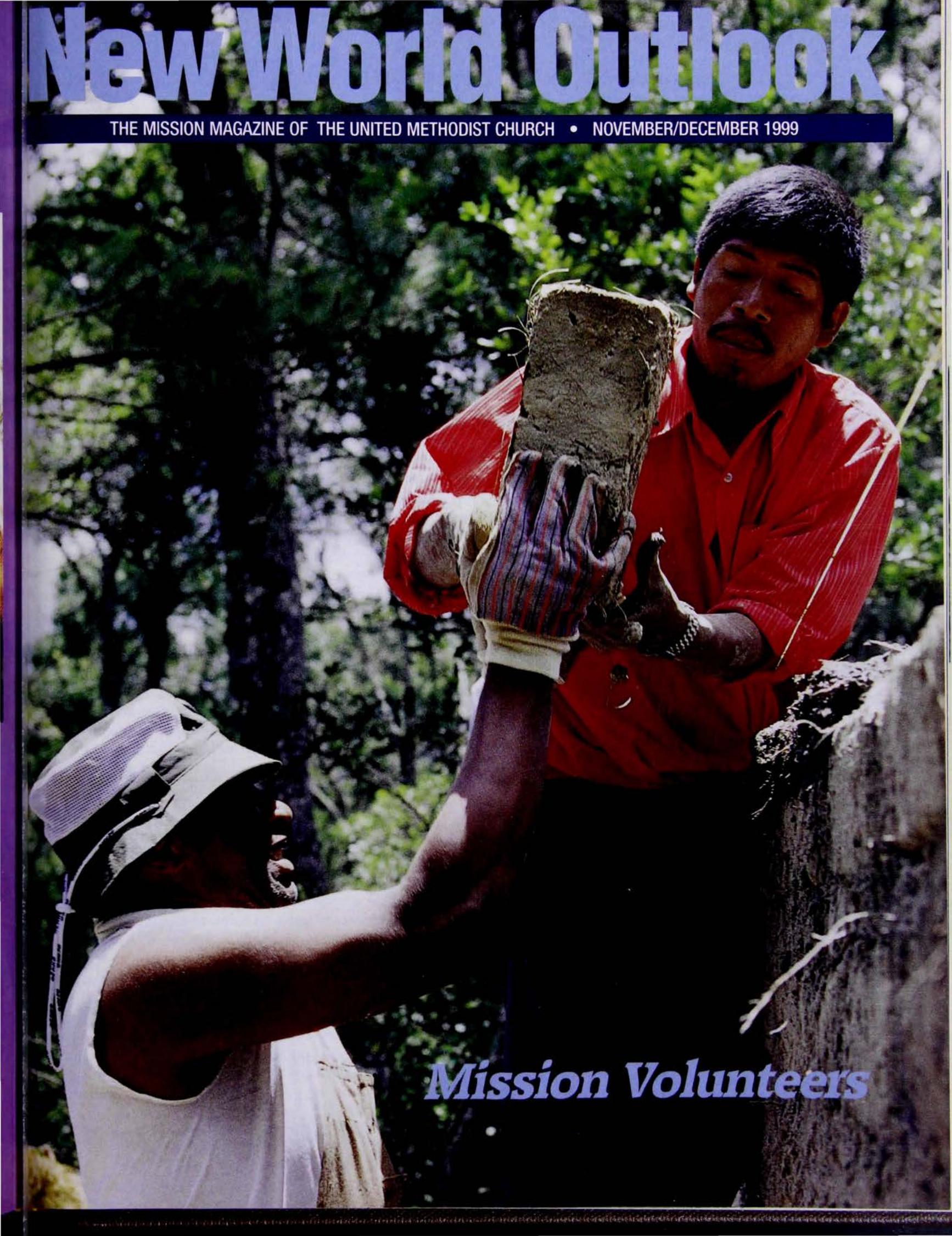


New World Outlook

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Mission Volunteers

NEW WORLD OUTLOOK

Publisher
Randolph Nugent

Editor
Alma Graham

Associate Editor
Christie R. House

Art Director
Roger C. Sadler Layout/Design
Emily Grote

Production Manager
Nancy Quigley

Administrative Assistant
Patricia Y. Bradley

Editorial Offices
Alma Graham
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1476
New York, NY 10115
212/870-3765

E-mail: nwo@gbgm-umc.org

Website: <http://gbgm-umc.org/nwo/>

Advertising/Promotion Director
Ruth Kurtz
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1472
New York, NY 10115
212/870-3784

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Cover Photo: Christie R. House. Volunteer Ron Jackman of St. Paul and St. Andrew UMC in New York City hands an adobe brick to Benigno Garcia Rodriguez, a lay pastor in Portillo del Norte, Honduras, as the two rebuild a house destroyed by Hurricane Mitch.

The Last Will Be First

These words of Jesus are cited in all three synoptic Gospels. You'll find them in Matthew 19:30 and 20:16, Mark 10:31, and Luke 13:30. We usually read them as a promise to the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed—a vow that earthly wrongs will be righted in the Kingdom of God. While this seems to be the primary meaning of the passage, it can have other applications as well, with reference both to the millennium and to the mission volunteer movement in the church.

As many know, Jesus' birth is now dated four to eight years earlier than it was believed to be when the A.D. calendar system was devised. Thus the much heralded third millennium of Christendom already began between 1992 and 1996. Further, we purists know that a century starts with the year 1, not zero, making the year 2000 the final year of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, we also know that the century battle has been lost to the magic of 2000's new look and name. Thus the last year of the twentieth century will be the first year of the twenty-first and will usher in the millennium for most people.

More significantly, Jesus' words turning earthly hierarchies on their head can also apply to the amazing movement of United Methodist Volunteers In Mission. In a world starkly divided between rich and poor, privileged and powerless, this grassroots movement brings with it a spirit of energetic hope. Lynne De Michele, Editor of the *Hoosier United Methodist News*, told me she found this movement "one of the most exciting signs of vitality and health in the church. It's a renaissance of the laity in ministry," she added, "and wise pastors are encouraging and enabling these lay volunteers." Bob Walton, Assistant General Secretary for Mission Volunteers at the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), reports that 60,000 people served in 48 different countries in 1998 through the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission program. Who says we have fewer missionaries today? We have more than ever before in history!

Minnesota Bishop John Hopkins notes that "in most activities, we have leadership defined in advance...But on a mission team, whoever is there at the time takes over and leads....You learn about people who seem meek and mild, but they are there at the right time. People ask them: 'How did you do that?'" These self-selected leaders might well answer: "By the grace of God and with the help of Jesus Christ, who makes the last to be first when they are needed."

The GBGM's mission volunteers receive valuable training that helps empower them to "do that" in solidarity with the people whom they are helping, with an understanding and respect for other cultures and customs. And what a wide variety of mission volunteer opportunities there are! Volunteers may serve on teams or as individuals. They may respond with ready hands and willing hearts to disasters and emergencies. They may transform lives—their own as well as others'—by serving as teachers or coaches or medical personnel. They may go to Third-World countries to learn about global justice issues firsthand. They may build houses, start libraries, teach Bible school, serve mission institutions. They may also inspire, empower, and train others to serve.

Whether 18 or 80, mission volunteers are God's gift to the church and the world. What better gift could we give in return than to salute them for Christmas!

—Alma Graham

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A Call for All Christians

by Robert E. Walton

All day long,

day after day, the phone brought the same inquiry: "Is there anything that I can do?" The computer screen was filled with E-mail messages offering help. Hundreds consulted the Volunteer Hotline (1-800-918-3100).

United Methodists throughout the world were responding to the scenes unfolding on their television screens. Hurricane Mitch had parked off the coast of Honduras and was dumping unprecedented amounts of water on the land. Winds, floods, and mudslides were wiping out whole villages, killing hundreds. People were suffering, as they did this year in Hurricane Floyd, and then, as now, compassionate people felt compelled to help and to serve when needed.

Today's technology makes instant information possible. We can be on the scene of a disaster, thanks to television. We can communicate

with someone at the scene via the Internet.

Whether it be the plight of refugees fleeing ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, children dying from famine and disease, or national infrastructures being devastated by civil conflict, we know about it as it is happening. For many, to sit back and do nothing is unthinkable.

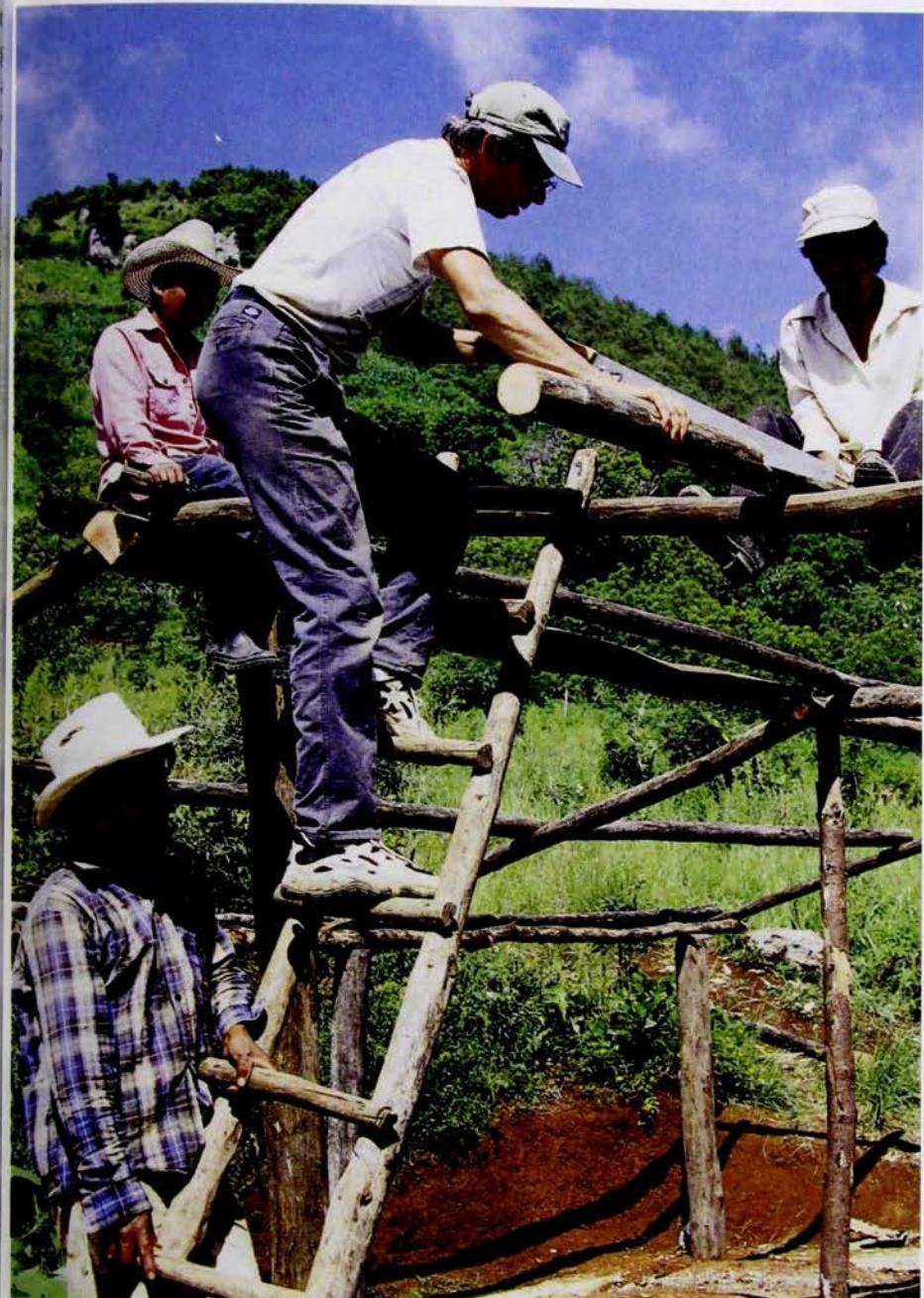
Mother Teresa observed that "there is a tremendous strength growing in the world through sharing together, praying together, suffering together, and working

together." There is a new spirit in mission that focuses on developing relationships between people for a common cause. There is a new understanding that the call to be in mission is not just for the chosen few, but for all Christians. The vital, growing mission-volunteer movement in The United Methodist Church is fueled by this new spirit. Last year, more than 60,000 people served in 48 different countries through the United Methodist Volunteers In Mission program. Thousands of others chose different volunteer opportunities for service.

Volunteers are helping to provide housing for the homeless and medical care for those who have access to little or none. They are establishing dental clinics, offering their skills for agricultural projects, and working with ministries that seek to provide food for the undernourished. They are teaching Bible studies, literacy, and skill development. They are constructing and repairing church buildings, raising funds, and helping with congregational development. As volunteers



As part of a Mission Discovery experience, Cynthia Burnson, Roxanne O'Brien, and Sara Florkey worked at Rockford Urban Ministries in Rockford, Illinois.



Bruce Robbins (on ladder), General Secretary, General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, builds a house frame with Puerto Rican colleagues as a member of a 1999 UIMVIM team from New York. In 1998, more than 60,000 people served in 48 countries through the United Methodist Volunteers In Mission program.

put their faith into action, they become, through their caring presence, powerful witnesses of the love of Christ.

Building Relationships

Even more important than the tasks volunteers perform are the relationships that they build. Time and again, volunteers report that they

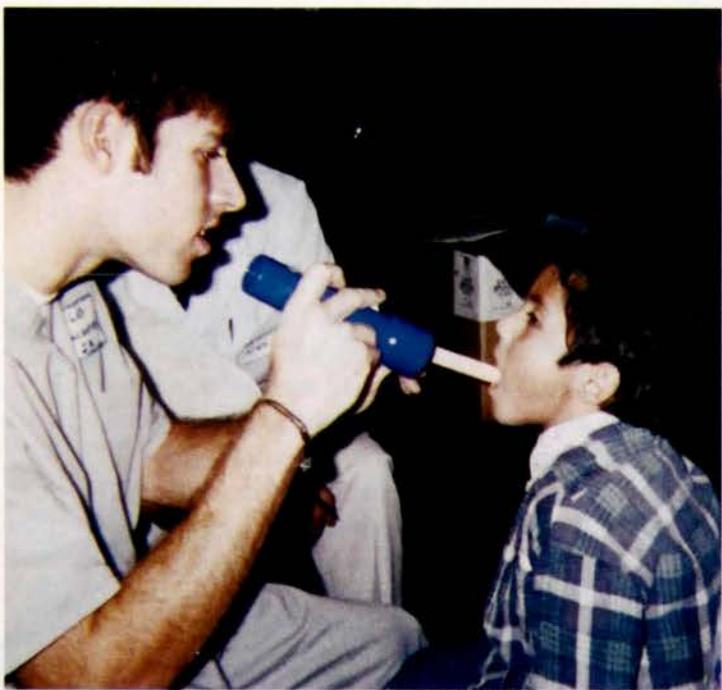
went to offer help, but what they found was new purpose and direction for their own lives. The real power of the volunteer movement appears to be in establishing relationships at levels never before experienced. These relationships occur in three arenas: with the other team members, with those who receive the volunteers, and with God.

We speak of the importance of experiencing community in the local church, but it is not easy to achieve. Bishop John Hopkins of the Minnesota Area, himself a veteran volunteer, reminded attendees at the Southeastern Jurisdiction's Volunteers In Mission rally that John Wesley started a *movement*, not an organized church. Bishop Hopkins noted that, from his experience, whenever Methodists around the world act like a movement, God blesses them and does marvelous things with them.

"When I serve on teams," Hopkins said, "I always learn something about myself. I learn something about other people, but, more important, I understand how God builds a Christian community. When you go on a Volunteers In Mission team—no matter how much of an expert you are, no matter what you're in charge of in the real world—you do what is necessary on the work team. I have seen accountants dig ditches. I have seen physicians count money. I have seen homemakers paint buildings. I have seen executives baby-sit. When you go on Volunteers In Mission teams, you become somebody helping the whole group, not somebody who's identified by the role you perform where you get your paycheck."

"In most activities, we have leadership defined in advance, and we always look to the leader to do things. But on a mission team, whoever is there at the time takes over and leads. You learn about strong personalities who lead but sometimes don't have any followers. And you also learn about people who seem meek and mild, but they are there at the right time. People ask: 'How did you do that?'"

Relationships also get built in the giving and receiving of hospitality. The gift of hospitality is a recurring theme running throughout the Scriptures. The Hebrew



As a medical volunteer from a local church in the South Georgia Conference, Les Kicklighter, a dentistry student, examines a member of a local Hispanic congregation.

Scriptures make it clear that giving shelter to the traveler, helping the sojourner in our midst, and sharing with one another are what God expects. Jesus introduces us to a God of grace who offers unconditional hospitality to all who will come. Provisions are made for all, with a special place reserved for those who are among the marginalized. We are told in the Book of Hebrews: "Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:1-2)

Volunteers have discovered themselves powerfully impacted by the generosity of those who make careful preparations for receiving them in their community. They have discovered that, when people from more affluent countries and congregations work alongside those who are poor or oppressed, the affluent ones are blessed in profound ways. When volunteers dare to tear down barriers and experience the reality of other cultures and contexts, they begin to live their own lives with greater sensitivity, understanding,

and compassion. For them, mission comes alive!

A common witness coming from volunteers is that their service was a "life-transforming" experience, one bringing them a new relationship and commitment to God. Every follower of Jesus must deal with the biblical imperative to reach out to those who are oppressed, hungry, or poor and to alleviate the conditions that perpetuate their poverty and oppression. Through volunteer service, the entire church community is called into witness and service—not just professional missionaries.

Through volunteer service in the name of the church, every individual has the opportunity to serve. All can live their calling and their lives more faithfully. For many, this becomes a deeply spiritual experience.

Giving in a Global Context

The selfless giving of volunteers who go to serve at their own expense and the hospitality given by those who reach out to receive them carry the message of Jesus Christ to the community. The local people see that others are willing to give of their time and talent to work beside them and make their lives better. In the process, true community is realized and the church is blessed. When people are directly involved in mission, whether it be

"We are building not only buildings but personal faith. We have many ways to grow our faith when we participate."

Participant at the International Conference on Sending and Hosting Volunteers, November 1998.

responding to disasters or working with the indigenous church, they have ownership, becoming ambassadors for the mission project.

As we move into the twenty-first century, it is clear that mission volunteers have an increasingly important role to play. The linking of mission volunteers with global mission projects will result in cross-cultural relationships and enrichment as people reach out to one another in cooperative ministry. Volunteers will be integral to the realization of the global church, as they learn to understand and work in one another's context.

An International Conference on Sending and Hosting Volunteers was held in November 1998, with participants from 35 countries. The following statement was issued:

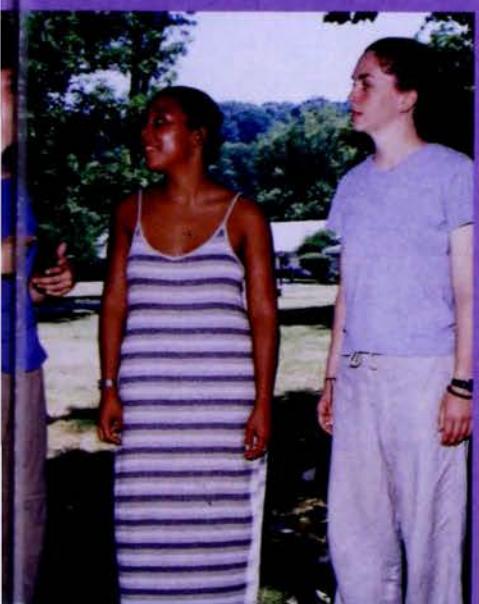
"We dream of a future where Volunteers In Mission will become the driving force for mission renewal of the local church. There will be a continuing positive impact of love and of brotherhood and sisterhood in a world torn apart by injustice and separated by apathy. Volunteers will be strong advocates for world peace, justice, and equality. We envision a church that recovers its purpose and power as it demonstrates God's mission by pouring itself out for others—crossing all boundaries to identify with joys and fears, struggles and needs, yearnings and sorrows, confusion and doubt, and the quest for true human dignity among people everywhere, especially those regarded as the least of God's children."

God has given us the volunteer movement to lead the way. □

Robert E. Walton is Assistant General Secretary for Mission Volunteers at the General Board of Global Ministries.

A Learning Experience for My Life

ORIS FROM THE
GLOAL JUSTICE VOLUNTEERS



"After my experience in the Philippines, I feel as though my brain has been expanded. It was a learning experience for my life."

—Kim Lehmann, Omaha, Nebraska

"Physically, São Paulo, Brazil, was the worst place I've ever been. The air was terrible. The traffic was terrible. But it was one of the most comfortable places I've ever been because of the social aspects—how the people treat each other, how I was welcomed."

—Casey High, Kent, Washington

"In Brazil's favelas, I would be walking in an area where the houses were shacks. And all of a sudden, whoa! I'd see this brand-new church that seemed to come out of nowhere. I found that religion is what keeps the people going. It gives them hope to get up every morning and catch that bus all the way to the city to make that \$70 a month to put food on their table for five kids."

—Jimee'n Jackson
East St. Louis, Illinois

"My experience in the Philippines affected every part of me and changed who I am and how I think and what I care about. You can't see injustices and not do something."

—Michele Johns
Birmingham, Alabama

"During my two months in the Philippines, I have had incredible life experiences. I could understand the political, economic, and social situations and struggles much better in their own contexts than from just reading about them."

—Kenia da Silva Guimaraes
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
(attending college in Mississippi)

"After more than three weeks in the interior of the Cordillera Mountains in the north of the Philippines, I passed through the capital of Kalinga Province and saw a market. In the United States, people buy food with money instead of growing it, hunting it, or finding it. It seemed strange...and I recognized the profundity of the place I had been.

—Jessica Tulloch
Chicago, Illinois

"As a Filipina American, I was able to learn about my own heritage in the Philippines. I've learned to use what privileges I have been given to do something good for this world."

—Lynn Peralta
San Francisco, California

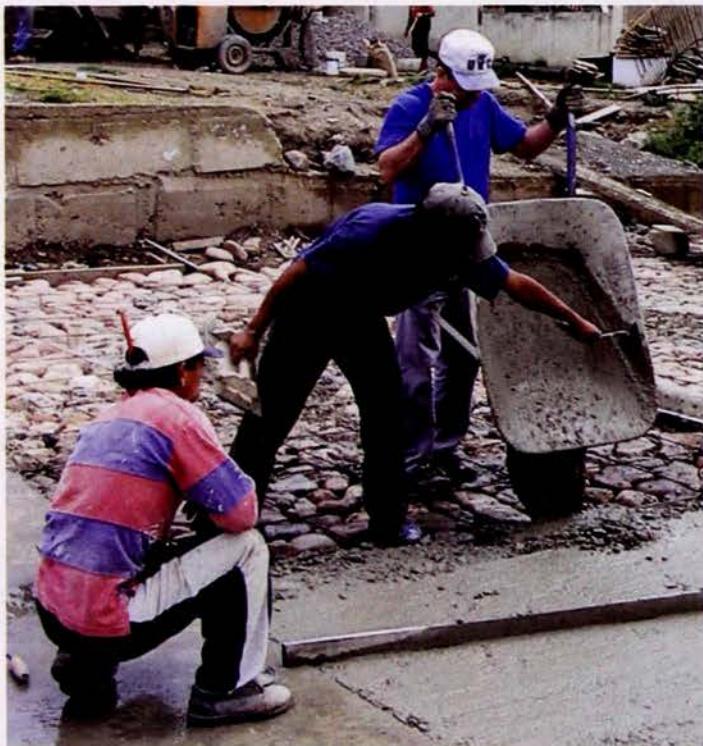
Participants in the pilot program of Global Justice Volunteers at Stony Point, New York, July 1999. Top to bottom, left to right: Jimee'n Jackson and Casey High; Lynn Peralta and Jessica Tulloch; Michele Johns, Kenia da Silva Guimaraes, and Kim Lehmann.

Caught Within the Explosion of the Gospel

by Wilson T. Boots

Words spoken decades ago by D. T. Niles, referring to Christians involved in evangelism, might be adapted to apply to mission volunteers today. In Niles's vision, to be a mission volunteer "is not just an undertaking to help others. It is rather to be caught within the explosion of the Gospel. Christ is at work—and in His working we are caught, impelled, given, till we become part of the lives of those with whom we are called to work. Those who do not learn more about Jesus Christ from the people and situations where they go to serve are not engaged in mission service, but in some other activity."

To be "caught within the explosion of the Gospel" is a powerful vision indeed. A great host of United Methodists who have gone out as mission volunteers bear witness to profound Gospel experiences among the people with whom they have served. As they have been caught up in giving and receiving with sisters and brothers of other races, cultures, and languages, many attest to a deeper self-awareness and a more faithful understanding of their relationship to God.



Members of a United Methodist Volunteers In Mission team from the United States work with Bolivian colleagues to build a basketball court at Emmanuel Methodist Church in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

A very large Christ figure stands on a mountain in the high Andes overlooking the Bolivian city of Cochabamba. Wherever you turn in the city, you see this graceful ecumenical representation of our Lord holding out his arms to embrace all peoples.

Within sight of this Andean Christ figure, a dedicated team of mission volunteers from the United States worked side by side with Bolivian colleagues in the hot sun. Together, they constructed a new roof for the Emmanuel Methodist Church Community Center, which includes a health center, a daycare center, and a program for elderly women. Several members of the visiting work team gave witness to significant spiritual experiences as they encountered the living Christ through their relationships with Bolivian coworkers.

Some time later at the same project, Alejandro Vera—leader of the Bolivian work crew and a lay leader of Emmanuel Methodist Church—led a devotional with another United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) team that had come to help build the adjacent basketball court. With the cement about to be poured and with the Christ figure in the background, Vera reminded team members that they were not only building a sports court. They and their Bolivian colleagues were also building each other up in the Body of Christ. And they were creating an arena where wholesome activities might be used to transform lives.

A popular song among the people of Emmanuel Methodist Church, which they shared with the mission volunteers in their midst, is entitled: "One Hand Is Not Enough." The words affirm the actions of the North American volunteers as they worked with local church and community members to build not only a church roof or a sports court but the community of faith, itself: "No basta solo una mano si vamos a construir una iglesia de testigos que anuncie a Cristo—vamos juntos de la mano!" (One hand is not enough if we are going to build a church of witnesses who proclaim Christ—let's go together hand in hand!)

A Ministry of Hands

Emmanuel Methodist Church is a barrio congregation of largely very poor and marginalized people. The variety of ministries that several UMWIM groups have shared with this church is a sign of the energy for new life shared through human hands.

Hands of Emmanuel church members have been linked with hands of United Methodist volunteers from Oklahoma, Texas, North Carolina, Nebraska, Missouri, Louisiana, Arkansas, Minnesota, New York, and New Mexico. Together, they have cleaned up debris from the collapsed roof and walls of the ministry building, where some 200 poor children receive food and loving care each day.

Callused laborers' hands have joined with white-collar workers' tender hands (bearing painful blisters) as together they nailed up new beams, chipped off old stucco, and painted walls to renovate a 140-year-old building for ministry with children. Small hands have clapped for joy as the children played and sang. And the hands of hard-working cooks have prepared delicious meals for all volunteer construction workers.

Volunteer North American, Bolivian, and Cuban doctors and nurses have allowed the healing energy of God to flow through their compassionate, skilled hands at the Emmanuel health center. The helpful hands of local lay health promoters have also reached out to the community to point out the things that make for health.

And the grateful hands of volunteers from North America and Bolivia have shared with one another the consecrated bread and wine from the table of the Lord.



Children assemble a puzzle at the daycare center of Emmanuel Methodist Church, Cochabamba, Bolivia.



An Aymara woman. The Aymara people were already living on the altiplano, Bolivia's high plateau, before the time of the Incan empire.

The people of Emmanuel have been especially grateful for the visiting volunteers who have joyfully shared the life of faith in their midst. They remember several mutually shared Bible studies that became true events of the Spirit among Christians who differed in language, culture, and race. The times of shared laughter and enjoyment have been a sign of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's admonition from his prison cell to "spread hilaritas" whenever possible.

The joyful interactions many volunteers have experienced with the hosts of children all about Emmanuel have been occasions of special grace. And some medical volunteers, while sharing their knowledge and skill across language and cultural barriers, have become agents of pastoral care to their patients.

Most surely the experiences of United Methodist Volunteers In Mission at Emmanuel Methodist Church are common to a great host of mission volunteers who go out each year to serve with churches in many parts of the world. In a three-year period, more than 500 volunteer groups have gone out to the churches of Latin America and the Caribbean from the Southeastern



Bolivian women prepare vegetables and fruit in the kitchen of Emmanuel Methodist Church, Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Jurisdiction alone. In the United States, a Brazilian Methodist team has worked in Alabama, a Palestinian team has helped repair tornado damage in Oklahoma, and students from Africa University have worked as volunteers with youth in the summer camping program of the West Ohio Annual Conference. When we consider volunteer groups going to so many countries and continents from all across the world Methodist family, we must realize that the Volunteers In Mission movement is today a most significant expression of mission and service in the global church.

Theological Understandings

What are the missional issues and challenges for mission volunteers today? How can the vast commitment of human and material resources and of time and energy be most effectively engaged in loving service to God in the world? Reflections with a number of volunteers

from the United States and other countries, as well as with a number of churches that have hosted and worked side by side with volunteers, point to several significant concerns.

What is the theological understanding of mission volunteers—their comprehension of the importance of approaching volunteer mission in terms of "covenant" and of God's action in history? How is God at work in raising up persons who are being called to go as mission volunteers? How is God at work in the churches and local situations in which the volunteers serve? How are both "visiting volunteers" and "home volunteers" being called to respond to God's grace-full action? How do both participate in a covenant relationship of mutual responsibility?

A covenant relationship requires prior communication and serious planning on both sides. What goals and expectations does the host church have for the volunteers and how they might make the most effective contribution to God's mission in that place? This question implies far more than helping to construct a building, dig a well, or provide medical care. What steps can the "receiving" church take to faithfully prepare and care for the volunteers? How can the Christians of that place faithfully "give" as well as "receive"? What do mission volunteers have to learn from the people whom they go to serve? What insights can they gain about who they are and their own need for forgiveness and grace?

Volunteers' Concerns

How can mission volunteers prepare before they leave home to learn from the people with whom they are going to "live the Gospel" in loving service? Missiologist Max Warren states: "Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy."

Key leaders of mission volunteers, along with the leaders in several of the receiving churches, point to several relational concerns. Sensitivity to racial and cultural differences is critically important. There is a wide gap in many situations between the relative affluence of many mission volunteers and the poverty of the people with whom they work. Sensitive volunteers are increasingly aware of the dangers of paternalism in their relationships. Volunteers go to "give a hand, not a handout." They should not hesitate to insist that members of the local community share as fully as possible in the work involved.

Volunteers must always remember that people are more important than projects. We "learn the Gospel" and "share the Gospel" through human relationships.

Volunteers can be so task-oriented ("get the building finished") that participation in the building up of the faith community may be wrongly seen as secondary.

Host Responsibilities

Churches that request and receive mission volunteers also have key relational responsibilities. They must be faithful in claiming and understanding their partnership with their visitors. Local churches must be sure that they recruit enough volunteers from their own communities to work side by side with the visiting missionaries to make the mission mutual.

Congregations that receive volunteers should understand that they are also in mission with the volunteers in their midst. They are responsible for faithful hospitality and sensitive care. They should provide opportunities to share with the volunteers the life and mission of their church through Bible study, worship, and social activities.

Connectionality on Behalf of Life

A critical area of ambiguity involves how the desire for team spirit and bonding among the mission volunteers relates to the importance of their forming a wider team relationship with the people of the local church. Both dynamics are of vital importance. Only sensitive, Spirit-guided leadership from both sides can avoid serious pitfalls.

Surely one of the greatest strengths of the mission-volunteer movement is a powerful people-to-people dynamic. This dynamic binds together peoples of very different backgrounds and national identities in loving service on behalf of God's mission in the world. Latin American Methodists speak of "*conexionalidad a favor de*

la Vida" (connectionality on behalf of life). In this way, they claim the importance of the "connection" of the world Methodist family that enables a flow of mission energy, linking people around the world.

More and more Christians, "caught within the explosion of the Gospel," are answering God's call to give periods of volunteer service. They are committing their own financial resources and often personal vacation time from their jobs. As these volunteers respond, the words of Henri J. M. Nouwen can serve as a reminder of the concerns of many of the peoples with whom they are called to serve.

Walk With Us In Our Search

*Help us discover our own riches;
don't judge us poor because we lack what you have.
Help us discover our chains;
don't judge us slaves by the type of shackles you wear.
Be patient with us as a people;
don't judge us backward simply because we don't follow your stride.
Be patient with our pace;
don't judge us lazy simply because we can't follow your tempo.
Be patient with our symbols;
don't judge us ignorant because we can't read your signs.
Be with us and proclaim the richness of your life
which you can share with us.
Be with us and be open to what we can give.
Be with us as a companion who walks with us
neither behind nor in front
in our search for life and, ultimately, for God!*

-Henri J. M. Nouwen



The Rev. Juan Covarrubias, pastor of Emmanuel Methodist Church in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and United Methodist missionary Nora Quiroga Boots speak to a UMVIM team in the sanctuary.

*The Nouwen quotation above is cited in *People, Places, and Partnerships* by Sally Campbell-Evans. This workbook, highly recommended for use by volunteer teams in preparation for their journey, may be obtained for \$2 per copy plus shipping and handling (\$3.50 for an order of \$25 or less) from the Literature Sales Room, General Board of Global Ministries, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 1358, New York, NY 10115, tel. 212-870-3761; or call the Service Center at 1-800-305-9857.

Dr. Wilson T. Boots and his wife, Nora Quiroga Boots, are stationed in Bolivia as United Methodist missionaries working with the Latin American Council of Evangelical Methodist Churches (CIEMAL).



The Role of Volunteers in Disaster Response

by Donald and Barbara Weaver

Volunteers in disaster response are not only crucial in the beginning, as they work to help people get their lives back together, but they are also essential if there is to be a successful long-term recovery.

When a disaster strikes, volunteers from the affected area respond immediately in heroic ways. When a section of Interstate Highway 880 collapsed in the 1989 earthquake in northern California, the residents of Oakland risked their own lives rescuing victims trapped by fallen slabs of concrete. This rescue work went on even in the midst of repeated aftershocks.

In a crisis, the adrenaline flows. Miraculous—often superhuman—deeds are done. Then reality begins to set in. People begin to realize

what has happened. They begin to understand what the losses will mean to them. It takes only a few short days for the signs of grief to appear. The early post-disaster euphoria begins to turn into a time of denial, followed by frustration, disillusionment, and anger, and ending in depression.

When people become victims of a disaster, they suffer from the realization that they have lost control. People who pride themselves on having made their own way in the world suddenly find themselves dependent on others for their most basic needs. Many times they cannot return to their homes or their jobs. Sometimes they cannot even return to their communities. Most have never before had to ask

for help. Now they are thrust into a never-before-experienced world in which they have to apply for assistance, filling out forms and waiting in line. When they telephone for information or advice, they are put on hold. All the while, they are trying to think of ways to make themselves and their families safe and secure. Their circumstances force them to face a bewildering number of decisions at a time when they are least able emotionally to think things through.

Above: Sandy Villa of Coral Gables UMC (right) and friend work in a food and clothing distribution center in Florida after Hurricane Andrew. After a disaster, do not donate clothing unless it is specifically requested.

Volunteers From Within

Those of us who work in disaster response for the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) have a saying that we follow in a very strict way: The people in the community must own their own disaster. In most disasters, the people of the community are the earliest responders. The police, firefighters, paramedics and other emergency workers, church leaders, public officials, and ordinary citizens are there before, during, and usually after the disaster.

By its very nature, a disaster is an event that causes human suffering and need which its victims cannot handle without assistance. Still, it is essential that the victims of disasters begin to take ownership for their own recovery as soon as possible. Recovery is dependent upon their regaining the sense of control that they lost when disaster struck.

Volunteers From Outside

The use of volunteers that respond from within the stricken community allows local ownership of the disaster to begin. In most cases, however, members of the community soon realize that their needs far exceed their own time and ability to care for themselves. This is where mission volunteers are needed.

As volunteers from the outside, those of us who work with UMCOR in disaster response do not come to a disaster site to create dependency but to provide relief, support, and guidance. Our role as outside volunteers is to give disaster victims a lift that can, for a time, relieve them of overwhelming burdens. We bring the victims hope and a feeling that others care. We provide an atmosphere in which God's healing power can be released.

In a disaster, many governmental and relief agencies offer their services. But the church has a unique role to play. Its central

purpose is to offer the multifaceted ministry of Christ. This includes dealing with theological, physical, emotional, and advocacy issues as well as providing certain social services. The aim of the church's efforts is to reconnect and strengthen relationships between individuals and their God, their families, and their communities.

United Methodist Response

The United Methodist Church is uniquely situated to respond to disasters because we have churches (mission stations) in every county and in almost every town and village across the United States. We also have a worldwide Methodist connection with annual conferences, central conferences, and autonomous partner churches on five continents. Most of the time, even before the area bishop or the annual conference officials contact

the UMCOR disaster-response office, the UMCOR network manager is on the phone to ascertain the damage and to offer assistance to affected communities.

Within the first 12 hours after a disaster strikes, the UMCOR network manager is in contact with one of the 45 specially trained UMCOR Volunteer Consultants, asking the consultant to be prepared to travel to the disaster site. At present, there are only two full-



Right: Volunteers at Cutler-Ridge UMC prepare food boxes for Florida hurricane victims. **Below:** Volunteers from Kenmore UMC near Buffalo, NY, demolish a home destroyed by a flood in Cumberland, MD.





UMCOR volunteer Barbara Weaver trained these Japanese students from the Osaka YWCA to use play therapy, music, and art with children affected by the Kobe earthquake.

time staff people and three part-time paid staff members who work with UMCOR on disaster response. All the other UMCOR workers are volunteers.

The concept of an Early Response Team has come out of a new alliance between United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) and UMCOR. To put this concept into action, each United Methodist annual conference is being asked to form a conference team of early responders. Special training is a must and is provided for potential Early Response Team members. It takes detailed preparation to know what to take into the early stages of a disaster—what things can be done and what tasks need to be left undone. Otherwise, very well-intentioned people might disqualify eligible victims from further forms of help that may be available. Safety for the Early Response Team and for the victims is always a primary concern.

How To Help

Each annual conference will be looking for individuals and groups that would like to prepare themselves for early-response mission work. If you are interested, contact your jurisdictional UMVIM coordinators (see centerfold brochure) and they will help arrange training for you. In most disasters, work teams are needed to do everything from removing debris, to offering care for children, to helping rebuild. Timing is an important factor. Only the leadership on the scene can determine when help is needed and what the nature of the help will be.

Calling UMCOR's national Volunteer Hotline is always essential (1-800-918-3100). When you call, you can expect to be asked your name; whether or not you are a part of a volunteer group, the size of your group, and the skills group members possess; your available dates; and how you or your group can be contacted. In return you will

be sent a packet on the preparations you or your group should make.

The call to come to the disaster area will come from the conference Disaster Response Team on the scene. The conference disaster-response coordinator will decide on the appropriateness of inviting volunteer teams into the area. This judgment will be based on the nature of the work that can be done at various stages, the ease or difficulty of travel within the affected area, and whether the local leadership can manage the oversight of your work team. Patience and understanding are needed at this point on the part of volunteers.

UMVIM and UMCOR are able to train volunteers in a wide range of skills that are needed in disaster-response work. We commonly think of volunteers tackling heavy jobs such as debris removal, mudding out (use of pressure sprayers to remove mud and dirt), and rebuilding. These tasks are important and are certainly needed. But there are many other services that can be offered by the volunteer.

- Volunteers are needed to minister to spiritual needs. Survivors wrestle with questions of life, death, hope, and resurrection. They ask: "Why me?" or "Why not me?"
- People who can provide emotional support for adults, youth, and children are always needed.
- In a disaster, providing accurate information through the electronic media, the pulpits, and the printed page is an important task. Telling the story not only helps to inform the victims and their friends and families but also lets the general public know what assistance is needed.
- Casework volunteers can help victims develop a plan of action

to aid them in coping with crises and decisions.

- Physical assistance with transportation, childcare, and filling out forms is consistently needed.
- Logistical assistance is often required. Volunteers are needed who know how to move or to warehouse the supplies and equipment that will be used by other volunteers.
- People with volunteer management skills are needed. One work-site supervisor who knows construction methods and building codes is usually needed for every four work sites.

Both UMCOR and UMVIM have developed training methods for each of the areas mentioned above. Twice a year, UMCOR holds an academy at its Sager-Brown Center and Depot in Baldwin,

Louisiana. The academy is a training experience for conference leaders and for members of the Catastrophic Disaster Response Team, which operates at the national and international level. Annual conferences are urged to send representatives from their area to the academy for training—either in meeting disasters in their own communities or in becoming part of national teams sent to communities in crisis around the world. If you are interested, contact your conference disaster-response coordinator or council director to see if you might be included in an academy training session.

Training in any of the needed areas can also be scheduled for local teams *within* conferences by contacting the UMCOR office in Washington, DC (202-548-4002). UMVIM personnel also provide

training for tasks within their areas of expertise. Contact your conference or jurisdictional UMVIM coordinator to find out when the next training opportunity will be or how your conference can hold a training session. A list of jurisdictional UMVIM offices is included in this issue of *New World Outlook* in the centerfold brochure. □

Dr. Donald L. Weaver, retired United Methodist pastor and former district superintendent of the Western New York Conference, has been a volunteer for disaster-response ministries for 20 years. He is part of the UMCOR Catastrophic Disaster Response Team. Barbara Weaver is a Christian Education coordinator and author of the curriculum used for children who have been in disaster situations. She has led workshops throughout the United States, Japan, and Bosnia.

▲ Haitian church volunteer uses "Kid's Kits" to do sidewalk art with children after Hurricane Andrew in Dade County, Florida.



Equal in the Sight of God

A Manhattan Work Team in Honduras

Article and Photos by Christie R. House

We woke to the crowing of roosters and the barking of dogs soon after daybreak. We heard no traffic. We saw no jet trails overhead. We lived without electricity and without telephones, computers, or television. The only lights at night were the stars, our flashlights, and the glow of a city in El Salvador over the mountains.

We didn't know what to expect when we left New York City. We were making the trip under the guidance of Church World Service, but the volunteer office in Louisiana could tell us only a few facts. We would be in a rural village that had been hit by Hurricane Mitch. We would help build houses. And it would be cold at night because we would be nearly 6000 feet above sea level. Many of us came on the trip because we felt an urging from within, but we didn't know why. We came with a question. We trusted God to provide an answer.

We learned that mud is more than a disdainful annoyance that we scrape off our shoes. Mud is God's gift of life. In this ooze, rain is soaked up, seeds are given life, nutrients are passed from animals to plant roots and back to animals, and mountains are built. Mud can be fashioned into sun-baked bricks, clay pots, mortar for cement, or roof tiles to keep the rain out.

When a hurricane whips up this same mud, dumping several feet of water on it in a very short time, it can become deadly. A landslide can wipe out a lifetime of work and all the members of a family in seconds.

Making the Trip

Our team was made up of 15 people from St. Paul and St. Andrew United Methodist Church (SPSA: one church, two saints). The oldest team member was 68. The youngest, my daughter Bekah, is 9. We had a few youth, a couple of young adults, and four married couples—most nearing or over age 40. We brought a nurse, an artist, our pastor, a professor of political science, a church-agency executive, a teacher, a social worker, an accountant, a computer engineer, an editor, a missionary, a theater administrator, and three children, ages 9-14. We were joined by two college students from Central United Methodist Church in Detroit, Michigan.

In Honduras, Church World Service (CWS) and the General Board of Global Ministries, through Mission Volunteers and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), work with an ecumenical agency, the

Christian Commission on Development (CCD). Our team was assigned to Portillo del Norte, a small village of 42 families in the state of Intibucá.

United Methodist missionary Paul Jeffrey met us for orientation at Monte Carmelo, a CCD retreat center where our first night was spent. Earlier, we'd had several required orientation sessions in the United States with Don Reasoner, one of our covenant missionaries, who later joined our team as an ace translator.

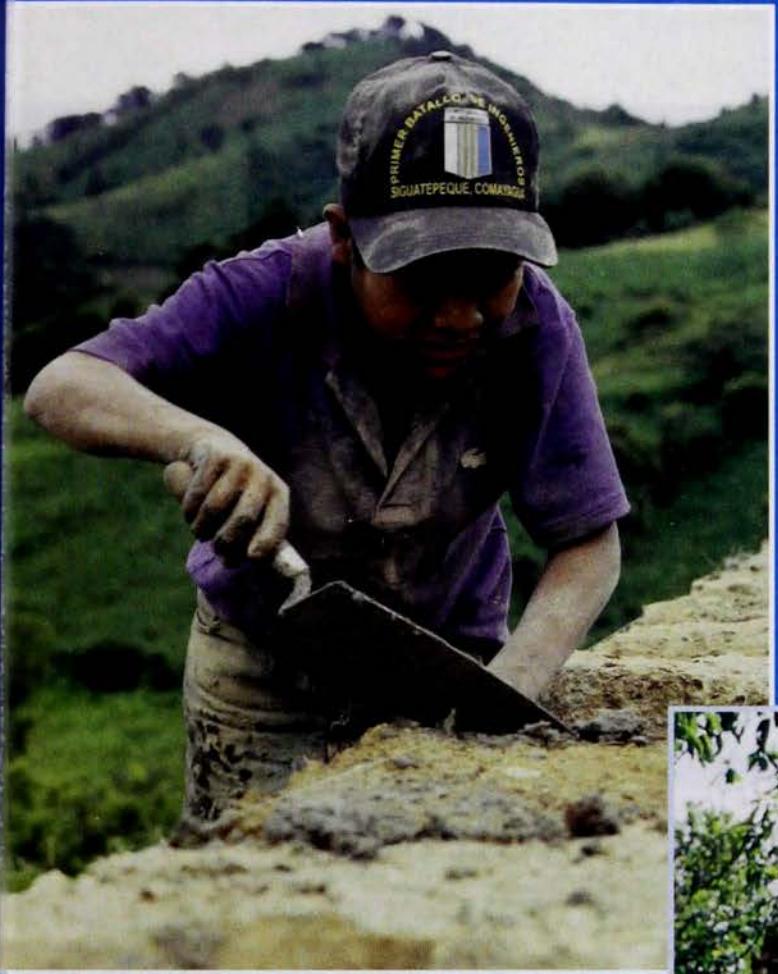
Paul filled us in on some of the political and social history of Honduras. With multinational corporations owning much of the arable land, the small farmers had to move up into the mountains to make a living. In order to grow food, they cleared the native forest by the slash-and-burn method. So now, without a spongy forest floor to soak up rainwater, the rain runs down through the crops, taking the good soil with it. Then more forest must be cleared to get any kind of crop yield. This practice left the mountains vulnerable to the landslides brought on by Hurricane Mitch.

It took us about four hours to travel to Portillo del Norte from Tegucigalpa. The coordinators for pastoral care and agriculture, Marta and Omar, went with us. After the final hour's ride over a dirt road, the vans carrying our crew, tools, and luggage stopped on a hillside. A group of men were moving a large load of corrugated zinc up the hill, a few sheets at a time. The view over the mountains was breathtaking. "This is it," said Omar. "Your home. They built it for you."

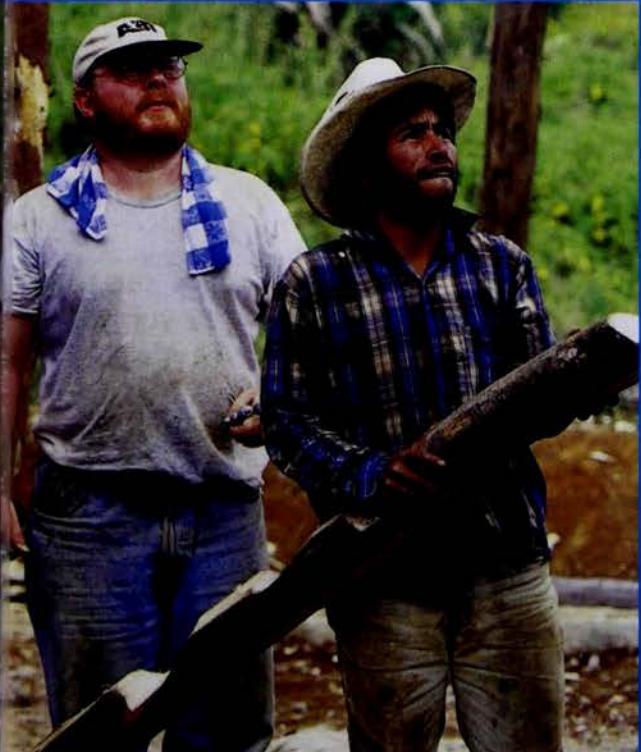
Perched on the hillside was a fresh adobe-brick hut with a roof of clay shingles. "They didn't have any place for your group to stay, so they built you a house," Omar explained. "They'll use it as a chapel and meeting place after you go."

The only way to fit 22 people into the one common room of our *casa communal* (communal house) was to lay the small mattresses side by side on the cement-and-dirt floor without space between them. That night, the wind howled and the rain spattered, but we stayed dry and kept each other warm.

After breakfast, we divided into three work groups to build houses of adobe bricks—made of mud baked in the sun. The first step is to dig the foundation of the house and pour cement. The first row of adobe is set with cement, the rest with *lodo* (mud). Our first task



Clockwise from top left: Saul Mejia's seven-year-old son, Martin, laying adobe bricks with mud, worked as hard as the adults. Men of Portillo del Norte confer about how best to use the volunteer workers. UMVIM Connie Coddington and Ron Ackman make metal frames for doorways and windows. Volunteer Tom Westfall with Guadalupe Rodriguez.





Children outside the casa communal (communal house) built for the volunteers by the Hondurans.

was to go and get sand to mix with the cement. We were working with Saul Mejia and Tomas Lorenzo from the community. We merrily picked up the bags Saul passed out and followed him down the path.

I'm not sure our team would have followed our Honduran hosts so eagerly had we known what was coming. When they asked for some volunteers to do woodwork, a few of our men willingly took their hammers and followed. Halfway up the mountain, they figured out that woodwork meant hiking to the top of the rain forest, hacking down trees with machetes, and carrying the logs back to the site so that they could be cut into beams for the roof or frame.

In our present case, we walked along one field and down another, up a muddy slide, and around a bull, wondering where the drop place was for the sand. Then Saul stopped along a steep path next to what looked like a cave, dropped to his knees, and started scraping the sides of the cave with a pick. Sand began piling up around his knees, and he filled our bags, one by one. I have a four-year-old daughter at home who weighs 42 pounds. My bag was heavier than that.

Appearances Are Deceiving

After the first night, we wondered if we were really rebuilding houses destroyed by Mitch or if we were

building for people from lower-lying areas who had been resettled. We couldn't see any damage. We also wondered why CCD had a food-for-work program here when the hillsides were thickly planted with corn, beans, potatoes, and other crops. Don invited some of the community leaders that night to talk with us.

All the people we had been working with had been living in this valley for several generations. They had suffered much damage in the hurricane. We couldn't see the landslides because they had planted them over already. The next day they took us back into the hills a bit so that we could see some of the ravines carved out by the water, along with the landslides that were too steep to plant. Huge trees were strewn about, uprooted.

"We are very thankful we didn't lose anyone in the hurricane. There were no deaths. But we lost all our crops and most of our animals," explained Guadalupe Rodriguez. "After three days of powerful rain, we stayed inside and prayed it would pass. Our houses can survive through storms until the water eats away at the first layer of adobe. Once that goes, the house settles in and the walls break open. But it kept on raining for eight days. The water flowed through my walls."

"The children sat in the puddles in the house. We couldn't go outside," Nola Perez Reyes told our work team. Her house was one of 14 our team was helping to

rebuild. Her husband had been ill and unable to work. She had eight children. But she was at the cookhouse preparing breakfast for us at 5:30 every morning and was still there at 7:00 P.M. cleaning up after supper.

After the hurricane, officials from the municipality came to the community to assess the damage. Meanwhile, the people gathered up whatever grains and food had survived the hurricane to send off with the officials. "Those in other areas suffered more. We sent what we could," Rodriguez said.

On the question of land, Rodriguez hedged a bit. "Most of us own about an acre, where our houses are," he said. One of our CCD visitors prodded him, asking: "Who owns the rest?" He admitted that most of the lush hills we saw were owned by one man. The visitor filled us in. "The owner is an absentee landlord who lives in La Esperanza. The people plant and harvest the crops you see and they are sent for export to the United States. The owner pays the workers very poorly. Some of them have to rent land from him to plant their own gardens so their families have something to eat."

Hearing the truth was not exactly setting us free. Our conclusions had been completely wrong. After all the effort US church groups expend to raise funds to take trips as mission volunteers, do we take the time to dig deeper, ask questions, and make every effort to understand the lives of those we come to help?

Community Dialogue

During our week's stay, we lugged adobe, laid bricks, put on a roof, shoveled in a dirt floor, and pulled trees out of the rain forest. But these things community members could have done themselves. Dialogue was what they wanted most from us. They needed us to tell the wider world that their lives and families matter.

The last evening the *Delagados de la Palabra* (delegates of the word, or lay pastors) led a worship service for the community. Our friends, Benigno and Ernesto, read Leviticus 25:35: "If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens." In Portillo del Norte, the families that lost their houses were living with other families in the community. Later, Benigno urged: "We should all view ourselves as equals in the sight of God."

Returning Home

As we packed up to go, I looked at the faces of those who had come at six in the morning to bid us farewell. We were the first team they had received from CCD and for now the only team scheduled to work with them. I wished I could send them another team from our church the following week. Our time was so short.

They wanted contact with the outside world. We had not finished the houses. We should have planned a trip of ten days instead of seven.

What we brought back to New York was another question, rather than an answer. The people we had met knew how to make steep hillsides yield crops. They loved their families. They studied the Bible and then tried to live it. They sought abundant life.

If only they could keep what the land produced, their lives would vastly improve. Our world, not theirs, produced their predicament. Their lives are lived very close to the source, measured by seasons. Our lives are lived in mythical numbers on a page, measured by profits. US companies have been showing an elite group of Hondurans how to exploit natural resources to fuel North American consumption. Our friends in Portillo del Norte suffer because someone in La Esperanza tasted our way of life and found it good.

Now it is our turn to live the Gospel. □

Christie R. House is associate editor of New World Outlook. The SPSA team expresses deep appreciation to Don Reasoner, the missionary and ace translator who is the author's husband and who helped team members hear the stories of Portillo del Norte.



Volunteer Taylor Matheson gets a big adobe brick from seven-year-old Martin Mejia of Portillo del Norte, Honduras.

Health in the People's Hand: A Medical Volunteers Seminar in Bolivia

by Margie Hesson

Recently, 40 United Methodist medical volunteers from the United States and 12 United Methodist Volunteers In Mission leaders from seven Latin American and Caribbean countries gathered in a consultation in Bolivia to reflect on the role of volunteers in health care. The national leaders urged that the North American medical personnel visiting the region as mission volunteers emphasize work with local doctors and nurses and the training of local health-care promoters in such procedures as blood pressure readings, home visits, the detection of childhood diseases, and first aid. In these ways, visiting medical teams could contribute to health initiatives that would continue to benefit local communities after the visitors left for home.

The voices of the young children singing "Jesus Loves Me" in Spanish greeted us as we approached the Community Center of Emmanuel Methodist Church on a cool, sunny day in Cochabamba, Bolivia. We are nurses and pastors, doctors and dentists, pharmacists and microbiologists, teachers and missionaries. Forty of us from across the United States had come to Bolivia to participate in the Bolivia Medical Volunteers Seminar sponsored by the Mission Volunteers Program Area and the Health and Relief Unit of the General Board of Global Ministries. The seminar was also supported by the United Methodist Fellowship of Health Care Volunteers (UMF/HCV).

Health Care in Action

The Emmanuel Community Center gave us our first opportunity to see Comprehensive Community-based

Primary Health Care (CCPHC) in action as a working model for holistic health. At Emmanuel, when a new child comes to the church's daycare center, a local health promoter from the church's health center goes to the child's home for a family diagnosis, identifying needs and looking for the root causes of any problems. Much of the inspiration for CCPHC comes from the work of Dr. Mabelle Arole and Dr. Rajanikant Arole, who developed a model Comprehensive Rural Health Project in Jamkhed, India.

CCPHC is based on three principles: equity, integration, and empowerment. The program reaches all the people, including the poor and other marginalized groups. It integrates curative and preventive care, including economic and environmental concerns. And through accessible, affordable, and sustainable health care, the people of a community are empowered to help themselves—both in assuming responsibility for their own health and in acquiring marketable skills that enable them to support their families. When the women acquire these skills and start businesses, the impact on family health is direct.

In Cochabamba, we saw this community-based model working in a powerful way. We saw young children coming to the Emmanuel Community Center for nutritious food, mental stimulation, and emotional and spiritual nurture. We heard women speak with dignity about the work they do to promote the health of their families and communities. We saw the "third age" elderly women—who, in the past, were left at home in isolation—now visited by the center's health-care workers and trained in making crafts to sell.

Empowerment on the Altiplano

From Cochabamba we headed to La Paz, one of Bolivia's two capitals,

located on the *altiplano*, or high plateau. At an elevation of 12,000 feet, La Paz is one of the highest cities in the world. Snowcapped Mount Illimani provides a stunning backdrop for the city, where adobe houses seem to climb steep canyon walls.

Our destination was the tiny village of Ancoraimes in the highlands along the eastern edge of Lake Titicaca. There, staff members welcomed us warmly to the Community-based Primary Health Care programs of Andean Rural Health Care. The Frank S. Beck Hospital, the only hospital in the Ancoraimes area, is the center for a census-based, impact-oriented public-health-care program that is administered by Andean Rural Health Care in partnership with the Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia. Primary and secondary health care is provided to families in 51 small surrounding villages that are home to the Aymara, the indigenous people whose ancestors lived on the *altiplano* before the time of the Incan empire.

The dream that these indigenous people would become responsible for their own health care has come to fruition. The public health-care program is carried out mainly by indigenous community health workers from the Aymara villages. These workers visit every home in every village at least twice a year. Using this strategy, they have achieved an immunization rate of more than 90 percent and have reduced the risk of death for children under five to one-half that in other areas of Bolivia. Grassroots education focuses on environmental concerns, sanitary practices, and other preventive measures.

A young Aymara mother, Primativa Mamani, shared her story of appreciation for Andean Rural Health Care. She believes her life and that of the child clinging to her skirt were saved because caring health providers were there when she had complications in childbirth. She graciously showed us her home and spoke with pride and dignity as she described her work as a community health promoter.

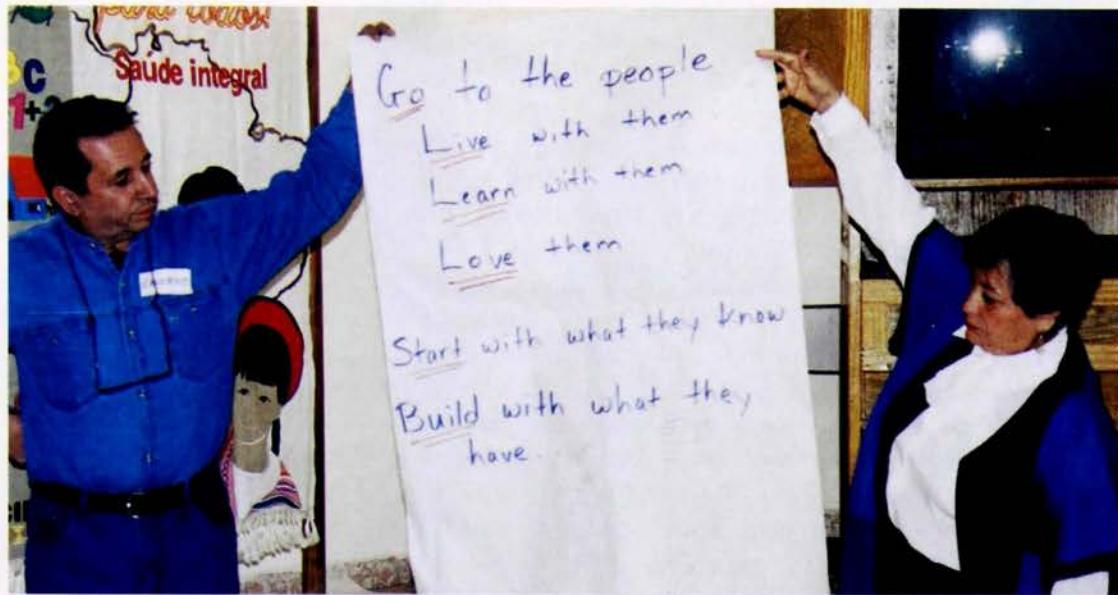
Progress in the Lowlands

The final leg of our Bolivian journey took us to the tropical lowlands of Santa Cruz. There, in nearby Montero, we visited another of the Andean Rural Health Care centers. We heard that immigrants from surrounding mountain areas come to Montero, but many who are at high risk of disease are afraid to come to the clinic. So a team of community health volunteers goes to their homes. The community is divided into 38 barrios, each assigned a health worker. A family chart is developed for each home to assist in promoting health for each family member. Growth and immunization charts are kept for the children. Family planning methods are discussed with the adults. Ongoing health education is provided based on the family's individual needs.

The needs in Montero seem very great. The open market is littered with garbage and puddled with stagnant water. Dogs roam freely amid the flyspecked meat carcasses hanging in the hot sun. Many homes in the barrios have no



This daycare center is a program of the Community Center at Emmanuel Methodist Church in Cochabamba, Bolivia.



Aided by United Methodist missionary Nora Boots, Dr. Celerino Carriconde, a physician from Brazil, displays the motto he wrote for Comprehensive Community-based Primary Health Care.

indoor plumbing or running water. Animals and children live together on tiny plots of land.

Yet, in the midst of an overwhelming public health challenge, there is a sense of hope in this community, thanks to the Andean Rural Health Care Center. The dedicated staff members proudly share the center's accomplishments, passing around a certificate for achievement in reducing tuberculosis. Many more people now have access to running water, they tell us. Their laboratory can conduct water analysis, and people are being taught how to disinfect water that is impure. Latrines are being built. Ophthalmology and dental services are available. In many ways, progress is being made and lives are being changed.

Going to the People

During our first days in Cochabamba, we met with the Itinerant Team for the Promotion of Integral Health in Latin America and the Caribbean. These dedicated professionals from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Guyana shared with us a common dream: that all the children of God may have the possibility of enjoying full health in harmony with family, with community, and with

the God of creation. They gave us simple, yet profound, advice:

***Go to the people. Live with them.
Learn with them. Love them.
Start with what they know.
Build with what they have.*** □

Margie Hesson, a member of Spearfish United Methodist Church in Spearfish, South Dakota, and the author of several books, is on the nursing faculty at South Dakota State University. See also "Hope and Healing Through Comprehensive Community-based Primary Health Care" by Sarla Lall in New World Outlook, March-April 1999, pp. 22-25.

Contributions to these Advance Specials will benefit health-care projects in Bolivia:

Comprehensive
Community-based Primary
Health Care,
Advance #711405-8

Andean Rural Health Care,
Advance #010158-2RA

Frank S. Beck Hospital,
Ancoraimes,
Advance #005078-8RA.

United Methodist Fellowship of Health Care Volunteers

Members of the United Methodist Fellowship of Health Care Volunteers (UMF/HCV) are doctors, nurses, dentists, hospital managers, physical therapists, other professionals, and laypeople willing to support and participate in time-limited health-care missions in the United States or throughout the world. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, listings of volunteer medical opportunities worldwide, and connections within their own jurisdictional structure and its medical organization.

UMF/HCV's purpose is to invite health professionals and other interested people to nurture and witness their Christian faith through ministries of healing of body, mind, and spirit as servants of Christ, providing health care to a world in need.

For information, contact:
Roger Boe, M.D.
Consultant UMF/HCV
226 South Sixteenth St.
Pocatello, ID 83201.
Phone: 208-234-4159
Fax: 208-234-4223
E-mail:
boeroger@crsinternet.com

MISSION MEMO

UMCOR Aids Victims of Hurricane Floyd

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has committed \$100,000 to help eastern North Carolina recover from Hurricane Floyd, whose heavy rains caused devastating floods in the state, swelling rivers, submerging entire towns, knocking out electric power, and closing long stretches of interstate highway. UMCOR sent 1200 five-gallon buckets with disinfectant and other cleaning materials, vacuums for removing water and mud, power washers, and generators, plus initial grants of \$10,000 each to the Wilmington, New Bern, Greenville, and Elizabeth City districts. The relief agency is working on a long-term response plan with Bishop Marion M. Edwards of Raleigh, NC, and is taking part in an ecumenical relief effort in New Jersey, where the town of Bound Brook was inundated. Work teams willing to help with cleanup may call 800-849-4433, ext. 254. Individual volunteers may call the UMCOR volunteer hotline at 800-918-3100. Donations for flood relief can be made to UMCOR through Hurricanes '99, Advance # 982460-1.

UMCOR To Distribute Goods From US Base

Thanks to the fact that an employee of the US Department of Defense was highly impressed by the work done in Bosnia by the United Methodist Committee on Relief, UMCOR is being given more than 27,000 items worth an estimated \$3 million to distribute to nations in Latin America and the Caribbean. The occasion for the gift is the closing of the US military base in the Panama Canal Zone on December 31. Tom Griner, director of United Methodist Volunteers In Mission for the Florida Conference, is coordinating the effort to distribute the goods. It was he who alerted Robert Walton and Paul Dirdak of the General Board of Global Ministries and obtained an initial UMCOR grant of \$10,000 to ship the goods. A drive to raise another \$25,000 is under way.

ACT Aids Refugees From East Timor

UMCOR's ecumenical partner, ACT (Action by Churches Together), has been responding to East Timorese refugees who have fled to West Timor to escape the campaign of terror waged by pro-Indonesia militias in their homeland. On September 4, the UN announced that 78.5 percent of East Timor's people

had voted for independence from Indonesia. Though militia violence did not prevent the vote, it quickly followed, uprooting half of East Timor's population and killing hundreds. Some 200,000 East Timorese have fled to West Timor, where ACT is building shelters for refugee families. Another 190,000 people are believed to be displaced within East Timor. The militias have targeted church leaders for death. On September 10, the General Secretary of the Christian Church of East Timor, the Rev. Francisco de Vasconcelos Ximenes, was fatally shot. His last words were: "Please voice our voices." In another incident, two Roman Catholic nuns, two seminarians, the local head of the Catholic relief agency Caritas, two volunteers, their driver, and an Indonesian journalist were killed by militiamen. To respond to the crisis in East Timor, please give to UMCOR's International Disaster Response, Advance #982450-8, and designate your gift "East/West Timor."

GBGM Executives Appointed to WCC Commissions

Two executives of the General Board of Global Ministries have been appointed to commissions of the World Council of Churches. Associate General Secretary Deborah Bass will serve on the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, while Assistant General Secretary Lois Dauway will join the Churches' Commission on International Affairs. Both applauded the WCC's declaration of an Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence, 2001-2010.

DEATHS **Caroline R. Robinson**, retired missionary with 19 years of service in southern Congo, died May 17, 1999...**Edna Foss**, retired missionary with 30 years of service in the Philippines, died June 29, 1999...**Ruth H. Peters**, retired missionary with 10 years of service in Korea, died July 9, 1999...**Alex C. Queen**, retired missionary with 2 years of service in India, died July 10, 1999...**Edwin T. Bower**, retired missionary with 37 years of service in Chile, died July 29, 1999...**Alta Jane Ice**, retired deaconess with 39 years of service in the United States, died July 31, 1999...**Judy Montgomery**, former Associate Director of the GBGM's Mission Resource Center in Atlanta, Georgia, who had served as a US-2 and a missionary in the Marshall Islands, died August 7, 1999, at the age of 54.

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Alma Graham, Editor, September 28, 1999



The Mission Volunteers Program Area exists to enable the participation of persons from throughout the world in global mission volunteer programs and projects so that affirming, empowering, and trusting relationships are established.

The responsibilities of the Mission Volunteers Program Area are to:

- * Plan and develop a broad range of mission-volunteer opportunities.
- * Work in close relationship with the jurisdictional and annual conference Volunteers In Mission coordinators to assist in identifying, developing, and supporting opportunities for mission-volunteer service.
- * Promote and interpret the need for volunteers with a variety of skills and abilities.
- * Provide information enabling the relationship between volunteers and projects.
- * Provide guidelines and procedures for the participation and training of mission volunteers.
- * Develop standards by which projects qualify for mission volunteers; evaluate projects upon request.

Putting our faith into action is at the heart of our Christian calling. Through Mission Volunteers, everyone in the church has the opportunity to serve.

To Call

To Send

To Host

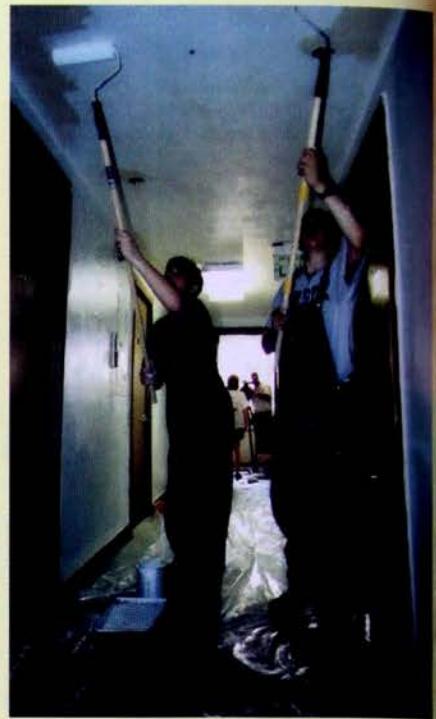
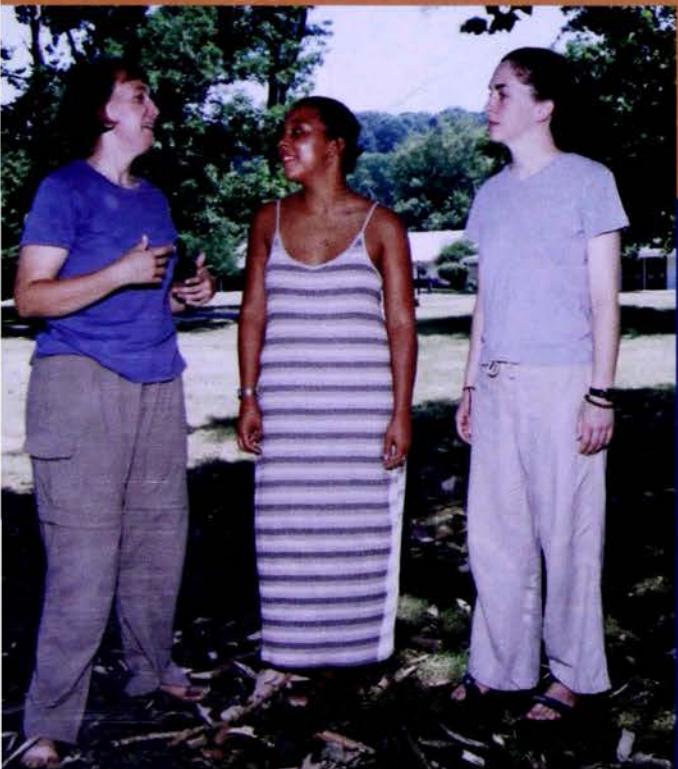
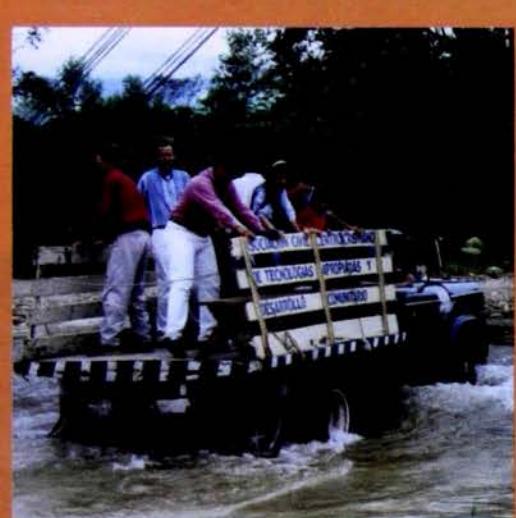
To Be One



Mission **Volunteers**

National Opportunities

Our United Methodist-related national mission institutions and many local churches across the United States welcome the help of volunteers in the construction or remodeling of buildings and in many other service ministries. Through the Caring Connection provided by United Methodist Institutional Ministries, volunteers may help with feeding programs, after-school activities, job-skills training for adults, English classes for recent immigrants, and a host of other vital hands-on tasks.



International Opportunities

Mission Volunteer teams serve around the globe in a variety of ways for one to three weeks at a time. Working cooperatively with partner churches, mission teams assist with the construction of sanctuaries and other buildings, participate in worship services, conduct Bible Schools for people of different ages, and come to know and love their sisters and brothers from other cultures.

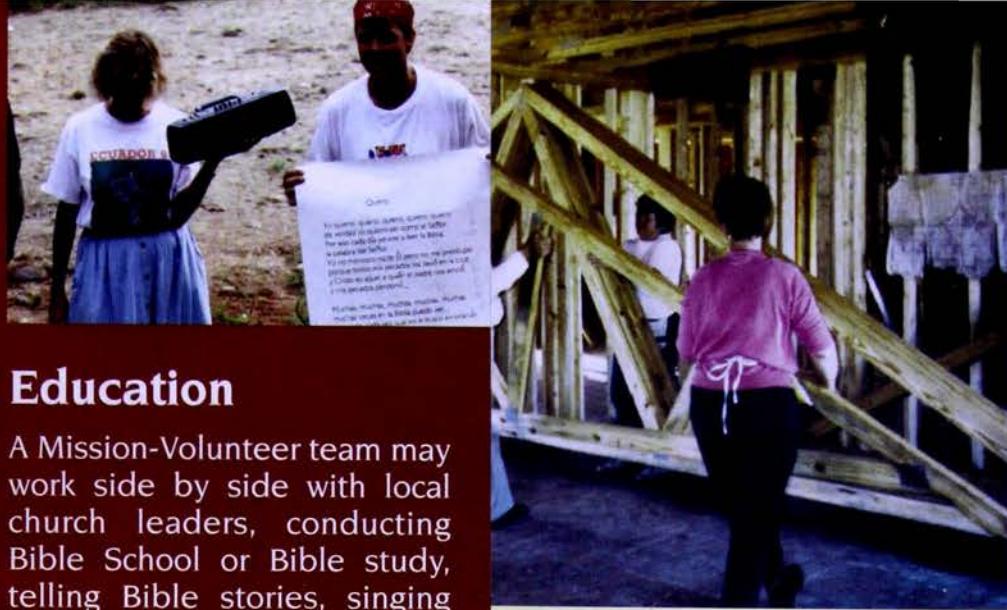
Global Justice Volunteers

We are 18- to 25-year-olds who serve for two to six months in Third-World countries, learning about and working on justice issues. Some of us serve during summer vacations from school; others, before embarking on graduate study or full-time jobs. As Global Justice Volunteers, we are changing our world.



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Education

A Mission-Volunteer team may work side by side with local church leaders, conducting Bible School or Bible study, telling Bible stories, singing songs, playing games, and praising God. Educational teams also serve in many other capacities, from basic literacy training, to the teaching of farming skills, to the demonstration of techniques for water collection and irrigation.



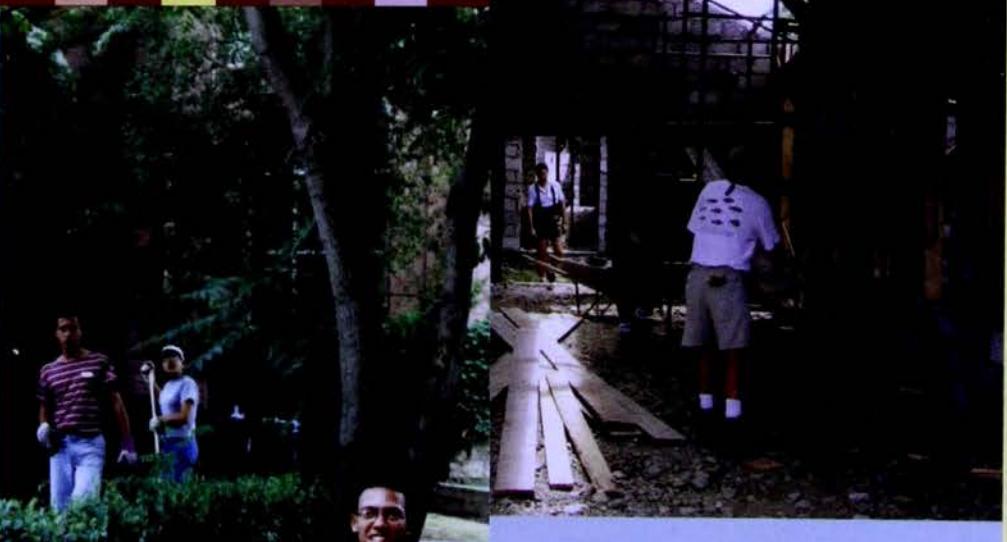
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Christian love in Action

UNITED METHODIST VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION JURISDICTIONAL COORDINATORS

North Central Jurisdiction

Beverly Nolte
4112 SE 23rd Court
Des Moines, IA 50320-2683
Tel (515) 237-8545
Fax (515) 237-8541
E-mail: bnmedical@aol.com

Northeastern Jurisdiction

Gregory Forrester
32 North Church Street
Cortland, NY 13045
Tel & Fax (607) 756-8267
E-mail: GForrester@compuserve.com

South Central Jurisdiction

Thalia F. Matherson
5646 Milton Street, Suite 240
Dallas, TX 75206
Tel (214) 692-9081
Fax (214) 692-9083
E-mail: scjumc@mindspring.com

Southeastern Jurisdiction

Nick Elliott
159 Ralph McGill Blvd. NE, Room 305
Atlanta, GA 30308
Tel (404) 659-5060
Fax (404) 659-2977
E-mail: sejumvim@compuserve.com

Western Jurisdiction

Janet and Kurt Kaiser
600 High Circle Road
Sandpoint, Idaho 83864
Tel (208) 263-4094
Fax (208) 263-3220
<love2trvl@nidlink.com>

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MISSION VOLUNTEERS OFFICE

General Board of Global Ministries
Mission Volunteers Office
475 Riverside Dr., Suite 330
New York, NY 10115
Tel (212) 870-3825
Fax (212) 870-3624
E-mail: voluntrs@gbgm-umc.org
Website: <http://gbgm-umc.org/vim>

DISASTER RELIEF / UMCOR

Volunteer Hotline
UMCOR Sager Brown Depot
P.O. Box 850
Baldwin, LA 70514
Tel (800) 918-3100
Fax (318) 923-2032
E-mail: nosgood@mcimail.com

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Mission Volunteers Office
475 Riverside Dr., Suite 330
New York, NY 10115
Tel (212) 870-3825
Fax (212) 870-3624
E-mail: voluntrs@gbgm-umc.org
Website: <http://gbgm-umc.org/vim/globalj.htm>

INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS

Walt & Betty Whitehurst
1761 Princess Anne Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23456
Tel (757) 426-2461
Fax (757) 426-3742
E-mail: IndVol@aol.com

NOMADS

Betty and Don Levans
15105 Shamrock Lane
Woodstock, IL 60098
Tel (630) 830-2067
E-mail: bnmedical@aol.com

United Methodist Fellowship of Health Care Volunteers

UMF/HCV
226 South Sixteenth St.
Pocatello, ID 83201
Tel (208) 234-4159
Fax (208) 234-4223
E-mail: boeroger@crsinternet.com
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Learning To Help Ourselves

Liberia United Methodist Volunteers In Mission

by Jeanie Blankenbaker



"I walked for three days to get here, but I was lucky. For a part of the journey, I was able to catch a ride in the back of a jeep for 1000 Liberian dollars [\$23 in US currency]," said one district superintendent in Liberia. He and others had traveled from near and far to Liberia's capital, Monrovia, for

a three-day training session planned by the Rev. James Labala, the newly elected conference coordinator for the Liberia United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (LUMVIM).

Who were the ones who cared so much about their church and this new program that they would walk that far? The travelers included 16 newly named district coordinators of LUMVIM and others who had been invited to attend the training workshop in Monrovia. The motivation for the training was expressed in a radio interview, when Bishop Arthur F. Kulah said: "We have been having our friends from America help us build our schools, our hospitals, and our clinics. We thought we should learn to help ourselves."

The Liberian civil war, which lasted for seven years, has broken down the system that the United Methodist Church in Liberia strived to build over many decades. It left many United Methodists and other Liberians scattered, traumatized, distressed, frustrated, and with a feeling of hopelessness. The Liberia Annual Conference (LAC) has 415 churches, 113 schools, three clinics, and one hospital. Of these, 263 churches, 45 schools, and all three clinics suffered serious structural damage in the war. A full 40 percent of the local churches and 70 percent of the schools now lack the proper buildings in which to operate.

It was in the midst of this situation that the Liberia Annual Conference decided to constitute a committee of Volunteers In Mission (VIM) and to elect a full-time VIM coordinator. The LAC partnered with the Mission Volunteers unit of the General Board of Global Ministries to accomplish this mission through training of the district coordinators and their regional committees.

Volunteer Training

Training was conducted on two levels. The first was for district coordinators and conference committee members, held for three days in Monrovia. The second was



Top left: The author training district coordinators in Monrovia, Liberia. **Above:** A Liberian volunteer making concrete blocks by hand at Mt. Sinai United Methodist Church, Monrovia.

for the district committees, held for one day in each of the three separate regions of the conference. Attendance far exceeded expectations. Sixteen of the 17 district coordinators (one was trained separately) and 61 of their committee members came ready to learn, to have fun, and to share ideas of why and how they could volunteer. Enthusiasm was so high that one district had its first meeting only three days following the training. Participants made plans to assess the damaged churches in their district and to form their first district LUMVIM team.

"How do we help our people understand why we volunteer?" asked the Rev. Stephen Snorton. "Our people are not used to volunteering. That's a new word for us." Group members suggested various answers, citing the Christian call to demonstrate the love of God by serving others and the call to share talents, skills, and gifts with those in need. The Rev. Wilfred Gray-Johnson of the Monrovia District expressed his



The Rev. James Labala (in cap) eating porcupine with friends en route to Greenville, Liberia.

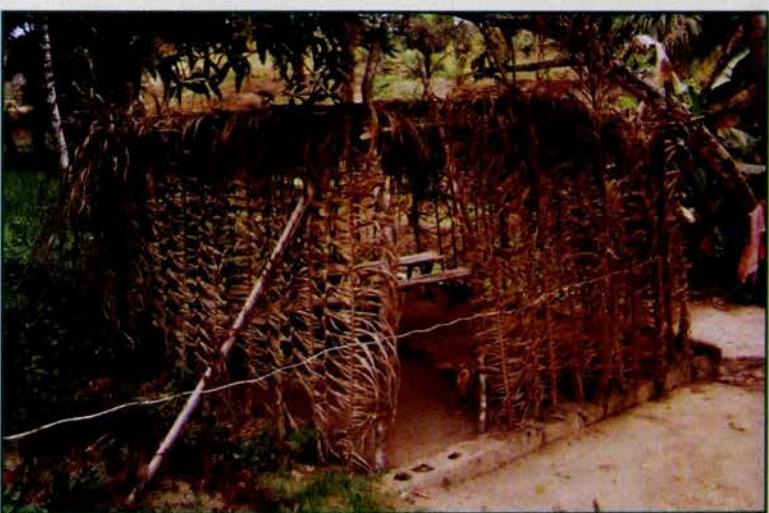
thoughts in a song that begins: "If I can help somebody, then my living will not be in vain."

Sensitivity to cultural differences is always a vital concern for UMVIM teams. The Liberians and their trainer were no exceptions. During the discussion, the issue of the hats or headcloths that all Liberian women wear to church came up. It was explained that, in the United States, it is no longer customary for women to cover their heads in church. One man in the group couldn't believe this. His eyes widened as he shook his head in disbelief and said: "I assumed that all women everywhere wore hats to church!"

The subject of communication was also explored as a cultural difference. Group members explained that, in the upcountry, away from the capital and the coast, they passed information along by word of mouth. As travelers walked from settlement to settlement, they carried letters and notes for one another, and they sometimes used drums. The trainer shook her head in disbelief and said: "I didn't know that

you still use drums to communicate!" The whole group got a good laugh out of that one.

At the end of each training session, participants talked about what they had experienced and learned. Shadrack Gueemie, from the Gbarnga District, said he



A temporary Sunday school classroom for a church in Kokoyal District, Liberia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

learned "that as Volunteers In Mission, if our job must be done effectively and efficiently, we must have our team members well trained. When they are trained, the job will be done with ease, pleasure, and interest." The Rev. Pay W. Suah, also from the Gbarnga District, commented: "I have learned today that we do not have to depend upon the overseas friends for all of the help, but we have to do some things for ourselves, as the members of the United Methodist Church in Liberia."

Volunteer Projects

Following the training sessions, the Rev. Labala reported that a special collection on each second Sunday for district LUMVIM projects had been approved by the bishop's cabinet. In addition, the Kakata-Farmington River District had acquired 10 acres of farmland to be cultivated as an agricultural project to raise funds for mission volunteers. Some congregations with damaged churches in the district had started cassava farms to generate funds for rebuilding, and some of these had already constructed temporary structures to use for worship services. In the St. John River District, the LUMVIM committee completed a comprehensive assessment of all the damaged churches and held a fundraising rally to buy planks for roof construction on the Isaac Padmore United Methodist Church. A local UMVIM team of 19 members had already started sawing the planks for the roof.

The Volunteer Dream

Throughout the Liberia Annual Conference, the Volunteers In Mission movement has brought renewed hope and encouragement. The Rev. Robert N. Sieh, Sr., district superintendent of the Garraway District, said: "My dream is for this process of volunteering to be a part of the whole

church, because it brings us together, and, by this, we'll be a greater church. We'll be able to demonstrate God's love to our neighbors. My dream is that the whole idea will bring us closer and closer together and help us become children of God together."

Bishop Kulah was asked by a radio reporter if he believed the excitement generated by the volunteer movement would stimulate the annual conference to undertake the reconstruction of the war-torn country. Bishop Kulah's answer was powerful. "This is an invitation for us to help ourselves. Here in Liberia, we always like to look up somewhere, to get help. This is a moment when we prepare ourselves and motivate ourselves to help ourselves. The invitation is ours to come, to pray, and to prepare so that we can help ourselves...not only for our own sakes but for the church in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." □

Jeanie Blankenbaker is Executive Secretary in the Mission Volunteers Program Area of the General Board of Global Ministries.



A giant manual saw (inset) is used by two Liberian UMVIM team members, one above and one below, to saw logs into planks (right) for a roof (August 1999).

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers for the Long Term irat

The Rosses—Tommie, 79, and Charlie, 82—are strong threads firmly woven into the tapestry of the United Methodist-supported Neighborhood House that serves Wilmington, Delaware. Each of them has given this bustling, inner-city community center three full decades of volunteer service.

The quiet, unassuming couple came to the center after a women's group meeting at their church,

Aldersgate United Methodist, when Tommie said yes to an appeal for volunteers. When she arrived, she found a place where low-income and working-class families were benefiting from programs in education, recreation, housing, job training, community development, and other areas of need.

"First I went in to wash dishes and set lunch tables," recalled Tommie, a former public school teacher. "They used to tease me about being the maid."

But a change in her duties soon brought her a more endearing title and responsibility as "the Reading Lady." After three decades, one can still find her at the center on Monday mornings in a quiet corner, reading books to two children at a time, opening their minds to a wider world of creativity and adventure.

The amusing antics of *Curious George* are clear favorites among her 4-year-olds, Tommie reports, although *Blueberries for Sal* becomes fairly popular whenever she brings in blueberries as edible props. "I just hope these experiences will encourage them to read when they're older," she says.

Charlie, a retired finance director for DuPont, also was recruited at Aldersgate. He started as a tutor but soon became a master recruiter of volunteers and donors himself.

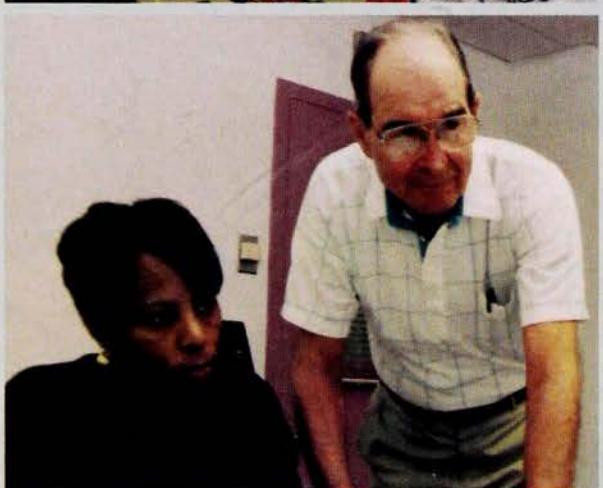
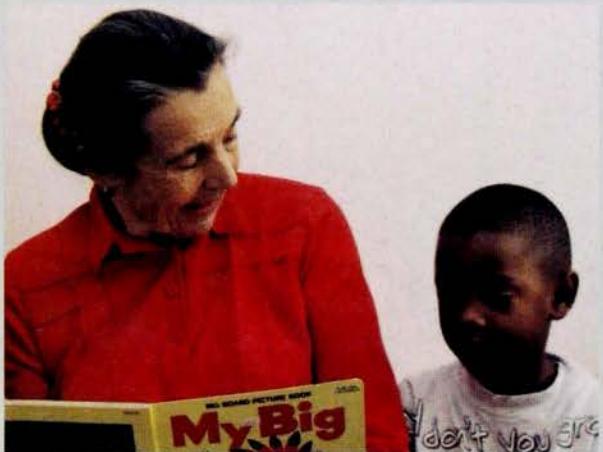
"I was impressed with the work of Neighborhood House and wanted to help out," he explained with a modest shrug. And help he has. During his long tenure, Charlie

has chaired the finance committee, served as board president for two terms, and championed an endowment fund. As co-chair of the building committee, he also led the planning and fundraising that produced a new, sorely needed \$2.3 million facility for the 72-year-old center. Today Charlie heads a committee that is planning a 27-unit housing development in the agency's low-income community.

Charlie also has played a significant role in Wilmington's successful Methodist Action Program, chaired the District Committee on Religion and Race, and served as board president for the Ingleside Retirement Apartments, a collaboration by United Methodists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians.

Pillars of Support

The Rosses' active, satisfying lives are best epitomized by their generous sharing of time and talents at Neighborhood House. Such generosity is the mark of thousands of volunteers who give of themselves daily, weekly, or monthly to support the ministries of United Methodist-related mission institutions around the world. Among these are 100 National Mission Institutions across the United States and in Puerto Rico that receive significant support from the General Board of Global Ministries. The institutions include community centers, residences for women, schools, colleges, and residential treatment centers primarily for troubled children and youth. Most



Top: Tommie Ross reads to a child at Neighborhood House, Wilmington, DE.
Above: Charlie Ross (standing) helps plan a low-income housing development.

National Mission Institutions

by John Coleman

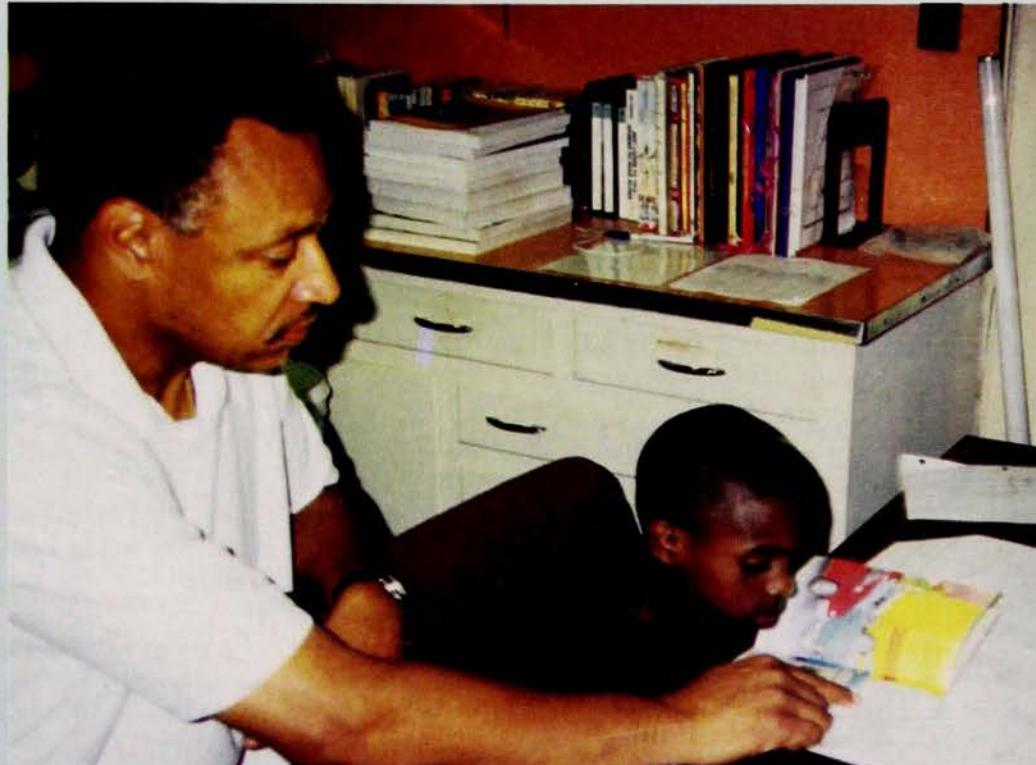
of these mission institutions were established by Methodist women's societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today, more than ever, their complex responsibilities, wide range of programs, and often overworked staffs depend on dedicated, creative, trained volunteers of all ages.

Many institutions clearly are grateful for and proud of their veteran volunteers, judging from the outpouring of letters, profiles, and photographs submitted in response to a recent request for information. Visiting work teams and short-term mission volunteers make important contributions to help these institutions serve their communities and constituents. But the volunteers who are there regularly throughout each year are an essential part of their programs and operations.

Teaching Crafts in Toledo

Etelia Robinson finds rich rewards volunteering at the Friendly Center in Toledo, Ohio. Four years ago, as part of the state's welfare-to-work program, the 40-year-old mother of three initially was assigned to work in the center's food-distribution referral program. With some free time on her hands, she also joined the ceramics class down the hall. "I already liked crocheting and other crafts," she recalled, "but ceramics really relaxed me and took my mind off my problems."

When the teacher left three years ago, Robinson took over the class and has since added more sessions and other crafts and activities



Volunteer Tom Sanders serves as a tennis instructor, reading tutor, and role model at the Bethlehem Center, Charlotte, NC.

to the program. "I'm the youngest person there," she says, since the students are all over 50.

According to executive director David J. Morris, "T," as she is popularly known, seems to spend as much time at the center as some of the staff, a comment heard about many devoted volunteers who go way beyond the call of duty.

A Male Role Model

The Bethlehem Center in Charlotte, NC, is delighted to have Tom Sanders as a volunteer tennis instructor and reading tutor—especially because he is a much-needed African American male role model

for neighborhood youth, according to Catherine Chapman, a program director at the center.

Sanders, 52, came initially to help introduce his favorite sport to youth who usually played only basketball and football. Seeing a greater need and a fear that blocked their learning potential, he decided also to volunteer as a reading tutor.

"A lot of the youth are afraid of learning to read at first and shy about pronouncing words," he said. "They aren't getting the one-on-one help they need in their crowded schools. But once they learn the basics, their confidence increases and they start to enjoy books."

Sanders, an airline utility worker who has worked with youth before as a Big Brother and a coach, stresses the importance of a good education, responsibility for one's community, and respect for oneself and others as keys to success in life. He recently organized an awards banquet to honor his young charges for their achievements.

"I'm patient, but I get tough with them sometimes because I know they can learn," he said. "Still, it's important to let them know they are loved and cared about. That usually gets results."

Role models like Sanders are making a difference in the lives of young people in mission institutions across the nation. And just as those institutions and their communities are diverse, so are the volunteers themselves—varying in their ages, races, and cultures; in their skills and interests; and in their economic backgrounds. Some have volunteered for years in different venues. Others are trying it for the first time and they are learning gratifying lessons.

Counseling at Med Camps

Stephanie McElroy, 16, joined more than 160 volunteer youth counselors at Camp Aldersgate in Little Rock, Arkansas, in the summer of 1997. The counselors came to help children with handicapping conditions enjoy Med Camps, a 27-year-old recreational program designed for them. Stephanie enjoyed organizing daily activities, caring for young campers' needs, and finding ways to encourage their self-esteem. She enjoyed it so much that, while other youth counselors generally spend a week or two at the camp, she became the first in the program's history to sign up for an entire summer.

"My biggest challenge was learning to overcome my fear of the unknown," said Stephanie. "That



Stephanie McElroy (far left, standing) with Lashawna Dean, Jenny Glover, Kellie Lang, Helen Cole, Deloris Jefferson; front: Rachel, Heather, Rebecca, Courtney, Melissa, Kazzie, Sally.

meant learning to understand each child's medical condition, and to look beyond that condition to the person inside. Even when one child had cerebral palsy and couldn't communicate clearly, I had to spend time figuring out what made her happy and what didn't."

Stephanie returned to devote more than 1175 hours to the camp in 1998. When she returned again in 1999, she was old enough to become a paid staff member. "I think I enjoyed it more as a volunteer," she said. "Knowing you're there for the kids and not for the money makes a big difference."

In two years at the camp, the teenager has worked in practically every volunteer position, at every special event, and even in the year-round Weekend Respite Program, which invites developmentally disabled children to the camp to offer their caregivers some relief. She has received several awards and was elected to the camp's Volunteer Youth Council. With her interest in science, she also volunteers at school and at the local Aerospace Education Center. But her favorite place is still Camp Aldersgate.

"Without a talented volunteer like Stephanie, who is willing to do

so much, we would need another staff member," said Sarah Spencer, executive director. "Her involvement has made a huge impression on us and on the community."

Leaving a Lasting Impression

Committed volunteers, especially longtime volunteers, do leave lasting impressions on mission institutions and the people they serve. Adrie Rhodes has logged 19 busy but satisfying years at Bethlehem Centers of Nashville (Tennessee), working with almost every program and every age group there. She began volunteering after enrolling her children in the day-care program, and she became more involved over the years as her children progressed into a series of other programs.

Today, among a host of tasks, Rhodes works in the administrative office, conducts tours, helps serve meals and organize activities with the senior adults, and runs the Kids Café, which provides hot meals at the center on Tuesdays for children in the neighborhood. Indeed, the staff considers her, as the executive director, Joyce Searcy, puts it, "a pillar of support and, more importantly, part of our family."

All of Us Working Together

"I am enriched, encouraged, and inspired every time I engage in activities to help others," said Bobbie Henry, a retired lab technician and a 10-year volunteer at the 116-year-old Marcy-Newberry Association on Chicago's West Side. A board officer and top fundraiser for this consortium of community centers and housing facilities, she also participates in its speakers' bureau and helps out in the childcare program, among numerous other jobs.

The Metro Women's Auxiliary, an ecumenical group that supports the agency, was named Volunteer Group of the Year in 1995 by the National Association of Health and Welfare Ministries, largely because of Henry's exemplary service.

"It's heartwarming to see Marcy-Newberry do so much good with such limited resources, especially for children," she said.



Bobbie Henry

"Whenever I have the occasion to participate in activities with children, youth, or seniors, I am richly blessed by them. Their positive response to my efforts challenges me to do even more."

"I have come to realize that everyone has valuable gifts," she added, "and it takes all of us working together to try to bring wholeness to all of God's people." □

John Coleman is a freelance writer and communications consultant to the Community and Institutional Ministries Program Area of the General Board of Global Ministries.

Varieties of Services

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

Visit and spend time at any of the 100 National Mission Institutions supported by United Methodists through the General Board of Global Ministries. You will feel inspired by the vitality, compassion, and creativity that seem to permeate these remarkable, historic places of mission. Some are more than a century old, yet still vibrant with innovative programs and ideas.

Each offers an individual testimony to the redeeming love of God that saves and transforms countless lives each day. But when they are linked together with one another and with churches, annual conferences, United Methodist Women's groups, and other partners in ministry, they become a dynamic Caring Connection.

The labors and responsibilities of volunteers at these institutions vary widely. Many help organize rummage sales, choir concerts, fashion shows, and other fundraising events. Some provide leadership on boards and committees. Others contribute maintenance and office skills.

Still others perform key public relations tasks, including:

- greeting visitors and conducting tours of an institution;
- speaking to churches, civic organizations, and other groups to interpret an institution's ministry and needs;
- staffing information booths at events;
- helping produce promotional materials, updating address lists, and stuffing envelopes.

Most volunteers provide more direct services to clients—or students, in the case of schools. They distribute food and clothing, do home-repair projects, provide transportation, deliver and serve meals, supervise recreation, teach crafts and other classes, help senior adults enjoy social activities, and mentor children and youth.

The list is probably endless. And the value of volunteers as an essential part of any mission institution's programs and services is inestimable. But clearly, so is the intrinsic value of the volunteer experience to many who seek that opportunity. It is an experience that can reveal diverse gifts and talents by using them in ways that manifest God's loving grace and the creative, transforming power of the Holy Spirit.



Top: Inter/Serv volunteer George Richmond collects and delivers food daily to a food pantry in St. Joseph, MO. **Above:** Volunteers from St. Luke UMC at Bethlehem Community Center in Jackson, MS.

Changing the World:



Global Justice Volunteers

by Bud Heckman

"Oh yes, and I was tricked into eating goat and was offered charred bat," laughs Kim Lehmann, a 21-year-old Nebraska native. Knowing she is a vegetarian, Kim's newfound friends chime in with laughter. They are all participants in the pilot program of Global Justice Volunteers. All have just completed an 8-week mission experience in a Third-World country, designed to change the way they view the church and the world.

Unusual foods, cultural differences, lost luggage, faith-filled reflection—these are familiar aspects of a typical international mission experience. What makes this program different is its focus, length, and intensity.

Global Justice Volunteers (GJV) is a new program of the General Board of Global Ministries. It was initiated by the Women's Division and the Committee on International Ministries with Women, Children, and Youth, and it is administered by the Mission Volunteers Program Area. The GJV program is designed to enable young adults 18 to 25 years of age to have short-term experiences living and learning alongside people whose lives are shaped by justice work. Based on a philosophy of mission *with*—not mission *to or for*—others, the model is one of solidarity and reciprocity.

Mission Volunteers works with United Methodist affiliated agencies and ecumenical organizations that place small pairings of volunteers—usually groups of two—with grassroots community groups. There, the volunteers are immersed in the local culture, language, and customs. High school graduates, college students and graduates, seminarians, and others—both US citizens and internationals—make for an interesting mix.

Accepting the challenge in Micah 6:8 "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your



Above: Children in the Philippines.

Top: Global Justice training at Stony Point, NY, left to right: Markinhus da Silva Sousa, Jorge Domingues, Nisha Purushotham, Tamara Walker, Casey High, Lynn Peralta, Jimee'n Jackson, Jessica Tulloch, Michele Johns, Cheryl Hemmerle, Karen Prudente, Kim Lehmann, and Kenia da Silva Guimaraes.

God," the Global Justice Volunteers work with local people on the pressing issues that face their communities. Sites for the GJV program are in development on five continents. Issues addressed include community organizing, conflict resolution, economic development, environmental justice, indigenous rights, land rights, labor relations, refugee resettlement, interfaith communities, and advocacy for women, children, and families.

In the rural communities of the northern Philippines, this means working with local organizations on environmental-justice concerns and land-rights issues posed by strip mining. In the streets of São Paulo, Brazil, it means working with the Street Children's Project to identify homeless children and connect them with their families in the favelas.

Building Relationships

Over the course of a term of service—which may last from two to six months—local hosts offer ongoing education and orientation for the volunteers, along with opportunities for exposure, work, dialogue, and reflection. Rather than building structures in the community, participants work to build relationships, to make critical connections between their developing faith and specific justice issues, and to understand the causes of social, political, and economic problems. Given the educational character of the program, an agreement is being negotiated with Drew University to offer transferable college credits for participation.

Like Mission Interns and US-2s, the GJVs receive a stipend that covers most of their expenses. However, GJVs are asked to collect sponsorships and to contribute \$200 for each month of participation, as well as cover food and local transportation costs. Some scholarships are available. In addition, the program utilizes an internal stewardship fund whereby wealthier participants share support with less affluent ones.

At the close of 1999, GJV teams are serving in Armenia, Brazil, and Liberia. More teams are scheduled for 2000. Applications are received on a revolving basis, but there are deadlines for specific dates. Approximate dates of service for 2000 are: May 14-August 1 (deadline February 15); June 4-August 22 (deadline March 15); and September 11-December 14 (deadline June 30). □

The Rev. Bud Heckman is Executive Secretary for Mission Volunteers at the General Board of Global Ministries, 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 330, New York, NY 10115.

Tel: 212-870-3825

Fax: 212-870-3624

E-mail: dheckman@gbgm-umc.org

An Interview With Global Justice Volunteers

by Alma Graham

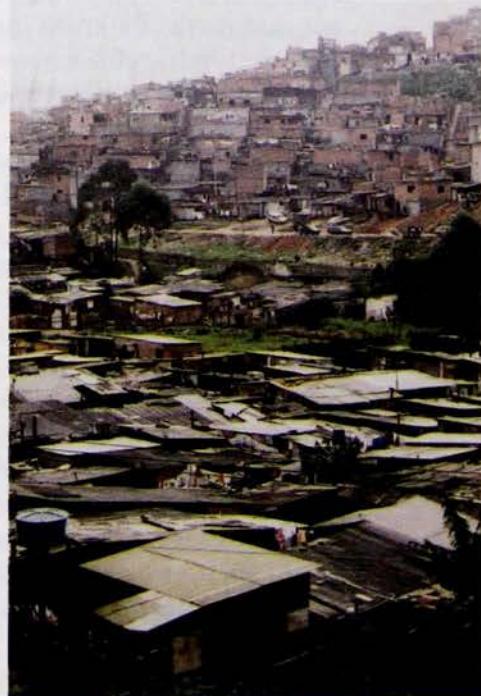
On July 23, I drove 50 miles north to the Stony Point Conference Center to interview seven young adults in their twenties. They had just completed an intensive, two-month pilot program for the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). They were the first group of Global Justice Volunteers.

They were an ecumenical group (five United Methodists, a Baptist, and a Catholic) and included an African American, a Filipina American, and a Brazilian. All seven were either in college or were recent graduates, with majors ranging from anthropology, psychology, and political science to divinity and social work. Two—Jimee'n Jackson and Casey High—had gone to São Paulo, Brazil, while the other five—Kenia da Silva Guimaraes, Kim Lehmann, Michele Johns, Lynn Peralta, and Jessica Tulloch—went to the Philippines.

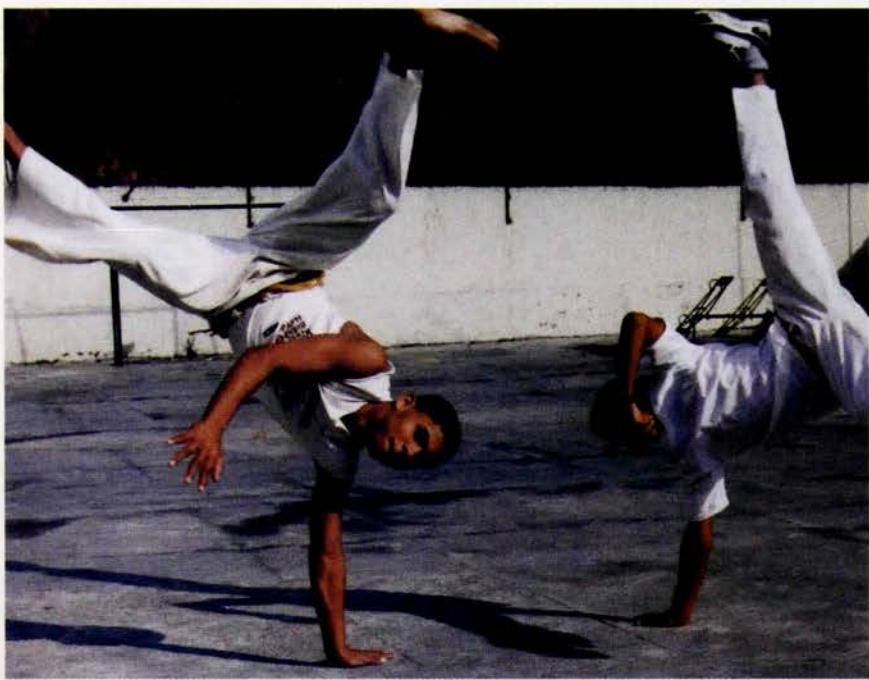
The seven had learned about this pilot program from pastors, campus ministers, professors, friends, and GBGM executives. Michele's mom found the program on the GBGM's web page on the Internet. All were drawn to the program through an interest in issues of human rights and of economic and environmental justice. "Instead of going somewhere to build a building," Casey said, "we went to develop an understanding of the people's situation."

A Day in Brazil

Jimee'n: We would work from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. Tuesday through Saturday. The first part of the day, we'd visit different neighborhoods and talk to the street children. We'd ask: "What is your name? How old are you? How many brothers and sisters do you have? Do you stay with your mom? Where do you live?" The second part of the day, we would visit the favelas, which are the Brazilian slums.



A favela in São Paulo, Brazil.



Two youth practice capoeira at the Street Children's Project, São Bernardo do Campo, Brazil.

Casey: The job of the street educator is to ask the kids: "What is your parents' situation? Why aren't you going to school?" We'd tell them: "We have a project where you can come, play soccer, and discuss these problems together in groups." After work, I would go to practice *capoeira*, an Afro-Brazilian dance form that combines dance with martial arts and resembles theater fighting. It is symbolic of Afro-Brazilian resistance to slavery during colonial times and perhaps also of the struggle against economic injustices that street kids face today. I felt that it was the most important cultural activity at the street kids' project because it gave the kids a positive alternative to violence on the streets.

Jimee'n: I was more interested in going to the favelas. Then at 5 P.M., I'd catch the bus, and it would be a straight shot from the favelas to the upper-class neighborhood where I lived with a White Brazilian family. I felt I was living in two different worlds and that I left my spirit behind in the favelas.

Casey: All the favelas were different. People have no work in the country, so they move to the city. They start with nothing. So they cut down a few trees, put up a few posts and a plastic tarp, and call it their home. Later they get bricks and build a house. Then they get electricity and running water. I never was in a favela that had telephones, but most have basic services. One way people cope with their situation there is by working together and organizing. The solidarity I saw in the favelas was something my community in the United States is far from.

Jimee'n: In Brazil, Afro-Brazilians are the majority, not a minority as African Americans are in the United States. But there, as in America, a lot of children of African heritage are deprived of their own culture. I come from an all-Black community in southern Illinois where Brazil is just a place on a map. For me, actually seeing it with my own eyes and being there was very different from just reading about it in books. It was a great opportunity.

Learning in the Philippines

Kim: Iloilo City was our home base. From there we went to different places and learned about open-pit mining, sugarcane workers, rice farmers, and out-of-school youth. The youth may be either high school graduates who could not afford college or younger children who had to leave school to work and support the family.

Kenia: The open-pit mining destroyed an entire farm community. They were not going to have that land anymore to produce their food. And the water was going to be polluted.

Michele: We were near Mt. Opao. An American mining company has come in, looking for gold and other minerals. If the mining goes through, it'll affect the ocean, which affects the fish, which affects the people's food supply. It will also affect the people's drinking water, which comes from the mountain. It will affect every part of their life.

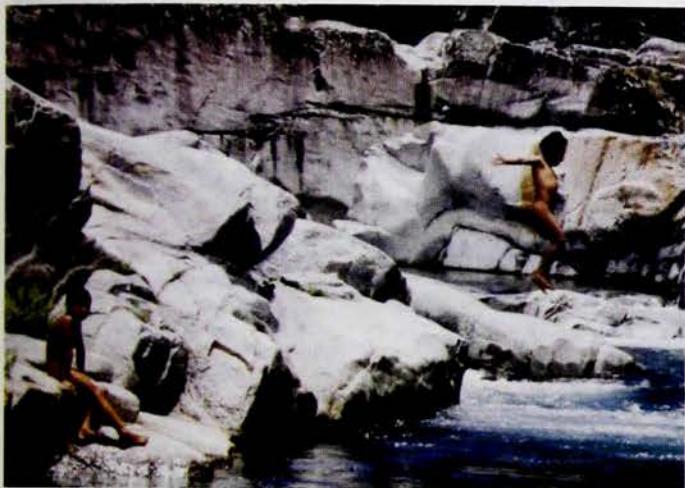
Kim: With a local rice farmer, Toto Henry, and two others, Michele and I hiked up Mt. Opao. When we reached the top, we were surrounded by 36 people—all



Above: An inactive open-pit mine in Hogan, Beuguet, Philippines, owned by a US company. **Inset:** Michele, Bernadith, and Kenia walk to barangays (villages) near Barotac Viejo to learn the people's stand on proposed mining.

brothers, sisters, parents, cousins, neighbors, and friends. Despite the fact that they had only flip-flops to climb in, that we spoke very different languages, and that Michele and I were from the same place as the company that threatened to mine their mountain and destroy their livelihood, we were all able to be in communion with one another on Mt. Opao.

Kenia: The sugarcane workers organized themselves into cooperatives. They will be able to export brown



Balbalasang children swim in the Saltan River, the cleanest river in the Cordillera Mountains.

Going on From Here

Jimee'n: I want to go back to Brazil. I'm interested in becoming a missionary or doing mission work. My special interest is in Afro-Latino culture. Afro-Brazilian culture is a big part of that.

Casey: I'm supposed to start a Ph.D. program in anthropology. Now I'm trying to decide: Should I go to graduate school and become a teacher so I can help educate my people, or should I go where I feel I belong right now, struggling and working with the people of Brazil? Can I do both?

Kim: I feel my work for the Filipino people and other oppressed people is here in the United States.

Kenia: I'd like to work in any situation where people are struggling to survive in poverty situations.

Michele: I want to do art therapy with children who've experienced trauma. That can be done globally and locally.

Jessica: I'm interested in community organizing and development and I've also thought about teaching.

Lynn: I already have a career track in social work, primarily with youth. After my graduate program, I'd like to return to the Bay Area and start my own nonprofit organization.



In Iloilo City, Philippines, an 11-year-old tricycle driver works all day to earn money for his family.

sugar and banana chips to several countries and they'll be able to get a fairer price.

Jessica: I worked with the Banao people in the Balbalasang barrio in Kalinga Province. It's a community where an elite group manipulates the majority, who are mostly farmers working their ancestral land. They raise rice and vegetables for their own consumption, but often there is not enough since the farmers still use the traditional plow pulled by the caribou. With better technology, they could produce more, sell the surplus, and have income to send their children to school. Meanwhile, a small farmer might have to borrow rice from the head of a rich family. If the farmer doesn't do what the rich man says, he won't lend the farmer any rice next time and won't let the farmer use his rice mill. It's important that the small farmers organize so that they can resist these manipulations.

Lynn: I worked primarily at the Cordillera Labor Center. The chief need is for jobs. There aren't enough jobs in the Philippines, in general. A memorable moment for me occurred when I visited a mushroom farming company along with labor organizers. One organizer, Aldwin—whose family was too poor for him to attend school this semester—told me about visiting a family of five that could eat only one meal a day, a bowl of rice mixed with sugar. I thought of my life in America and how food was not a worry of mine. As a Filipina American, when I learned about the people of the Philippines, I reconnected with my roots. Now I'll bring that experience back to my community in the United States. □

Alma Graham is Editor of New World Outlook.

VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION UNITED METHODIST

On My Own in the Philippines

by Bob May



Individual volunteer Bob May at a market, Cabanatuan City, the Philippines.

My perspective and attitude will be forever changed by my experience serving as an individual volunteer in the Philippines.

Previously, I had spent a few weeks on mission-team projects in a mountain village in Mexico and on an Indian reservation in South Dakota. A cross-cultural mission team is a small miracle in action. It's great to be a part of a group of strangers working together with a common purpose.

But there were many new things I learned by being an individual volunteer. Without the local support of a

group from the United States to ease my transition into the culture, I had to become totally dependent on the assistance and kindness of my hosts. This meant I had to grow immeasurably in faith. As usual, God surprised me. My hosts in Cabanatuan City provided everything necessary for my stay: room, food, guides, and even my own personal computer.

God opened my eyes in other ways too. Now I have a much better understanding of how much work it is to offer oneself in mission service. My duty at Wesleyan University meant much more than just showing up in a classroom several times a week to teach computer science. It was a full-time job.

Even so, away from the distractions of busy American life, I had the time necessary for proper spiritual reflection and meditation. For our daily devotional in the dorm, someone would write a verse on the board and someone else would illustrate it. Some of the drawings were really impressive. A few students had questions, and I did my best to answer them. In turn, I asked questions too.

My time in the Philippines brought other special benefits. I loved the laughing children of the Bakod Bayon community who were attending their first daily vacation church school. I had volunteered to teach the 10- to 12-year-olds. They screamed with delight when we teachers arrived each morning.

Being responsible for visual aids, I drew lots of pictures. I held up signs and carried chairs. I sang songs and danced in circles. I jumped up and down and made airplane noises. I couldn't communicate very well in words, for none of the kids spoke English. But I noticed that a smile and a few simple words of Tagalog let people know you are making an effort to understand and be understood.

At vacation church school, we didn't have a room to meet in, so we met under a big tree beside the rice field. Whenever we needed a chalkboard, we taped paper to the tree. Seeing the children's enthusiasm as

UNIVERSITY IN MISSION UNITED METHODIST VOLUNTEERS

they attentively listened to Gospel stories and joyously sang praises and hymns for the Lord made my entire trip worthwhile.

Soon after my arrival, I discovered how seriously the Filipinos value family and interpersonal relationships. During discussions in Bible study, it became obvious how important they consider other people and how highly they value their friends. For example, their word *pasalubong* means the gift that you bring back to your family or friends whenever you go somewhere. As someone who didn't always regard my family and friends with the proper love, I think God wanted me to hear this message.

One surprising benefit of my stay in the Philippines was that I became closer to the people I left behind. When I left for Cabanatuan City, I thought I was leaving my friends and family, but I was wrong. They made sure that we went through all of my adventures together. Although I was far from home and distant from them, I felt their care and concern. I read their words of encouragement. I opened their care packages. Most of all, I benefited from their prayers. I knew that, no matter what happened, I had many voices uplifting my service. I was an individual volunteer, but I was working with a great deal of support. □

Bob May is an individual volunteer from Bergton, Virginia, who served at Wesleyan University in the Philippines.

INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS

United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM), both lay and clergy, single and in couples, are engaged in Christian ministry. They serve as individual volunteers in a program designed to complement—not compete with—long-term mission service. In fulfilling the work to which God has called them, they embody the UMVIM motto: "Christian Love In Action."

Where and How Individuals Serve

Individual volunteers may serve nationally or internationally, sometimes ecumenically, in projects ranging from construction to evangelization, from social outreach to medical assistance. Individuals may serve locally in churches and communities, visiting the homebound, assisting in nursing homes, tutoring children, or repairing houses. They may also serve in annual-conference projects such as community centers, children's centers, camps, and vacation Bible schools.

Because individual volunteers are viewed as missionaries by the host community, they may be asked to pray aloud, speak in public on short notice, or lead Bible studies. When they serve in other countries, fluency in the language is often required.

Steps to Follow

Individual volunteers serve for periods of two months to two years, usually at their own expense. In general, individuals or married couples should follow these steps:

1. Complete a UMVIM application form.
2. Provide recommendations from your pastor and two other people.
3. Arrange an interview with your conference or jurisdictional UMVIM representative.
4. Prepare a budget and secure financing.
5. Attend an Individual Volunteer Orientation.
6. Make your travel arrangements.

For an application or information, contact:

The Rev. Walt Whitehurst
1761 Princess Anne Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23456
E-mail: IndVol@aol.com

For those living within the Southeast Jurisdiction, contact:

UMVIM, SEJ
159 Ralph McGill Blvd. NE, #305
Atlanta, GA 30308-3353
E-Mail: sejumvim@compuserve.com



Children of the Bakod Bayon community in Cabanatuan City, the Philippines, attend daily vacation church school under a big tree.

VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION UNITED METHODIST

Books Are Like Gold in Zimbabwe by Ann and Morris Taber

In early January 1999, looking for adventure and wanting to use our skills as educators to help others, we left our home in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for a five-month stay in Mutare, Zimbabwe. We became a part of the United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) program as self-supporting individual volunteers. Morris, who had taught history at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn for almost three decades, was going to teach American history at United Methodism's Africa University (AU). Ann, a retired school librarian and elementary reading teacher, offered her professional services to the Hartzell Primary School for ages 5-12.

When Ann first offered to help with the library at the 900-student Methodist mission school, the headmaster wrote that Hartzell did not have a library because of "a lack of appropriate books." Similarly, Morris learned that most of his students could not afford textbooks, relying instead on AU library texts or on photocopied sections. These realities reminded us of what a Zimbabwean friend had told us: "Books are like gold in Zimbabwe."

The scarcity of books in Zimbabwe inspired us to undertake a "Books Are Like Gold" project. We bought new books, collected and sorted used ones, and sought monetary donations to buy more and to cover shipping costs. Since Morris's AU students would be going back to teaching in high schools, he told would-be donors that, for just \$29, "YOU can significantly influence what thousands of African students know and understand about America by providing an American history book!" Ann's appeal called for funds to buy appropriate books in the United States and to purchase books in Africa specifically designed for Zimbabwean pupils.

Our few modest appeals created an unanticipated chain reaction of support. Family and friends spread the effort to other churches, and a United Methodist retirement home contributed a month's chapel collection. A *Detroit News* reporter wrote about our efforts, which brought another outpouring of donations.

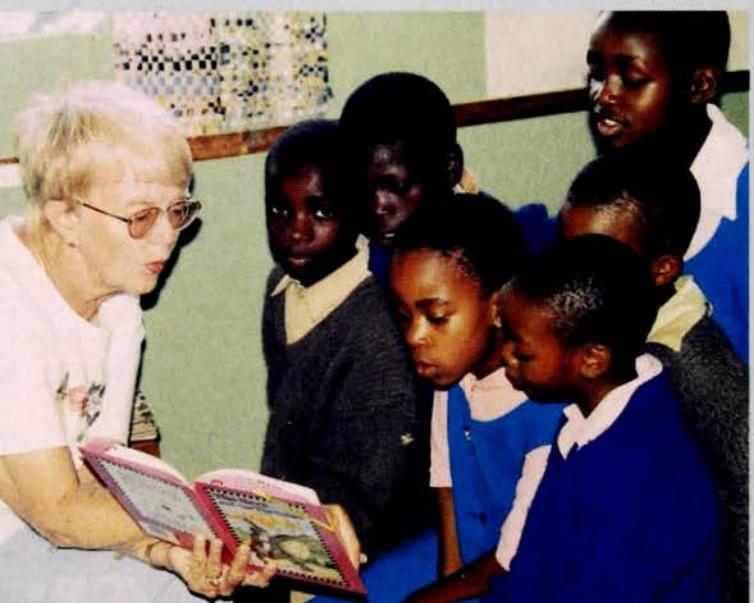
By February, which is midsummer in Zimbabwe, Ann was either reading stories to the children in their classrooms or processing books in the teachers' tea-room, while the children peeked in, smiled, and waved. Meanwhile, the headmaster had a damaged classroom refurbished to be used for the library. By March, our 15 mailbags of books had all arrived as well as a number of books contributed by United Methodist churches in Michigan, Illinois, and Minnesota. Ann hired two unemployed high school graduates to help her process the books. A carpenter made library shelves and furniture.

In March, the school had a weeklong reading-emphasis program, with posters, poems, storytellers, and time-outs for reading. By April, 4000 more books

were on their way from a book-collecting effort by the Hartland, Michigan elementary schools honoring "March Is Reading Month." They were joined by 27 bags of books from Greenhills School in Ann Arbor. A visiting UMVIM team from California and Florida not only brought money and books but also volunteered time to help in the library. A Catholic friend paid the fees that enabled 131 more children to begin school in the May term.

Finally, on May 21 (late autumn), the "Taber Library" had its grand opening. For the first time, the children had access to books, ones they could check out and read, especially ones with interesting stories instead of textbook exercises. Reading had become fun! On June 4, we headed back to the United States, secure in the knowledge that 900 children now have a library of 8000 books and that a group of secondary teachers have returned to their African classrooms armed with a better understanding of American history. Our "little adventure" had inspired hundreds of people to help. This outcome so excited and energized us that we are returning for another five-month term in January. □

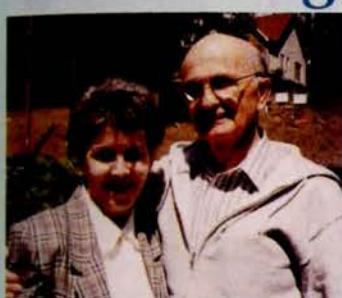
Morris and Ann Taber are members of Ypsilanti First United Methodist Church in Ypsilanti, Michigan, near Ann Arbor.



Ann Taber shares a book with children at Hartzell Primary School, Mutare, Zimbabwe.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSION UNITED METHODIST VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering in the United States by Leon and Doris Graham



In early May 1997, we were working full time in our management-services company in Florida's Tampa Bay area. We were living in a nice retirement community with a comfortable income and a wonderful circle of friends and were well-respected in the business community. But the sense of fulfillment we once gleaned from personal and business activities was no longer there.

Then one day, at the same time, we each felt a calling to go out and do the Lord's work. After a month's cooling-off period, our belief had become a conviction. So, over the next two months, we notified our clients, closed our business, and enrolled with the United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM).

Individual volunteering gave us the flexibility of choosing the season, geographic location, and length of our mission. We could select a variety of work experiences in various cultures. We also elected to serve on missions of one to six months to give us an opportunity to develop personal relationships at the place of service.

After earlier assignments at the Southwest Indian School in Peoria, Arizona, and at Chugiak United Methodist Church in Alaska, we reported to work at Lake Junaluska Methodist Assembly in western North Carolina. We arrived on New Year's Day 1999 and remained through August. We generally travel and live in our 26-foot travel trailer, but at Junaluska, nice housing was provided.

Our basic mission was to recruit, supervise, and provide support for work teams that were needed to

make extensive renovations and repairs to several assembly buildings. We went to work immediately, with Doris doing administrative work while Leon worked in planning, recruiting, and implementing the "Missions at the Lake" project.

Few people are attracted to volunteer work in the North Carolina mountains in winter. On a typical day, Leon (who moved to Florida in 1981 to escape the cold) was out at 6:30 A.M., in fierce cold winds accompanied by sleet, rain, or snow, starting a 12-hour workday in buildings with no heat or water. Even so, with some creative recruiting, we had a nominal work force through March and an abundance of teams in April and May. One day before our May 28 deadline, all targeted projects were complete.



Top left: Doris and Leon Graham. **Above:** Volunteers working at Lake Junaluska Methodist Assembly in winter install one of 97 vanity sinks that replaced old cast-iron sinks.

After Leon's role reverted to more routine work, Doris was still working a 10- to 14-hour day directing the summer day-camp program, night nursery, and Sunday nursery at church.

The spiritual aspect of individual volunteer work is difficult to describe, but imagine this. You wake up one morning and the whole world seems warm, sunny, and bright. There's a happiness inside you just bursting at the seams to come out. You radiate a feeling of love for everyone you meet. There are no negative thoughts to be found anywhere.

We cannot better describe having had a spiritual experience with our Lord Jesus than by describing the experience of serving him through volunteer services to others. This was his mandate given to us in so many of his teachings, and this is the greatest of all rewards for us as individual volunteers. □

Leon and Doris Graham have served as United Methodist Volunteers In Mission in Arizona, Alaska, and North Carolina. See the Bulletin Inserts for more of their story.

Mutuality in Mission

Let mutual love continue.

Troy Conference Hosts VIMS From Mozambique

by Brenda J. Arley

"I'm not sure that you realize how deep your invitation reaches," said João Somane Machado, resident bishop of the Mozambique Annual Conference. It was May 25, 1998, and the bishop, with 10 other members of a Volunteers In Mission (VIM) team from Mozambique, had just arrived at JFK International Airport in New York.

Bishop Machado was addressing representatives of the Troy

Annual Conference, which includes Vermont and northeastern New York. In 1996, Troy had invited the Mozambique Annual Conference to form a VIM team to visit Troy Conference and reinvigorate its people and churches for mission, faith development, and renewal.

"What you are doing with this invitation," Bishop Machado said, "is turning a page in the history of The United Methodist Church. Always missionaries have come to Africa. But never, until now, have missionaries from Africa been invited to North America."

Enlarging Our Understanding

Members of Troy Conference had made their first trip to Mozambique

in 1990 at the initiative of Bishop Dale White, then resident bishop, and of Bonnie Totten Adkins of Africa Church Growth and Development. Since then, four VIM teams from Troy Conference had worked in Mozambique: two in 1993 and two in 1995. It was in 1995 that God called us to take a deeper look at mutuality in mission.

Not unlike the story of Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28, where Jesus was moved to enlarge his understanding of his mission, our 1995 VIM teams envisioned a new concept of reciprocity. Guided by God's grace and moved by our encounter with the Mozambican people, we came away with the understanding that authentic mutuality in our missional relationship could happen only if a VIM team from Mozambique was invited to visit Troy Conference to help us not with physical building but with spiritual rebuilding.

Repairing a Relationship

The mission volunteers from Troy Conference knew the blessings inherent in the VIM opportunity. What made that privilege possible was our access to financial resources. We grew deeply disturbed by the imbalance of privilege in our relationship with the United Methodist Church in Mozambique. This time, God was calling us not to reconstruct and repair mission buildings in Chicuque and Cambine but to



Mozambican VIM team members sing songs of praise upon their arrival at Ogden Lodge in Troy Conference.



Bishop Machado of Mozambique embraces twin brothers at Saranac Lake (NY) United Methodist Church.

reconstruct our relationship with our United Methodist brothers and sisters in Mozambique.

When you first arrive in Mozambique, you are welcomed with songs praising God for guests. You worship in churches overflowing with people. Congregations that lack buildings worship under cashew trees. "What accounts for the phenomenal church growth in Mozambique that we have heard about and now see?" asked one of our 1995 VIM team members. A former US missionary in Mozambique replied: "In America, you don't really need to depend on God, do you? People here depend on God for everything."

Living Letters From Christ

In 1995, we experienced the richness of spiritual gifts found in the United Methodist churches in Mozambique. In the face of daily uncertainty of all kinds, the people kept faith. They embraced the stranger with love and extended hospitality. In fact, they referred to us as living letters from Christ, bringing the message that they

were loved and not forgotten by the world or the larger church. Once, upon our return to Chicuque after a brief trip, the district superintendent, Victor Mavalule, asked to count our toes. He told an African story about how parents counted the toes of their children upon their return home to see if they were safe and well. So moved were we by experiencing such spiritual gifts and love that we knew God was calling us to invite the Mozambique Conference to come over and help us.

Though the Volunteers In Mission program is based on people's paying their own way, that was not possible in this situation. So we challenged ourselves to raise the money to bring over a team from Africa. Our planning team was guided by its theme scripture, Hebrews 13:1-2. By 1998, with God's help, enough money had been raised to allow an 11-member team from Mozambique to itinerate in Troy Conference for three weeks.

One Body, One Church

This dynamic, spiritually gifted VIM team from Mozambique was

present at Troy Conference's 1998 annual conference session. During the meeting, Bishop Machado spoke of the plight of Mozambican children at risk of losing life and limb during outdoor play because they live in a country laced with landmines. He and the other team members told their country's story in a way no returning American VIM teams could do,

Later, the VIM team itinerated in more than a dozen local churches and visited various ministry sites. The team members met with individuals and churches to exchange experiences of faith in God through Jesus Christ. The message from the team was that we were one body, one United Methodist Church. In unity with one another, we would find our strength and wholeness.

By transcending barriers of culture, race, geographic distance, and economic inequity, we experienced true mutuality in our missional relationship. As Bishop Machado wrote after the experience: "Christian love was the bridge between our differences." □

Brenda Arley was the Troy Conference Planning Team Coordinator for the visit of the Mozambican VIM team.



Bishop Machado leads a group activity at Eastern Parkway UMC.

A Mozambican's Questions and Prayer

by Humberto Guibunda

At the beginning of 1998, I was suddenly surprised by information from Bishop Machado saying that I would be going to the United States by the end of May that year. My dream of visiting the United States had begun in the summer of 1985, when I was taking part in the twelfth annual Youth and Students World Festival in Moscow. (I was then a youth representative of Mozambique's Conference Council on Ministries.) But when my first excitement was over, my mind was full of questions. Why were some chosen and not others? Why, if team members were to be Volunteers In Mission, were we all appointed by the bishop? Also, knowing that several VIM teams of Americans had been among us in Mozambique restoring Cambine and Chicuque, what would the Mozambicans help to restore in Troy Conference? Don't Americans usually seem to be self-sufficient?



Troy Conference planning team leader Brenda Arley and Mozambican VIM team leader Humberto Guibunda.



The Mozambican VIM team: (kneeling) Arlindo Sambo, Arlindo Dias Simbine, Humberto Guibunda; (standing) Cecilia Jose Filipe Low, Edna Escrivão Anglaze Zunguze, the Rev. Jamisse Taimo, Angelina Abdul, Bishop João Somane Machado, Nocia Machado, Andre Zacarias Massicame, and the Rev. Pedro Canhavane Monteiro.

After three preparatory sessions, we started our journey with several objectives in mind. First, we went to America not to enjoy the food or to travel on beautiful highways but to exchange experiences of faith in Jesus Christ as one church, one body. We went to carry our spirituality to the believers in the United States. And we went to turn a page in the history of the relationship between the United States and Africa, especially regarding Mozambique. In the context of our church, that relationship has lasted 100 years.

One year after our wonderful experience of faith as Volunteers In Mission in the United States, one question starts to worry me more and

more. The Mozambican VIM team was able to go to the United States thanks to the vision and generosity of our brothers and sisters of Troy Conference, who I believe were guided by the Holy Spirit. But while I consider the exchange of VIM teams as cement for our unity as members of one body, I wonder, in the long term, what will be the sustainability of this aspect of the Volunteers In Mission program.

However, because I fully appreciate the value of VIM teams as "repairers of the breach," I invite all people to pray faithfully that God will lead us in the way of His Spirit during the next millennium, a way in which each of us will confirm that we are all children of the same Creator. □

Humberto Guibunda was the Team Leader of the 1998 Volunteers In Mission team that visited Troy Conference from Mozambique.

Photographing in the Philippines

by C. Michele Johns, Global Justice Volunteer, Mission Volunteers, General Board of Global Ministries



Proud grandmother with her grandson in Iloilo City, the Philippines.

areas whose residents are still called "squatters," even after living on the same land for generations. When the landowner decides it is time to develop the land, communities of these "possessors" are broken up, residents are relocated, and the land is then used for new subdivisions, beach resorts, or other lucrative ventures.

On a morning in mid July, my two companions and I went to a community facing relocation. Community leaders showed us around, proudly detailing their relationship with the ocean for food and with one another for strength. While walking, we came across two men mending their fishing net. I wanted to photograph this scene, but a gentleman with us thought I was asking to photograph the children. He ordered the children away from their play and arranged them into a posed picture. I felt guilty taking the photo. Yet now, when I look at my photographs, I remember the stories behind them. Showing and telling those stories is a way to recall and report the injustices I saw.

While in the Philippines, I struggled with the ethics of photographing people who are suffering. How can I justify my yearning to capture the painful eyes of a hungry child when what she needs is a meal? What gives me the right to invade a community with my camera? My presence alters the balance. How much will exposing my camera from my backpack distance me from the very people I desire to know?

In Iloilo City on the island of Panay, there are hidden urban

The United Methodist Church in Mission

Adult Education at Red Bird

by John Coleman, Communications Consultant, Community and Institutional Ministries, General Board of Global Ministries

Like many volunteer couples, Elvera "Al" Zunk and her husband, Bob, began full-time mission service after their retirement in 1988. A year later, they came as long-term volunteers to Red Bird Mission in Beverly, Kentucky—a program of the Red Bird Missionary Conference, located in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains. While Bob led work teams in doing maintenance projects, Al initially taught and tutored students at the mission school. After her husband's death, she stayed on to work with the medical transportation and meals-on-wheels programs, then received training to teach physical fitness to senior adults.

For the past three years, the 73-year-old volunteer has directed an adult education program, helping clients earn General Equivalency Diplomas (GEDs) in order to obtain decent jobs and seek higher education. She credits supportive prayers, greetings, and "little love notes" from her home church and her family and friends with keeping her uplifted in her work.

One typical former student recounts her story of becoming a teen mother, dropping out of high school, and working "low-paying dead-end jobs, trying to keep food on the table."

"I gave up for a while until I realized I needed to give my child a better future," she said. "I changed jobs, completed my GED, and now have a supervisory level position with my employer. Completing my GED allows me to consider going to college to continue improving my life. Without support and encouragement from Al Zunk, I might not be a success story today."



Elvera "Al" Zunk with student.

Self-Supporting Volunteers: Blessed Beyond Belief

by Leon and Doris Graham, United Methodist Volunteers In Mission



A volunteer paints playground equipment, Lake Junaluska.

give them actual experience with such subjects as budgeting, banking, comparison shopping, leasing an apartment, and financing a car.

During a three-month assignment at Chugiak United Methodist Church in Alaska, we made repairs to the parsonage and church building, reorganized and catalogued the church library, and planned vacation Bible school. While there, we house-sat for two families and lived the rest of the time in our travel trailer in the church yard. It was our loving relationships with staff and church members that made the 10,000-mile roundtrip worthwhile.

In most instances, the individual volunteer is completely self-supporting. We generally travel in our 26-foot travel trailer, which is very comfortable for the two of us. In Arizona, we paid the school \$60 per month for parking and could have a meal while on duty in the dining hall. All other travel, costs of living, and student field trips were out-of-pocket expenses. All of our travel and cost of living for the Alaska mission was at our own expense.

A dedicated volunteer must expect to meet the challenge of serving under conditions that may be uncomfortable or trying. But if you approach the challenge with a loving heart and willingly apply yourself, you will feel blessed beyond belief.

Continuing Jesus' Healing Ministry

by Martha Brice, United Methodist Volunteers In Mission Coordinator,
West Ohio Annual Conference

In 1997, I was invited to preview a medical clinic, called Branches of Faith, which provides free health care to the people of Nuevo Progreso, Mexico. Expanding the ventures of West Ohio Volunteers In Mission to include medical missions seemed a good idea, so I accepted.

During several days at the clinic, we saw person after person needing medical attention, prescriptions, and care. After a while, the patients seemed to blend together in a swirl of active children, language differences, and dust.

Then one little boy totally changed my perspective. Alejandro was six years old. He lived with his large family in a 10- by 14-foot home with a dirt floor, no electricity, and no running water. He had cerebral palsy and used his arms to pull himself around on the earthen floor. No one had ever dreamed that he could walk.

After a search of stored equipment, we found a child-sized walker that another volunteer group had donated. A team member put it together to fit Alejandro's exact specifications. As the boy stepped up to the walker, we held our collective breath as we witnessed his first halting steps of freedom out into the world.

The healing ministry begun by Jesus Christ 2000 years ago was carried out anew in the hands of clinic volunteers that day. I returned to Ohio with renewed vigor to begin a venture that, over the past two years, has sent more than 200 volunteers from the West Ohio Conference to the Branches of Faith Clinic to continue Jesus' healing ministry.



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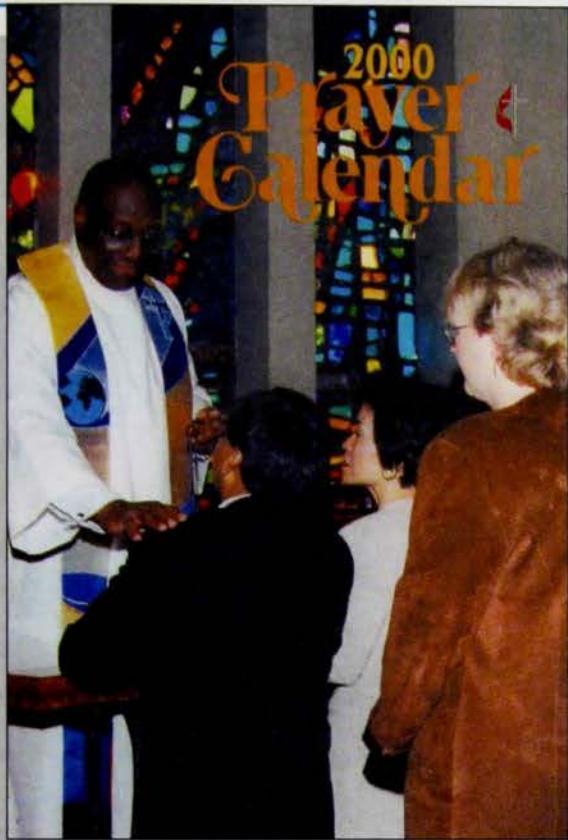
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