, malaria is classified as a "disease of poverty," but the vicious cycle linking disease to poverty and poverty to disease can be broken. World leaders are calling for an end to the approximately 1 million deaths caused by malaria each year. A recent United Nations agreement calls for the elimination of malaria deaths by 2015.

This historic call to action is working. Thanks to attention drawn to malaria by faith groups—along with heads of state, celebrities, and philanthropists—malaria rates in some African nations are falling for the first time.

IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT MALARIA

The United Methodist Church has joined a worldwide movement to rapidly increase efforts to fight malaria. In partnership with leaders in global health—including the United Nations Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria—we United Methodists can help end malaria deaths in Africa.

Imagine what more we can do to break the malaria-poverty cycle. Imagine nations' gaining an additional $12 billion in productivity because workers are not at home sick or caring for sick loved ones. Imagine families using their resources to feed their children rather than having to pay for malaria medicines. Imagine children staying in school rather than missing weeks of classes because they are sick with malaria.

The United Methodist Church has the hope, the people, the power, and the vision to break the malaria cycle.

Photo: Mike Dubose/UMNS

Margo Jacobs is the Executive Director of Community Consulting Services (CCS), which provides fundraising, development services, and strategic consulting for The United Methodist Church's Global Health Initiative.

Opposite: *School Children in Lekki, Nigeria, peform a skit promoting the effectiveness of mosquito nets in preventing malaria.* ***Left:*** *Muji Bakare displays an insecticide-treated mosquito net from the Nothing But Nets campaign against malaria in Agapa, Nigeria.*

Fast Today and Change Tomorrow

by Rachel Harvey

In 2007, Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference contacted The Advance office looking for a new way to connect the youth of Greater New Jersey Annual Conference to The Advance, the denomination's giving channel dedicated to mission. Two years later, the response to the bishop's request can be symbolized by a letter and number, "B1."

B1 stands for "one being, being one." It raises awareness and funding for projects that empower the poor and also encourages youth to understand the unjust systems that sustain poverty in our world. Part of the B1 action plan is a 24-hour fasting event. Youth ask church members and friends for pledges to support an Advance project of the youth group's choice. Yet B1 is not about teaching youth they can save someone's life just by giving money or going without food for 24 hours; rather, B1 helps participants to see how their lives are connected to their sisters and brothers who live in poverty. We can make a difference in someone else's life if we first make changes in our own lives—in the ways we make use of the resources and privileges available to us.

Youth groups participating in B1 select an Advance project and pledge to raise money and awareness for the project by reaching out to friends, family, and community members. Each year, the Advance office will select a different set of six projects to highlight through B1, enabling every youth group to choose its fast based upon the project or the world region that inspires passion among its members. The B1 curriculum and other resources give youth an opportunity to learn about poverty and discover how we, as Christians, are called to respond.

More than an event, B1 is both an introduction and an invitation to a different way of life. In this new way of living, we become aware of connections between us and our sisters in Ghana, between our Ghanaian sisters and our brothers in Virginia, between our Virginian brothers and our siblings in Chile, and so forth around the world.

B1 allows youth to see and experience connectionalism first-hand. They begin to see how problems in our world may be connected to our own choices in life. They are urged to consider how Scripture connects to their lives and how God calls us all to connect our gifts and talents to the needs in our communities.

The Advance office developed B1 with the help of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, which served as a test pilot in 2008. In 2009, B1 was tested again in Greater New Jersey and in Oregon, Virginia, Minnesota, Idaho, and Oklahoma. In 2010, The Advance invites all youth across the United Methodist connection to plan a B1 event during the Lenten season. For more information, go to www.fasttodaychangetomorrow.org or contact Rachel Harvey at (212) 870-3792 in the Advance office to learn about B1, order and download resources, and begin planning a B1 event.

Rachel Harvey is a mission specialist with The Advance, General Board of Global Ministries.

Left: *Youth participants in the B1 program pack meals for the hungry in Medford and Elizabeth, New Jersey.* ***Center:*** *B1 participants at a Salvation Army facility pray with a man.* ***Right:*** *During their fast, B1 youth learned about global systems that perpetuate poverty.* Photos by Gwen Kisker.

2009 B1 Jurisdictional Pilot Advance Projects

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE & DEVELOPMENT: GLOBAL—Advance #982188

Rural areas account for three of every four people living on less than US$1 a day and a similar share of the world population suffering from malnutrition. This program supports the efforts of church- and community-based partners in activities that promote economically and environmentally sustainable community development, especially in agriculture.

The sustainable agriculture program provides training to help small-scale farmers improve their livelihoods through Farmer Field Schools, Training the Trainers programs, and Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange programs. Workshops in snail farming, mushroom farming, and beekeeping offer farmers a variety of agricultural opportunities.

The Sustainable Agriculture and Development program aims to train 3,000 people over the next three years in appropriate agricultural methods that are environmentally safe and sustainable. By building local capacity and non-dependency on outside donors, participants build a stronger network of communities.

GIVE YE THEM TO EAT: MEXICO—Advance #07629A

Founded in 1977 as a social outreach project of the Methodist Church in Mexico, Give Ye Them To Eat (GYTTE) serves marginalized families in the rural sector of South Central Mexico. Approximately 60 percent of those living in the rural areas of Mexico are poor, with most of them living in extreme poverty.

The three large income sources for Mexico have traditionally been petroleum, tourism, and money generated in the United States and sent back to Mexico as remittances. In the last few years, tourism has moved to third place and remittances from the US jumped to second place. Rural people find few opportunities that enable them to support and feed their families; thus, they cross international borders in search of a way to improve their situation.

The GYTTE program offers rural families development opportunities so that they can remain together and find solutions to feed themselves and their dependents within their own communities in Mexico. Informal education and training opportunities help to make this possible.

Each year, GYTTE trains 10 families in livestock care and production; at the end of the training, the families receive the gift of an animal from the GYTTE herd.

CEREIMI: CHILE—Advance #09751A

Since 1990, CEREIMI has opened its doors to children from the Iquique area of Chile who have both economic and emotional needs. CEREIMI stands for *Centro Recreacional e Integral Metodista Iquique* ("Iquique Methodist Recreation and Community Center.") The Second Methodist Church of Iquique, where CEREIMI is held, is within the Caupolican population of the city of Iquique. This is a town of high social vulnerability—of homes deteriorated by an epidemic of drug addiction and alcoholism. CEREIMI offers children a place to have a meal, recreation, tutoring, and Christian education.

CEREIMI is like a tree, offering children shelter, protection, and a place to be reminded of who they are—a place where they know they belong.

Top: *Honorine Mujing Mwad, director of the DR Congo-run Mary Morris Orphanage, harvests moringa leaves that will be added to the children's food as a nutritional supplement.* Photo by Paul Jeffrey. ***Middle:*** *Pastor Khieu Vorn inspects a sustainable agriculture crop of rice straw mushrooms in Phum Sophy, Cambodia.* Photo by James L. Gully. ***Above:*** *Society of St. Andrew volunteers in Titusville, Florida, collected and packed citrus fruit to be distributed to people needing food throughout the state.* Photo: Mike Wacht, used by permission of the Florida Annual Conference.

Photo: June Kim

Mozart Adevu, Global Ministries missionary and regional coordinator for Sustainable Agriculture and Development in the United Methodist Committee on Relief, confers with villagers during a 2005 event in West Africa.

SOCIETY OF ST. ANDREW POTATO PROJECT:
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA—Advance #801600

Since 1979, the Society of St. Andrew's Potato Project has worked with major potato growers and potato chip companies to save loads of potatoes to feed the hungry across the United States for the cost of packaging and freight (approximately two pennies per serving). Volunteers also glean other kinds of fresh produce. Annually, approximately 15 million pounds of produce are saved and redistributed through the Potato Project.

COMBATING HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION:
GHANA—Advance #120004

In 2008 the Combating Hunger and Malnutrition project received a grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to start a moringa plant farm in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Moringa leaves are an excellent source of vitamins, minerals, and protein. Ashanti women work on the farm to strengthen their community through incorporating moringa leaves into the children's school lunches. In addition to their nutritional benefits, the moringa leaves are also used to purify water and treat cuts.

HAITIAN CREOLE PIG PROJECT:
HAITI — Advance #418002

The Haitian Creole Pig Project is improving health and economics through the reintroduction of the Creole pig, known as the "peasants' savings account." In 1988, a US-induced forced extermination of the pigs for fear of the spread of Swine Fever left many farmers emotionally and economically devastated. This Advance supports a Grassroots International Project in partnership with a Haitian organization, the National Congress of the Papaye Peasant Movement (MPNKP). The project provides 177 pigs to farmers each year, with 40 percent of those pigs given to women's groups. Through a six-day training session, participants gain skills in pig-raising and veterinary care for pigs and piglets.

UMCOR's 10 Facts About Hunger and Poverty

Global

1. More than 963 million people in the world go hungry every day. In developing countries, nearly 11 million children die every year from preventable and treatable diseases. Hunger and malnutrition contribute to 60 percent of these deaths. (Source: Bread for the World)
2. Just 20 percent of the world's people in the highest-income countries account for 86 percent of total private consumption expenditures; the poorest 20 percent account for 1.3 percent. (United Nations Development Program)
3. In the developing world, 850 million people are illiterate; nearly two-thirds of these are women. (UNDP)
4. Every year, 3.4 million people, mostly children, die from diseases associated with inadequate supplies of water, poor sanitation systems, and improper hygiene. More than one billion people lack access to clean water and more than 2.4 billion lack access to basic sanitation. (UNDP)
5. Poor nutrition contributes to one out of two deaths (53 percent) associated with infectious diseases among children under five years of age in developing countries. (World Health Organization)
6. As many as 300,000 children under the age of 18 (some as young as eight) are conscripted as soldiers to join government forces or armed rebel groups.

United States

7. In the United States, 12.6 million children live in households where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. That means one in 10 households in the United States is living with hunger or is at risk of hunger. (Bread for the World)
8. 3.4 million youth between the ages of 14 and 24 are high school dropouts. (US Census)
9. Two-thirds of children living in poverty have one or more parents who work and one-third have a parent who works full-time, year-round. Government assistance programs provide a lifeline—yet even with safety-net programs, such as food stamps, poor families continue to struggle. (Bread for the World)
10. The United States could cut hunger in half within its borders in two years and within two decades worldwide for less than seven cents a day per US citizen. (Bread for the World)

Sources

Bread for the World (www.bread.org)
Food and Agriculture Organization–United Nations (www.fao.org)
Human Development Reports (http://hdr.undp.org)
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United Nations Development Program (www.undp.org)
World Health Organization (www.who.int/en/)
US Census Bureau (www.census.gov)

CROP HUNGER WALKS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

by Lesley Crosson

When the Reverend Dean Prentiss left Williamston United Methodist Church last June after nine years as pastor, the Michigan church had just completed its annual CROP Hunger Walk. (CROP stands for Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty.)

When Rev. Prentiss arrived at his new appointment to First United Methodist Church in Big Rapids, Michigan, the city's CROP Walk planning committee was gearing up for their town's annual walk. "The ecumenical community of Big Rapids comes together to organize it," Prentiss says. "I showed up and the organizing group told me, 'You have to put the CROP Walk together because that's what the pastor at First United Methodist Church does.'"

So Prentiss, with the help of members of his new congregation—and others in the ecumenical community "who had been doing it for a long time"—began putting together his second CROP Hunger Walk of the calendar year.

WALKING IN BIG RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

With the economy in free fall, more and more people who have lost their jobs are turning to food pantries and soup kitchens for groceries and meals. Many of those food pantries stock their shelves with the help of donations from CROP Walkers, who collectively raise more than $16 million a year from the friends, family members, colleagues, and local businesses that sponsor them.

The donations are especially welcome in Prentiss's part of the country. "People are losing their jobs and their homes everywhere," he observes. "But Michigan, as the center of the US auto industry, probably has been devastated more than any other state. Yet people here are coming together at CROP Hunger Walks and going door to door asking for donations."

His assessment of the situation in Michigan is not an overstatement. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national unemployment rate was 8.5 percent in March 2009, with especially hard-hit Michigan at 12.6 percent.

WALKING IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Some 1,200 miles south of Michigan, in San Antonio, Texas, Don Khan is coordinator of the city's CROP Walk. Khan is missions chair at Trinity United Methodist Church in San Antonio.

"The people who suffer the most from hunger are our kids," Kahn says, "and that suffering is unnecessary. As the economy continues to crash, there are some signs of improvement—but that doesn't take away from the fact that very many people are losing their jobs every day. We have to look at those wristbands that people wear which say 'What would Jesus do?' and then do it."

As many as 1,100 people have participated in and donated to the CROP Walk as their contribution to ending what Khan calls "a hidden scourge."

"We don't have to see the suffering of people dying of hunger because we assume that no one is dying of hunger here in the United States," Kahn says. "So we might not feel a sense of urgency related to the human suffer-

HELP CROP STOP HUNGER

What Is a Crop Hunger Walk?

CROP Hunger Walks help to support the overall ministry of Church World Service, especially the grassroots, hunger-fighting development efforts of partner agencies in some 80 countries.

In addition, each local CROP Hunger Walk can choose to return up to 25 percent of the funds it raises to local hunger-fighting programs. This year, CROP Hunger Walks will share more than $3.7 million with food banks, pantries, community gardens, and other local efforts nationwide.

ing that is caused by the unmet need for nourishment. But," he continues, "the suffering is real and more than just the Crop Walk is needed to address it. We need to raise awareness. We need to be actively involved in our local food banks and have food pantries available in our churches."

One of the beneficiaries of the San Antonio CROP Hunger Walk is the San Antonio Food Bank. It prepares meals and provides food to some 400 partner agencies in a 6-county area for distribution to the public.

Heather Roberts, special events coordinator for this food bank, says the need for food assistance has increased dramatically as formerly dual-income families lose one or both of their paychecks to unemployment.

As one of the local recipients of donations from the CROP Hunger Walk, the San Antonio Food Bank received about $6,500 from the proceeds. That money goes a long way toward helping to feed families in need, says Roberts. "One dollar equals seven meals, 10 pounds of food, or $13 worth of groceries," she points out, "so the $6,500 is a huge, huge benefit."

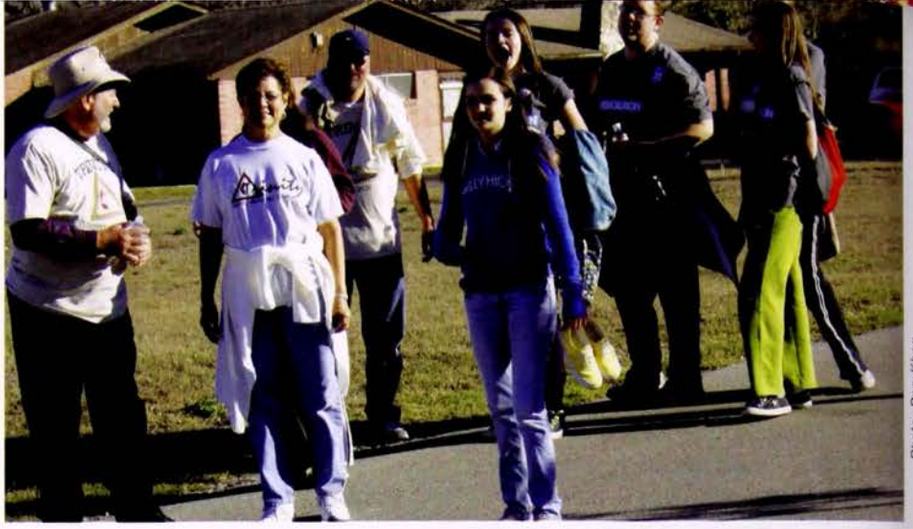

Photo: Don Khan

Members of Trinity United Methodist Church in San Antonio, Texas, participate in a CROP Walk. A portion of their donations are used to stock food pantries and soup kitchens.

But the money is not the only benefit. CROP organizers see great value in the coming together of neighbors from different faith communities—churches, temples, mosques—to help people in crisis.

In San Antonio, the 6.2 mile walk along the San Antonio River in Mission Park is one of the regular mission activities of Trinity UMC—along with participation in special offerings, the Church World Service Blankets+ program, and the building of houses with Habitat for Humanity. Khan sees the annual event as a visible community expression of care for suffering people here and for those in developing countries who walk miles and miles every day. "We walk in solidarity with those who have to walk that distance just to get water," he explains.

WALKING TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY

The CROP Hunger Walks, sponsored by the humanitarian agency Church World Service and organized by local faith communities, take place in some 2,000 communities in the United States. Donations from the walks are used to fund the agency's international relief and development programs and local hunger-fighting efforts.

Back in Big Rapids, Michigan, Rev. Prentiss's rapid immersion in planning his city's CROP Walk not only raised money but also helped to build community. People of several faith communities—from Roman Catholic churches to student ministries at local Ferris State University—worked together to organize a walk of about 100 people in the small college town.

Prentiss is pleased by the fact that his congregation at First UMC works in partnership with people from so many neighboring congregations. This partnership makes a difference, not just for people whose lives are made a little easier because of the food-pantry donations but for the entire community.

"When you walk together as a community and you have a common purpose, it changes the nature of the community, I think," Prentiss says. "People have a common desire to do good, so it doesn't matter what church you come from. We're all in it together. To walk together as a big crowd, not as individual churches, symbolizes that combined effort. I think it's just beautiful."

Lesley Crosson is the Media Relations Officer for Church World Service.

How Do I Start or Join a CROP Hunger Walk in My Community?

Call your CWS/CROP Regional Office, toll-free 888-CWS-CROP (888-297-2767) or visit www.cropwalk.org online to find out about the CROP Hunger Walk nearest you. If there isn't a CROP Hunger Walk in your area, your CWS/CROP Regional Office has all the expertise and free promotional materials to help you take the first steps to a successful, fulfilling CROP Walk.

Photo:

recite John 3:16 in their native Choctaw during Native Moccasins Rock, celebrating native culture and spirituality in Bon Aqua, Tennessee.

Youth Fast Today and Change Tomorrow

by Gwen Kisker, a freelance journalist, who produces a television program about the mission work of Christ United Methodist Church in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

The United Methodist Church is giving hundreds of youth an opportunity to serve the poor through the B1 (one being, being one) program. Through B1 they learn that everyone has the responsibility to live with a sense of connection to others.

Photo: Gwen Kisker

Youth participants in the Medford UMC B1 events, Greater New Jersey Conference.

At the February 2009 kick-off meeting of the B1 program, teens and tweens from Medford and Epworth United Methodist churches in New Jersey focused on biblical references to hunger, examining world hunger statistics, and discussing ways to address hunger.

As the youth groups harnessed the power of the spiritual discipline of a 24-hour fast from food, they fundraised for United Methodist Advance projects, learned about systems around the world that keep people impoverished, and fed the poor.

The B1 program targets the body, mind, and spirit to create empathy for the poor. Bethany Carl, youth director at Medford United Methodist Church in New Jersey, said, "... fasting is critical because [the youth] are physically feeling the effects of hunger."

The B1 activity was also piloted in Oregon, Virginia, Minnesota, Idaho, and Oklahoma and is expected to be offered to youth groups nationwide during Lent 2010.

Rachel Harvey, mission specialist with The Advance, explained, "B1 is a way for the church to pick up where Jesus left off....Our area of focus with poverty is our call as Christians to respond and to carry on the work that Jesus was doing."

Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

The General Board of Global Ministries
475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115
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connecting the church in mission

United Methodist Mission in Bok Chitto in Neshoba County, Mississippi, Aids Choctaw Family

by the Rev. Jon Walters, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Mississippi, and Jody Cataldo, executive secretary of Emerging Churches Resources, General Board of Global Ministries.

At Mississippi Choctaw United Methodist Mission in Bok Chitto, Neshoba County, Mississippi, a young Choctaw woman asked, "Would you be able to help us with some gas?" She and her children had accompanied her mother to an appointment at the health center next door.

When asked if they needed anything else, the young woman began to cry. Finally, she responded: "No one else has offered to help us at all, and we were afraid to ask for anything else. We are very hungry."

Members of the mission staff went to a local restaurant for some sandwiches for the family while they waited for the completion of the grandmother's medical examination. When staff members returned with a large bag of food, tears were shed in appreciation and in anticipation of the probable future hardships of this family, part of the often-overlooked Native American populations in North America.

During the 1800s, most Choctaws were forced to leave their land in Mississippi and relocate to Oklahoma. However, some remained, and United Methodist mission work with them began in 1827 through the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The present mission serves three Native American congregations and operates the Pushmataha Family Life Center in Pearl River, four miles west of Philadelphia, Mississippi.

Photo: Mike DuBose/UMNS

Children from Philadelphia, Mississippi, recite John 3:16 in their native Choctaw during Native Moccasins Rock, celebrating native culture and spirituality in Bon Aqua, Tennessee.

Photos: Shana Harrison.

Edith Sanchez, Laura Santa Maria, and Adriana Véliz.

The Golden Girls of La Esperanza

by the Rev. Shana Harrison, a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church. She is director of La Esperanza, a group home serving developmentally challenged adults in Santiago, Chile.

The Group Home of La Esperanza serves as an advocate for the Golden Girls, developmentally challenged women past retirement age who live on feeble pensions that keep them in poverty. The home provides residents like Edith, Adriana, and Laura an opportunity to receive care in a loving community and experience independence and self-worth in a family environment. They have the opportunity to interact with visitors while receiving the advocacy and support they need.

Edith lost her disability pension. La Esperanza has advocated for her through a series of interviews to receive a pension for the elderly.

Adriana quickly invites new acquaintances to her house (the La Esperanza group home) for tea. She proudly gives a tour of the entire home and introduces them to her "brothers and sisters," assuring guests that "here they take good care of us."

Laura is bilingual. She easily practices English-language skills that her mother taught her with English-speaking visitors.

Note: In May 2009, the name of La Esperanza was changed to Crescendo; although the mission, staff, and beneficiaries will remain the same. Initially, the organization will be listed by The Advance under both names.

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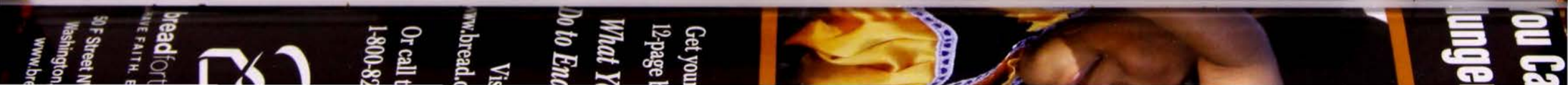

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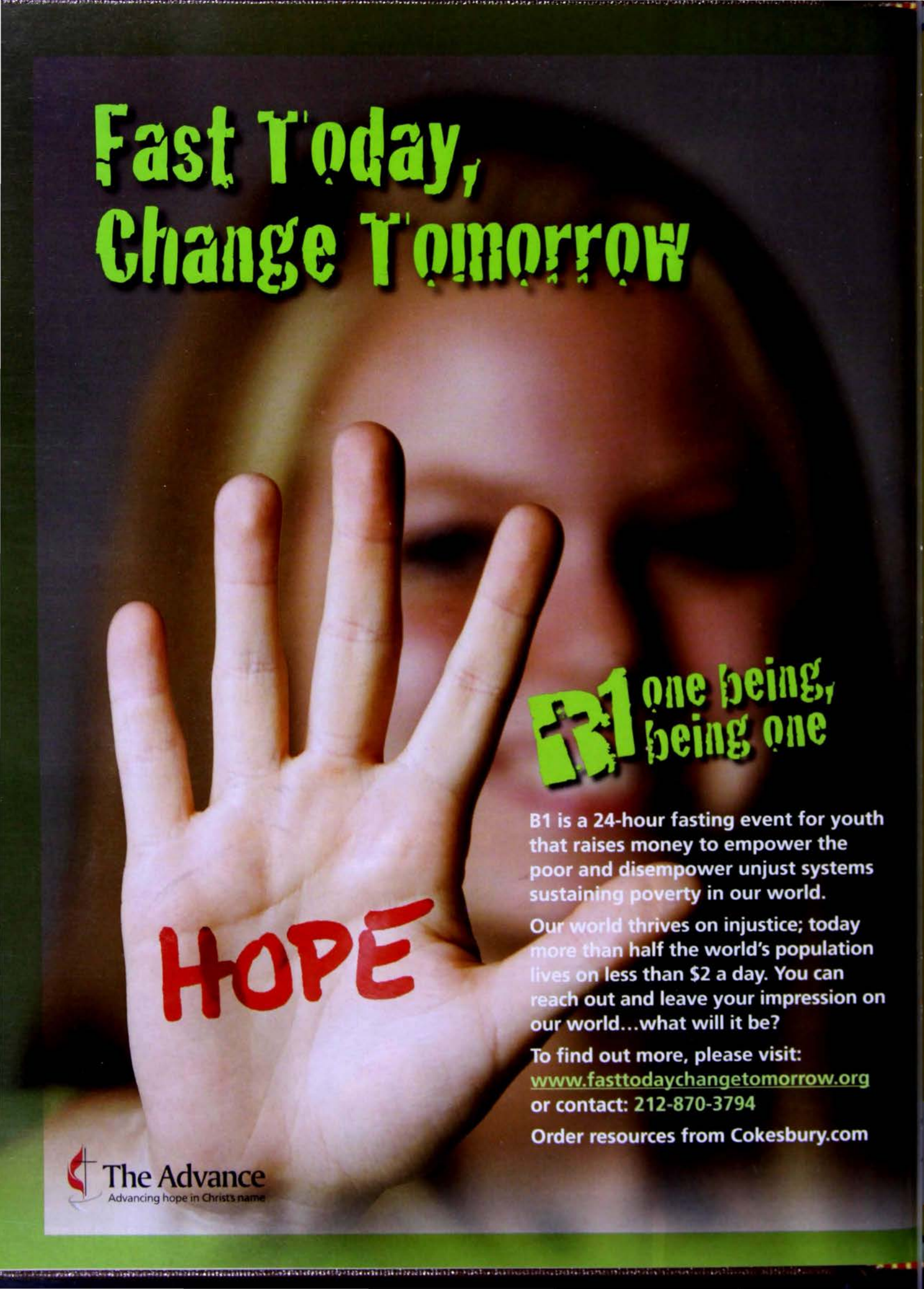
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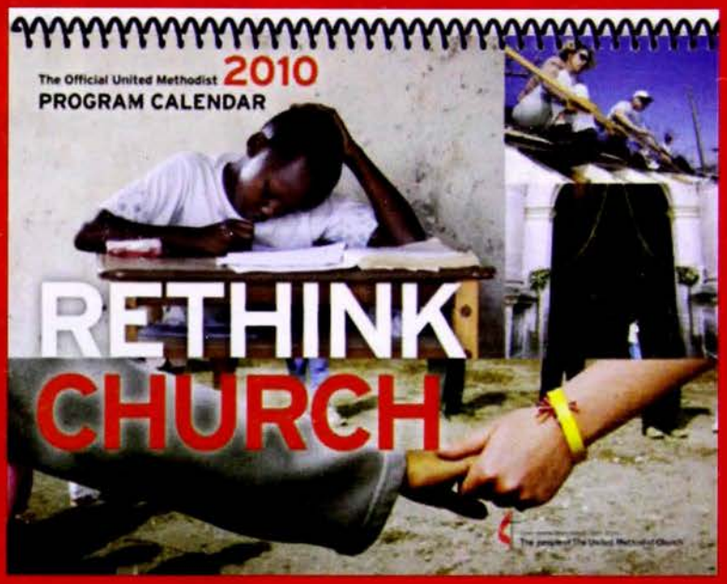

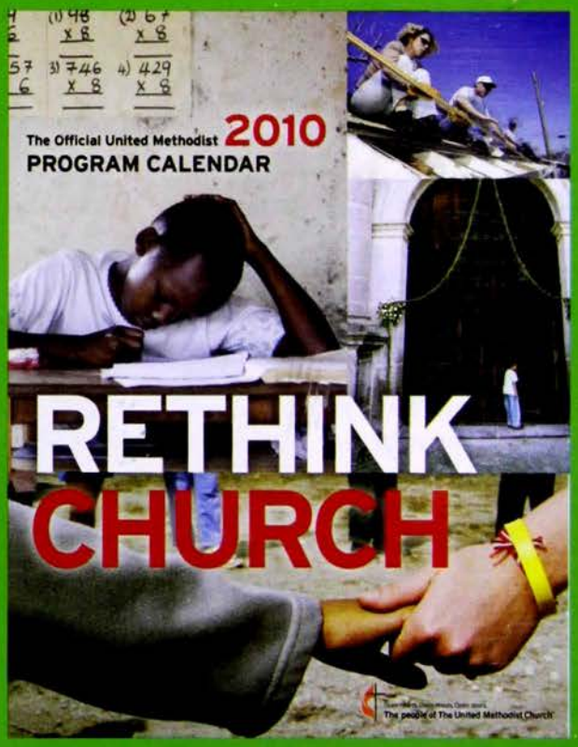

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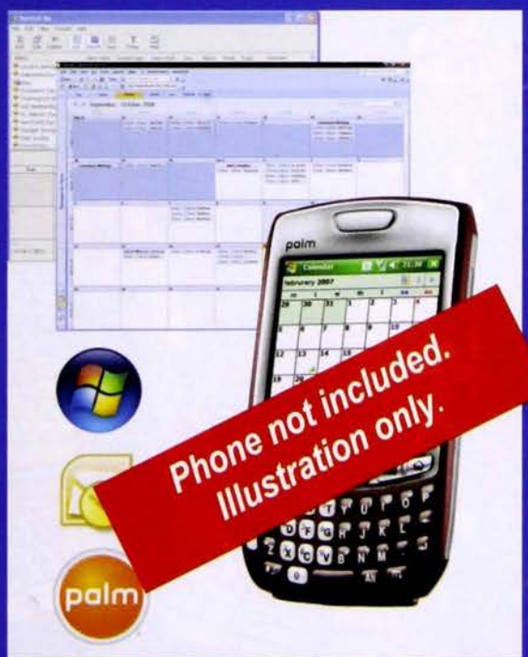

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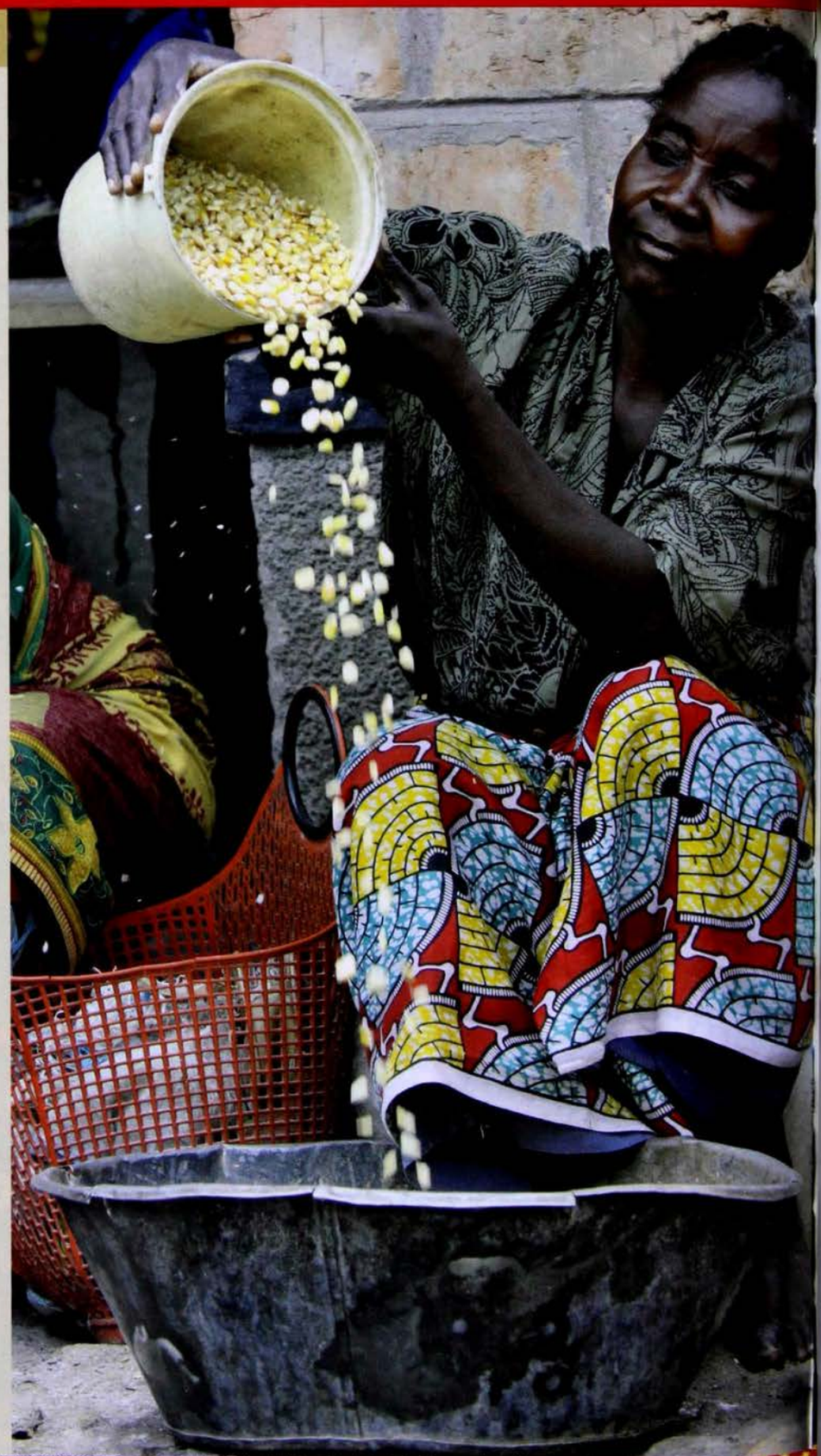
Breaking Free from Poverty

Kamina, a rural town in the North Katanga Annual Conference in the Democratic Republic of Congo, will be experiencing a renewal over the next four years. A pilot project as part of The United Methodist Church's emphasis on ministry with the poor, will help release some of the poorest members of this community from the shackles of poverty.

The Household Food Security Program will help end hunger, improve nutrition and overall health and economic standing for these families. Education in agricultural techniques, nutrition, and sanitation along with providing a source for potable water will lay the foundation for the rest of this program. Over the next four years these families will learn how to teach others what they learned and multiply the impact of the program.

You can support this and similar programs by giving to **World Hunger and Poverty, UMCOR Advance #982920.**



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