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# New World Outlook

THE MISSION MAGAZINE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH • NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012

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*The Things That Make  
for Peace*

*C.G. Coleman*

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# New World Outlook

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NEW WORLD OUTLOOK NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: BY CHRISTOPHER G. COLEMAN

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Participants in a March 12, 2003, interreligious peace march in Davao, in the war-torn southern Philippines region of Mindanao.  
PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

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# From the editor

## JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS: ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS FOR PEACEMAKING

*His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.*

Isaiah 9: 7

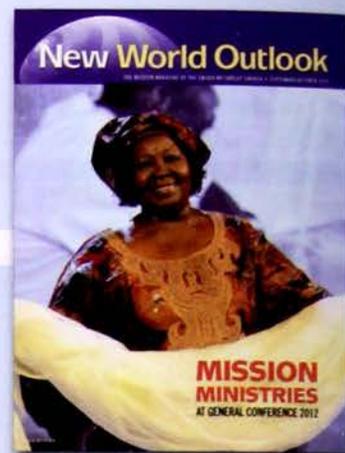
**W**e are perhaps more familiar with the earlier passages of this chapter in Isaiah. We sing them often, particularly at Christmastime, such as Isaiah 9:6, for instance: "For a child has been born for us, a son is given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." But verse seven adds depth to what has otherwise become a bucolic and pastoral image: He will establish this peace with justice and righteousness.

"There can be no peace without justice," notes Norma Dollaga in her interview in this issue. This edition of *New World Outlook* considers the difficult task of infusing the cessation of war and conflict with those difficult ingredients of peace—justice and righteousness. Long after the actual fighting has stopped, the effects of conflict can simmer, unsatisfied, for years. As Gary Mason indicates in his article about Northern Ireland—sometimes for centuries. Even generations of people who have no direct or living memory of war or conflict can still be affected by the results of a peace that was brokered without justice or reconciliation.

War is really not good for anyone. Obviously, those people and communities in the direct path of armed conflict suffer greatly, but even the supposed victors in a conflict do not escape the deadly consequences. Today, after 10 years of "keeping the peace" in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Pentagon reports that more US soldiers are losing their lives from suicide than from enemy forces. The US Department of Defense confirms that the suicide rate for active-duty soldiers so far in 2012 is around one per day. Armed conflict doesn't seem to solve any issue; it just creates more and more suffering. The vanquished suffer, the innocent suffer, and the victors suffer.

This Christmas season, when we hear Handel's *Messiah* and think about the beautiful baby, the Prince of Peace, let us also remember the next verse in Isaiah: the peace of Christ is an everlasting peace forged by justice and righteousness. Many workers within our global Methodist family are working to establish just that kind of peace. May we support them in all the ways we can.

Christie R. House



**D**ear Editor:  
Again it took me only two sessions to read the Sept-Oct 2012 issue, as it was so interesting. I would have kept reading from cover to cover but had other things on my plate to do. I enjoyed your articles on General Conference as so many members do not have any idea what we do or what is in the *Discipline*. Missionaries working and reporting is always interesting, rather than having information spread by other media, which so often gets jumbled.

After study on Palestine/Israel and the UMW Reading Program book, *Bethlehem Besieged*, I am still frustrated how people can live so closely but do unto others as is being done. I still keep praying for a miracle and some common sense with much love.

Keep up the great work and with hope that more members will be reading about the mission of The United Methodist Church.

Peace,  
Loretta Roberson  
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

**D**ear Editor:  
Many thanks for including an article on the United Methodist Kairos Response, as well as Alex Awad's letter, in the September-October 2012 issue.

## Letters from Readers



Alex Awad in Tampa at the Kairos Response.  
PHOTO: CHRISTIE R. HOUSE

I appreciate the visibility, but there were several key factual errors that I would like to correct.

1. On page 39, it says, "Although the petition that passed asked Israel to seek new ways to address Palestinian concerns, 69 percent of the delegates voted for the minority report...."

In fact, the minority report was the one calling for divestment from three companies and it was defeated. The "Aligning UMC Investments" petition adopted in plenary was the majority report as amended in Finance Committee.

2. Later the same paragraph, on p. 39, describes how "delegates also voted to support Palestinians and to condemn the Israeli occupation...." They actually did not vote to approve this language but to approve additional language calling for economic actions like a boycott. The UMC has opposed the occupation and other human rights violations for decades.

3. In the paragraph just above (bottom of p. 38 and top of 39), it says "the original petition asked the General Board of Pensions...." In fact, the petition "calls on The UMC," not just the Board of Pensions, and it further "instructs all UM general boards and agencies to divest" from three companies only. These two clauses were among the ones that the Finance Committee majority deleted.

Please understand that these corrections are combined with my deep appreciation that you made space to cover this vital justice issue facing our church. I really appreciated the way you lifted up the names of the many people who traveled great distances to be a witness at General Conference (Alex, Kristen, Daoud, Dalit, Rabbi Brant). As you know, this issue keeps generating lots of conflict within the church as well as attacks from those outside.

David Wildman  
Executive secretary for Human Rights and Racial Justice  
General Board of Global Ministries

Dear Editor:

I was pleased to learn in the Sept-Oct 2012 issue, pages 30-32, that "The Church Is Growing in Honduras." At the same time, however, I was disturbed to find in this article no recognition of the violence, criminality, repression, and severe human rights violations taking place in that country. A January 2012 article in the *Miami Herald* speaks of Honduras as a "disaster zone" since the 2009 military coup that ousted a democratically elected president and replaced him with a US-backed military regime. In the same month the *New York Times* called the country a "human rights and security abyss" and a "center for drug cartel violence."

The Summer 2012 newsletter of the "Food First" NGO describes how multinational agribusiness, mining, oil, palm, and textile companies, in league with the "ten families" in the tiny land-owning elite, and abetted by the business-friendly, military-backed government are driving peasants off the land (which increases emigration to the cities and the United States). Growing crops for export removes land from food production and raises food prices. Utilizing death squads to assassinate labor leaders and human rights workers fosters a climate of fear throughout the country.

I have heard first-hand reports from Honduran citizens who have been victims of this reign of terror. Yet this article, authored by our United Methodist missionaries there, seems oblivious to this. Could it be that one reason the church is growing is because people are seeking solace and protection? Are we as readers not entitled to some historical background and social analysis to help us understand the reasons behind church growth there? Can effective, full-orbed mission really take place without taking account of—and addressing—issues in the larger socioeconomic context? Are we starting new churches to help people escape from social reality or to bring a prophetic witness within and to it? Are we not to be about "Making Disciples for Jesus Christ for the *Transformation of the World?*"

Dr. Doug Wingeier  
Retired Global Ministries' missionary, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

# A Peace Process that Cuts Deep

## in Northern Ireland

by Gary Mason & Mark Houston

This article was edited from a presentation given by the Rev. Dr. Gary Mason, mission superintendent, and Mark Houston, director, of the East Belfast Mission in Belfast, Northern Ireland. As the Peace Process in Northern Ireland matures, Houston and, particularly, Mason, have sought ways to apply their experience in conflict transformation to other contexts around the world.



**Gary Mason:** The conflict on the island of Ireland had been going on for almost 800 years when it flared up again in 1969. The northern part of the island, along with England, Scotland, and Wales, is part of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland has about 1.7 million people—900,000 to a million of whom are Protestants, who identify themselves as British. The other 700,000 or so are Catholics, who see themselves as distinctly Irish. The larger part of the island, the Republic of Ireland, has about 5 million people and is almost 90 percent Catholic. In all, there are about 6 to 7 million people on the island.

The Irish Civil Rights movement began in the late 1960s, primarily with Catholics in Northern Ireland asking for equality. Some commentators have said the movement was hijacked by people who wanted to use terrorism to achieve their goals. Loyalists, mostly Protestants, wanted the northern territories to remain part of the UK. Republicans, mostly Catholics, wanted to join the Republic of Ireland. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of terrorist groupings arose and a civil war broke out in Northern Ireland. It lasted almost 30 years, killing 4,000 people and injuring 40,000. Statistics indicate that half of

today's Northern Irish population was psychologically scarred in some way by the conflict, which has been described as having religious, political, cultural, and economic overtones. Even now, 90 percent of the people still live in segregated areas.

In Belfast, where we are working, 30 Peace Lines—or Berlin-type walls—segregate the communities. While Catholics and Protestants are both now represented in Northern Ireland's government, they still live segregated lives. So our role as Methodists in the East Belfast Mission is to bring about a meaningful integration and dialogue.

This photo of Newtownards Road in East Belfast shows some of the murals that dot the landscape. Typically, they express political and religious beliefs held by Republican or Loyalist paramilitary groups.

PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE/UMCOM

**Clockwise from right:** A mural that commemorates the 36th Ulster Division's service in World War I covers a wall off Newtownards Road in Belfast, Northern Ireland; Some of the more recent murals painted in Belfast are depicting more peaceful and less violent subjects; A mural in the Ballymacarrett area, which runs through the heart of East Belfast, Northern Ireland.

PHOTOS BY MIKE DUBOSE, UMCOM



Years ago, I spent two years participating in a working party on sectarianism and theology. Specifically, the party looked at three doctrines: The One True Church, Error Has No Right, and Divine Providence.

The One True Church doctrine holds that there is only one way to salvation, and if you're outside it, your chances of salvation are diminished. It is simply a truth claim,



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II meets with the Rev. Gary Mason (3rd from left) and Mark Houston (4th from left). She is introduced to them by Alan Shannon (2nd from left), a Northern Ireland Office Permanent Secretary.

PHOTO: COURTESY EAST BELFAST MISSION

typical of most churches and religions. The doctrine of Error Has No Right is one originally developed by St. Augustine to justify the use of state coercion to suppress those deemed guilty of heresy. This doctrine gave rise to penal laws, inquisitions, forced conversions, and many other ugly stains in Christian history. As a doctrine, Divine Providence simply means: "God is at work in the world." Individually, these three doctrines may look OK. But when One True Church is combined with Error Has No Right, the church sees tolerance as a deadly vice. In the Irish situation, these two doctrines are used together. Likewise,

if One True Church is combined with Divine Providence—God is at work in the world—it becomes: "God is on our side."

You can see this in the mottos of a number of terrorist groupings. The main grouping we have worked with is the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Its motto is "For God and Ulster" (Ulster being a term for the northern part of Ireland). The theological aspect has fed into the conflict, though the church hasn't really owned up to that. But, in the end, salvation is not attained through theology, but by God's grace.

I have been in ministry for about 25 years. Like many young men and women in Mark's and my generation, I could have ended up getting involved in terrorism. I often say that the many young people who did take up arms did the wrong things for allegedly the right reasons—assuming that this was the way to defend their communities. They were indoctrinated, to a certain degree, by godfathers and godmothers of an older generation, who had also been indoctrinated in their youth by their elders. Many who turned to terrorism have served long prison terms. That is one reason I have given myself to this conflict transformation ministry: I realized that I could have quite easily gone down the same path.

Probably 30 to 35 percent of my time is invested in conflict transformation ministry, which lies outside my job description. As the main Protestant paramilitary grouping, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) chose to give its decommissioning statement from the church hall of East Belfast Mission. That was very significant for us, so we continue to work with these leaders. In May, we took a group from UVF to Israel-Palestine, seeking ways to share our

experience of peace building with folks in the Israeli and Palestinian communities. We told both communities that peace building is all about flexibility and compromise. In a true peace process, no one side is going to get its own way. It took Northern Ireland 4,000 deaths and 40,000 injuries to realize that.

**Mark Houston:** Behind any paramilitary organization are women, children, and families heavily traumatized by the conflict. Men who were radicalized to such an extent that they were able to carry out murder could not simply leave it at the front door when they came home. There was a lot of domestic violence, addiction to alcohol, and child neglect, which resulted in single-parent households. Children grew up making a weekly visit to their fathers in prison. That kind of passive trauma was communitywide, affecting many who were not directly involved in the conflict and thus ineligible for monetary help. But for that passive trauma, there is no help. When men slowly drink themselves to death trying to cope with their past, their families are deeply affected.

**Gary Mason:** With any peace process—whether in South Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans, or Northern Ireland—you're going to need transparency and honesty before you can get to trust. The pretense of politics doesn't work. Instead, you need a hard, meaningful dialogue. It is not easy to get people who so deeply distrust one another into a room and then to get them to honestly say: "Let me tell you why I think I dislike you. Here are the reasons." You have to learn to dispel stereotypes, myths, and prejudice.

Piet Meiring—a South African Dutch Reformed Church professor



The Methodist congregation on Newtownards Road was established in 1803. **Above:** The 1826 building called the Ballymacarrett Methodist Church was torn down to make room for the Newtownards Road church in 1900, which was destroyed by bombing during World War II (above right). Newtownards Road rebuilt the church in 1952. That building was demolished last year to make way for the new Skainos center (right).

PHOTOS: COURTESY EAST BELFAST MISSION

who was part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa—once said that reconciliation is not accomplished by papering over deep-seated differences. The way to heal a deep abscess of mistrust requires more than applying a bandage; it requires anesthesia and a deep cut into the bone.

**Mark Houston:** Eventually, when you get that deep, men and women on both sides of the conflict discover honesty, commonality, and an understanding that—I was fighting in the same way you were fighting, just for a different cause. Many consider that both sides were used by the political parties and perhaps the

churches—Protestant and Catholic. Research shows that many believe that both sides were neglected by the church.

After honesty and commonality comes empathy. When each side understands the other, the two sides can empathize with one another. Once they develop empathy, they are less likely to go back to war the next day.

Despite a dissident threat in Northern Ireland at this moment, it is to the UVF's credit that they have not gone back to conflict. Conflict would be their natural default position and they come under huge pressure from their community. To maintain their standing, they have to bring

their community with them. I believe they have shown a high degree of courage in doing so.

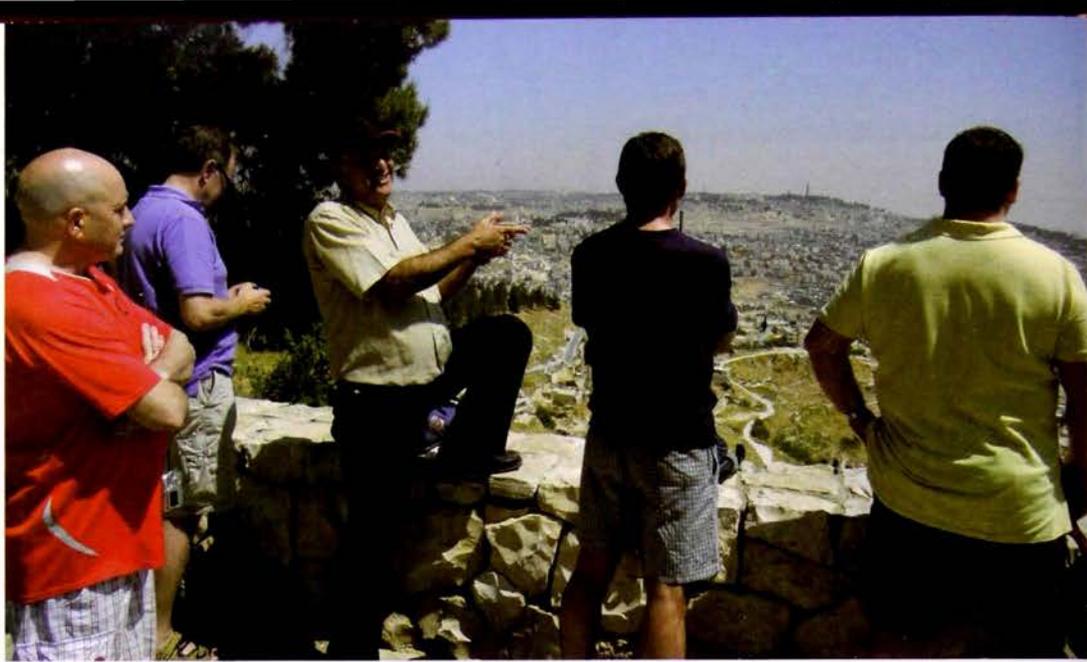
**Gary Mason:** East Belfast Mission is one of five Methodist missions in Northern Ireland. It includes Newtownards Road Methodist Church, formerly known as the Ballymacarrett Methodist Church, with its worship services and groups for men and women, children and youth. But the mission also has a massive social arm. Of our 100 staff members (12 years ago, we started with 20), only five or six work in the church congregation. The other 94 are working within East Belfast on social justice issues. Another 150 people work as

The Rev. Gary Mason from East Belfast Mission traveled with ex-combatants from Northern Ireland to the West Bank, Palestine, to meet with Palestinians and Israelis.

They felt they had something to share from their experience of the difficult work in brokering peace.

Team members look out over the West Bank.

PHOTO: GARY MASON



volunteers in the mission. We are currently in the middle of a \$40 million building project to erect the largest faith-based community center in all of Western Europe.

**Mark Houston:** Belfast has a population of about 350,000 people. Our organization works in Inner East Belfast, the fifth poorest electoral ward in the north of Ireland in terms of social deprivation, and the fourth poorest in educational attainment. One in every four young men aged 16 or younger is functionally illiterate. The “peace dividend” resulting from the peace process has regenerated the Belfast city center but has bypassed the East Belfast neighborhoods.

Historically, the Methodist Church has been in Belfast since 1803. The first Methodist church building was erected in an area known as Ballymacarrett, which in those days was a little village on the outskirts of Belfast but now is quite close to the center.

In 1900, the Methodist Church in Ballymacarrett was rebuilt—expanded to a seating capacity of 1,500, which, for Northern Ireland, was megachurch size. From the beginning, the church developed two schools and, in the classic Wesleyan tradition, was engaged in social justice and social action.

In 1941, during the “Blitz” of World War II, the church was bombed, as

was most of the inner part of Belfast. The church was rebuilt in 1952 and demolished again one year ago. Since its founding, this church building has been taken down about once every 50 years. This means that the Methodist congregation understood the rationale behind redeveloping the site for a new community hub. The congregation’s new home in the Skainos center has an adaptable worship space.

We are charged by the government to work with what they call the “economically inactive”—people from families whose members have been unemployed for generations. Having never been in the labor market, these people have no history of work, and it’s our job to assist them in gaining meaningful employment. Approximately 100 people a year move into full-time employment through our Stepping Stone employment ministry.

In 2006, we realized that our reliance on government funding was not sustainable. So we developed a social-economy strategy aimed at raising our own sustainable income. We went from running one classic charity shop—or thrift shop—to 10 retail outlets, province-wide, called by our brand name, “Restore.” That model has worked very successfully for us. Our charity shops take in all sorts of donated goods that we repair, clean, and resell, feeding the

money back into the community and into our organization.

**Gary Mason:** Currently under way on the site of the original 1826 church is our new community center, Skainos, which is a biblical Greek word meaning “tent” or “where the presence of the Lord dwells.” We have invested in this area and hope others will do likewise. We have 36 apartments on the site and a hostel for the homeless with 26 bed units. There will be 100 people living on site at all times.

The funding for the project has come from different sources, including the International Fund for Ireland—a private trust of people from North America, Australia, and New Zealand; the Special European Projects Board, part of the European Union Peace Fund; Belfast Regeneration Organization; the Department of Social Development (UK) through one of our partners, Oaklee Housing, a voluntary nonprofit organization. And, as a church, we’ve put about \$6.4 million into the project ourselves in funds and land.

*The Rev. Dr. Gary Mason is a Methodist minister serving East Belfast Mission in Northern Ireland as Mission Superintendent and pastor of Newtownards Road Methodist Church. Mark Houston serves as Director of East Belfast Mission.*

# missionmemo



## Interfaith Delegation Seeks Justice

A delegation from the DR Congo met recently at the General Board of Church and Society's United Nations office seeking help to end human rights violations associated with two decades of invasions by Rwanda. United Methodist Bishop Ntambo Nkulu Ntanda of the North Katanga Area was a featured presenter for the DR Congo at the Church Center for the United Nations.

The delegation presented a petition that calls for peace and states that "massive violations of human rights" have been recorded. Hundreds of thousands of women have been raped and more than 6 million Congolese have been killed during two decades of assaults from Rwanda. The delegation hopes to deliver its petition to the White House.

## JFON and GRIL Take on the DREAM Act

This past summer, a select group of high-school-aged students from Grand Rapids public schools in Michigan participated in the Grand Rapids Initiative for Leadership Program (GRIL). GRIL asked Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) to develop a curriculum centered on the DREAM Act, which was developed to provide relief for undocumented immigrants who arrived in this country at a young age and now find themselves as young adults with no avenue to adjust their immigration status in a country they consider home.

The students helped JFON present a public information session to explain the new Obama policy called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The Secretary of Homeland Security announced that certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several key guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal, and would then be eligible for work authorization. Deferred action does not provide an individual with lawful status, however. This was a first-time collaboration for GRIL and JFON-West Michigan.

## African Health Boards Share Ideas

Pan-Africa Health Consultation 2012, hosted by UMCOR and sponsored by Imagine No Malaria, successfully brought together doctors, community health workers, local leaders, educators, and United Methodist health boards from 15 African countries. UMCOR's strategy to establish health boards in these countries is to help

identify healthcare priorities, envision solutions, and monitor the progress of various projects in their countries. UMCOR tries to ensure that these health boards have all the support and training they need to maximize their effectiveness and ultimately save more lives.

Donations can be made to Hospital Systems Strengthening, **Advance #963168**, to further support UMCOR's work in the field of global health.

## Global Ministries' Missionary Receives Distinguished Alumnus Award

Dr. Romeo del Rosario, a Global Ministries' missionary, has been named one of four distinguished alumni by Boston University School of Theology in Massachusetts. A native of the Philippines, Dr. Rosario has been a missionary since the mid-1980s.

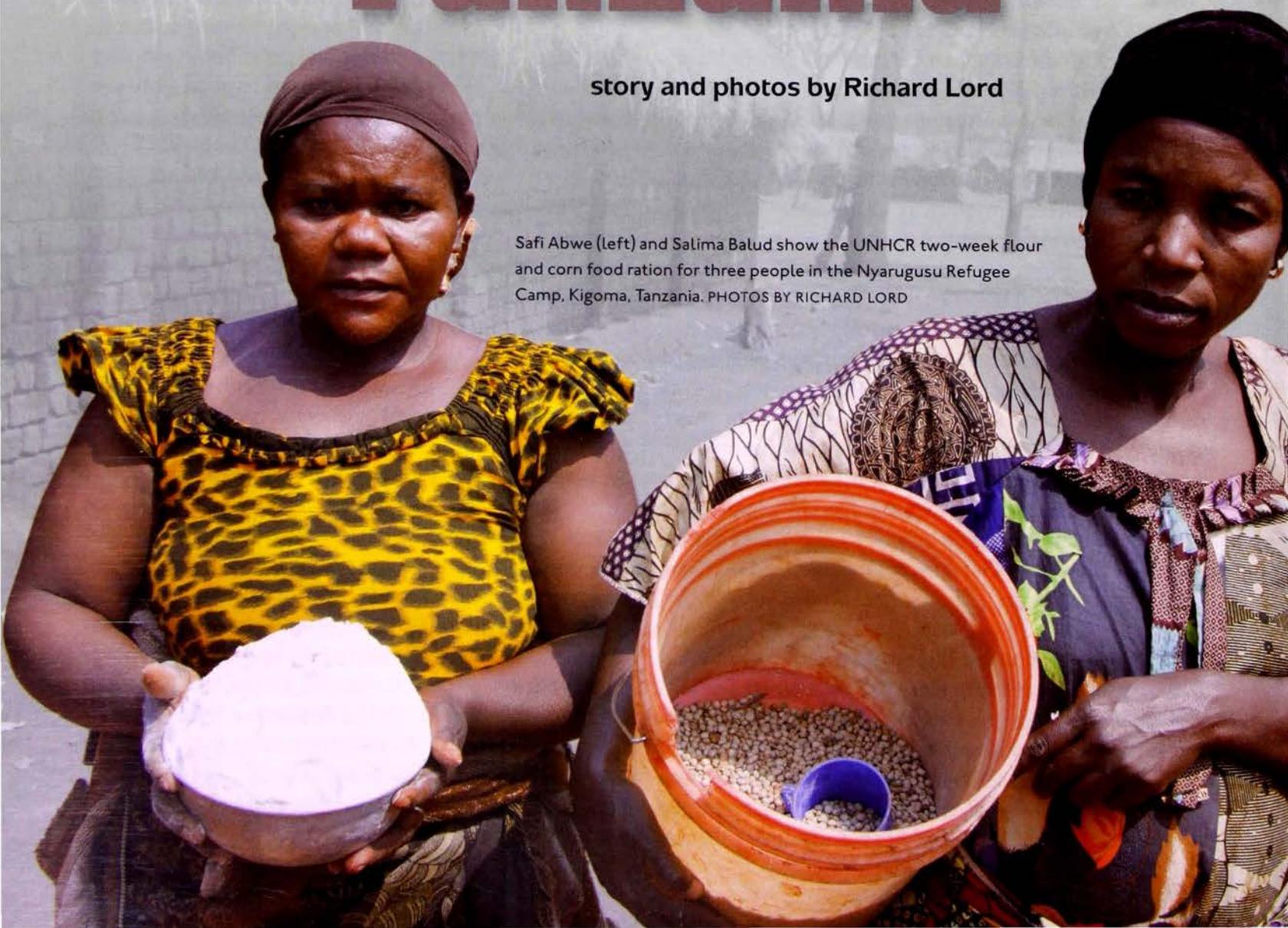
As Director of the Cambodia Mission Initiative, Rosario is responsible for helping the rapidly growing Cambodian Methodist Church to find, develop, and train local leaders, mostly under the age of 30. The Cambodia Mission Initiative is part of the emerging Methodist Church in this Southeast Asian country.

**DEATHS—Harold D. Hoffman**, retired missionary with 5 years of service in the Philippines and China, died May 23, 2012...**Ezekiel C. Makunike**, retired missionary and former *New World Outlook* staff writer, as well as pioneer journalist in Africa, died June 20, 2012...**R. Roy Coats**, retired missionary with 5 years of service in Indonesia, India, and Nepal, died June 25, 2012...**Juanita L. Ivie**, retired deaconess with 14 years of service in the United States, died August 12, 2012...**Victor Peters**, retired missionary with 20 years of service in Korea, died August 12, 2012...**Marion Price**, retired missionary with 11 years of service in the Philippines, died August 14, 2012...**Donald E. Barnes**, retired missionary with almost 6 years of service in Chile, died August 21, 2012...**Gladys Galow**, retired missionary with 20 years of service in Sierra Leone, died August 22, 2012...**Darrell L. Hayden**, retired 10-10-10 missionary with 3 years of service in the United States, died August 25, 2012...**Rosemary Townsend**, retired missionary with 26 years of service in India, Sierra Leone, and Russia, died September 3, 2012...**Sarah L. Middleton**, retired missionary with 17 years of service in Bolivia, died September 5, 2012.

# War's Devastation Continues *for* Refugees in Tanzania

story and photos by Richard Lord

Safi Abwe (left) and Salima Balud show the UNHCR two-week flour and corn food ration for three people in the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp, Kigoma, Tanzania. PHOTOS BY RICHARD LORD



**W**ar, like wildfire, forces everyone in its path to fight it or to flee. For women and children, fleeing warfare often means becoming long-term refugees.

Having fled in the late 1990s from warfare in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the refugees in the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp in Tanzania had crossed the border expecting to return home in a few months. Instead, some 15 years later, they are still waiting for change.

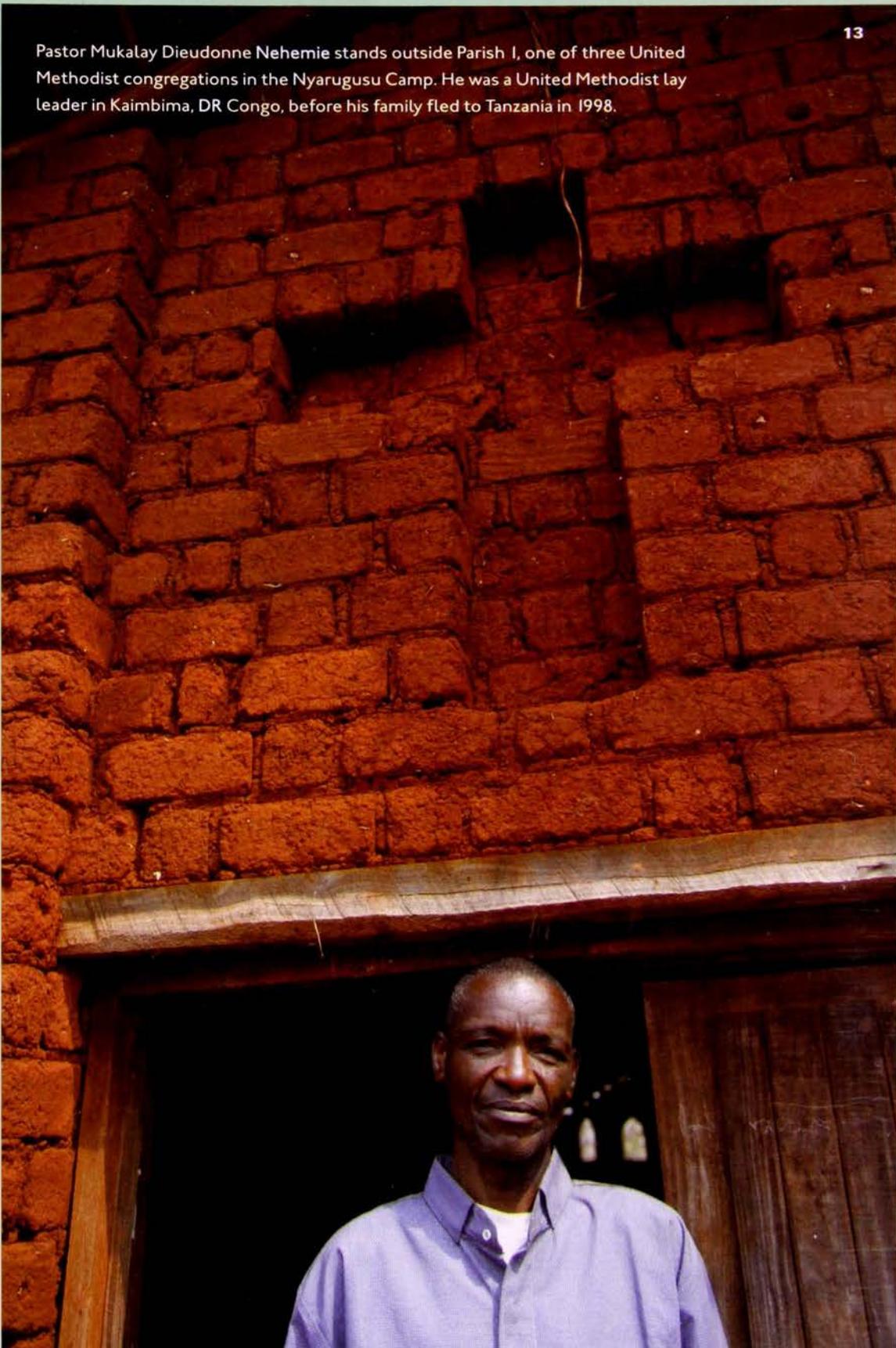
Many have witnessed things that no one should ever see. They have felt too much and feared too much, being forced to seek refuge in another nation to escape a devastating war. But instead of finding relief, they escaped death only to enter a place that feels like a prison.

These Congolese refugees did nothing to deserve their fate. They were not criminals or rebels or fighters on any side. Instead, being in the wrong place at the wrong time, whole families had to run for their lives. They were primarily women and children, and, as survivors in the Nyarugusu Camp, they lead difficult, unfulfilling lives.

**Life in a Refugee Camp**

In some ways, the refugee camp resembles a prison. To enter, a visitor must pass through two security checks. A barbed-wire fence surrounding the camp is meant to keep refugees inside, while blocking access to outsiders.

Residents claim that the only food they receive is supplied by aid organizations. Every two weeks, small portions of flour and corn come from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to serve as the ration for three people. The Tanzanian government prohibits farming and other



Pastor Mukalay Dieudonne Nehemie stands outside Parish I, one of three United Methodist congregations in the Nyarugusu Camp. He was a United Methodist lay leader in Kaimbima, DR Congo, before his family fled to Tanzania in 1998.

economic activity in the camp without its permission. So, to complement their meager food rations, many residents escape from the camp for a day and work in a nearby village in exchange for food. Then they bring the food back to the camp to feed themselves and their children.

One refugee, Salima Balud, age

39, was caught leaving the camp at least 10 times. Each time, the testimony of community leaders won her release from custody. Now she leaves two or three times a week to work for food in a nearby village. "I don't go farther than the village," explained this married mother of seven, whose children range in age from



two to 22. "Many people go to Dar es Salaam," she says, referring to the Tanzanian capital. "But, I don't have the money for a bus ticket."

Balud is a nurse who occasionally works part-time in the camp hospital. "I need to work more," she says. "I want to study more to be an even better nurse." In 1997, it took her three weeks to get to Nyarugusu Camp from her DR Congo village. Back home, she had not only witnessed the murder of a friend and a neighbor but had watched as government troops killed her older brother. She had seen a family being locked in a house that was then set on fire, with family members being shot when they tried to escape. She had witnessed pregnant women being raped, after which the attackers would cut open the woman's belly, grab the fetus, and throw it up in the air.

Elizabeth Michael, age 50, was a farmer back home, but now she has cancer and cannot work. She lives with her seven children, aged 10 to



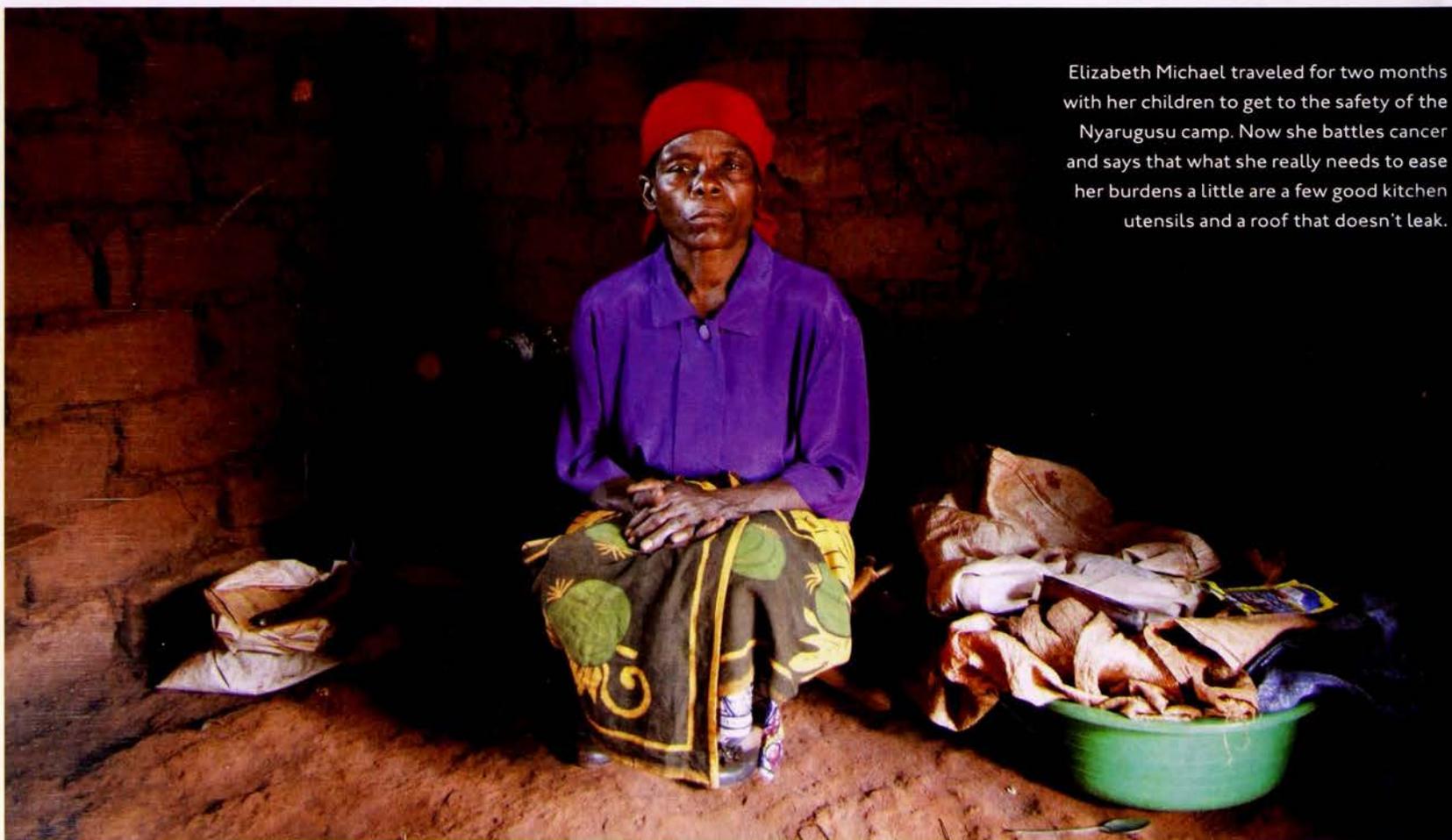
A worship service at Parish I UMC in the Nyarugusu refugee camp in Tanzania.

20, in a 90-square-foot house in the camp. She and her children fled the DR Congo after witnessing teenage girls being raped and her neighbors—then her husband—being killed. She and her children traveled for two months to reach Nyarugusu. Now her children are traders. They leave the camp to make purchases in the market of a neighboring village, returning

to the camp to sell the goods they bought.

### A Church for Refugees

The United Methodist Church has a strong presence in the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp. Pastor Mukalay Dieudonne Nehemie, 57, was a United Methodist lay leader in Kaimbima, DR Congo, before fleeing to Tanzania in



Elizabeth Michael traveled for two months with her children to get to the safety of the Nyarugusu camp. Now she battles cancer and says that what she really needs to ease her burdens a little are a few good kitchen utensils and a roof that doesn't leak.

1998. "I saw many people killed in my village," he said. "The government said they were killing rebels. But the women and children I saw being massacred were certainly not rebels."

In the Nyarugusu Camp, Pastor Nehemie pursued studies at a theology school sponsored by Africa Ministry Network. After completing the multi-denominational course, he was ordained as a deacon. His parish is one of three United Methodist congregations in the camp, which has 5,000 United Methodists among its 64,000 occupants.

"Our role here lies in starting churches," explained the Rev. Mutwale Ntambo, a Congolese missionary and the mission superintendent working with The United Methodist Church in Tanzania (UMCT). "We don't have the money to do anything else. We have churches without buildings and pastors without salaries." The UMCT is a mission outreach of the North Katanga Annual Conference.

Adjacent to the Nyarugusu Camp, where the great majority of residents are from the DR Congo, is the Mtabila Camp, which is home to 38,378 Hutu refugees from Burundi. Mtabila Camp is scheduled to close by the end of 2012. Some Burundis have begun to resettle in Nyarugusu, where they are intermixed with the Congolese. Relations are not warm, but there is no open fighting.

"In our church, both groups are welcome," Pastor Nehemie explained. "They come together freely. They may not be friends outside the church, but here they come together naturally. This is a place of peace."

### Capital Refuge

In the village where she and her family farmed in the DR Congo, Safi Abwe, now 38, saw her parents, along with many children, being killed by the

military. The soldiers also raped five women while she watched. Escaping the bloodshed in 1997, she is now a single mom with seven children between the ages of two and 18. "I want to work," she explained, "but there are no jobs here. I would love to start an orphanage."

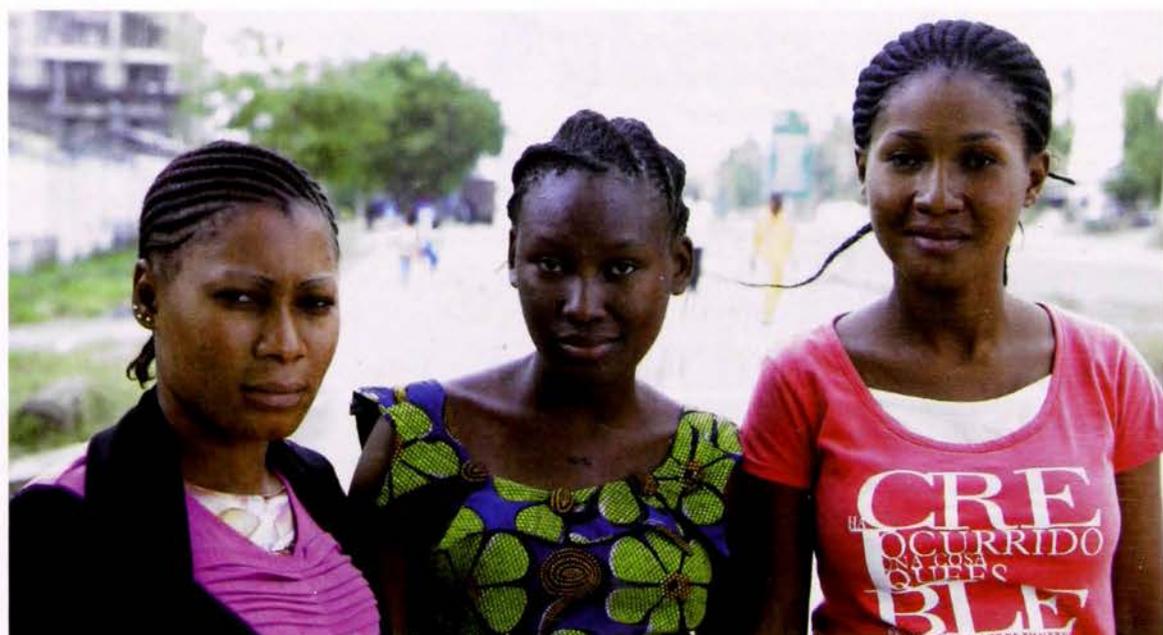
"My life is very, very hard here," she continued. "Many people have escaped to go to Dar, but I have no possibility of working there. It may be very bad here, but I think it could be worse in Dar."

A sister and brother—Yvonne Kisimba, 19, and Joachim Kabwe, 15—fled their home in the Katanga region of the DR Congo in 1998, com-

"It's a horrible life in the camps," her brother Kabwe added. "There is no freedom. You can't leave. And, when there is food, it's bad. When I was 11, I left and came to Dar by myself."

With no connections in Dar es Salaam, Kabwe roamed the bus station, wondering what to do. There, he met some friendly Congolese residents who took him into their home, where he lives today with their two children, aged three and one. This made his sister's relocation considerably easier. She went directly to the family that took her brother in.

Kisimba and Kabwe's father and one brother remain in the Nyarugusu



The Ekendji sisters, Fatuma, Diane, and Leonie, originally from Uvera, DR Congo, were separated from the rest of their family in 2007 when their village was attacked. Hearing horror stories about the refugee camps along the border, they made their way to Dar es Salaam, but they have not found enough work to support themselves.

ing to the refugee camp in Tanzania with their parents and four siblings. "They were killing people in our village," Kisimba explained. "We fled during a battle. I was five and my brother was one. We didn't know what we were doing or where we were going when we ran. It took us a day to arrive in Kigoma (Tanzania). From there we were taken to the refugee camp."

Camp. Their mother died and their other siblings are in the DR Congo. In the capital city, neither Kabwe nor Kisimba has found work. Having no money to pay school fees, they have nothing to do. Still, they feel that their home in Dar es Salaam is an improvement over the refugee camp.

"In the camp, we had nothing to do and the little food we had was horrible," Kisimba explained. "Here,

there are possibilities. And the food is enough and it is good."

In 2007, the Ekendji sisters—Fatuma, Diane, and Leonie—left their home in Uvera, DR Congo, after their village was attacked. "Our uncle was killed by our neighbors," said Diane, age 18. "We watched the killing through the window of our house." In the course of the attack on their village, the sisters were separated from their parents and three other siblings. They still do not know what happened to the rest of their family.

"There is no real border between DR Congo and Tanzania on Lake Tanganyika," explained Fatuma, age 21. "So we decided to escape into Tanzania. We had heard many horror stories about the refugee camps, so we decided to come directly to Dar. We have been here ever since."

In Dar es Salaam, the three sisters sleep together in one room in a private house. They use an outdoor toilet. Fatuma is the primary financial provider, earning money by doing

casual and domestic labor. Diane occasionally weaves hair. Leonie, 20, who completed secondary school, wants to study; but she has not found work and has no money for school fees.

The separation of refugee families is common. Patrick Iluba Ndoba, age 27, fled his home in Kivu, DR Congo, in 2003. After seeing a friend and many other people killed, he fled with his parents but was separated from them during the journey and has never seen them since. "Everyone knew that the small boat near my village would go to Kigoma," he said, "so I got in." His plan was to return to the DR Congo as soon as it was safe, but that has not happened. Instead, five months ago, he fled to Dar es Salaam.

"The conditions in the refugee camp were very hard to bear," Ndoba continued. "I survived by dreaming of the day when I would be back in the DR Congo. But I was doing nothing with my life but dreaming. Finally,

I realized that I had to get out of there if I was going to get on with my life."

Life for Ndoba has not been easy in Tanzania's capital. He was able to find a place to live in a house built by The United Methodist Church in Tanzania (UMCT). But, not having found a job, he remains fully dependent on UMCT. Yet Ndoba still hopes for the opportunity to build the life he wants. Opportunities are relative. Goals may be simple or lofty. The refugees in Dar es Salaam pray for decent housing, regular employment, and other basic necessities of life.

Elizabeth Michael, the cancer victim who remains at the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp, has simpler goals. "Maybe," she says, "if my children went to Dar es Salaam, they could send me money. All that I want is a few kitchen utensils and a roof that doesn't leak."

*Richard Lord is a freelance photographer and journalist based in Virginia, but with many ties to New York City.*

## Nyarugusu Refugee Camp

**Location:** Approximately 65 miles (a three-hour drive) northwest of the nearest town—Kigoma, Tanzania, and 15 miles west of the Burundi border.

**Physical Size:** 9 square miles

**Camp population:** Approximately 64,000 individuals: 62,500 from DR Congo and 1,500 from Burundi

### Age distribution of residents:

0-04:	11,026
5-12:	15,425
13-17:	10,582
18-59:	25,286
60+:	2,530

### Facilities present in the camp:

#### EDUCATION

- 9 pre-schools: enrollment 2,509
- 12 primary schools: enrollment 19,487
- 4 secondary schools: enrollment 7,771
- 715 teachers in all the schools

#### HEALTH

- Two hospitals with a 256-bed capacity
- Three additional health posts
- The health facilities in the two camps (Nyarugusu and Mtabila) also provide free medical services to the host communities.

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# Standing for the Religious Rights of Others

## A Hearing in Geneva on Pakistan's Blasphemy Law

by Elliott Wright

Bishop Samuel Azariah, a World Council of Churches executive committee member and moderator of the Church of Pakistan. PHOTO: MARK BEACH/WCC

**T**he arrest of a young Pakistani Christian girl on charges of blaspheming Islam is adding incentive to an international ecumenical effort to protect religious minorities in Pakistan. The late August 2012 arrest of Rimsha Masih in Islamabad dramatizes the rationale for a hearing on the "Misuse of the Blasphemy Law and the Plight of Religious Minorities in Pakistan," organized by the World Council of Churches' Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) and held September 17-19 in Geneva, Switzerland. The United Methodist Church, through its General Board of Global Ministries, helped to fund the hearing.

The hearing was attended by about 100 participants from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, including 23 representatives of Christian, Muslim, and Hindu religious groups. Also in attendance were representatives from civil society and human rights organizations from different parts of Pakistan. The sessions provided opportunities for participants to hear about one another's experiences and perspectives on the law. The rise of religious fundamentalism and extremism is a complex situation in Pakistan and the misuse of the blasphemy law often leads to human rights violations. The World Council of Churches is composed of hundreds of Protestant and Eastern Orthodox member churches.

### One Among Many

Rimsha Masih, who reportedly has Down's syndrome, was arrested and held on charges of violating a law that makes it a capital offense to defame Islam. Her accusing neighbor claimed she was 21. Her parents said she was 11. A medical examiner placed her age at closer to 14. She allegedly was found with ashes of burned pages of the Qur'an, Islam's holy book.

The blasphemy law, enacted in its present form in 1986, is periodically used to suppress or frighten religious minorities in Pakistan, which is 96 percent Muslim. The law is arbitrarily enforced by the police and judiciary, yet it has become one of the most stringent laws in the country. The law itself provides only a vague definition

of blasphemy, yet conviction carries a mandatory death sentence in some cases. Reports also indicate that it creates major challenges for moderate Muslims, many of whom favor religious freedom for all.

On September 2, a Muslim cleric was arrested on suspicion of fabricating the case against Rimsha Masih. International press reports said that witnesses claimed the Islamabad clergy placed torn pages of the Qu'ran in a bag of ashes and trash the girl was taking to the garbage. Masih remained in police custody for three weeks and then was released on bail. Her case was remanded to the juvenile court system. Meanwhile she and her family have had to go into hiding for fear of their lives. Pakistani Christian groups welcomed the arrest of the Muslim cleric and it looked likely, at the time of this writing, that the charges against Masih would be dropped.

*The New York Times* reported that Masih is from a family of sweepers, work common among Christians but shunned by Muslims. Christians are not welcome in the family's neighborhood, and some observers see the charges against the girl as part of a campaign to frighten Christians away. Muhammad Khalid Chishti, the arrested cleric, is held by some to be part of an effort to oust 400 Christian families so that their property can be seized.

Bishop Samuel Azariah, moderator of the Church of Pakistan and a member of the World Council of Churches' executive and central committees, commented on Rimsha Masih's case at the hearing, saying that Rimsha's case is "one among many. The religious minorities and even some sects of Muslims have been affected by the misuse of the blasphemy law. A majority of the cases have proved to be false, which has disturbed the fabric of trust in our society," he said.

### In Solidarity with Pakistani Minorities

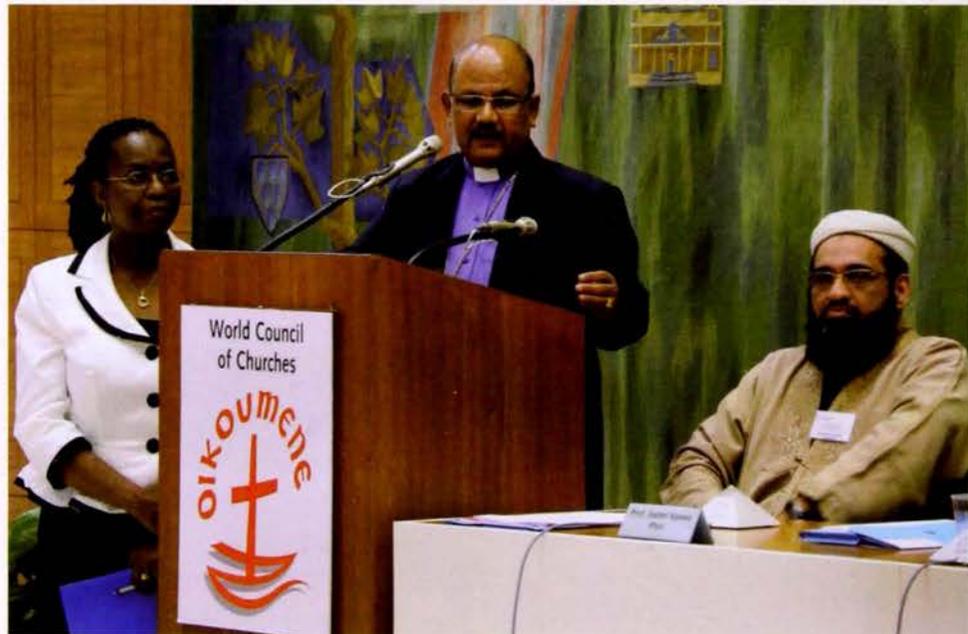
Thomas Kemper, Global Ministries' general secretary and chief executive, said: "We have a long-standing commitment to religious liberty globally and to the beleaguered Christian minority in Pakistan. We are in solidarity with our mission partner, the Church of Pakistan, in working toward greater freedom for all the people in that country."

Global Ministries gave a grant of \$6,000 toward the hearing, which covered the cost of two of the 20 people coming from Pakistan to

immediately to look into the tragic consequences of the blasphemy law and suggest a way out of this difficult and embarrassing situation." One major problem with the blasphemy law, according to observers, is that it holds a person or a community guilty until innocence can, if ever, be proven.

### Increasing Persecution

Religious extremism and the persecution of religious minorities are increasingly serious in Pakistan, according to a World Council of Churches' background paper on the hearing. The paper states:



Dr. Isabel Apawo Phiri; Bishop Samuel Azariah, moderator of the Church of Pakistan; and Moulana Qari Hanif Jalandhari, clergy, secretary Federal Board of Wafaqul Madares (Islamic Schools) and president of Pakistan World Council of Religions. PHOTO: MARK BEACH/WCC

the hearing in Geneva. Other WCC member churches also supported the proceedings. The hearing coincided with a meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The CCIA statement drawn from the hearing urges the Government of Pakistan to take realistic and solid steps to stop the abuse of the blasphemy law, which they concluded was causing massive human rights violations: "We urge the Government to constitute a competent Inquiry Commission

"Repression, intolerance, and fear have become the order of the day. The minority communities continue to suffer because of the misuse of the blasphemy law...which is used to target both Muslim and minority communities, such as Christians, Hindus, and Ahmadiyas [a Muslim group considered heretical by orthodox Islam]."

The General Board of Global Ministries has come to the defense of Pakistani Christians and questioned the use of the blasphemy law

on numerous occasions in recent years. Religious liberty and the rights of religious minorities are fundamental in The United Methodist Church's Social Principles.

In early September 2009, the president of the board, Bishop Bruce R. Ough of West Ohio, and the national president of United Methodist Women, Inelda Gonzalez, joined in a statement calling for an end to violence against Pakistani Christians. That action was triggered in part by a series of attacks, on both Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, including arson.

In early March 2011, Kemper, Global Ministries' general secretary, issued a letter of support for Pakistani Christians on the occasion of the assassination of the most prominent Christian in government service, Shahbaz Bhatti, the minister of minority affairs. His murderers objected to his support of the rights of religious minorities, which should have equal rights with Muslims under the original constitution adopted in 1947, when Pakistan became independent of Great Britain.

Blasphemy provisions were initially seen as governing the interactions among contending Muslim factions. Over the past two decades, as the World Council background paper says, Christians "have been living in a state of fear and terror, as the blasphemy law has become a source of friction between the country's majority...and minority religious communities."

### Speaking Out for Justice

The Church of Pakistan is a rallying force for the small Protestant community. This union church was formed in 1970 by merger of various Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations. Pakistan's population is about 96 percent Muslim, 3 percent Christian, and 1 percent Hindu. The

World Council of Churches' profile indicates close to 2 million of Pakistan's Christians are Protestant, 1.45 million are Catholic, and a little over 80,000 are independents.

Bishop Samuel Azariah explained that, for him, the purpose of the WCC hearing is to raise assertive Christian voices on the issue of the blasphemy law. "This dialogue is an attempt to improve churches' understanding of the situation of religious minorities in Pakistan. With a constructive debate on the blasphemy law among the Pakistani churches, civil society representatives and our Muslim partners in dialogue, we hope to raise awareness about our situation among the international community," Azariah said.

The bishop also expressed appreciation for the participation of Pakistani churches and representatives of Muslim and Hindu religious communities in the hearing, and for the WCC's support to persecuted minorities in the country regardless of their religious affiliations.

A representative from the Hindu community, Haroon Sarab Diyal, chairman of the All Pakistan Hindu Rights Movement, an organization engaged



Asiya Nasir, member of the National Assembly in Pakistan, addresses the public hearing on the "Misuse of the Blasphemy Law and Religious Minorities in Pakistan," organized by the World Council of Churches. PHOTO: MARK BEACH/WCC

in promoting rights of the Hindu community, said Hindus in Pakistan are often a forgotten community.

During the proceedings of the hearing he said, "The CCIA consultation has provided us with an opportunity to advance the debate on the issues of the dignity and rights of religious minorities in our country. I hope our voices are noted by the higher authorities in Pakistan."

*Elliott Wright is a freelance writer and former staff member of Global Ministries.*

**A**ccounts of the September 17-19 proceedings, which included Christian, Muslim, and Hindu witness, are available on the website of the World Council of Churches.

The concluding appeal to Pakistan:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/wcc-urges-pakistani-gover.html>

An appeal from Bishop Azariah to curb the misuse of the blasphemy law:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1724/church-of-pakistan-modera.html>

Comments on the Pakistani law from international human rights experts:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/wccs-side-event-at-the.html>

Hindus in Pakistan are a Forgotten Minority:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/hindus-in-pakistan-are-a.html>



# The Cost of Working for in the PHILIPPINES

story and photos by Paul Jeffrey

**A**ngie Ipong is a Filipina human rights activist who was detained by the Philippine military in 2005 and held until 2011, when all charges against her were dropped. Her book, *A Red Rose for Andrea*, chronicles her experience of torture and incarceration. In June 2012, United Methodist missionary Paul Jeffrey interviewed Ms. Ipong in Manila. This is an edited version of their conversation.

**Paul Jeffrey:** Tell me about how you came to be a prisoner.

**Angie Ipong:** I was working at the time with the Maryknoll Fathers, who were active missionaries in the Davao area. They were fighting against encroachments on the people's lands. We and the churches were actively helping them.

That was when I decided that the struggle of the peasantry is legitimate—that peasants need to be

helped. I saw this in Central Luzon in the sugar plantations, where people were having problems with the landlords. My father had experiences with landlords also, because we were tenants on our own land.

These are not isolated cases. I decided to devote myself and my life to working with the peasants. So, for almost 40 years, I was teaching illiterate people and organizing them.

In 2005, at a meeting of peasant leaders of both sexes, a group of

armed men swooped into the room and immediately handcuffed me. "No, no, no," I said. "Where is your warrant?" They said, "We don't need one." Then they brought me to their van and blindfolded me.

They took me from camp to camp. I stayed in one camp four days while they interrogated me. In the second camp, I experienced terrible torture. At first they abused me, because they wanted me to admit that I was a [member of the New People's



**Left to Right:** Protesting the presence of US troops in the region, Roman Catholic nuns lead a procession of 4,000 demonstrators through the streets of Cagayan de Oro, in the southern Philippines region of Mindanao; Sharon Liguyon, 44, enjoys a moment with her children inside their temporary home. They are part of a group of almost 200 residents of the indigenous village of San Fernando who fled their homes on March 14, 2012, shortly after the March 5 assassination of her husband, Jimmy Liguyon, the barangay captain; Adam Shaw, a United Methodist Mission Intern, visits the indigenous people who fled their village of San Fernando. Shaw is assigned to work with INPEACE-Initiatives for Peace in Mindanao. PHOTOS: PAUL JEFFREY

MANILA ★

**Below:** Angie Ipong. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

# g for Human Rights PHILIPPINES



Army—the armed forces of the Communist Party]. They wanted to know who my companions were. I could not answer them, even under torture. They started beating me, punching my shoulders and my hips. Then they started to undress me. I said, “No, don’t do that to me!” They started to touch my private parts. I said, “Don’t do what you don’t want done to your mothers and sisters.” But they were mocking me, laughing at me. I could never have imagined that something like this could be done to a 60-year-old woman like me.

I thought that they were protectors of our law, but they trampled on my rights as a woman and my dignity as a person. If they could do that to me, they could do that to anyone. I

knew that, if I shouted, they were the only ones who would hear me. So I decided to begin a hunger strike.

I staged a hunger strike for 12 days. I did not eat anything at all. I did this to show them that I was against all they were doing. Anyway, after 12 days, they brought me to a regular detention center. They were afraid I might die while in their hands.

At that center, I saw the charges against me. First, I was charged with rebellion. Then came another rebellion charge, followed by criminal charges of double attempted murder. “These are heinous crimes I did not do,” I said, “so why have they charged me with them?”

I believe it is never a crime to serve the people. All my life, I have

given myself to the peasantry, and here I was being accused of all these crimes. “These are fabricated charges,” I said. Finally, after six years of detention, I saw all the charges against me dismissed for lack of evidence. But I had been made to suffer for six years in prison.

Once I was released, I went to the Department of Justice and asked for indemnification (compensation for loss and damages suffered because of illegal imprisonment). They said, “You were not convicted, so you will not be indemnified.” I said, “Is indemnification only for those convicted? I have suffered for six years.” They said, “Yes, if you are convicted and then acquitted of your crimes, you are indemnified. Even then, you

are only going to be indemnified 10,000 pesos [about US \$230]."

My lawyer said we should go to the courts and file countercharges. But I knew that, if we went to the courts, something like this would happen again. There would only be further humiliation for me.

Instead, I decided to talk and tell the world what happened to me. Maybe that was better than going to the courts. This court system is so slow that you cannot get justice. That is why, whenever I am invited to speak, I talk.

**Jeffrey:** You were in prison for almost six years, yet you refused to succumb to being a victim. Instead, you created a space for life within those prison walls.

**Ipong:** The first few months I was there, I had terrible pains. My head was aching, my blood pressure was unusually high, and I was afraid I was going to die. The prison cell was very hot and noisy. I was joined by other prisoners—some of them addicts or criminals. I thought, can I talk to these people? I didn't know the level of their crimes.

I saw an open space outside the prison, so I went to the warden and asked if I could plant a garden there.

He said yes. I thought that maybe working so hard might not be good for my health. But as I worked every day, the pain in my body left. After two or three months, I had developed an organic vegetable garden. Other prisoners began helping me. We started selling vegetables, and then we were making salads every day. The garden was very therapeutic.

The garden was also our way to bond. We shared the produce with everyone, even the guards. We told everyone about organic farming. I was telling my prison mates that these were healthy vegetables we could raise ourselves. The garden opened up more possibilities. We had been dependent on aid from outside, but now we were helping ourselves, creating something with our hands. People have this idea that manual labor is something shameful, but it is much more demeaning to beg. Working is better.

This same attitude expanded into other projects. I found a sewing machine that was in poor condition, so I had it repaired and we started sewing. I didn't know how to sew, so I asked somebody who knew. We learned and people started bringing us clothes to sew and repair.

Next we tried cooking. When people would visit, I would ask them to donate things to help us cook and generate funds for our group.

Prison walls, iron walls, and barbed wire can only imprison the body—not our minds, our thoughts, and what we stand for. Wherever we are, even if we are in prison, we can still be agents of change. That is very important. When you are in jail, you can easily succumb to self-pity. But if you open yourself up, you see that your fellow prisoners are just ordinary people. Maybe they have committed crimes, but now they are here. As people, they have dignity.

So we started conversing inside the jail. I said that maybe we could meet every Saturday and talk about what we want to do and the tasks we have to accomplish. Maybe we could have some discussions about women's rights. I think this was a way to raise the level of consciousness of the prisoners. In jail, people constantly think of bad things. Maybe the role of political prisoners is to tell the other prisoners about our lives. Jail is a small prison, but there's an even bigger prison outside.

Angie Ipong speaks on the state of human rights in the Philippines at the Church Center for the United Nations, March 20, 2012. She gave testimony, along with Bishop Felixberto Calang (center) of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (or the Philippine Independent Church), and Bishop Reuel Marigza, vice chairperson of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) and general secretary of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). PHOTO: PONG JAVIER/NAFAUM



**Jeffrey:** Outside the Philippines, the island of Mindanao is often seen as a place of conflict between Muslims and Christians. The Muslims are painted as terrorists, and that's why there's a war. Tell me about the relationship between Christians and Muslims at the community level in Mindanao. How do you see the future of that relationship?

**Ipong:** The conflict in Mindanao was never a religious conflict. I have seen many areas where Muslims and Christians were living together peacefully. Where the Muslims are struggling against others, it's the military they oppose, not the Christians.

We have much to learn from the struggles of the Muslims. From the beginning, they struggled against the Spaniards, then against all kinds of oppressors. Their struggles are legitimate. What they want is self-determination.

**Jeffrey:** In Mindanao and other places in the Philippines, there are conflicts today over mining, especially since the 1995 mining law was passed. You have urged the Congress to replace that law with the People's Mining Bill. Do you see this whole conflict over resource extraction as symbolic of larger struggles about who controls sovereignty and who controls wealth?

**Ipong:** You know, that has always been the problem—the control of resources in the Philippines. Mindanao has rich resources. But, from the beginning, we've had conflicts around the banana plantations, then the pine-apple plantations, and now with mining. Mindanao is very rich in minerals. Practically half of the island has already been given away in concessions to the mining industry, which extracts resources and exports them to the United States, or Canada, or Europe. Mining companies get a lot of return on their investment, but they shove the indigenous people off their lands. The people of the Philippines are left with a devastated, polluted environment.

The struggle against big mining is representative of the struggle for control of the whole Philippine economy. If you control the economy, then you control practically everything, including the political and cultural spheres. The mining industry is quick to declare, "You want us out, but we have built schools and health clinics." But that is not enough. They only do that to mask other interests. All these mining industries that do not help us must leave.

I am not the only one speaking this way. Many in the church, such as Sister Stella Matutina, speak the same way. The mining industry is a microcosm of the whole economy of the Philippines, where many important industries are controlled by foreigners. If that doesn't change, we will never

be able to develop. We will always be export-oriented and import-dependent. We export resources, and we buy back expensive imports. As long as the economy remains that way—as long as the Philippines remains agricultural and does not industrialize—we will never develop.

President [Benigno] Aquino III says the economy is growing, but most of that is from the Overseas Foreign Workers (OFWs), who are working abroad and sending home their remittances. The country gets billions of dollars from their labor. But OFWs do not help industry grow in the Philippines. We are importing goods from Vietnam and Thailand. We have to start developing our own industries; otherwise, our economy will remain controlled by foreigners. If we can industrialize our country, then those overseas Filipinos can come home. We will have work for them here. And the Philippines will prosper.

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*The Rev. Paul Jeffrey is a United Methodist missionary serving as a photo-journalist and communicator in The United Methodist Church. Angie Ipong is a human rights activist and community organizer who has worked for the Filipino people's rights since before the time of martial law. She worked as a lay missionary with the Mission Society of the Philippines. Later, she studied organic agriculture at the Asian Rural Institute in Japan and, upon her return, was a founding member of Mugna (Create) Farm. Currently, she is the Secretary General for the Society of Ex-detainees Against Retention and Arrest (SELDA).*



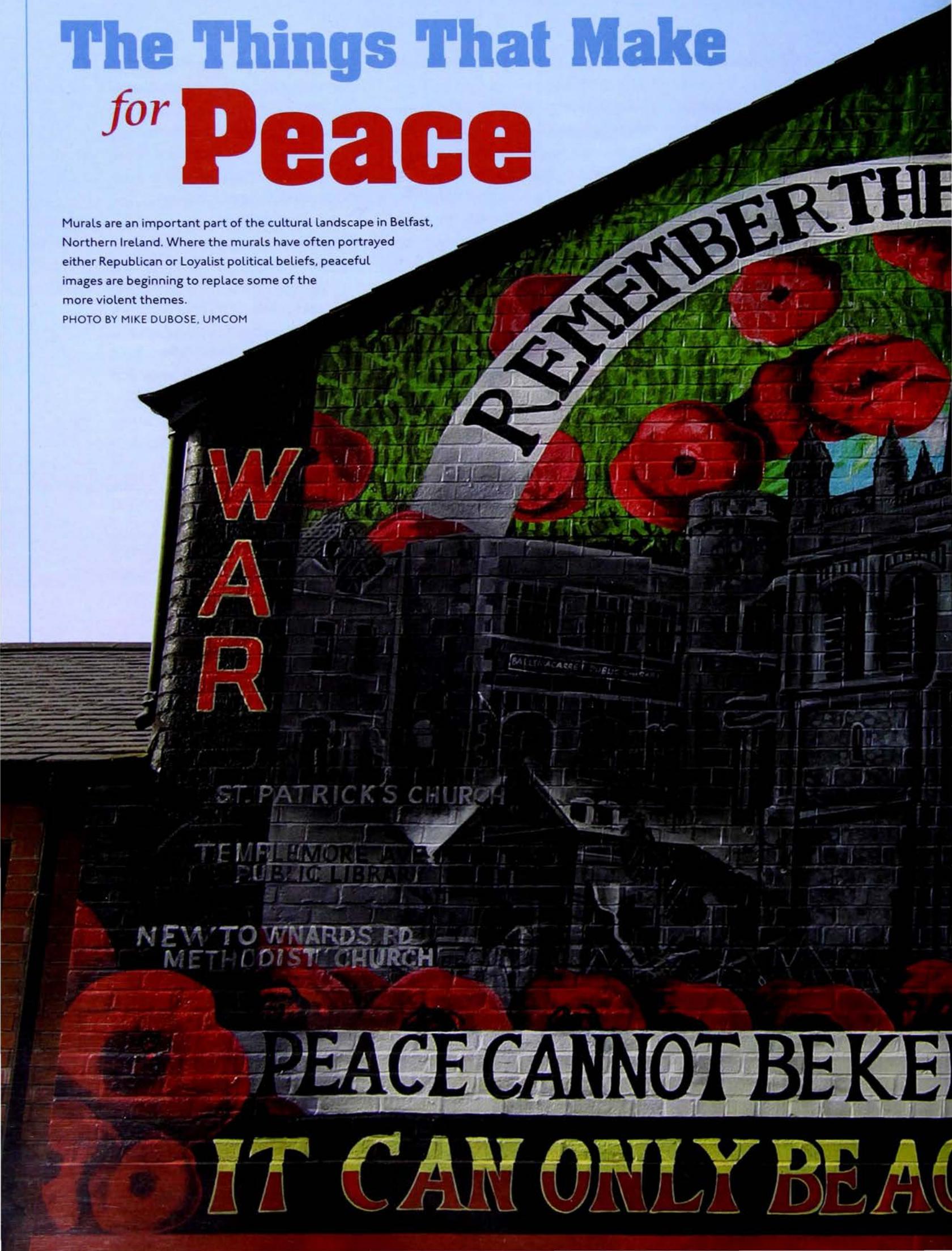
Clifford Pauley is a United Methodist Mission Intern serving with the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute in Davao, Philippines.

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

# The Things That Make *for* **Peace**

Murals are an important part of the cultural landscape in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Where the murals have often portrayed either Republican or Loyalist political beliefs, peaceful images are beginning to replace some of the more violent themes.

PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE, UMCOM



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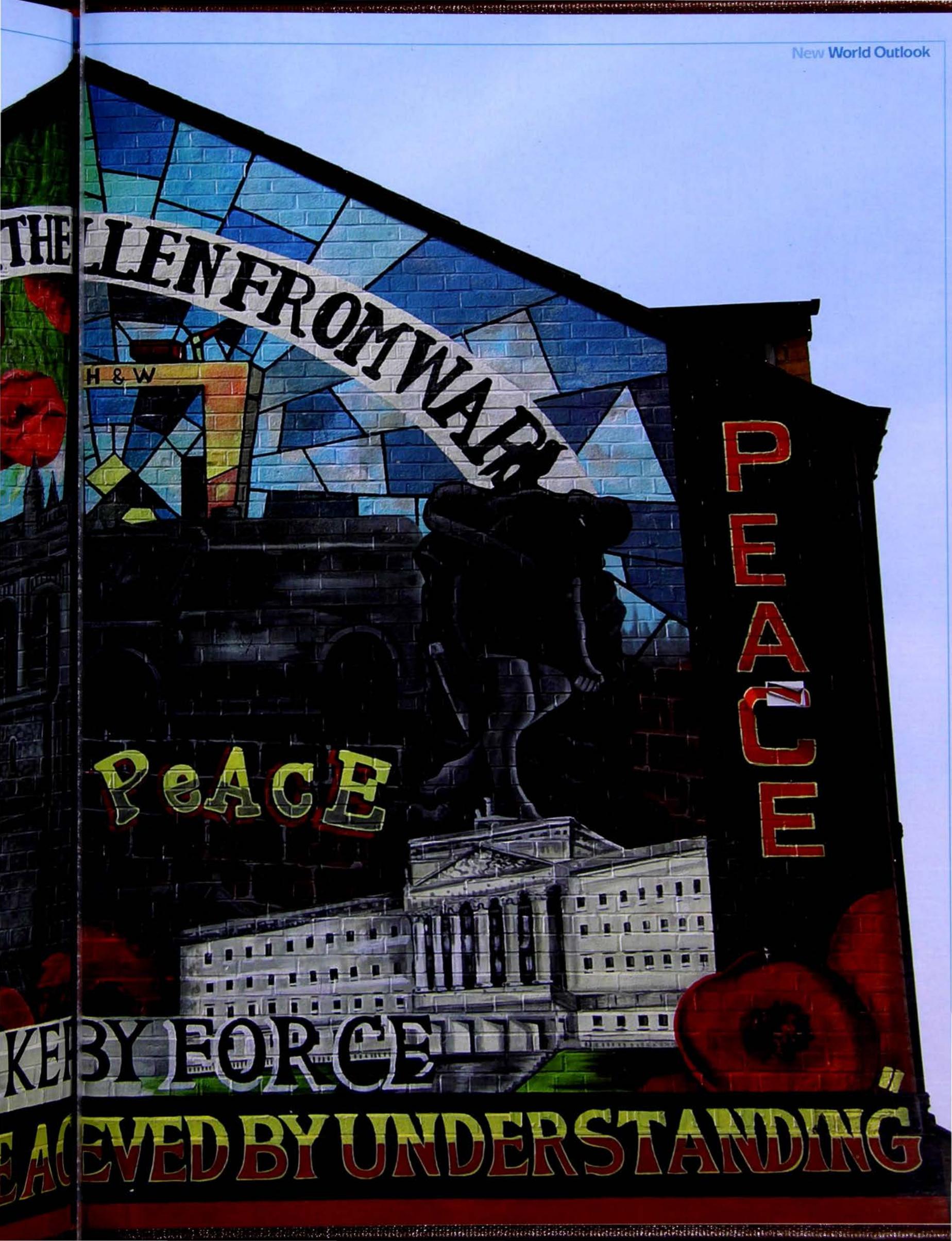
H & W

PEACE

PEACE

KEY BY FORCE

PEACE BY UNDERSTANDING





Residents of the indigenous village of San Fernando, on the southern Philippines island of Mindanao, fled their home on March 14, 2012, shortly after the March 5 assassination of Jimmy Liguyon, their barangay captain. Liguyon was killed by a paramilitary squad led by Aldy Salusad, which was angered by Liguyon's refusal to sign papers ceding the community's land to a large mining company.

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

# No Shortcuts for Peace

## Working for Human Rights in the Philippines

An interview with Norma Dollaga by Christie R. House

**Christie House:** Norma, as General Secretary for the Ecumenical Center for Development, what can you tell us about that organization?

**Norma Dollaga:** The Ecumenical Center for Development is the English name of the organization I work for. Its Filipino name is *Kasimbayan*. In Tagalog, *Kapatiran* means brotherhood, sisterhood, or fellowship. *Simbayan* is the church for the people, since *bayan* means people. So this, literally, is

I have to meditate late in the evening and allow myself to cry. I think that is strength—allowing ourselves to cry and weep—because I'm afraid if we do not cry, we will be numb to the situation.

—Norma Dollaga

the Fellowship of Church People for the People.

**House:** Are multiple faith groups involved?

**Dollaga:** We are generally talking about Protestants from different denominations in the Philippines. There are a few Roman Catholic members, but most members are from Protestant churches. Membership is made up of individual church members who would like to express their faith through justice and peace ministries.

Kasimbayan started after former president Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in the Philippines (1972-1986). The ecumenical movement was strengthening then because of the people's struggle. The faithful were asking: "What is the role of our faith, given this oppressive rule?"

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) sponsored a conference that gave birth to the Ecumenical Center for Development. This was a time in the Philippine ecumenical movement when Roman Catholics and Protestants could come together—not only with one another but also with the non-religious: the farmers and the peasants. This was something powerful.

**House:** Can you tell me a little bit about the peace aspect of the organization's work?

**Dollaga:** Building peace with justice is at the heart of our existence. Generally, our work for peace is done in a multifaceted way. Kasimbayan is part of a group called "Pilgrims for Peace," in which different religious and nonreligious organizations are calling for the government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines



Religious leaders lead a march in Davao on March 12, 2003, to repudiate the March 4 terrorist bombing of the Davao airport. The government quickly blamed Muslim separatists for the blast, but some suggested the Philippine military may have been behind the bombing.

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

(NDFP) to continue their official Peace Talks. [Editor's note: The NDFP is a coalition of groups seeking reform in the Philippines. Its founding members were part of the Communist Party. For more than 20 years, the NDFP has been joined by trade unions, indigenous peoples seeking autonomy, and other revolutionary organizations seeking change from the government.]

The major agenda of the talks is vital to the lives of the Filipino people. We, the faith-based community, want peace. Pilgrims for Peace is pushing both the government and the NDFP to talk, no matter how arduous that might be. Both sides find reasons to suspend the talks between them. We still believe that peace is not only possible, but necessary.

There are four agenda items for the Peace Talks. One item has been agreed upon: the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Laws. This agreement states that, whenever there is a violation of human rights

on either side—by the New People's Army of the National Democratic Front (NPA) or the army of the Philippine government—theoretically a case will be opened and filed with both parties through the Joint Monitoring Committee. Then, both parties will review the case.

Of course, when the Peace Talks have been suspended, it is difficult for the two sides to conduct a review and proceed with other substantive agenda items. Kasimbayan and its ecumenical partners assist the victims of human rights violations through ecumenical forums in coordination with the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. I think the NCCP is deeply committed to human rights work.

We also try to promote the writing of testimonies, Bible studies, and reflections, which we then circulate. We feel this articulation through statement is very important. I think the stories of the people strengthen our resolve to pursue the Peace Talks.



Norma Dollaga (far left) interviews a villager as part of a fact-finding mission team in the Philippines.

PHOTO: COURTESY KASIMBAYAN

**House:** Concerning political prisoners, it seems that the ones who have no advocates—no one asking about them, no one trying to visit—are the ones who are likely to be detained longer or to disappear altogether.

**Dollaga:** There is an organization of political prisoners called “SELDA.” <http://seldapilipinas.wordpress.com/> [Paul Jeffrey’s interview with SELDA’s Secretary General, Angie Ipong, can be found on p. 20.] In Tagalog, *Samahan ng Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto*. We visit political prisoners and campaign for church members to visit them, but doing so is quite difficult. The government denies that these prisoners are being held for their political views. In most cases, trumped-up charges have been made against them. They may be accused of anything from property damage to murder.

That is one of the issues in the Peace Talks. Theoretically, members from the revolutionary side who are engaged in the Peace Talks have immunity from imprisonment as specified

in the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees. Unfortunately, what happens is the government slaps them with trumped-up charges. So the NDFP is saying: “Hey, we have an agreement. Why are you arresting our members?” And the government is saying: “No, these are not political cases; these are criminal cases.” That is the main reason for the recess in the talks.

As I mentioned, it is difficult even to visit the political prisoners. I was part of a church team organized to visit some of them around Christmastime. The problem is, as a visitor, you feel

harassed when searched. The prison officials make you remove all your clothes. It didn’t matter that we were deaconesses and church leaders.

**House:** It sounds like they were making sure you didn’t come back.

**Dollaga:** Yes, this was a way to discourage us. And all the food we brought for the Christmas meal had to be searched. They just dug through it roughly. Even so, we are continuing the campaign for visits as part of our efforts to free all political prisoners.

**House:** What other issues does Kasimbayan work on?

**Dollaga:** We also support the people by petitioning the government for just land reform. Currently, the biggest environmental concern in the Philippines is the mining issue. Kasimbayan belongs to the Stewards of Creation, a formation of faith-based communities that advocate against large-scale and other exploitative mining. Specifically, we are

advocating for the repeal of the Mining Act of 1995, because it gives the big mining companies so many privileges and opportunities to plunder the earth. As Stewards of Creation, we are mandated by our faith to care for the Creation and to recognize the primacy of people’s lives over the market value of trade. So in our mandate for peace, we believe there is no peace when the environment is being destroyed.

**House:** I understand that the land which many of the mines are sitting on belongs to indigenous peoples, and that many indigenous people are being driven out and displaced.

**Dollaga:** Yes. One economist is quoted as asking: “Is it a geographic accident that all of these mining applications and explorations are in the sites where there are indigenous communities?” Many groups believe that their communities are highly militarized because they oppose the mining corporations.

**House:** When you say that an area is “militarized,” what do you mean?

**Dollaga:** Military personnel move into an area to regulate the activities of normal living in the communities. For example, in one of the conferences we had with Moro women, they said that they have to ask permission from the military to go and tend their own farms. The women have to ask, because the men are always suspected of being revolutionaries, or rebels, or terrorists. There are some reports from the region that military personnel are staying in the houses and even in schools—they just move in. So that is what it means to be militarized.

It is quite difficult to fight this legally. The kind of testimony that I am giving you would not be valid in court. Statements must be written,

signed, and presented on the right forms. This is the reason for our fact-finding missions.

**House:** Can you tell me about the fact-finding missions that you have been on?

**Dollaga:** When there are killings and other human rights violations in the indigenous communities, an invitation issued by the region will be sent out to human rights and faith-based organizations to come and investigate. We interview witnesses to gather data. Then we translate the data into the form of an affidavit. If you want to fight legally, you have to be legal in the process. We human rights advocates in the Philippines understand the difference between actual truth and legal truth. When there is no affidavit, it doesn't mean that a violation didn't happen.

When we make an analysis of a legal battle, we have to consider the

economic situation of the people. Some cannot share in the fact-finding or give testimony because they are afraid. In the Philippines, even the lawyers and the journalists are in danger. So we have to gather strength from one another to document what is happening.

We used to think of these violations as happening only in the rural provinces. But recently, we had to organize a funeral for a poor urban woman with 10 children who was a leader in the fight against the demolition of houses in her community. She was killed right in front of her house in Manila.

Kasimbayan, through its network of human rights groups and environmentalists, creates venues for Christians to discover what is happening. It is important to consider where the church members are coming from. Most of the local churches are not ready for this—sometimes

simply because they don't know what is going on. We are hosting integration work, encouraging young people and church workers. If they want to know what is happening, we will take them to visit the mining communities and the indigenous people so that they can learn from them directly.

*Chrisie R. House is the Editor of New World Outlook. Norma Dollaga is a deaconess with The United Methodist Church in the Philippines. She both attended and taught at Harris Memorial College in the Philippines, founded by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. She is currently the chairperson of Church and Society for the Philippines Conference and Women's Coordinator for Religion and Culture. Her current appointment is as General Secretary of the Ecumenical Center for Development (in Tagalog, Kasimbayan).*

## How to Be a Light Traveler by Norma Dollaga

**I** have been on many fact-finding missions, and they have taught me a lot:

- How not to forget the things you should be carrying from your place of origin and back.
- How to listen to people's accounts and remember their stories beyond the facts you want to gather.
- How to operate while following the rules.
- How to ask the right questions politely and either seek permission to write down what you hear or develop a strong memory.
- How to blend with the people and respect their culture.
- How to let the victims, witnesses, and community members know that you are there to stand by them.
- How not to expect that meals will be always available.
- How to adapt your body to sleep on a bench, municipal hall space, or in any nook where you can rest your back and head—or how not to sleep at all.
- How to forget the comforts of life you have known.
- How to adapt to sudden changes of plans and not be fussy when things do not turn out as expected.
- How to encourage people to tell their stories and express the things they are usually not allowed to divulge.
- When and how to hold back your tears, as well as when and how to weep.
- How to take care of the data gathered and at times stuck in the most hidden pockets of your backpack as



A fact-finding mission team makes its way to a remote village in Mindanao. PHOTO: COURTESY KASIMBAYAN

protection from rain or confiscation by the military.

- And, most of all, how to value people's stories and keep them in your heart like sacred Scripture.

# Christians Seeking Coexistence in the Land of Jesus' Birth

The once-elegant Palestinian village of Lifta, whose inhabitants were expelled by Israelis in 1948, today sits like a ghost town surrounded by freeways and apartment complexes in the middle of Jerusalem, a symbol of a past life that many Palestinian refugees refuse to forget. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

An interview with Alex Awad by Christie R. House

**The Rev. Alex Awad is a missionary with The United Methodist Church and a Palestinian Christian serving as a pastor in the land of his birth. This interview was conducted during General Conference 2012, in Tampa, Florida.**

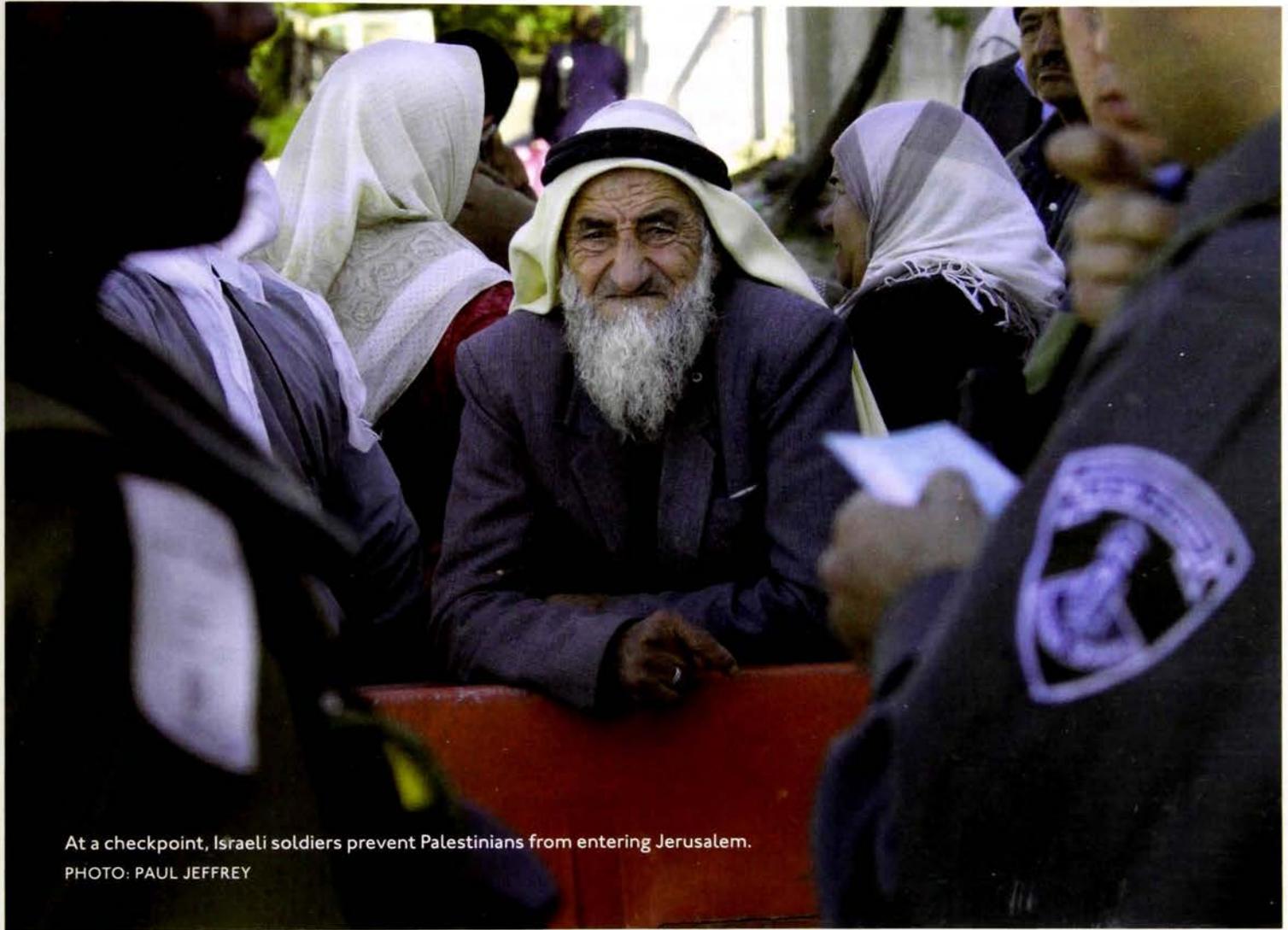
**Christie R. House:** Alex, I have written about many topics over my years reporting for The United Methodist Church, and some of those topics have been controversial. But when I publish a story calling for justice for the Palestinian people, the number of negative responses I receive is staggering. Dozens of critical emails arrive from people I have never met. The writers (who generally are not members of The UMC) tell me my story has no logical basis because there *are* no Palestinian people. *Palestinian* is an invented term, they say. So I have to ask you a question that I'm sure you've answered many times. You come from a family of

Palestinian Christians who lived in East Jerusalem before modern Israel was created. How do you make sense of this claim that you and your family are not Palestinian?

**Alex Awad:** The rationale for denying our existence is this: If you don't exist, then you can't own land. Since we don't exist as a people, therefore we cannot own land, and so the settlers are free to take our land. There is a myth going around—subscribed to by many Americans, former congressman Newt Gingrich among them—that the Palestinian people were invented by Yasser Arafat. This is a cry against history and against the

reality on the ground. It is a claim that can even be dismissed by archeology.

Most of the old homes in Palestine are Palestinian homes. Most of the old mosques or churches are Palestinian mosques or churches. Obviously they are not Jewish mosques or churches. The land itself cries out: "This is Palestinian land." That does not mean that we dismiss the desire of the Jewish people to live in this land. There is nothing wrong with their also living in this land. The problem is the radicalism that says: "This land is all ours and no other people should exist on it." Would it not be better to say: "These people have been living in this land."



At a checkpoint, Israeli soldiers prevent Palestinians from entering Jerusalem.  
PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

We come to the land from Europe, and we will learn to live with them and share it with them.”

It is just amazing how people who have suffered so much in Europe—because of injustice, bigotry, and anti-Semitism—come from Europe and apply the same immoral behavior that was used against them. It is very hard to understand.

On the other side, there are also radical Palestinians who want the whole country. I totally disagree with them. Radicalism on either side is wrong. Coexistence is what we want. We are saying to the Israelis: Take 78 percent of historic Palestine. Leave us with only 22 percent—the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. We are willing to live with the settlers as long as the Jewish settlers in the

West Bank and Gaza Strip are willing to live under a Palestinian government. There are many Arabs in Israel who live under an Israeli government.

To have settlers in the heart of Palestine who pledge allegiance to Israel rather than to Palestine—the state in which they live—will never work. And for Israelis to take most of the country and leave the Palestinians in refugee camps—that doesn't work either, because the number of Palestinians today is almost equal to the number of Jews in the country. You can't pen half the population up in ethnic camps. The white South African apartheid regime tried it and they failed. It will fail in Palestine. And I think it will fail sooner than people think.

**House:** The United Methodist Church is opening a new office in Palestine—or, will it be in Jerusalem?

**Awad:** It is going to be at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute outside Bethlehem. Actually, according to the current Israeli government, it is in Jerusalem. But it is only about a kilometer from where I live. The Rev. Kristen Brown is the United Methodist missionary assigned to the office there.

**House:** How is your work going at the Bethlehem Bible College?

**Awad:** Our work has really been very fruitful for my wife, Brenda, and me. The Bible College is flourishing. We have more students, a new building,

and new programs in Galilee and in the Gaza Strip. We have hosted two conferences in the last couple of years on what we call "Christ at the Checkpoint." United Methodists have participated in these conferences. They were very successful events in which we invited people to come join Palestinians—at the checkpoints they must pass through to go from one area to another. This way, others see the reality on the ground. We visit the Israeli settlements and the Palestinian refugee camps and then study the Bible for guidance. These experiences have been life-changing for many people. This is how we contribute to the educational process so that the church knows what is happening in Israel and Palestine.

**House:** Are you having more success at getting United Methodists to see some of the Palestinian lands and people when they come to visit the Holy Land?

**Awad:** Yes. I think more and more Methodists are saying: "We don't want to see only the dead stones. We want to see the living stones. We want to really know the people of the land and the challenges they face." And so there are people visiting us as well as visiting the Israelis—trying to hear the whole story.

**House:** In a "60 Minutes" show that aired in April 2012, the topic was the disappearance of Palestinian Christians from the Holy Land.

**Awad:** Yes, this is a reality. My own family can serve as an example. Most of my brothers and sisters live either in Europe or in the United States. If you urge them to go back home, they say: "Go back to what? Look at the

political situation. Look at the economic situation. We can't find a job or otherwise progress there." As long as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are occupied by Israel, there is not much hope for the Christian church there.

We have to change the equation. We have to say to Israel: "If you are saying publicly, internationally, in every forum that you are fair



Nathmeya Abdel Fattah, a woman in the Daheisheh Refugee Camp in Bethlehem, holds the key to her home, which she lost more than 60 years ago when she was displaced by the establishment of the state of Israel.

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

and good to the Christian people, follow your words with actions. Let Palestinian Christians who were born there and who lived there all of their lives—let them go back to their homes." I cannot, now, live in the Holy Land as a Palestinian. I go there as a Palestinian-American with an American passport. If I go

as a Palestinian, I cannot gain entry. So, the only way I can minister with The United Methodist Church in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, in the land of my birth, is with an American passport.

If I were Jewish, I would have a law to protect me: the Law of Return. Any Jew living anywhere in the world—even one who has no connections with the land at all—is welcome in the country. Jews are instantly given Israeli citizenship and they become citizens—while we, who have lived all our lives on the land and whose ancestors lived there for at least 1,400 years—are now treated as strangers in the land, as people who do not belong here.

That's what I want to tell to the church. The church should be the conscience of humanity. The church should speak out against injustice, wherever it may be. We cannot say: "Israelis are our allies and friends, so we can ignore their injustices." If we, as Palestinians, have done something wrong, the church should speak out and say that we are wrong. But if the Israelis also do something wrong, the church must speak out about that too. I think one of the problems is that Christians around the world really don't know what is going on in Israel and Palestine, because the news media do not tell the whole story. For example, in the skirmishes of the last six to eight years, 100 Palestinians have been killed for every one Israeli who has been killed. But when an Israeli is killed, the media show the whole family—the man's wife and children—whereas a Palestinian who is killed is only a statistic, if the story even makes the news at all. As a result, most Americans are not getting the real picture.

**House:** If you are born to a Palestinian family in Bethlehem, the West Bank, or the Gaza Strip, what does your passport say? Though you were born in an Israeli-controlled territory, it wouldn't say that you are Israeli.

**Awad:** No, you would not be an Israeli citizen, but you could have an ID that the Israelis gave you and a magnetic card. Whenever you went through an Israeli checkpoint,

Palestinian passport, they would say, "Fill out an application." The completed application would then have to go through the Israeli authorities. Only when the Israeli authorities gave the green light could I receive my passport. This is part of the Oslo Agreement.

**House:** So, it is entirely possible that you can't really travel, because you have no international ID. This would

**House:** And there is really no way to return?

**Awad:** No, there is no way to go back. Israeli policy does not favor the return of refugees.

**House:** But you do have people—such as young people coming to Bethlehem Bible School who are studying to be pastors—who are willing to stay and take up that work in Palestine?

**Awad:** Yes. We offer Christian education and ministry education. We are like a liberal arts Bible college. Also we have a master's degree program in Contextual Palestinian Theology. We now have close to 170 students in all of our branches.

**House:** And do you still pastor a church?

**Awad:** Yes. I serve as the pastor for the East Jerusalem Baptist Church, which is really an international interdenominational church. It is an English-speaking congregation. This is the only Christian church in the Middle East that uses United Methodist hymnals!



The Rev. Alex Awad and his wife, Brenda, serve as missionaries in Bethlehem and Jerusalem through the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries. Awad is Dean of Students at Bethlehem Bible College and pastor of East Jerusalem Baptist Church, an international and interdenominational congregation. Brenda works in the college's English administration office and serves as the development liaison. PHOTO: JOHN GOODWIN/UMNS

you would have to use both. The eyes of the soldier on guard would see the ID card, and the magnetic card would be checked electronically. You would be doubly checked. There are also cameras all over the place—extra surveillance that outside companies provide for Israel.

**House:** If you were to apply for a passport, to whom would you apply?

**Awad:** Well, you can apply for a Palestinian passport, but there is a catch. Israel decides who, among the Palestinians, can have a Palestinian passport. For example, if I went to the Palestinian authorities wanting a

be a violation of the Declaration of Human Rights, Article 15, which says that everyone has a right to a nationality and that no one should be arbitrarily deprived of that right.

**Awad:** The Israelis do this so that Palestinians in other countries—such as Jordan or Lebanon or Syria or anywhere in the world—cannot get a Palestinian passport. Only the Palestinians who live in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and who have an ID issued by Israel can get that Palestinian passport. Otherwise, if you are a Palestinian refugee in a Lebanese refugee camp, there is no way for you to receive a Palestinian passport.

*Christie R. House is the editor of New World Outlook magazine. The Rev. Alex Awad and his wife Brenda Awad are United Methodist missionaries. Rev. Awad serves as a professor and Dean of Students at the Bethlehem Bible College and as pastor of the East Jerusalem Baptist Church.*

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

East Jerusalem Baptist Church:  
<http://ejbc.wordpress.com>

Alex Awad's website:  
[www.alexawad.org](http://www.alexawad.org)



Clockwise from top left: Literacy I Class at BFC; Lunch break at the BFC; Bakery class at CESPRO—youth learn marketable skills to help them find work in Liberia's job market; Bill and his friends Kapard, AB, and James set up for carpentry class. PHOTOS: FRIDO KINKOLENGE



# Peace and Wholeness for the “Lost Generation” of Liberia’s Children



by Frido Kinkolenge

**I****N THIS DECADE FOLLOWING THEIR COUNTRY'S CIVIL WAR,** Liberians are desperately hoping that real peace is close at hand. We see many hopeful signs in the lives of the children and youth of the “lost generation”—those who were forced to serve as child soldiers. Many survivors lost their parents and other family members in the fighting. While still children, they were taught to murder. Then, after being thus exploited, they were abandoned to an ocean of neglect and suffering.

We are aware that conflict, ignorance, poverty, and economic injustice are all too real for these children and youth. These conditions stand

in the way of our collective United Methodist effort to see the children develop in self-sustainable ways on a path to lasting peace.

Both the Children Empowered for Sustainability Program (CESPRO) in Kakata, Liberia, and the Brighter Future Children Rescue Center (BFC) in Buchanan, Liberia, were developed by The United Methodist Church in Liberia to address the needs of children and youth who were victimized by the civil war. Because we seek paths that end hostility both in children and toward children, while unifying the community, we work tirelessly during the school year to re-train the children's minds. We draw

them away from violence by engaging them in a variety of peaceful and productive activities.

The basic meaning behind “peace” is “wholeness,” which encompasses attributes like compassion, health, justice, and love. Seeking peace involves working actively for wholeness. As long as these former child soldiers live in brokenness of body, mind, or spirit, then no one within the community can experience true peace.

## **In Training for A New Life**

While working with these students, I discovered that some 18- to 20-year-olds stopped attending school when



BFC staff member Alex teaches the advanced carpentry trainees. PHOTO: FRIDO KINKOLENGE

they were in the fourth grade. To bridge the gap between their chronological age and school grade level, I have introduced the A+ Learning Program, with a curriculum for levels K through 12. This course of study, tailored to students' educational level rather than their age, will help many successfully reenter the public school system. Over time, it will prepare them to take and pass the Liberian National Examination, enabling them to earn a high school diploma.

Over the past year—by the grace of God, the healing spirit of Jesus, and gifts from the wider United Methodist family—these young people have accomplished a great deal. Food, clothing, and financial resources provided by the church enabled the Liberian UMC to send children and youth to the academic and training programs of both BFC and CESPRO. There, they were taught literacy and math and received psycho-social counseling. We were able to organize devotionals and related spiritual activities for them. We offered different workshops and seminars

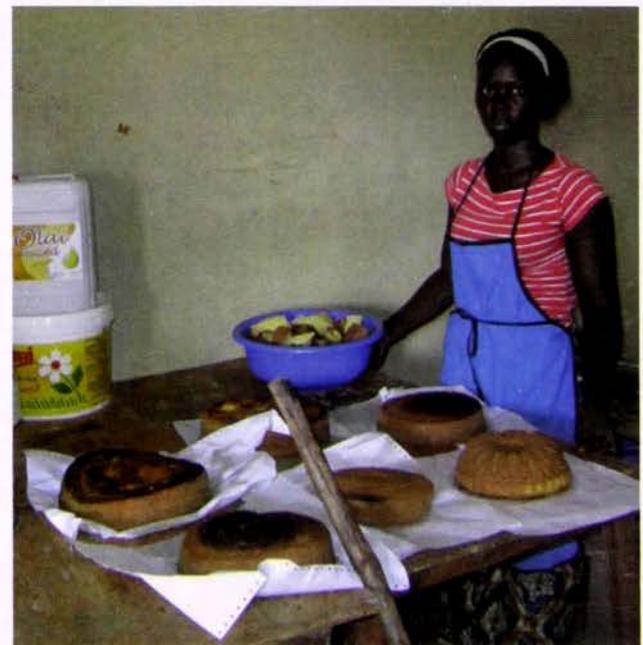
during cross-group sessions, in which local and foreign friends presented programs on substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, family planning, and conflict management.

This year, we created a new poultry program, teaching students to raise chickens. We expect that the program will not only impart new skills but eventually will raise funds, give the students economic incentives, and enrich their diets at the BFC Rescue Center. In the same vein, we are building a fish pond and hatchery that will supply fish—further enabling the students to grow what they eat and to eat what they grow. We have revitalized the microenterprise program that we experimented with in 2010 and 2011. It now includes a small restaurant, a beauty salon, a tailoring shop, and a

corner for textile and soap-making sales. This, we believe, will help lead the youth to the wholeness we seek.

Also this year, thanks to donations of tools and supplies, the youth have been involved in a volunteer work day to get the school ready for classes. They helped to clean up the campus grounds, learning to use garden tools and the power mower. This way of rendering service in God's name is an important part of their religious education. It's a new form of discipleship for them—forming a work team that volunteers assistance without expecting a prize in return.

Some students erupted into violent outbursts last year. The stain of their past sins is still haunting many of them—those who were forced to use drugs and taught to kill. But we have taught them that Jesus does more than just cover our sins—he removes them! We thank God for forgiveness as we see these children and youth working together, painting and clearing, to prepare the center for a new school year. These are young people who used to kill other



Bendu displays her bakery products at the Children Empowered for Sustainability Program (CESPRO), in Kakata, Liberia.

PHOTO: COURTESY CESPRO

young people! Now, working together to build a team helps them overcome their differences as they continue on the road to recovery and productive lives.

When we announced that we were recruiting students for the new school year at BFC and CESPRO, young people came in great numbers seeking opportunities to enroll. They have heard that these centers are havens of hope, help, and peace—places where they will find warmth and counsel, be trained in a trade, and learn how to gain a good life and livelihood by their own efforts. Even after the 700 copies of our registration form were given out and were

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” That is what the graduating trainees at BFC understand. They mount posters around the center affirming, “Jesus Christ Is Our Hope!” In Jesus Christ, we see a peace that goes beyond the uneasy quiet between conflicts that led first to the rejection of these children and youth and then to their difficult reintegration into their communities. Their communities had rejected them—and sometimes their own families did—out of fear of the youth and of the atrocities they were taught to commit.

who are unjustly denied wholeness. During this school year, they are being trained in skills that will help them collect the broken pieces of their lives. Graphic arts, soap making, cosmetology, textile tie-dye, manual and electronic typing, agriculture, carpentry, pastry baking, computer literacy—any of these departments may provide an avenue to recovery for youth in the program. In addition, selected children attended the A+ curriculum at BFC and CESPRO to improve their knowledge in language, math, and phonics, in the hope that they might advance to higher education.

Where poverty and injustice deny emotionally wounded children the peace for which they hope, the church provides healing. It teaches the ignorant, shows the light of devotion to those in darkness, and trains unskilled children and youth to follow avenues that will help them become instruments of peace. The successful trainees are awarded a certificate attesting to their completion of the nine-month training programs at BFC and CESPRO.

We are grateful to God whose grace has empowered us anew for the task of service to the broken world of children and youth in Liberia. In Christ human brokenness is restored to wholeness—physically, mentally, socially, economically, emotionally, and spiritually.



Missionary Frido Kinkolenge (first row standing, third from left) poses with the student volunteers who helped to prepare the BFC for the new semester. PHOTO: COURTESY BFC

completed, applicants kept coming in waves to the centers. Our capacity cannot exceed 230 persons. So I had to talk to some of the youth and convince them, calmly, to come back and seize this golden opportunity next year.

### Wholeness for the Broken

During this Advent season, the Apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:13-14: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

In Christ, the dividing wall of hostility against them is falling down. A Peace Builders’ Club program has helped to build relationships between the youth and their communities. This effort has been reinforced by the Community Radio Program, which is led by children and youth trained at the Better Future for Children Rescue Center. The BFC also hosts an annual community peace festival.

In a broken world, the church, as God’s people, must form a healing presence for children and youth

*Frido N. Kinkolenge is a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries and the EmK Weltmission (United Methodist Church in Germany). He serves as the director of children’s ministries in the Liberia Annual Conference and as project manager for the EmK Weltmission in Liberia. Kinkolenge’s particular focus is on the ex-combatant Liberian children and their reintegration into the community. He is originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.*

# Liberian Women Are Key Players in Liberia's Peace Process

**L**eymah Gbowee, a social worker and a member of the Lutheran Church in Liberia, formed the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) in July 2002, along with another Lutheran laywoman, Comfort Freeman. Liberia's long civil war had raged since 1989; and although Charles Taylor's term as president ended some of the conflict with a peace treaty in 1995, rebel and government skirmishes continued. Conflict diamonds fueled Taylor's administration, and the practice of forcing children and youth to serve as soldiers continued. Severe poverty, mass displacements because of fighting, and lack of food, clean water, and other basic necessities marked daily life for the Liberian people. By 1999, Liberia had descended back into civil war.

The Women in Peacebuilding Network issued this statement in 2002: "In the past we were silent, but after being killed, raped, dehumanized, and infected with diseases, and after watching our children and families destroyed, war has taught us that the future lies in saying NO to violence and YES to peace! We will not relent until peace prevails." They began by organizing women to hold a peaceful demonstration daily at the local fish market.

Inspired by the Christian women, Asatu Bah Kenneth, the Assistant Minister for Administration and Public Safety of the Liberian Ministry of Justice and president of the Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association, formed the Liberian Muslim Women's Organization to work for peace. The Christian and Muslim organizations joined together to form Women in Liberia Mass Action for Peace. Gbowee organized a network of women peace builders in nine of Liberia's 15 counties. Muslim and Christian women worked together in collaborative demonstrations and peace efforts.

President Charles Taylor refused to meet with the women and sent his soldiers to beat them. But the women stood together across ethnic and religious lines and refused to back down. In 2003, Liberia's warring factions met for peace negotiations in Accra, Ghana, but talks were stalled and nearly ended when the parties could not come to an agreement. The women of the Mass Action, who were peacefully demonstrating outside, entered the hall and refused to let anyone pass until an agreement had been reached.



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, president of Liberia (left) and Leymah Gbowee, a Lutheran social worker, received the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize. President Sirleaf addresses the 2008 General Conference. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY. Leymah Gbowee speaks to guests at the Interchurch Center in New York, where she just happened to be when she learned of the award. PHOTO: FELIPE CASTILLO

Their story is chronicled in the documentary film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* ([www.praythediabacktohell.com](http://www.praythediabacktohell.com)). Charles Taylor, wanted on 17 counts of war crime, left the talks, resigned his presidency, and fled to Nigeria.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a United Methodist woman and Liberia's current president, has made great strides to ensure the country's peace and security. In her six-year tenure so far, she has been able to rebuild more than 800 miles of roads, reopen schools, and build strong relations with African and other international partners. \$16 billion has been invested in Liberia's mining, agriculture, and forestry sectors, and Sirleaf has secured more than \$4 billion in debt forgiveness. She has increased the national budget from \$80 million in 2006 to more than half a billion in 2011. Yet, owing to the persistence of poverty and hardship in the general population, her achievements have not always resonated in her home country.

Despite her leadership successes, President Johnson Sirleaf's second-term election in 2011 was a struggle. Numerically, she won by 90 percent, but the opposition candidate, Winston Tubman, orchestrated a boycott, refusing to accept the results of the run-off. This marred the legitimacy of the vote.

In 2011, Leymah Gbowee, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and a third peace-making woman, Tawakul Karman of Yemen, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

# Prosperity Candle: A New Fair-Trade Partner for UMCOR

by Christie R. House



PHOTO: HEBER VEGA/PROSPERITY CANDLE

"Prosperity Candle invests in women to build peace and prosperity around the world. Our mission is to support women in places of conflict and natural disaster to live above a living wage."

—Ted Barber, cofounder, Prosperity Candle

*At the 2012 General Conference, delegates and visitors to the Tampa convention were able to pick up a new fair-trade item at the exhibit booth of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)—a sweet-smelling, smooth candle in a tidy little tin bearing UMCOR's logo. UMCOR has partnered with a new company, Prosperity Candle, to bring more fairly traded items to the United Methodist constituency.*

*Here's why.*

**M**y parents' anniversary is in September and I was looking for a nice way to commemorate it. They don't need much; they are at the point in their lives when they are trying to divest themselves of stuff. If you've lived in a house more than five years, you know what I mean. Stuff starts to take over.

But my mother has always loved candles, and she is one of the few people I know who actually lights and uses them. And then I remembered the UMCOR partnership with Prosperity Candle.

Ordering took me all of about four minutes. The candle I picked out would be shipped to my parents in two days. Then I noticed a little card by the picture of the candle I had ordered. The card indicated who made the candle—Moo Koh Pav from Burma (now known as Myanmar, but Moo Koh prefers the more familiar name). As grace would have it, I had met Moo Koh when she came to our offices in New York with the Prosperity Candle founders, Siri Morley and Ted Barber.



**Left:** Moo Koh Paw makes candles at Prosperity Candle in Massachusetts. PHOTO: JUDITH SANTIAGO/UMCOR.

**Above:** Moo Koh sells candles at an event in Amherst, Massachusetts. She received her first paycheck from Prosperity Candle. PHOTO: COURTESY PROSPERITY CANDLE

### Moo Koh's First Paying Job

Prosperity Candle was meeting with June Kim of UMCOR, and June was hosting an information session, both live and by webcast. (Webcast is still available on You Tube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypF083U3DKI&feature=plcp>). Moo Koh spoke beautifully about her work with Prosperity Candle.

"I came from Burma through a Thailand refugee camp," Moo Koh explained. "But I was born in Thailand. When I was four years old, my grandma brought me to Burma. I grew up with my grandma in a small village. She had a big garden. I wish I could show everybody how lovely my grandmother's garden was. I miss her and I promised my grandma I would go back to her."

In Burma, Moo Koh attended the Karen Baptist Theological Seminary in Insein Township, Yangon. In 2005, she fled to Thailand to a refugee camp on the border. "We were afraid of the Burmese soldiers, because they were cruel to the villagers," she said. "They beat the men, raped the

girls, and after that they killed them without reason."

At first, this experience made Moo Koh want to become a rebel soldier so that she could fight the Burmese military. Her grandmother hadn't even let her speak Burma's official language. "Nobody spoke Burmese in our village," she said, "because they hated the Burmese soldiers." But in the refugee camp, instead of taking up arms, she turned to helping others. She became a volunteer pastor and Bible School teacher. In 2007, she was married in the refugee camp.

Moo Koh hadn't planned to come to the United States, she said, because she had promised her grandmother that she would return to Burma. Her husband's family made the decision to come to the United States. There was no chance of advancement in the Thai camps. "We didn't have the chance to go outside and look for a job because the Thai security caught us," she explained. "After we finished high school in the refugee camp, if we were not Thai citizens, we didn't have a chance to

go to college. We had to stop our education in the refugee camp."

In time, Moo Koh discovered that her grandmother had passed away. Her family's refugee status was accepted by the United Nations refugee relocation program and they moved to West Springfield, Massachusetts. Moo Koh and her husband now have three daughters. She discovered Prosperity Candle through Lutheran Social Services, the agency that had helped resettle her family in Massachusetts.

Prosperity Candle offered Moo Koh her first paying job. Now she makes candles for the company, and, in addition, oversees order fulfillment and candle shipping. (Maybe my timing was just right, but I received an email from Prosperity Candle within an hour of placing my order saying it had been shipped out to my parents' address.)

"I like to make candles because the candle gives light," Moo Koh reflected. "The light came from God. Jesus said: 'I am the light of the world' (John 8:12) and John 1:5 says:

‘The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.’”

### Help to Build a Business

Ted Barber, a cofounder of Prosperity Candle, says the company was created to address the problem of market access for women who were trying to develop businesses. “We not only provide training to women as entrepreneurs and leaders in their communities,” Barber explained, “but we also help ensure access to markets. That is the key—and often the missing component—that opens the door to opportunity.”

The founders of Prosperity Candle—Ted Barber, Siri Morley, and Amber Chan—chose candle making for very specific reasons. Candles are used everywhere in the world, so there is a global market. They are beautifully symbolic, as Moo Koh indicated, quoting the Bible. Candle-making supplies are available just about everywhere. And, since candle making is also a business that can grow quickly, a woman can scale it up and, in a short time, earn an income that is well above a living wage.

Candle making can also be accomplished in the safety of one’s own home. Since one of the goals of Prosperity Candle is to provide this

kind of opportunity to women in places of conflict, that was a key factor.

Ted Barber said that “scalability” was very important to the company. Its founders have seen women increase their earnings from \$2 a day, which is poverty level, to \$10 a day, which is a living wage, to \$50 or even \$100 a day, which enables them to prosper. That kind of income gives a woman the ability to help her family and other women in the community.

“We’re not just focused on a woman’s ability to survive in difficult circumstances,” said Barber, “we want her to thrive. What we’ve decided to focus on is the ability of a woman not just to gain skills but actually to put food on the table, buy medicines, and send her kids to school.”

Prosperity Candle, now in its third year, started its work with a pilot program for women in Iraq. Barber estimates that more than 100 Iraqi women—many of them widows—have been trained in candle making. He is not sure how many more might have been trained by other organizations using Prosperity Candle’s “Business in a Box” kit. This kit can be flown into communities in conflict and contains everything a woman needs to start her own candle-making

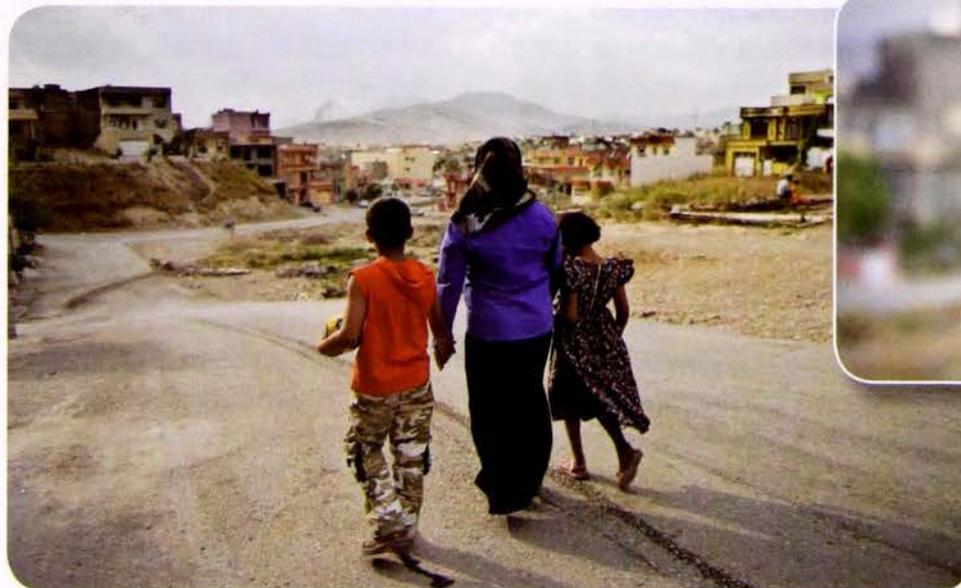
business. Other organizations have used this unique kit as a template to train still more women in Iraq.

One of the first four field testers for Prosperity Candle in Iraq was a woman named Nazahat. She had a strong interest in making candles and training participants. The mother of five children, Nazahat spends considerable time making candles in her home and has become a good trainer. Her dream is to develop a large exhibition with a wide variety of candles for sale. She hopes to reach a global market with her candles branded “N CANDLES.”

Nazahat is supportive of new entrepreneurs and helps them make good-quality candles for Prosperity Candle. She also has helped to create new samples and designs for candles in the local market by using simple, readily available items as molds. She has a strong entrepreneurial drive and she earned the equivalent of 3.5 times the minimum wage in Iraq during the pilot project in Baghdad.

### Both Profit and Nonprofit

Siri Morley—another cofounder of Prosperity Candle—says that, as a young business, the company is still working out the best way to accomplish its mission. Just recently, Prosperity Candle added a nonprofit business



Women in Iraq have received training and an opportunity to prosper in their own candle-making business with the help of Prosperity Candle.

PHOTOS: HEBER VEGA/PROSPERITY CANDLE

Nazahat, a Prosperity Candle trainer and creator, is a wife and mother of five children. She earned 3.5 times the minimum wage in Iraq during the Prosperity Candle pilot project.

PHOTO: HEBER VEGA/  
PROSPERITY CANDLE



section to its work. Morley serves as the nonprofit section's executive director. The company's theory is that the for-profit business will ensure market access and a connection to customers. The nonprofit arm will focus on the international and local work with women, making sure that women trained in candle making have an avenue to grow their businesses. Part of this goal is also providing the women with access to social support by partnering with on-the-ground organizations, such as UMCOR.

Morley said their first nonprofit venture will be to expand into Haiti, training 30 to 50 women in northern Haiti to make candles. "We have some retail partners that are very interested in Haitian candles," Morley said. "That's what has been pushing this part of the work forward.

We are very excited to be able to create jobs internationally in a place like Haiti, where there is great need for stable economic opportunity." Prosperity Candle is working with UMCOR and exploring UMCOR's networks in Haiti to get started.

In 2010, on the local front, Prosperity Candle began candle making at its Massachusetts site. Six women—who, like Moo Kho, came to the United States as refugees from Burma and Bhutan—make up

the work force. Many have received their first paychecks from the company. The ability to hire more women depends on the consumer market for their products. UMCOR's order of candles for General Conference was a great boon for the company. In addition to candles made in the United States and in Iraq, Prosperity Candle has worked to provide a market for Afghan women working in silk making and embroidery, Rwandan basket weavers, and Haitian stone cutters.

Every person who buys or receives a candle also receives another gift—the name of the woman who made it. It was UMCOR's idea to develop story cards that tell a little bit about the chandlers (candle makers). By visiting Prosperity Candle's website, customers can even send a message of support to their candle maker.

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

## How to Place an UMCOR Order with Prosperity Candle

Orders from Prosperity Candle can be placed online:

<http://www.prosperitycandle.com/> or by contacting the company directly by email: [customer@prosperitycandle.com](mailto:customer@prosperitycandle.com) or by phone: 413-727-3078.

Go to the shop button to see the line of products offered by Prosperity Candle. Any item will count toward an UMCOR order, not just the candles.

Once items are in your shopping cart, the website will ask for information to set up your account. On that account page is a line that reads, "Where did you hear about us?" Select the arrow in that line and it will offer a number of selections—one of which is UMCOR. Choose UMCOR and 10 percent of your order's cost will be earmarked for UMCOR and its ministry.

On the Prosperity Candle site are also stories and photos of the women who make up its work force. In addition, you can find out more about how the candles are made, the ingredients used, and the Prosperity Candle philosophy and business model.

**Have fun Christmas shopping!**



PHOTO: JUDITH SANTIAGO/UMCOR

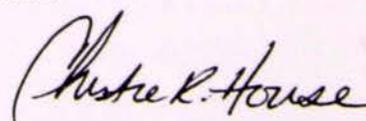
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 Christie R. House, Editor, October 1, 2012

## Murder of Philippine Child Brings Support for Cause of Indigenous Tribal Rights

by Elliott Wright, a freelance writer for Global Ministries.

The rights of indigenous people to control the use of their ancestral lands was endorsed by the chief mission executive of The United Methodist Church in the wake of the killing of the son of a Philippine tribal chief opposed to illegal mining in the territory of his people. "The United Methodist Church has a deep commitment to the rights of people to protect their ancestral lands from misuse. We honor those rights and also respect the earth and its resources that flow from God's good creation," said Thomas Kemper, general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries, making reference to official resolutions of the denomination.



Clifford Pauley is a United Methodist mission intern serving with the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute in Davao, Philippines. He also works with street children at the Maayong Pag-abot Center.

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

Eleven-year-old Jordan Manda was killed on September 4 as he rode on a motorbike behind his father, Timuay Locencio Manda, a chief of the Subanen people in the Bayog area of Mindanao, one of the main islands of the Philippines. Locencio—*timuay* is a title of respect—was wounded but not seriously injured. He is a major opponent of unlicensed mining in Subanen lands. Global Ministries is linked to the cause of the Subanen people through its mission partnership with the ecumenical Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute. The agency currently has a mission intern, Clifford Pauley, assigned to the institute for an 18-month period beginning in 2011. The Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute promotes peace and justice in situations of conflict and has a special focus at present on the Subanen situation.

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY



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CONNECTING THE  
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## One Year Later North Carolina Hurricane Survivors Need Help

by Susan Kim, a journalist and regular story contributor to UMCOR.

One year after Hurricane Irene tore through eastern North Carolina, hundreds of hurricane survivors are still waiting for home repairs.

In August 2011, Hurricane Irene lingered for nearly 36 hours over the North Carolina coastline, damaging and destroying thousands of homes. More than 35,000 people seeking aid for hurricane recovery registered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Case manager Donna Brader, who works at the Aurora United Methodist Disaster Center, said that for the first six months after Irene inundated their communities, people walked around in shock. "Now, they're thinking: Is anybody going to help me? We haven't had enough volunteer teams to move repairs along as fast as we would like," she continued.



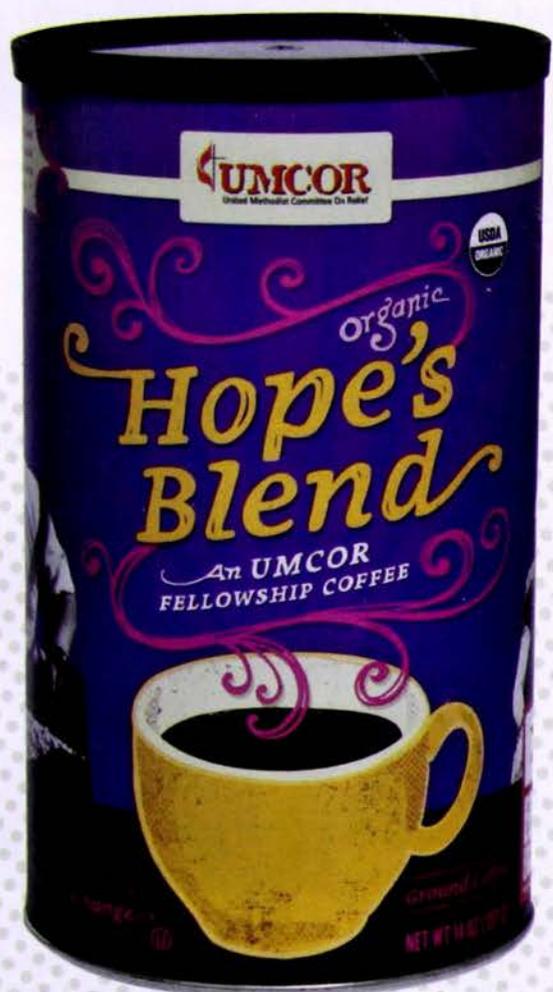
A year after Hurricane Irene raged through North Carolina, recovery work continues.

PHOTO: NORTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE

Cliff Harvell, the conference's disaster response superintendent, said that since Irene made landfall, more than 4,000 volunteers have given more than 70,000 volunteer hours, "but we're still desperate for volunteers," he added.

Ann Huffman, volunteer coordinator at the conference's call center, confirmed that; "A year out, there are people still living in homes that probably should be condemned, but they don't have another place to go."

In March 2012, UMCOR made a \$1 million grant to the North Carolina Conference to help hurricane survivors. This grant was in addition to other recovery funds given in 2011.



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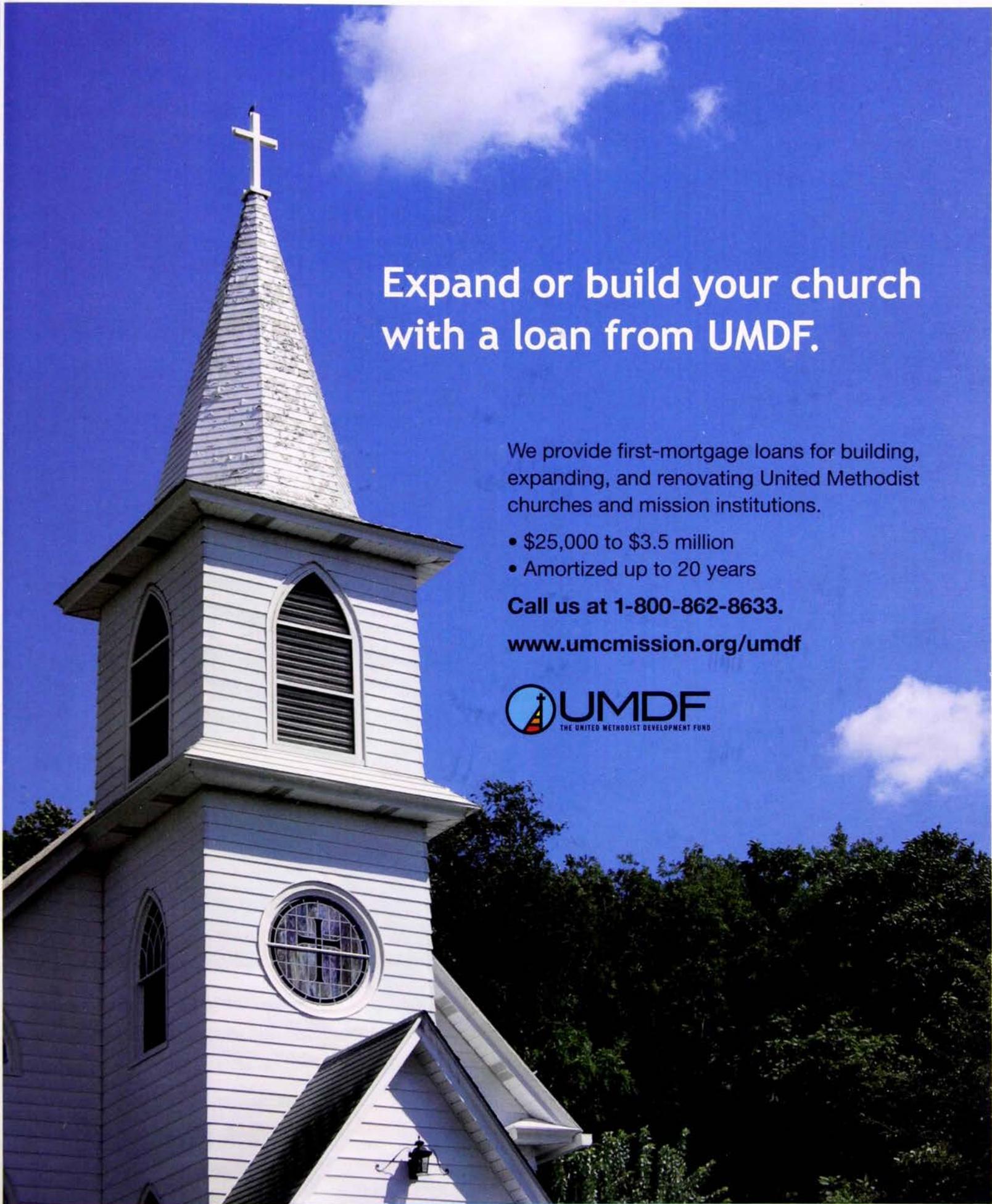
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Can a community prepare itself for disaster long before a calamity strikes?

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But DRR training does even more. It enables communities to reduce the impact of future emergencies by helping them identify and address natural or human-made hazards in their midst.

"DRR training makes communities both better prepared for disasters and more resilient to their impact," says Melissa Crutchfield, UMCOR's International Disaster Response executive.

UMCOR already has developed DRR trainings in those parts of the world that are especially prone to disasters, including the Philippines, Chile, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia.



*In interactive training sessions like this one in Barbados for disaster preparedness, participants use balloons that represent the multiple responsibilities of volunteer agencies during a disaster.*

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# RETHINK CHRISTMAS

This Christmas, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Rethink Church, Imagine No Malaria and the United Methodist Publishing House are teaming up to reclaim Christmas and provide an alternative means to celebrate the joy of relational giving this season.

This Christmas, cut through the hype that leaves you exhausted at the end of the year and give the best gift you can give: service to others through your time, talents and resources.

This Christmas, live simply so others may simply live.



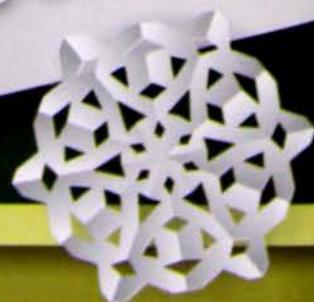
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