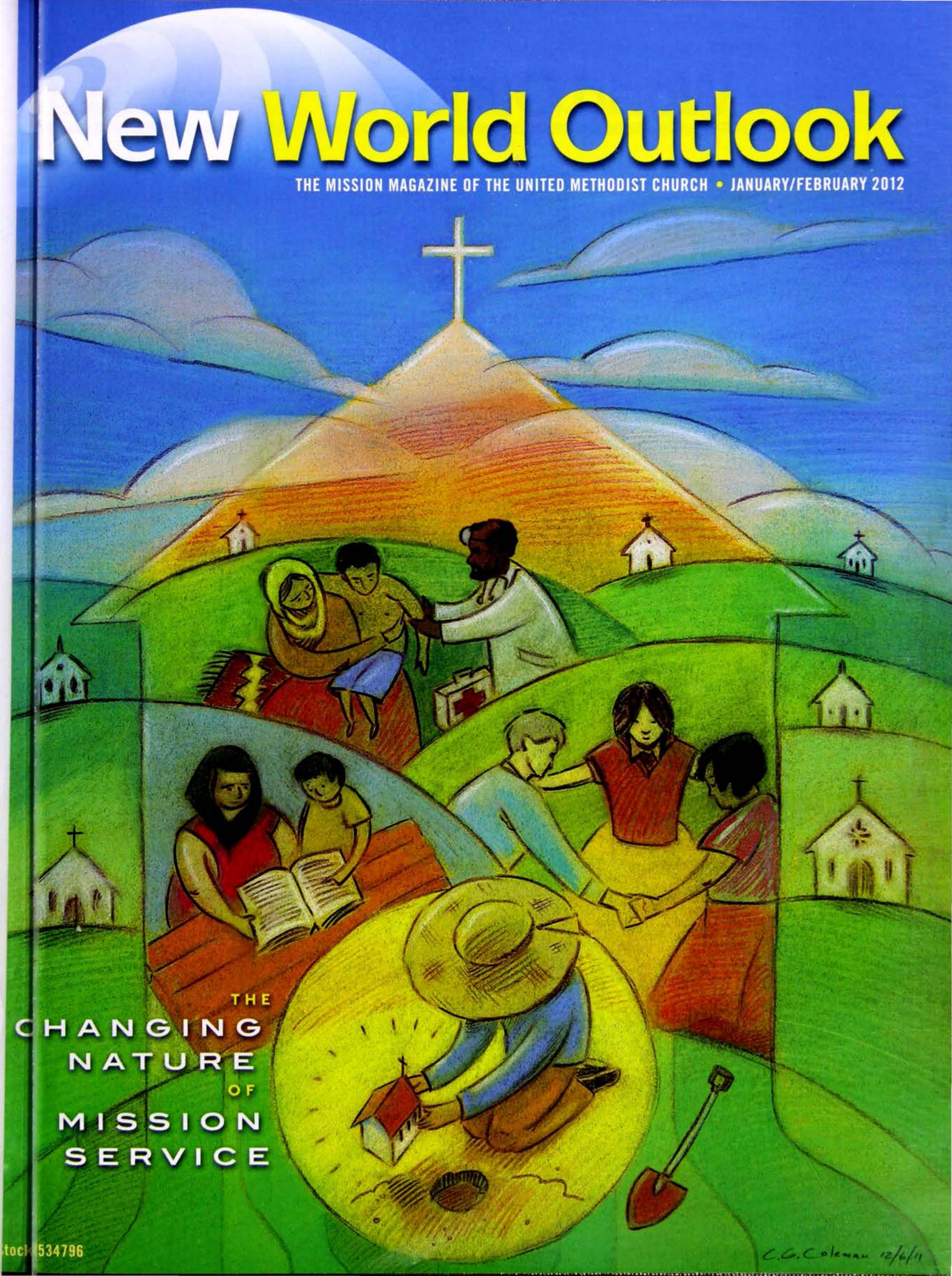
New World Outlook

THE MISSION MAGAZINE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH • JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2012



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New World Outlook

New Series Vol. LXXII, No. 3; Whole Series Vol. CII, No. 1
NEW WORLD OUTLOOK JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2012

ISSN-0043-8812

Published bimonthly by the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.

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Printed in the U.S.A.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes directly to New World Outlook, P.O. Box 395, Congers, New York 10920-0395. Subscriptions in the United States and Possessions: One year, $24.00. Single copies, $4.00. Two years, $42.00. All foreign countries: one year, $40.00. Church Subscription Program: 5 or more one-year subscriptions for $18 each.

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Direct all subscription inquiries and changes of address to: New World Outlook, P.O. Box 395, Congers, New York 10920-0395. Send old address label if possible. Allow at least 30 days' notice. Or call 1-877-881-2385 (toll-free). Email: NewWorldOutlook@cambeywest.com

COVER: "Planting Churches"
ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS COLEMAN
Well-integrated ministries provide more than just a church building in the communities where they are planted.

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

LEFT: A baby on her back, a woman works in a field planted with corn and cassava near Thekerani, in southern Malawi. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

From the editor

SAME MISSION, DIFFERENT METHODS, BETTER UNDERSTANDING

Connecting, engaging, hands-on—are just a few of the adjectives in this issue of *New World Outlook* that describe mission today. Congregations of all sizes are jumping into mission opportunities in most parts of the United Methodist connection. Large churches, like St. Paul's in Oklahoma City or The Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, may have the resources to set up their own partnerships. Other churches, such as those in the West Ohio Conference covered in this issue, may have opportunities to add support to projects through their conference or district ministries—or by partnering with a large church in their conference.

With so many new folks venturing into mission, the need for knowledge and experience also increases. Education in a particular discipline and intense study coupled with years of learning on the job are priceless. Practical experience teaches the best lessons, and often the mistakes made along the way are as important as the successes.

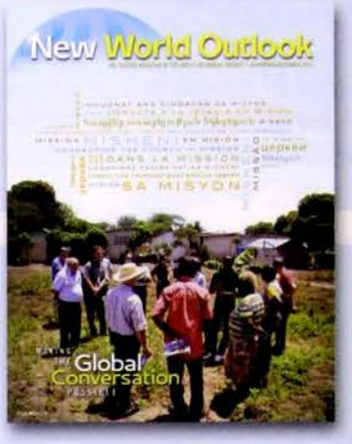
Even with formidable resources, a wise congregation seeks council before striking out on its own in a new mission adventure. The strength of the Methodist connection *is* its connection. Churches are connected to other churches in their districts, conferences, jurisdictions, and other regional bodies. Feeling called to do something about malaria, a curable disease that needlessly causes suffering and death, especially among children? There are already United Methodists in the United States working on that. There are also United Methodists all across Africa, Europe, Asia, and Latin America working on that. Connecting those ministries across the world's oceans, minimizing duplication, leveraging donor contributions, and building health-care capacity in remote areas are major contributions of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to the Imagine No Malaria campaign. As a result, much progress in malaria awareness, education, treatment, and prevention has been made.

Much has been learned across the centuries about how to connect people and integrate ministries. United Methodists must have a way to take the many lessons learned in one generation into the next. Otherwise, the church is constantly starting over—none the wiser and not much further along.

The mission agency, presently named the General Board of Global Ministries, is currently the keeper and practitioner of this collective mission knowledge for United Methodists. The General Commission on Archives and History certainly keeps and preserves the record of this knowledge, but the mission agency should be actively integrating the lessons learned over more than 200 years into the next mission project, the next missionary placement, and the next mission initiative.

So jump into hands-on ministry. Engage, connect, and experience the joy of answering God's call to mission. A strong foundation, centuries old, supports the feet of those that venture out today. Methodists have been forming, reforming, and redefining this mission agency for hundreds of years just for this purpose.

Christie R. House



November–December 2011

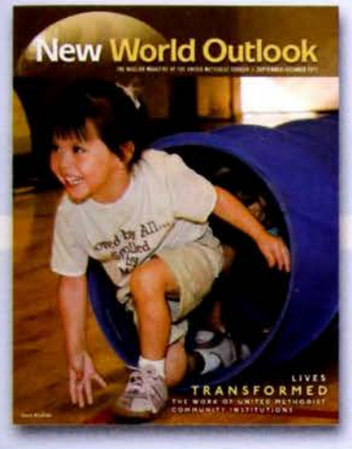
Dear Editor,

I nearly finished the issue, and before I forget to comment—then share it with a friend to read, before we use the centerfold and some pictures on our UMW bulletin board at church—I must comment on the issue. As usual, it is great and so full of information; I especially enjoyed the article "The Missionary at the Mission Hub" by Elliott Wright. It was good to see his name after many years of his work during the time my husband served in Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference for 20 years before his health required early retirement (second career).

Two former UMW members have challenged me to always be in the United Methodist Women and mission outreach; the Spirit is strong but the flesh is getting weaker! Keep encouraging me! My friend and I look forward to both magazines (*New World Outlook* and *Response*).

Peace,

Loretta Roberson



Letters from Readers

ERRATA

November–December 2011

The Rev. Cynthia Harvey, Deputy General Secretary or UMCOR, is an ordained elder of the Texas Conference rather than an ordained deacon, as reported in the November-December 2011 issue.

The Statement of Ownership published in the November-December 2011 edition contained an error in the number of paid distribution copies mailed or sold outside the United States Postal Service subscription mailings. The average number of paid distribution outside the mail was 557, and the number for the September-October 2011 issue was 249. This brings the average paid distribution to 8,677 and the paid distribution for September-October to 8,182. The final percentage of paid distribution remains at 94 percent, on average.

Dear Editor:

I'm enjoying receiving *New World Outlook* at my new temporary address. Fascinating articles. I especially appreciate ready-to-print mission inserts I can pass on to others in the church I attend here, First UMC in Vancouver, Washington.

June Roth-Barneson

September–October 2011

Dear Editor,

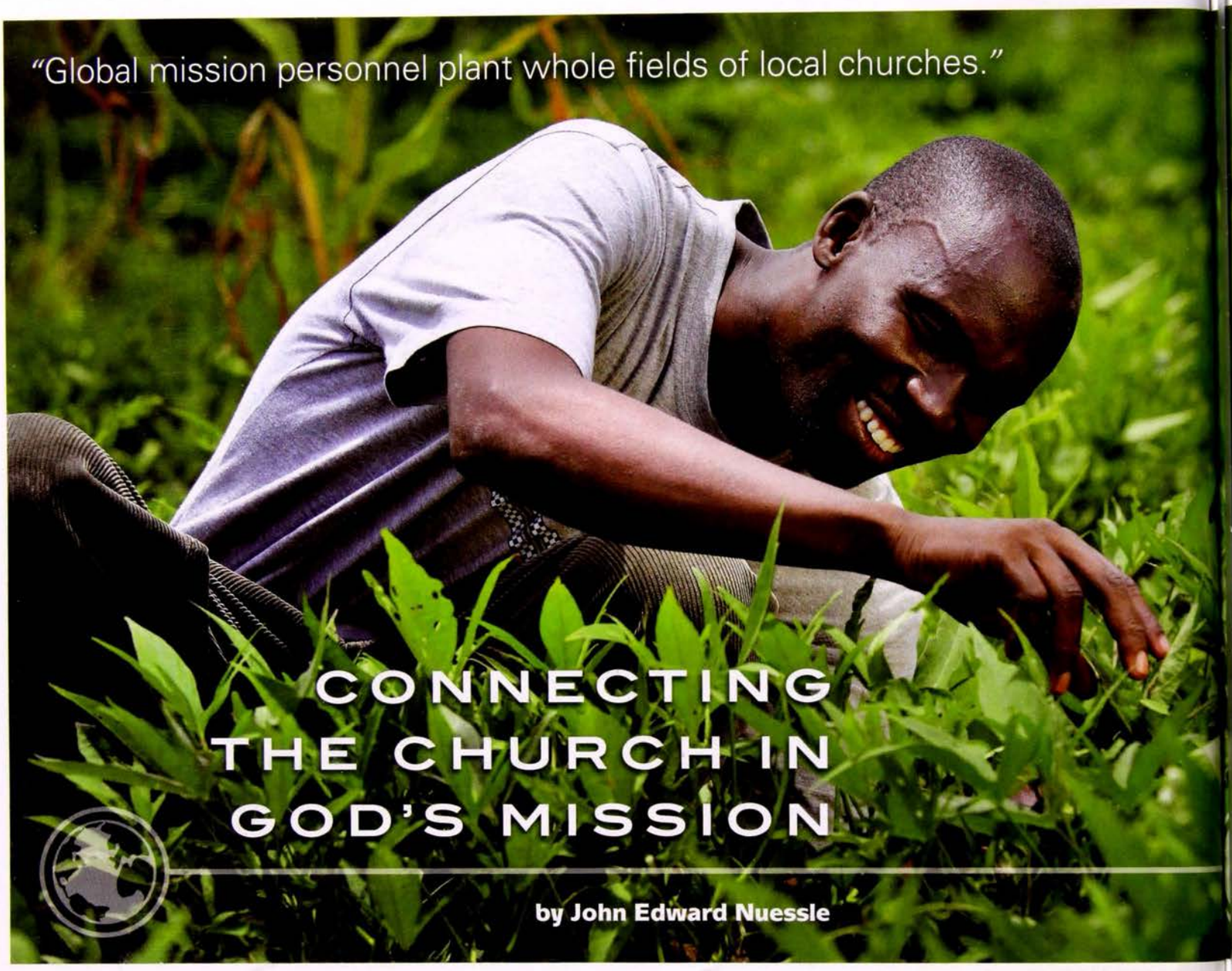
I am writing with a concern about the September-October issue of *New World Outlook*. I always enjoy reading the articles in each issue. However, when I came to the map and listing of the United Methodist Women's Mission-Giving Supported National Mission Institutions on pages 24 and 25, I was disappointed and concerned because one of the institutions, dear to my heart, is missing.

Marcy-Newberry Association in Chicago is 128 years old and a Women's Division National Mission Institution. As a former US-2 assigned to Marcy-Newberry, a past president of the Northern Illinois Conference United Methodist Women, and a present member of the Board of Directors of Marcy-Newberry Association, I hope that this omission can be corrected in the next issue of *New World Outlook*. Marcy-Newberry is doing great work and we want everyone to know about it. Thank you for your time and help with this concern.

Blessings,

Anne Genther
Northern Illinois Conference

Editor's Note: Thank you Anne Genther for pointing out this error. Rest assured that Marcy-Newberry Association in Chicago is indeed one of the 97 institutions supported by United Methodist Women's giving, and we agree, the association does great work and should be recognized. If you check the online version of the map, http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umw/programs/nmi/search/, you will find Marcy-Newberry Association is part of the Google map. We have forwarded the omission to the Women's Division for correction of the map in the downloadable PDF format, which is what New World Outlook *had permission to use for the September–October center section map.*



CONNECTING THE CHURCH IN GOD'S MISSION

by John Edward Nuessle

DO YOU KNOW HOW THE INTERNET, or the World Wide Web, actually works? I'm sure someone reading this knows, but for me it's a complicated feat of technical engineering. It takes knowledge and expertise to understand how this marvel of our times actually enables us to communicate around the globe—how it gives us instant access to so much information and provides close connections with so many people. It's a wonderful thing! But I have no idea how this contemporary communications infrastructure really works. I know it's great when it does work. I also know that, when the "Internet is down," my life is adversely affected.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19) is the biblical call to create a church infrastructure similar to the World Wide Web—a Worldwide Church Web. Such a web can connect Christians in established places with new Christians in places previously unreached. This mission for The United Methodist Church is clearly stated in *The Book of Discipline* (¶120): "To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." And from the Holy Scriptures, Christians hear the clarion call telling us where to engage in this Great Commission: "among all nations." This is a connectional task I understand. It is the task of calling individuals to faith in Jesus Christ in a life dedicated to God. This task is accomplished by creating

a connected infrastructure in all nations (that is, among all groups of people) around the world. Disciple-making occurs when the church moves into a whole culture, society, or nation and seeks to plant and grow the church from within that context. In United Methodism, emerging churches are not just scattered, independent gatherings of new Christians. They are regional and national church connections within the United Methodist tradition of conferencing.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Xaviour Chikwatu, pastor of the United Methodist Church in Madisi, Malawi, works in a church-sponsored plot raising food for families in the congregation. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY
ABOVE: Missionaries Ut and Karen Vo To in Vietnam. PHOTO: ADAM NEAL

A Connected Church

Churches are like most food crops. A farmer doesn't plant just one stalk of corn but a whole field of corn. The crop grows better because of the way the plants interact with one another. Likewise, missionaries do not plant just one church congregation. They organize the mission to plant congregations everywhere—all across a nation, among the indigenous peoples of that land.

Through the General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist mission churches are formed from the very beginning to grow into annual conferences. Global mission personnel plant whole fields of local churches, whose members seek to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of their communities.

To connect the church in mission is to follow a biblical model of church planting. Connecting the Church in Mission is also the theological and programmatic purpose of the General Board of Global Ministries. Through Global Ministries' Mission Initiatives program, new national churches are being planted for new Christians in 17 nations around the world. By planting these churches, United Methodists are living out the biblical and disciplinary mandate to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). We carry out this mission by linking Christian communities together through a connectional system, as explained in John 15 and I Corinthians 12.

Thus far, during the 2009 to 2012 Quadrennium, more than 300 new churches and faith communities have been planted outside the United States. They have been built on the foundation of nearly 400 such churches founded in previous years. This suggests that the original quadrennial goal of 400 new churches might well be surpassed by the end of 2012. The intention of the Mission Initiatives program of Global Ministries is that most of these new mission areas will be formed into United Methodist annual and central conferences. Or, some may choose to develop as autonomous Methodist communions.

This work in frontier evangelism has inspired a passionate response from local churches, districts, and annual conferences in the United States and Europe. United Methodists in the connection respond in many ways: through work as mission volunteers, through prayerful and financial support for missionaries, and through support for a variety of projects that reach the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual needs of new Christians in frontier areas. The call of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)—which is based on the Great Mandate (Micah 6: 6-8) and guided by the Great Commandment (Mark 12:28-34)—has led many to give generously toward the establishment of new churches and outreach ministries across a growing United Methodist connection. Members of a vital network of US and European United Methodist entities have formed partnerships with mission initiatives through the "In Mission Together" program. To strengthen such partnerships, a team of coordinators related to The Advance organizes annual consultations and training events. Both mission initiative members and their supporters participate in these events, working toward mutually sustainable approaches.

Mission Initiatives

The biblical mandate and the United Methodist understanding of it are

clear. The United Methodist Church is to expand into all the world to make disciples of all nations so that the world can be transformed. Thus it is anticipated that, through the Mission Initiatives program, Global Ministries will continue to seek out new places and new people. As a result, under the direction and mandate of *The Book of Discipline*, annual conferences will continue to be established well into the future. New areas for development are currently being considered in five countries on the continent of Africa, and efforts to assist newly developing indigenous churches in the Americas are ongoing.

Many biblical principles of church growth and development guide the Mission Initiatives program in forming new annual conferences. First, mission initiatives make disciples not just in scattered places but in many nations, among many sociological groups. From John 15:1-11, we understand that, without the vine and its branches, there is no fruit. An individual branch does not have the capacity to draw up its own resources for nourishment. Instead, there must be a connection to the whole. Similarly, congregations grow by being structurally connected to the whole church. In this way, the church is able to plant local congregations that grow and expand to form other local churches. All of these churches are connected to an annual conference in the same way that a branch is connected to the vine that nourishes it.

Just as St. Paul proclaims in I Corinthians 12 that all parts of the body are significant in the working of the whole, we know that each place of worship, as well as each worshiper, has gifts for the whole church and adds to its growth. The whole church in a nation or in an annual conference enables the disciple-making growth of each worshiping fellowship.

New church planting is mostly a matter of leadership development. In Ephesians 4:10-12, Paul states that the work of the whole church lies in equipping the indigenous church leaders (that is, the saints) for ministry; then they, in turn, will build up the whole body of Christ. A United Methodist annual conference is the agency through which all the leaders of an area are offered opportunities for development and growth in their discipleship.

Global Ministries' Role

For The United Methodist Church, creating a new church in a new field of mission requires a connectional structure through which biblical principles can be lived out. Based on more than two centuries of experience in planting congregations, The United Methodist Church has found the best structure to be the annual conference. As a result, *The Discipline* sets forth a process for the growth of a new church—from its birth as a new vision of the gospel in the United Methodist tradition to its emergence as a full annual conference.

This work begins as Global Ministries discerns new places to develop new faith communities around the world. In this discernment process, the directors and staff of Global Ministries work with interested individuals from each area being considered and from neighboring nations. Throughout the process, the current realities of our world must be taken into account. We see the significant growth of Christianity in the global South, and we observe that women form the majority in these new and growing churches. At the same time, financial and organizational resources are still concentrated in the European and North American churches. By forming partnerships in which we celebrate resources and move some to places where they are greatly needed, the whole church is enabled to grow and expand.

As this positive process of sharing moves forward, a new area is named as a Mission Initiative of Global Ministries. Then—with resources and support from Global Ministries' staff, advice from neighboring church leaders, guidance from missionaries, and input from partnering churches and annual conferences outside the area—the new church is ready to become an official mission of The United Methodist Church, as specified by *The Book of Discipline*.

An official mission begins as a church structure organized and managed by Global Ministries, with a bishop assigned by the Council of Bishops to give oversight to the work.

The status of being an official mission allows for the training and approval of mission pastors.

First, the work of the mission grows in the calling, training, and certification of mission pastors and in the planting of worshiping fellowships of new Christians. The next step is for the mission to become a provisional annual conference. Such a church body can be directly related to the General Board of Global Ministries for administrative oversight. If the mission is located outside the boundaries of an existing central conference, episcopal oversight by the Council of Bishops can continue. The mission can also be directly connected to an existing annual conference. Either way, the new church structure is affirmed and authorized by the General Conference.

When a mission initiative attains the necessary number of clergy, as mandated by *The Discipline*, it can form an annual conference. To accomplish this, the new church must apply to the United Methodist General Conference, requesting annual conference status. Once approved by members of the General Conference, the new annual conference becomes a basic unit of The United Methodist Church in its geographically defined area of the world. After a new annual conference is authorized, United Methodists on all continents continue to contribute time, talent, treasure, and trust for the support of this newly formed faith community. The global connections made within The United Methodist Church reflect the connectional nature of God's church in the Bible and in all places, for all people.

Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world is not only the mission of The United Methodist Church but it also underlies all aspects of our life of faith. It is a call to the whole church through the Mission Initiatives program of the church's General Board of Global Ministries. Through Global Ministries, God's whole church is connected in God's mission throughout God's world. Mission initiatives form a worldwide web of church planting, providing the gospel infrastructure that will guarantee the global growth of United Methodism for many decades to come. Thus, by planning for new annual conferences led by local indigenous leadership, the Mission Initiatives program is creating the infrastructure for a World Wide Web of Christian disciple-making in all nations.

Surely, by God's Grace, that will transform the world.

The Rev. Dr. John Edward Nuessle is an associate general secretary for Mission and Evangelism at the General Board of Global Ministries.

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM LEFT: A mother and her children attend church service outside of Luang Prabang, Laos PHOTO: ADAM NEAL
Women's economic development, sewing project in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. PHOTO: ADAM NEAL
CENTER: Congregation in Eurasia/Northern Europe Central Conference. PHOTO: ULLAS TANKLER
THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: A Laos Mission Initiative pastor. PHOTO: ADAM NEAL
Church members ponder their future in Eurasia. PHOTO: ULLAS TANKLER

God's REDEMPTIVE

by Adam Crites and Mariellyn Dunlap

TOLA SENG LIVES IN PHNOM PENH, the capital of Cambodia in Southeast Asia. As a child, she experienced the aftermath of a harsh and violent regime that killed much of Cambodia's population. "Twenty-four years ago," Seng says, "I was born to a single mother in a refugee camp on the Thai border. By God's grace, my mother was able to raise my sisters and me on her own. Yet, watching her struggle to support us, I wanted to grow up faster so I could find a job and help her."

As Cambodia recovered from its former devastation, Seng's story also took a positive turn. "My mother became a Christian while we were in the refugee camp," she recalls, "and when peace finally returned to Cambodia, with the first free elections in 1993, she found work as a cook at Phnom Penh Methodist Bible School." For Tola Seng, herself—though a scholarship helped her attain a university education—finding work proved more difficult. "Many young people in Cambodia experience this same frustration," she says. "They are expected to help support their families but are faced with a youth unemployment rate of more than 15 percent." Seng, who also received a scholarship from West Ohio to earn a master's degree in social work, currently serves as a translator with the Methodist Mission in Cambodia and works with United Methodist Volunteer-in-Mission (UMVIM) teams.

A Partner "Alongside"

Poverty, violence, and war have long plagued the countries of Southeast Asia. In an effort to offer support and resources, the West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMC) is helping churches, communities, and leaders there to build a strong foundation of faith. In the late 1990s, Christian leaders in Southeast Asia began talking with United Methodists to discover ways in which the denomination and its mission agency could support and encourage new Southeast Asian Christians. As a result, members of the West Ohio Conference joined staff members of the General Board of Global Ministries to

WORK in Southeast Asia: CAMBODIA, LAOS, and VIETNAM

LEFT: Laotian villagers congregate around a staircase built by funds from Linworth UMC, Columbus, Ohio PHOTO: JOEL RABB
BELOW: Volunteers-in-Mission leaders (left to right: Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads, Julia Nielsen Bingman, Amanda King from West Ohio, Tola Seng from Cambodia) at a Cambodian Methodist church.
PHOTO: JOHN HENDERSON

forge a partnership with the small but growing United Methodist communities in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

"The purpose of the partnership between West Ohio and the mission initiative in Southeast Asia," says West Ohio's bishop, Bruce Ough, "is to come alongside these burgeoning missions and to provide the kind of support that allows them to emerge as indigenous United Methodist faith communities." The Council of Bishops assigned Bishop Ough to provide episcopal oversight for the mission partnership in Southeast Asia. This is West Ohio's fourth such partnership—the others being in areas of the DR Congo, Mexico, and Russia.

During the past decade, many congregations in West Ohio have joined in ministry with their counterparts in Southeast Asia. "When our covenant partnership with Southeast Asia started in 2006," Bishop Ough explains, "we offered to provide resources and send missionaries, but nobody knew how quickly things would grow or what direction [the ministry] would take." The people of West Ohio have embraced Southeast Asia in their prayers, financial gifts, and mission experiences. Many in the conference have developed strong bonds of friendship with Southeast Asian Christians as they gain renewed hope and faith in Christ and begin the work of improving their communities.

Cambodia's Young Church

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. I Timothy 4:12

Under the brutal reign of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), 2 million Cambodians died. Many of the nation's young and educated people were killed, leaving a leadership vacuum. Today, 70 percent of the population is under 30 and 60 percent is under 18. In Cambodia, leadership development for youth is vital.

Young leaders organize their own outreach initiatives in their communities, sometimes partnering with UMVIM teams from West Ohio. During a recent rally, for example, youth teams were formed to go into outlying villages. There, they washed kids' and parents' hair, cut their nails, played games, and taught the children Christian songs. UMVIM team member Heather Moyers, a children-and-youth pastor from Worthington United Methodist Church, said: "It was amazing to see the youth connect with people and share God's love with the children." Tola Seng, who worked with the team in July, agrees: "All the members of the team inspired me through what they

have done. I pray that my life can inspire others to be God's hands in this world."

Across Cambodia, Methodist leaders from many traditions are working to become a self-governing Methodist Church by 2016. In 2004, since the Cambodian government would recognize only one Methodist body, five branches of Methodism there joined together to form the Methodist Mission in Cambodia. "The United Methodist presence in Cambodia is still significant," says Bishop Ough. "In fact, we have more United Methodist missionaries in Cambodia than we have in Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam combined." Today, the Methodist Mission in Cambodia includes 5,000 church members, 143 congregations, and 140 pastors.

Making Disciples in Laos

Though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:12

During the Vietnam War, the inland country of Laos was caught between the armies of North and South Vietnam. Laos suffered greatly in the civil war that followed (1964-1973). While supporting South Vietnam, the United States dropped so many bombs over Laos that, on a per capita basis, Laos became the most heavily bombed country in the world. Although the Vietnam War ended 300 years of foreign control in Laos, it brought Communism from North Vietnam. Laos then withdrew from most international affairs and trade.

Beginning in 2000, The United Methodist Church reached out to the people of Laos, where Buddhism is the predominant faith. Since United Methodism is new to the country, Methodist gatherings are regulated by the Laotian government. Whether one church is more accepted than others depends on the congregation's relationship with local authorities.

During a decade of mission work, 74 congregations have been created across seven provinces, with 10 to 70 people in each Christian community. As The UMC laid a foundation in Laos, members of the West Ohio Conference found ways to proclaim Christ's message there and to provide support to those in need.

The late Rev. Clinton Rabb, former head of Global Ministries' office for mission volunteers, helped launch the Laos Mission Initiative. Joel Rabb, Clinton's brother, is a member of Linworth UMC, and the two had planned to meet in Laos in April 2010. But in January 2010, Clinton Rabb died tragically from injuries he sustained when the hotel in Haiti where he was meeting colleagues collapsed during an earthquake. Joel and Linworth's pastor, the Rev. Rae Lynn Schleif, decided to continue with their trip to Laos. After their return, they asked their fellow congregants to commit to a covenant relationship with United Methodist congregations in Pongsavanh and Lat And. Through this covenant, their church helps support pastors' salaries and various outreach ministries in Laos.

Since Laos developed more slowly than many neighboring countries, travel is often inhibited by poor roads, treacherous mountain passes, and a general lack of infrastructure. The residents of the Pongsavanh and Lat And communities had to climb up and down a steep hill to reach the Mekong River—their one link to the outside world. During the rainy season, the hill would become muddy and slippery, posing a danger for all travelers. So the Linworth congregation helped provide funding for two long cement stairways to be built into the hillsides between the villages and the river.

"The church has been very generous this past year, giving $10,000 [to projects in Laos]," Rev. Schleif says. "During Vacation Bible School, we raised over $1,500 to buy school supplies for the Laotian kids."

"It's great to know you've made a difference in the daily grind of people's lives," Joel Rabb remarks. "It's one less piece of drudgery for them." Joel and his wife Beth were especially affected by the faith of Laotian Christians, who are sometimes persecuted. "One pastor we met had been imprisoned three times," Joel recalls, "and each time he refused to sign a paper renouncing his faith. It's a privilege to support people who make a commitment to worship in a way they think is right. They make a daily sacrifice that we [in the US] know little about."

Faith in Vietnam

For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. I Corinthians 12:13

The United Methodist presence in Vietnam began 30 years ago with small cell groups. Missionary pastors, such as Ut and Karen Vo To, would travel from one cell group to another, limiting their stay in any one place to avoid detection by the authorities. They would persevere though hunger, beatings, and imprisonment. While the Vietnamese constitution permits

freedom of religion, religious groups are not allowed to meet until they receive government recognition—a process that can take 20 years to complete. Yet The United Methodist Church has progressed quickly toward government recognition, thanks to a positive relationship built by Ut and Karen Vo To with the Vietnamese Office of Religious Affairs.

The West Ohio Conference takes an active and progressive role in supporting the growth of Methodism throughout Vietnam—providing resources, leadership training, and organizational oversight. West Ohio contributes to the training of new pastors and, through its 2008 Miracle Offering, funded the purchase of the United Methodist Center, a denominational headquarters and training center. The center was a necessary component in achieving government recognition, along with a constitution, now in its final stages of approval. In March 2012, Bishop Ough is scheduled to ordain the first United Methodist elders in Vietnam. The new church in Vietnam is well on its way to becoming a fully functioning, fully indigenous annual conference of The United Methodist Church.

This past spring, a team from West Ohio's Shawnee Valley District conducted stewardship training with United Methodist leaders in Vietnam. Fifty Vietnamese churches are participating in a pilot stewardship program, with each congregation challenging its members to give up to 15 percent of their income or produce to the church. Stewardship and tithing are new to the Vietnamese but are essential concepts for ensuring that The United Methodist Church in Vietnam does not become dependent on West Ohio or other US funding.

West Ohio's Shawnee Valley District has become a leading supporter of the mission initiative in Vietnam. Each year, the district promotes a year-long "Rally in the Valley," culminating in an event to which district churches bring their donations and celebrate God's redemptive work in Vietnam. In the few years since the rally began, it has raised more than $569,550 to support pastors, purchase motorbikes, and promote the Vietnamese church's formal recognition. "Many churches in Shawnee Valley are small," admits the Rev. Lori Lossie, pastor of Walnut Street UMC in Chillicothe, Ohio. "But our district superintendent, the Rev. Joseph Bishman, helped us realize that, working together, we can make a difference." Rev. Bishman encourages congregations to give "one shovel, one basket, one cart at a time"—a system of giving and support based on faith, determination, and action.

Over the last few years, The United Methodist Church in Vietnam has grown from 68 churches to more than 200, with a total of 12,000 members. Through expansion over the next five years, the Vietnam church hopes to have more than 1,200 congregations, while strengthening the training of its new pastors and leaders.

Three in One

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6.

A seemingly incredible diversity of worship, ministry, and mission exists within the Southeast Asia-West Ohio Mission Partnership. Yet a common theme unites all three of the young churches in the region. It is the grace of our triune God—Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer—that is bringing hope to a generation that longs for healing and redemption.

Adam Crites is a freelance writer for West Ohio. Mariellyn Dunlap is a Church and Community Worker in West Ohio.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Tola Seng works with the Methodist Mission in Cambodia and with United Methodist Volunteer-in-Mission teams. PHOTO: WEST OHIO CONFERENCE
LEFT: New motorbikes purchased and delivered to Vietnam clergy by Shawnee Valley District help clergy travel in their ministry. PHOTO: WEST OHIO CONFERENCE

"We've found the most critical element in long-term holistic and sustainable ministry is the partnership relationship. That relationship is started from a point of mutual respect and is built around mutual trust—around the assumption that God is already at work in whatever context we are talking about."

Jonathan Bell, Director of Mission Ministries
The Church of the Resurrection

COMING OF AGE

The Church of the Resurrection at 21

by Christie R. House

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION in Leawood, Kansas, celebrated its 21st anniversary in 2011. Resurrection has grown from a membership of four in 1990 to an adult membership of about 16,400 today—not counting 2000 children and youth. It has also grown and stretched out in its Kansas City environs—from its main location in Leawood, Kansas, to three other campus locations: Blue Springs, Missouri; downtown Kansas City, Missouri; and Olathe, Kansas. An online worship resource allows for remote viewing by even more participants.

Yet The Church of the Resurrection hasn't just experienced outward growth. It is also working on an inward, deeper kind of growth that gets to the heart of God's purpose for this vibrant congregation. At its beginning,

under the pastoral leadership of the Rev. Adam Hamilton, Resurrection designated 25 percent of its budget for ministry beyond its walls. According to the director of mission ministries, Jonathan Bell, "that pledge made a clear statement to the congregation, and to others, that this church is not about us; it is about what God wants to do for others *through* us." Bell notes that, as the church started to grow, the resources committed for its mission ministries grew proportionately. The congregation develops ministries around its core purpose: To build a Christian community where non-religious and nominally religious people are becoming deeply committed Christians.

Stages of Growth

Bell breaks down the growth spurts of this congregation into three phases that parallel childhood, youth, and young adult years. "For the first 10 years," he explains, "we focused on what we could do with mission money." He names the church's first decade "Missions 1.0." Then, Resurrection funded ministries locally, nationally, and globally—giving to UMCOR and other Global Ministries' projects as well. But the granting process this model required left Resurrection stuck in an "ATM-mode" of ministry. The more money the church had, the more folks lined up at the ATM.

Although Bell sees positive aspects—such as a congregation well-trained in giving sacrificially to mission and supporting good ministries—this practice didn't engage the congregation beyond writing checks. "That was not all that Jesus was looking for from us," Bell says.

So, in the second decade of its existence, Resurrection upgraded to Missions 2.0. "We intentionally shifted our emphasis," Bell explains, "beyond mobilizing our money to mobilizing our people as well. Besides giving money, we have developed programs and ministry opportunities in which members of our congregation can become directly involved. Over the past 12 months, more than 6000 people from the congregation have participated in some form of ministry in Kansas City. Internationally, 300 people have gone on short-term mission trips, and another 300 to 400 are involved in domestic ministry outside our area."

Missions 2.0 in Practice

Jeanna Repass, Resurrection's director for Kansas City Missions, explains what "hands-on" ministry has meant in the church's local area. Resurrection has five "entry points" into ministry: one-time service projects; FaithWork; Backpacks for Hunger; J.O.Y. in Service Holiday Missions; and Bless the School. These ministries encourage people to get involved. One-time service projects are jobs lined up for people to do whenever they can step in. FaithWork projects are larger organized events occurring twice a month.

Backpacks for Hunger provides food for K-6 students over weekends. J.O.Y. (Joyfully Offering Yourself) in Service encourages people to provide a meal for those in need during the holidays—or to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr., Day as a day of service. Bless the School builds on Resurrection's relationship with seven primary schools around Kansas City, where up to 1500 volunteers a year do light repairs and renovations. "Our hope," Repass says, "is that all these new volunteers will get their hearts convicted and begin to come on a regular basis."

Once that happens, all kinds of ministry opportunities become possible. Some major projects developed by Resurrection during the last decade involve basic needs: food, clothing, furnishings, housing construction, and education. Resurrection is a drop-off location for food collection. Its food bank provides 50 to 70 tons of food annually, supplying 17 pantries across Kansas City. The church has also developed ministries around foster and adoptive care and prison mentoring. In partnership with other agencies, Resurrection seeks to support ministries for addiction recovery and ones that help free women and children from the trap of human trafficking.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A new friendship begins in Malawi, Madisi. PHOTO: ROB WEBSTER
TOP LEFT: Children on the playground at Wheatley Elementary School, Kansas City, MO. PHOTO: ELIZABETH RITTER
ABOVE: Members of Resurrection Downtown planting flowers during a FaithWork event. PHOTO: DAVID SISNEY

Repass notes that this last decade has been a time when the church actively supported its members in creating new ministries. The latest to develop is a car ministry. Volunteer mechanics do repairs and teach other volunteers to repair older cars for people who still need them. Eventually, they hope to refurbish donated vehicles.

"In the Missions 2.0 phase, new ideas in ministry were floated, tried out, and expanded," Repass explains. "If someone came up with a great idea, we'd say 'these are the steps you need to take.' In the future, we'll probably be more focused. We're looking now at multilayered ministries—ways to further work in the areas around the schools we partner with, for instance. The idea is to transform those neighborhoods to help the kids, their families, and the whole community."

Missions 3.0

In the midst of Missions 2.0, Jonathan Bell says Resurrection began to wrestle with deeper questions—asking, for example, not just how the Christian community can provide for people living in poverty, but asking how to alleviate poverty itself. "We are living into Transformative Strategies, or Missions 3.0," Bell says. "We believe we are making a difference in the lives of people we serve and in our community. But are we making a difference that will last?"

In the Missions 3.0 phase of its growth, Resurrection sees sustainability as an important challenge in planning and partnering. Will the ministries of the church go beyond the church, helping people in the community to sustain the ministries without the church's involvement? Dignity is another important consideration. Rather than just providing resources to meet basic needs, are we helping empower people to provide for themselves and their families?

"We understand that Matthew 25: 31-46 (the parable of the sheep and goats) calls us to be concerned with the immediate needs of people in crisis," Bell reiterates. "Yet, can we be a part of empowering people over the long-term to thrive with dignity, while avoiding the trap of dependency?"

For Bell, the positive legacy of Missions 2.0 is that it engaged a large percentage of the congregation—68 to 70 percent, in Jeanna Repass' estimation—in hands-on ministries with other people. "Direct involvement and hands-on ministry is how we do church," Bell affirms. "Not just our missions department, but every ministry area of this church is involved in hands-on service beyond our walls. That's part of Resurrection's discipleship journey."

Bell sees a downside of Missions 2.0 in that the easiest way to mobilize people is through charitable relief. "We have created powerhouses of charitable giving," he notes. "We could easily consume all of our resources and leadership capital in those kinds of ministries. Now we are trying to figure out how to overcome the limitations of charity. What will we say 'no' to in order to say 'yes' to the kinds of long-term, strategic initiatives that real community transformation would require?"

Transformative Ministries

Churches often start with the resources they want to give, make plans, and then look for indigenous leaders to carry out those plans, Bell observes. "It is important to do this in a healthy way," he says. "When the conversation and a relationship start over resources, it is hard to avoid the dependency trap."

Instead, Bell believes the first step is to form a relationship with the community the church wishes to serve. "We've found the most critical element in long-term holistic and sustainable ministry is the partnership relationship," he says. "That relationship is started from a point of mutual respect and is built around mutual trust—around the assumption that God is already at work in whatever context we are talking about. The local church's leaders are likely to understand best what God wants to accomplish in their community through their church."

Once a relationship is established on the basis of equal partnership, long-term planning can begin. Long-term plans may take years and require patience. This is often a challenge for people skilled at mobilizing resources. "It is hard to be patient," Bell admits.

The capacity for indigenous leadership to carry out the mutually developed plans is a key component in sustainable ministry. Without indigenous ownership and leadership, the best-intentioned plans will falter.

Finally, resources, according to Bell, have to come last. "God has already given United Methodists in Malawi a vision for Malawi and the church there. We discern how we can come alongside their vision and provide strategic resources to further their plan."

Alongside Malawi's Vision

Cayce Stapp, Resurrection's director of Beyond Kansas City Missions, says the church leaders in Malawi asked Resurrection to come alongside them in their nutrition and education programs—efforts the Malawi UMC had already been working on. "We are partnering with United Methodist preschools to utilize best practices in training their teachers," says Stapp. A good part of this, he says, is helping the preschool teachers recognize the amazing capacity they already have. The nutritional program launched in Madisi, Malawi, includes many aspects of healthy living. Resurrection is involved in clean-water efforts, mosquito-net distribution, composting-toilet installation, and health and sanitation training—with a concentration on preventable diseases and conditions that are within local leaders' capacity. The goal is grassroots empowerment and local ownership.

In addition to the nutrition program, a form of health ministry, Resurrection has also partnered with the Malawian church on other areas in line with the denomination's four areas of focus. An October 2011 Resurrection team conducted micro-entrepreneurship training with graduates of the tailoring school in Mzuzu, Malawi. To facilitate the training, women who are key leaders across the Malawi UMC also attended. "The women church leaders were brilliant," Stapp affirms. "They clearly understood the need for personal and community-wide economic empowerment to fight the root causes of poverty."

In the area of leadership development, Resurrection provides scholarships to help Malawian clergy and laity further their education and works with the Malawian church on multiple training opportunities. Strengthening Christian community can mean not only building churches but also providing motorcycles for pastors who serve multiple congregations in an economy with astronomic prices for gasoline.

"All of our efforts together as partners are holistic," Stapp notes, "using the local assets already available in Malawi to bring about indigenously sustainable transformation."

OPPOSITE PAGE: Church of the Resurrection team members enjoy a meal together in July 2011 in Malawi. PHOTO: ROB WEBSTER

THIS PAGE: UMC Pastor Xavier and family, Madisi, Malawi, Church of the Resurrection Malawi partnership. PHOTO: ELIZABETH RITTER

ABOVE RIGHT: Team members from Kansas City and Madisi prepare a meal together in Malawi. PHOTO: KARYN KNOX

Other Partnerships

Besides its partnership with the Malawi UMC, Resurrection has formed other partnerships that work toward community transformation: in El Obaje, Honduras, with the Honduras Mission Initiative; with the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in South Africa; with the DR Congo UMC in Kamina, to assist with medical ministries; and with the Methodist Church of Haiti in the Petit Goave community. Stapp notes that Global Ministries was particularly helpful in identifying the DR Congo and Malawi as places where partnerships would be fruitful.

Jonathan Bell reports that The Church of the Resurrection is training lay leadership. Its members are seeking out best practices, reading books, and grappling with deeper issues churchwide. "We work around strategic priorities," he explains. "Missional outreach in Kansas City and beyond is a key emphasis of our churchwide priorities. We who serve in missions are responsible for leading the discussion, planning, and giving guidance on how to accomplish Missions 3.0. We don't know yet all that Missions 3.0 will require of us—but the questions we're asking are giving us clues."

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

RUN FROM THE TOMB AND TELL IT 10-FOLD

by Larry R. Hygh, Jr.

WHEN I SPEAK TO BOTH CHURCH AND SECULAR GROUPS about my profession, I tell them that I am a Christian communicator because of the 28th chapter of Matthew. It tells the story of the resurrection of Jesus, when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go to see the tomb. Instead of Jesus' body, they find an angel who tells them to come and see the place where he had lain and then to go quickly to tell his disciples. The angel's command is still our modern day calling! As Christians, we are all called to tell the old, old and amazing story. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary ran and told the story through the spoken word.

In this day and age, we have many different mediums that can be used to tell the story. We have the internet, television, videos, radio, magazines, books, and newspapers. We have devices with applications that, several years ago, were scarcely imaginable—from personal computers, to tablets—and smart-phones and electronic readers. The many rapid means of communication available to us today enable us to reach ever-increasing numbers of people with God's story.

The 10-Fold Initiative

When I arrived at Global Ministries in September 2010, I immediately became immersed in the launch of an online initiative called "10-Fold." This is a kind of interactive "global gathering"—supported by Global Ministries and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)—that features United Methodist mission projects around the world.

The 10-Fold journey began on 10/10/10—Sunday, October 10, 2010. It enabled people from all over the world to "gather" via the internet and to become advocates for Global Ministries' mission projects. These online advocates then encouraged others to learn about the mission projects featured, thereby raising worldwide donations for their support.

Over 10 days, from October 10 to 19, 2010, a new mission project was featured online each day. This technology allowed participants from around the globe to take part in live webcasts and online chats and to watch videos featuring that day's project. Each day's project had a sponsor. Whenever a participant clicked on the "Be Counted" button, that day's 10-Fold sponsor gave $1 to the mission project—up to a guaranteed total of $10,000 for the day's initiative.

In 2011, we held another 10-Fold campaign from October 10 to 19, featuring more United Methodist programs from around the world. As a result, people from more than 93 countries visited the site. More than 33,000 participants clicked on "Be Counted"—thus declaring themselves advocates of the various projects. On average, there were about 400 viewers for the live events each day, while posts to The United Methodist Church's Facebook wall garnered more than 86,000 impressions.

In United Methodism, we believe our calling and challenge is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We also emphasize the need to reach a younger generation. I strongly believe that 10-Fold is one of the ways in which to meet these goals. We are using modern technology to speak to people who may never have stepped through a church door. If we are to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world, we must use the best technology available to us to lift up Jesus, the Risen Christ!

As we search for new ways to tell the old, old story, I want to challenge and encourage United Methodists around the globe to embrace modern technology. It can serve the church well as we pursue our goals of reaching a new generation and making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!

Let's do it 10-Fold!

Dr. Larry R. Hygh, Jr., is associate general secretary and director of communications for the General Board of Global Ministries.

10-FOLD 2011 SPONSORS

Each of the sponsors below contributed $10,000 for the project of the day to encourage participants to support the mission projects highlighted by 10-Fold.

1. Arkansas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church—Imagine No Malaria
2. First United Methodist Church, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania—Missionaries in the United States
3. Alabama-West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church—Missionaries Around the World
4. Korean United Methodist Church of South Florida, Fort Lauderdale—Church Planting Worldwide
5. Germany Central Conference of The United Methodist Church—YAYA Youth and Young Adults
6. The Advance Committee—Developing Community Leaders
7. United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Kansas City, Kansas –With* Kamina
8. Mississippi and Louisiana annual conferences of The United Methodist Church—US Disaster Response
9. California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church—With* the Philippines
10. John Wesley United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas—International Disaster Response

OPPOSITE PAGE: An UMCOR project in Kamina, DR Congo, brings praise and joy to villagers. PHOTO: LISA JACKSON
RIGHT: Church and Community Workers—Fuxia Wang, Mariellyn Dunlap, and Francis Coffey. PHOTO: CASSANDRA ZAMPINI

How Changing Communication Networks

INFORM OUR MISSION

by Ibrahim Dabo

TECHNOLOGY CONTINUES TO ADVANCE AT A RAPID RATE. As a result, the way mission work is undertaken continues to evolve. Whether bringing people hope by sharing the gospel of Christ or helping the needy through humanitarian efforts, The United Methodist Church can now communicate and carry out its mission in new ways. Significant changes have occurred over the past decade. Thanks to technology, the world has grown smaller; the ends of the earth have come closer together. Embracing these technological advancements and finding innovative ways to use them will prove crucial as the church seeks to communicate its mission.

Using the Internet

According to Internet World Stats (InternetWorldStats.com), more than 2 billion people use the internet worldwide, and more than 245 million of them are in the United States. So it is important to develop a solid internet strategy—a detailed plan for using the web to reach a target audience. This strategy can include not only a website but also social media—such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs—to reach a more diverse audience and increase traffic to a website. The best internet strategy, using the best practices and guidelines, will help the church achieve its goals.

It can be challenging for some churches to maintain websites, often because of the static way in which these websites were built. It can also be difficult for church members who are not tech-savvy to properly maintain a site. What's needed is a dynamic website built on an appropriate content management system (CMS).

Just before joining Global Ministries in 2010, I served as the webmaster and communications chair of Old Otterbein United Methodist Church in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. We developed a new, dynamic website to replace the church's old, time-consuming, static one. Then I trained several church members, showing them how to

regularly maintain the site. The time we had put into research and development paid off in the way the new website better met the church's communication needs.

A "Webolution" in Mission

"Online communications, such as our new website (*www.oldotterbeinumc.org*) and Facebook page, have certainly increased our visibility in Baltimore," said Kate Hodge, communications chair and leader of the Young Adult Group at Old Otterbein UMC. With a sanctuary that was completed in 1786, Old Otterbein may be the oldest church in continuous use in the city of Baltimore, but it is not too old to communicate its mission work on the internet.

"The new website has helped us attract new members, especially young adults," Hodge continued. "Our e-newsletter and Facebook communications have helped spread the word about our various mission projects. We can post pictures and stories, so that people who couldn't participate can see what went on. Maybe they'll want to play an active part the next time!"

The Rev. Paul Jeffrey—a Global Ministries missionary who is also a highly respected photojournalist—agrees about the intrinsic value of technology and the web in mission communications. Part of his missionary work involves documenting disasters, such as the earthquake in Haiti or humanitarian work in Gaza or the DR Congo. He's a member of the Rapid Support Team of ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together), an international network of churches and church agencies responding to poverty and disaster. "One place where the web has been very helpful is in the sharing of images," Jeffrey said.

While a magazine article might use three or four photos, Jeffrey can place a much larger number of photos in a web gallery, enabling people to more completely visualize what happened. "I can mix location sounds with narration," he points out, "and mix still images with video, quickly uploading it all. That's amazing. We have to be just as innovative and creative in making technology work for the good of all God's children."

Jeffrey acknowledged how much technological advances have changed his work in recent years. Instead of carrying a bag full of film and waiting until he gets home to develop the images, he can now capture an image digitally and upload it over a satellite modem in a few minutes.

"So we've shrunk the world," he said, "in this case by slashing the time lapse between my experience of something and the person in the pew's seeing an image of that experience on a website or in a bulletin insert the following Sunday." While acknowledging that this speedup has helped the church respond to crises with more agility, Jeffrey questioned how much our political advocacy has kept pace with our technological wizardry. "What good does it do," he asked, "to take faster pictures of suffering people if we can't act more quickly to stop their suffering?"

Using an Internet Strategy

It's important to realize how much effect a well-defined internet strategy can have in helping churches drive their mission and touch the lives of their members and visitors. According to Kate Hodge, Old Otterbein UMC has a transient membership and constituency base. So quick communications through email and the church website allow absent people to stay connected with the church's mission. "People all over the country are able to follow what we are doing in Baltimore," Hodge said. "When visitors and guests come to the church, we ask for their email addresses. That way, communication about our

OPPOSITE PAGE: Children learn computer skills in a village in El Salvador. The children selected for the program are leaders in their peer groups and receive scholarships from the Lutheran World Federation. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

ABOVE: Hadiya Sadik of Misrata, Libya, makes contact with her family outside the country, using a satellite phone provided by the Libyan Red Crescent. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

mission projects reaches so many people, including one-time visitors and former members. Without modern technology, we could never reach people who, at some point, stepped through our church doors."

Jeffrey also uses social media such as Facebook and Twitter to reach different audiences, and he maintains an excellent blog (*www.kairosphotos.com*). "Today, my supporting churches can follow what I do almost instantly," he said. "And I can see how they are engaged in mission work locally through their participation in social media. I've also produced short video pieces that have been played in worship," he continued. "So although I can't physically be there, worshipers can feel closer to my work through the expanding use of technology within the church."

Democratization

Technological advancement has enabled people from all walks of life throughout the world to participate in world events. This is worth celebrating. Some participate in webcasts, chatting in real time with people involved in mission. A webcast is a live streaming video broadcast of an event over the internet. Viewers of the webcast sometimes get a chance to share their opinions on the topic of the video through available chat features on the broadcast page.

In other areas, cellular technology plays a vital role in the way people communicate. Jeffrey, who provides training in communication practices throughout the world, said he's excited about how technological advances have democratized communication. "We don't have to wait for the 'professional' to file stories now," Jeffrey said. "Anyone with a mobile phone can be a reporter. Cellular technology has allowed people in the Third World to leapfrog over the restrictions of wired technologies. That has had a big impact on empowering rural farmers to better understand market prices and forces," he continued, "allowing them to leverage information into benefit. That has revolutionized agricultural mission work in many places."

Technology's Downside

If not well managed, technology can also have its downside. During live webcasts, for example, it is sometimes challenging to manage counterproductive comments from viewers using the chat feature. The same applies to social media, as when a "profile page" on Facebook is open for users to comment on its "wall." While negative comments can be deleted, they can send the wrong message if the page's owner doesn't realize what's there.

For new websites, if a clumsy Content Management System is selected, it may not only affect goals for the web but might result in the loss of thousands of dollars. Due diligence is also vital to averting bad publicity.

Web Redesign

Over the last 12 months, I've had meetings with United Methodist communicators on topics that include web redesign. Hearing some of their strategies prompted me to share some tips on a process that ensures due diligence before a new website is launched. Since a successful web design or redesign significantly influences the way we communicate our mission work, it is important to get the project right.

A solid methodology for a web redesign may include consultancy, surveys, interviews, focus groups, site assessments or evaluations, and usability testing. Holding a stakeholders best-practice session and defining a user-tested and intuitive information architecture should help define your strategic plan.

Hiring a consultant to help with project planning and administration could bring new ideas and best practices you might not otherwise have thought about. Interviews with staff and stakeholders are vital, as is survey feedback from end users of the website. It's important to know who the target audience is: United Methodist pastors? Church members? Volunteers? Missionaries? What are their challenges with the existing website? What are their expectations for a new one?

Site assessment involves evaluating the existing website in areas that

include design, information architecture, search- and find-ability, and content. Best practices for the web should be determined, including readily readable content written expressly for the web at a sixth- to eighth-grade reading level.

Another key to the success of a web redesign is how well the Request for Proposals (RFP) is written. This document, at a minimum, details information about the organization, current web challenges, goals, and an exhaustive list of all requirements that must be met by the new Content Management System.

A Content Management System evaluation should be conducted after CMS vendors respond to the Request for Proposals. A CMS Evaluation Matrix is a comprehensive spreadsheet used to score more than 100 CMS requirements from each vendor. The scope of requirements varies with each organization.

Once a shortlist of CMS vendors has been drawn up, the vendors should be invited to demonstrate how their CMS would meet the organization's goals. Such vendors should be willing to provide a "sandbox" so that the prospective client can do hands-on testing and will have a chance to explore the proposed CMS solution.

Since content is king, there is a vital need for a content audit. One of the biggest challenges in most web redesigns is to develop new or rewrite existing content. Starting the process early will help avoid later delays in the timeline. It might be helpful to have an audit done in spreadsheet form—detailing as much information about content pages and links on the site as possible and referencing what needs to be deleted, rewritten, or migrated.

A Strategic Plan will help state the mission, purpose, and vision for the new website. A governance strategy should also be documented to define who updates content on the website and the procedures involved. Such a strategy also states who owns the website and both mandates and illustrates the chain of command.

Web Project Planning

Carmine Porco is general manager and vice president of Prescient Digital Media (www.prescientdigital.com), a Canada-based consultancy company specializing in providing strategic internet and intranet consulting. He pointed out that project planning is essential for any web redesign. Without proper planning, he said, a web design project is doomed to fail.

"Choosing a CMS prior to understanding your functional requirements is a recipe for disaster," Porco pointed out. "The enterprise is littered with million-dollar Web Content Management Systems rotting on shelves. Choosing the right CMS at this point need not be arduous," he continued. "Simply ensure that you have documented all your requirements before looking at any software."

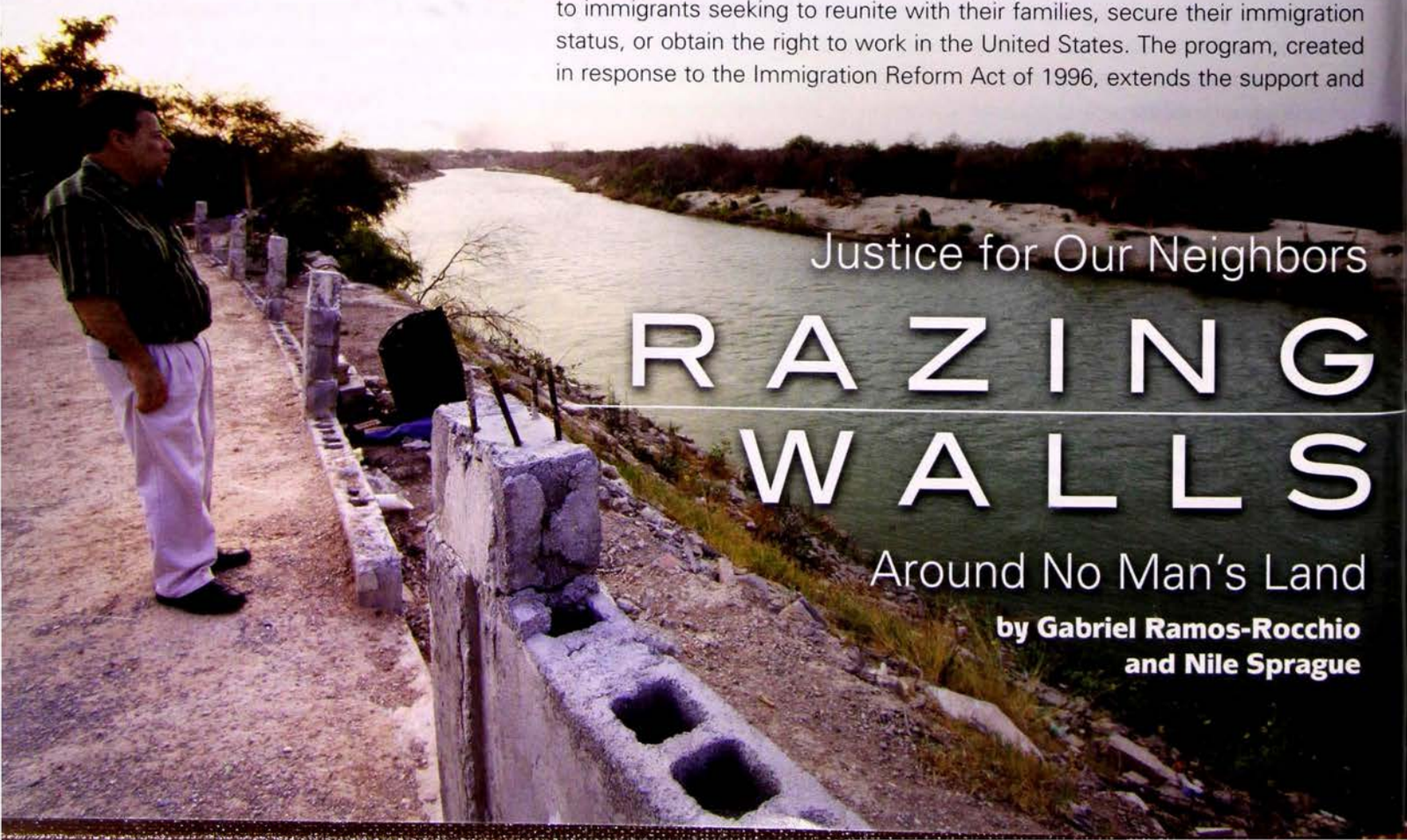
In countless ways the web can help show how The United Methodist Church participates in mission and communicates its actions. How well technology is administered in this process determines how successful an internet strategy will be. Successful web design or redesign calls for critical planning and due diligence. The sooner and better we successfully embrace 21st century technology, the more we'll continue to connect the world and enrich people's lives through God's mission.

Ibrahim Dabo is the former Webteam Leader for the General Board of Global Ministries in New York City. Visit his website at www.IbDabo.com

OPPOSITE PAGE: Parishioners at Old Otterbein UMC in Baltimore pray at the end of Sunday worship. PHOTO: IBRAHIM DABO

ABOVE: Gota Dzongololo (second from left), 11, follows as the teacher writes on the blackboard in a primary school class in Chidyamanga, a village in southern Malawi. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

BELOW: The Cyberbridges project provides computers and works with youth in the Daheisheh Refugee Camp in the West Bank of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The project receives funding from Catholic Relief Services. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY



Justice for Our Neighbors

RAZING WALLS

Around No Man's Land

by Gabriel Ramos-Rocchio and Nile Sprague

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA WAS BUILT TO PROTECT CHINA FROM WARRING TRIBES. Wall Street got its name from the walls of a fort built to keep the English and Indians out. For a time, the Berlin Wall kept East Germans in and Western ideology out. And today's barrier north of the Rio Grande is to keep noncitizens—especially Latin Americans—out of the United States. Past or present, walls and barriers serve one purpose: to keep something in or, more often, to keep something out.

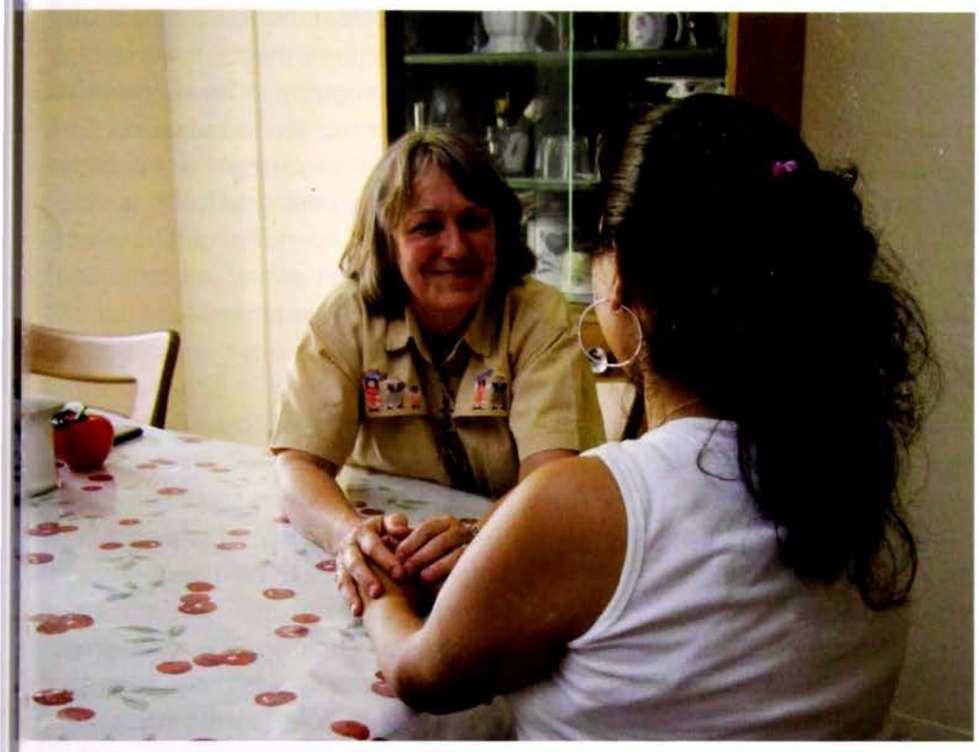
That "something" is people. The fact is that all of God's people are our neighbors. This is a fact that Justice For Our Neighbors—a United Methodist organization that provides free legal assistance to immigrants—understands and respects.

Outreach to Neighbors

Isabel, one of our neighbors from Mexico, had her back against a wall when her US-born husband refused to help her file for US citizenship. His reason was simple—control.

"We were happy in the beginning," Isabel admitted when asked about her marriage. "He was a bit violent, but not too much. After I had my third daughter, he changed." Her husband began leaving her alone with the children for days at a time—without money or food and never letting her know where he was or when he'd return. He became increasingly violent. Finally, Isabel and her children had to live in a tool shed without running water. "My eldest son came home one day, annoyed. He said: 'Mommy, this isn't the life for you. You deserve better!' I decided to talk with the people at the church. They helped me get out of the shed, and they let me borrow a house with everything already paid for. Suddenly, I had a life I never knew before. They rescued me." The church referred Isabel to the team of attorneys and volunteers at Justice For Our Neighbors South Texas.

Justice For Our Neighbors (JFON) provides free, professional legal services to immigrants seeking to reunite with their families, secure their immigration status, or obtain the right to work in the United States. The program, created in response to the Immigration Reform Act of 1996, extends the support and



welcome of the church to marginalized immigrants. In short, JFON helps those in need surmount the obstacles set before them in the US immigration laws, which became especially strict following the attacks of 9/11/2001.

Isabel's Story Continues

Armed only with an elementary school education, Isabel had found it impossible to navigate the bureaucracy inherent in the US immigration law and the justice system. "I found help through another member of the United Methodist church I attend," she said. "I went to a meeting and spoke with a lawyer, Danny. He offered me help." She had been nervous about seeking assistance. "I've been here 17 years illegally," Isabel admitted. She came to the United States when she was 18 years old, and she is now 35. "I would go out," she said, "but I would go in fear—worried they might catch me, worried about what would happen to my children if they did."

"WE MAKE A BIG TO-DO OVER THE BAD SIDE OF IMMIGRATION, BUT WE DON'T BRING UP THE GOOD SIDE. THESE FOLKS ARE HERE AND ARE HARD-WORKING. THEY NEED US AS MUCH AS WE NEED THEM."

With her husband no longer in the picture, Isabel is working to support herself and her children. "He is not giving me child support," she said. "He went to jail, but he's out now and they cannot find him." Despite her fear that one day he may show up unannounced, Isabel continues to move forward. Several months after meeting with JFON volunteers, she received a work permit. For the first time since her arrival in the United States, she was able to support herself and her family. After a year and a half, she finally obtained a green card, under the provisions of the Violence Against Women Act.

Isabel's case is only one of many in which men who are US citizens use their wives' illegal status to control them. Without the support of her church and the free legal clinic provided by JFON, Isabel would still be walled in, her story untold.

No Man's Land

Besides providing legal help for immigrant women victimized by their husbands, JFON helps marginalized communities located in the "frontier zone" along the Texas side of the Mexican border. Given the flood plains surrounding Brownsville and other areas of Texas, the US government had to build the border fence nearly a mile or more north of the international border. According to a newspaper article ("Some Angry Texans Are Stuck South of the Barrier," by Richard Marosi, *Los Angeles Times*, February 28, 2011), some American families that have owned land near the Rio Grande for generations now find their holdings trapped between the border fence and Mexico in what is known as the "frontier zone." Strips of farmland have been cut off, accessed only by gaps in the fence that are more than a mile apart.

Movement restrictions for immigrants in the area within the frontier zone are more flexible than those in the rest of the United States. Special border-crossing cards allow Mexicans to enter this area for short periods—but not to go beyond the checkpoints,

OPPOSITE PAGE: Willie Berman, a missionary in Reyonsa, México, peers northward across a quiet stretch of the Rio Grande international border. PHOTO: NILE SPRAGUE

ABOVE: Preferring not to be photographed from the front for fear of deportation, Isabel finds consolation and support from Susan Hellums, Border Area Mission Coordinator for the Methodist Border Friendship Commission. PHOTO: NILE SPRAGUE

some of which are located up to 70 miles north of the Mexican border. *Colonias* (informal villages) have sprung up in the Texas frontier zone. Some Mexican families have lived there illegally for years. Sometimes they are caught and deported. When the children are US-born citizens and their parents are not, families can be torn apart. Thus many adult deportees sneak back into the United States to rejoin their children, and the cycle of marginalization continues. These people live in fear, without social services or legal advocacy—vulnerable to exploitation at the workplace and to other abuses. Ironically, many illegal immigrants work with false Social Security numbers, paying into the Social Security and income tax systems to support services from which they can't benefit.

Luis de Alba's Story

Luis Valle de Alba, 32, is one of the many immigrants who have been deported and separated from their families, only to sneak back in. "I have four children between 14 months and 8 years of age," he said. Originally from Chiapas, Mexico, De Alba has been living in the United States for the past 22 years without legal documentation. In order to work, he has had to cross the border back and forth, often living on both sides while trying to make ends meet. "I was renting a place in Mexico," he said, "while my wife was struggling in Texas. We were going to lose our place in Texas because I could not maintain two houses. So I needed to come back and stay on the Texas side." Now that he has made the decision to work only in the United States, De Alba is trying to fix his papers. "I'm trying to move forward," he said. "Without my papers, I'm getting arrested on the way to the store. JFON is looking into my situation," he continued. "It seems complicated, because I was deported so many times."

JFON South Texas

Carole Lahti, the regional director of Justice For Our Neighbors South Texas, has been working to break the cycle of illegal entry, marginalization, and deportation. Lahti has been running the JFON program for two and a half years. "We're restarting with a new attorney," she said. "I do a lot of organizational activities and public relations. The program is completely funded by grants and donations, but we've got to hustle to support it."

With an $85,000 annual budget—supported by a parish with an average church attendance of just 55 people—Lahti isn't kidding when she says she has to hustle. Initially, there was just one JFON clinic along the border—in Pharr, Texas. A second clinic was recently opened in Brownsville.

Mary Ann Garza, clinic coordinator for JFON South Texas, said: "The immigrants here may have their resident papers, but they've never gotten their citizenship. Now they're realizing that, with all the problems we're having across the border, they should obtain citizenship." The problems Garza mentioned are the warring drug cartels in Matamoros, Reynosa, and other towns on the Mexican side of the border. These ongoing drug wars have only exacerbated the immigrant situation.

Being the child of an immigrant mother, Garza has a personal connection to families that are torn apart by deportation. "My mother is Cuban," she explained. "We had issues [with immigration], and it hurt me to see my mother, of all people, have those issues. Such things brand a child for life. We make a big to-do over the bad side of immigration," she added, "but we don't bring up the good side. These folks are here and are hard-working. They need us as much as we need them."

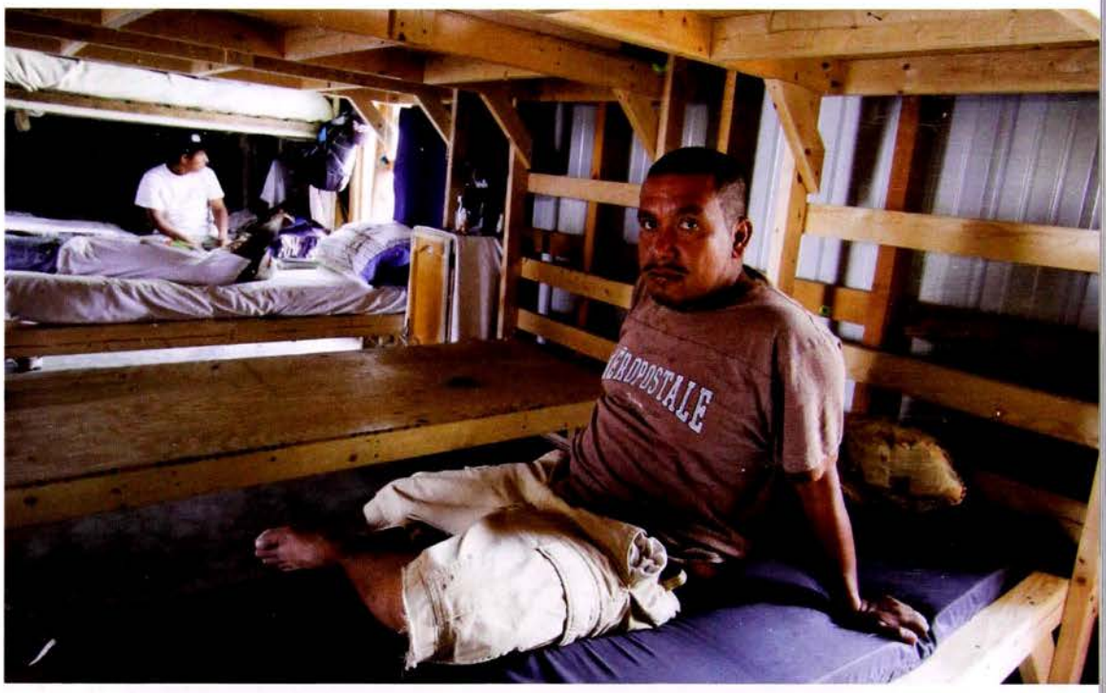
A Refuge Across the River

When undocumented immigrants are deported from the United States, one of the few places where they can find refuge is the *Senda de Vida* (Path of Life) immigrant camp. It is in Reynosa, Mexico, just over the border from McAllen, Texas. The migrant camp provides a place for uprooted deportees to get back on their feet.

Willie Berman, a United Methodist missionary and a Methodist Church (Mexico) liaison who works with the immigrants in *Senda de Vida*, explained:

"It's a human disaster. While trying to look for a better future, these immigrants have been displaced. They can't go across to the United States, but they can't go back home either because they feel there is no future for them back there."

One of the women in the camp, Sandra Martinez, was eight months pregnant. She thanked God for a migrant camp to help those deported from the United States. "It's good here," she said. "They help with food, water, and soap." When asked if she had other children, she said: "Yes, I already have three. I had to leave them in Pharr, Texas, where the younger ones are being raised by my eldest daughter, who is 22." She hopes to reunite with them one day.

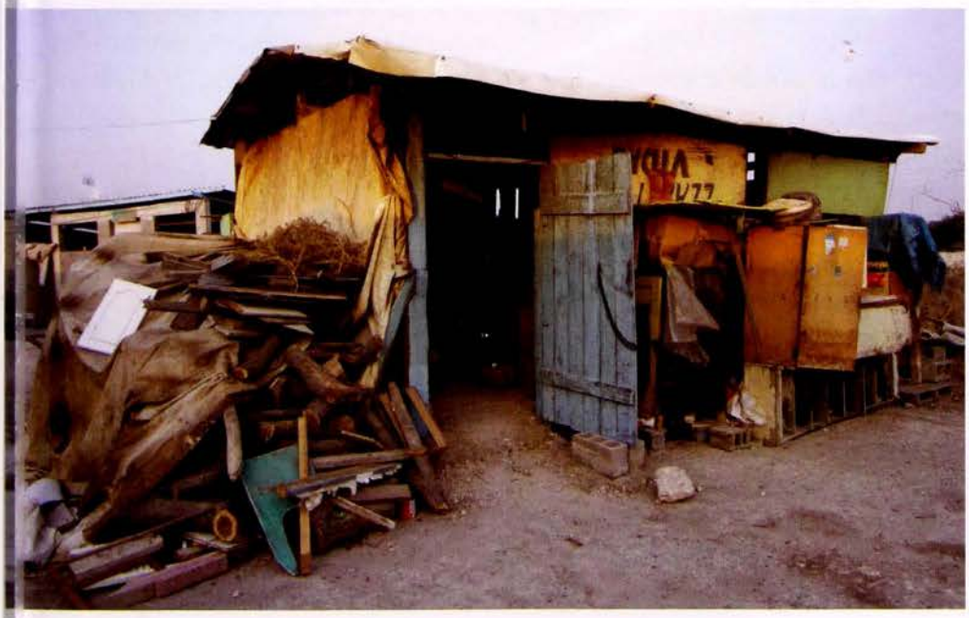


Back in Pharr, Texas, Carole Lahti and JFON have worked with women like Sandra Martinez and with other families who have been split apart. They are left in camps like Senda de Vida, waiting for either their immigration papers or the time when they have saved enough money to sneak back into the United States. The border fence, like the walls and fences of the past, may inevitably fail to stem the tide. A quote from a magazine article last year reads: "More than 500 foreign nationals have been arrested this year attempting to enter the western US by sea—a new trend in human smuggling, officials say. Tiny boats leave Mexico at night and drop their cargo on mainland and offshore-island beaches as far north as Ventura County, California, 200 miles from the border." (*Time* magazine, "Illegal Immigration," August 15, 2011, p. 16.)

Illegal immigration is a complex and highly emotional subject. It is being dealt with by putting up a wall—with no thought of what has happened to the great walls and barriers of the past. Aware of the heights they must scale, Carole Lahti, Mary Ann Garza, and all the other advocates at Justice For Our Neighbors continue to fight on behalf of displaced and victimized immigrants.

When asked why she cares so much for this cause, Lahti answered: "Because Scripture tells us to. In Matthew 25:40, Jesus says: "'Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

Garza added, "God has no boundaries."



Gabriel Ramos-Rocchio is a freelance journalist, poet, and horticulturist in New York City. Nile Sprague is a freelance journalist and photographer who works for nonprofit organizations in the developing world.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A border patrol vehicle.
PHOTO: NILE SPRAGUE
ABOVE: A displaced immigrant camper waits at the Senda de Vida camp.
PHOTO: NILE SPRAGUE
LEFT: Senda de Vida Migrant Camp.
PHOTO: NILE SPRAGUE

CROSSING CULTURAL FRONTIERS

in Mission

by Lindsey Kerr

FOR MANY OF US IN THE UNITED STATES, Christianity has ceased to be revolutionary. Instead, it has become part of the status quo—choir rehearsal on Tuesday, a committee meeting on Thursday, the worship service on Sunday, and an occasional potluck supper. We like it. It's what we know. But, lest we forget, Christianity started out as an embrace of the unfamiliar. The apostles were called away from their daily lives to follow Jesus on an unknown but radically different path. In the Hebrew Scriptures, when Hagar meets an angel of the Lord, she is out in the desert (Genesis 16:7). And it is while hiding in the wilderness that Elijah experiences God in the form of a breeze (I Kings 19:5-8).

The General Board of Global Ministries has sent countless women and men into the unknown. Jessica Tulloch is one such person. In 1999, she traveled from the United States to the rural Cordillera region of the northern Philippines. Imelda Ramos is another example. In 2005, she left the Philippines for Alaska, and then California.

I had the opportunity to rethink the meaning of "the unknown" when I had coffee with Jessica, an American, on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, and ate dinner with Imelda, a Mindanaoan, in Berkeley, California.

Called to the Philippines

Jessica Tulloch joined the Global Justice Volunteers (GJV) program in 1999. "I was in a stage of development when I liked adventure," she admitted. The CJV program—currently the responsibility of the Women's Division—enables young adults, ages18 to 30, to have short-term experiences living, serving, and learning in justice ministries around the world. These ministries raise awareness of social justice issues and address the root causes of injustice.

"I was assigned to the Cordillera region on the island of Luzon in the Philippines for eight weeks," Tulloch explained. "I went to a rural community with our local host, not realizing that, after just a few days, she was going to leave me in the care of the community. So here I was—in a strange new world of unknown people and undiscovered things! Culturally, life in this

Filipino community was drastically different from life in the United States. In terms of my faith, trusting was the biggest thing I learned there.

"The people in this community were farmers," she continued, "so it wasn't as though they bought food at a store. They even grew and roasted their own coffee! And all of the wildlife was oversized. One day, I was walking by the school and heard the children calling out to me. I turned my head to look, and there was a gigantic spider on my shoulder. It was so big that it had a body temperature," she laughed. "I was coming to understand the beauty of all of God's creation: the spider, the giant insects, the crystal-blue river where the children swam."

Tulloch stayed in that community for the last three weeks of her GJV experience. Then, after a debriefing in Manila, she returned to the United States. For two years, she worked in different capacities with the American Friends Service Committee in Chicago. "But I was in crisis," she admitted. She felt called to work in both community organizing and popular education, but there seemed to be no organization that fulfilled her vision of linking local issues to international politics.

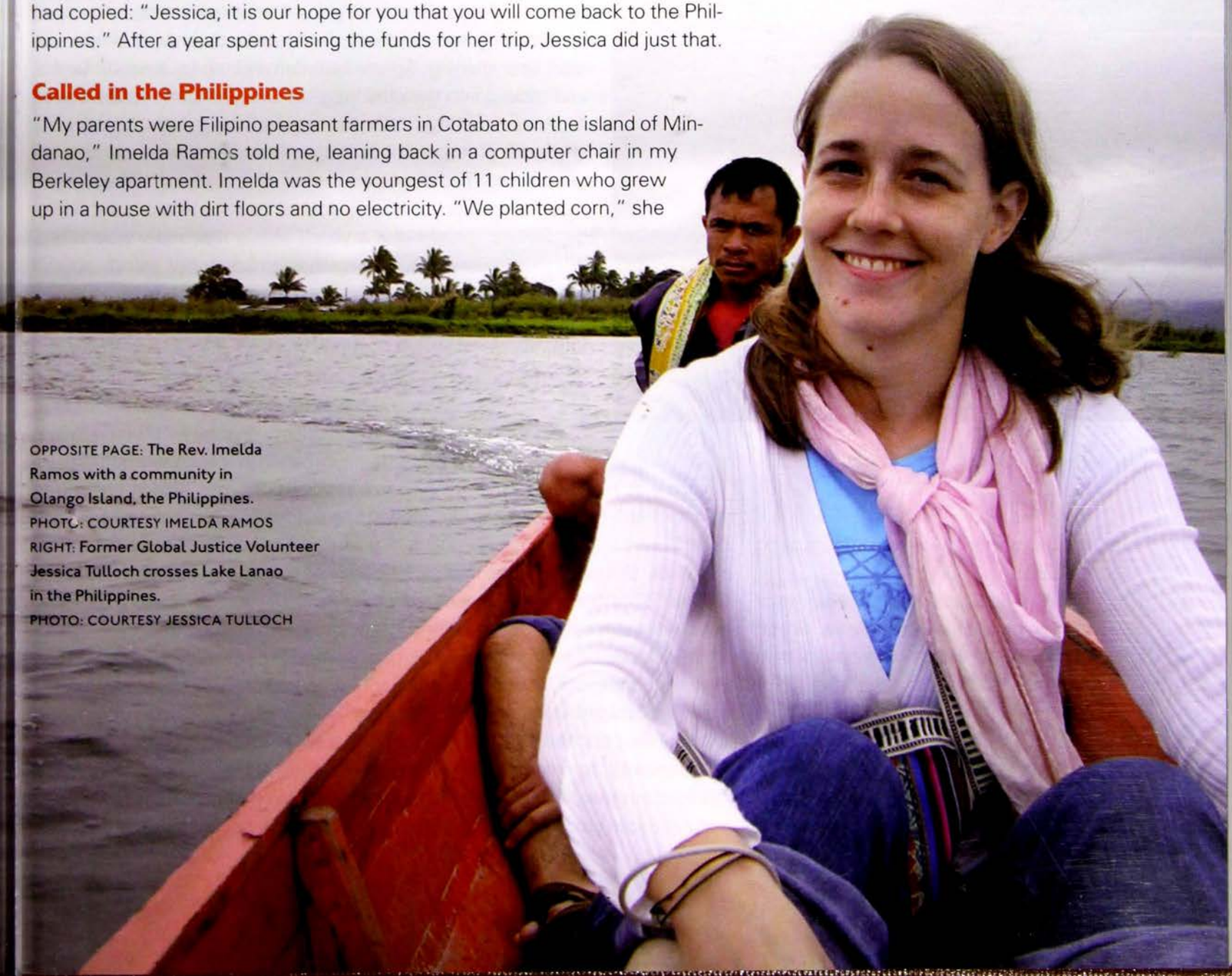
She was considering returning abroad—perhaps this time to Panama or Colombia—when she found and opened the journal she'd kept during her time as a GJV. Her eyes fell on a comment from a community host that she had copied: "Jessica, it is our hope for you that you will come back to the Philippines." After a year spent raising the funds for her trip, Jessica did just that.

Called in the Philippines

"My parents were Filipino peasant farmers in Cotabato on the island of Mindanao," Imelda Ramos told me, leaning back in a computer chair in my Berkeley apartment. Imelda was the youngest of 11 children who grew up in a house with dirt floors and no electricity. "We planted corn," she said, "and I played in the rice paddy with the water buffalo." Tilling the irrigated rice fields is too strenuous a task for a horse or mule.

In the 1970s, the United States was trying to stamp out Communism in Southeast Asia. With American support, Ferdinand Marcos—then president of the Philippines—increased attacks on both Christian and Muslim revolutionaries in Mindanao. "We were on the run from war—we had to leave everything," Ramos said. She was in first grade when her family fled to Davao Oriental. "Since we were farmers," she noted, "we had to wait until we could harvest the squash and gourd we had planted. In the meantime, we went hungry."

Ramos's family had to remain on



OPPOSITE PAGE: The Rev. Imelda Ramos with a community in Olango Island, the Philippines.
PHOTO: COURTESY IMELDA RAMOS
RIGHT: Former Global Justice Volunteer Jessica Tulloch crosses Lake Lanao in the Philippines.
PHOTO: COURTESY JESSICA TULLOCH

the move—a practice she continued while attending college. She had to go to four different colleges just to finish an undergraduate degree. "I was a student leader and an activist," Ramos explained. Her active opposition to Marcos's martial law caused her to be kicked out of one school after another. "Some of my colleagues got killed," she said. "But because I was in so many different places, I met different pastors and had different church experiences."

This experience was key to her spiritual formation. After college, Ramos attended Union Theological Seminary in Luzon on a scholarship, graduating in 1983.

"My first assignment was to a rural high school called the Green Academy in North Cotabato," she recalled. In the summer, she led a Christian summer camp. But Cotabato was plagued by fighting between insurgents and government troops, and there were internally displaced people all over Mindanao. So, after she worked there for a year, The United Methodist Church moved her to the Leyete region in the central Philippines. She was moved several more times before arriving at the Methodist Social Center in Manila in 1999.

"We had 40 street children living there," she said, "and 250 students living in the dormitory. We were serving 11 communities across Manila, including the poorest of the poor. We had programs for recovering addicts, for the elderly, and for childhood education." For four years, Ramos didn't take a vacation. During that time, both of her parents and one of her brothers died.

Called to the Western US

"I needed to take some time for pastoral care and personal development," Ramos explained. She was accepted into the Doctorate of Ministry programs at both the Pacific School of Religion in California and Union Theological Seminary in New York City, on a full scholarship. Then, a new unknown presented itself. "I received an email from the district superintendent of the Alaska Missionary Conference," Ramos explained, "and she offered me a pastoral position in Alaska." Ramos laughed. "I wanted to continue my education, but I also wanted to see the world. I'd never even heard of Alaska!"

Under the guidance of a trusted seminary professor, Dr. Ben Silva-Netto, Ramos felt she finally knew where the spirit was moving her. Fieldwork, her mentor told her, is where you start your training. So she boarded a plane to Juneau, Alaska, and moved into the parsonage of Douglas Community United Methodist Church. "It wasn't so different from Mindanao," she said. "I knew about Native Americans and how the US government had displaced them." She paused. "Of course, it meant transitioning from a tropical country to a place that can get 200 inches of snow a year!" While that snow was falling, Ramos focused solely on getting to know her community. "I didn't impose myself, I just honored who they were."

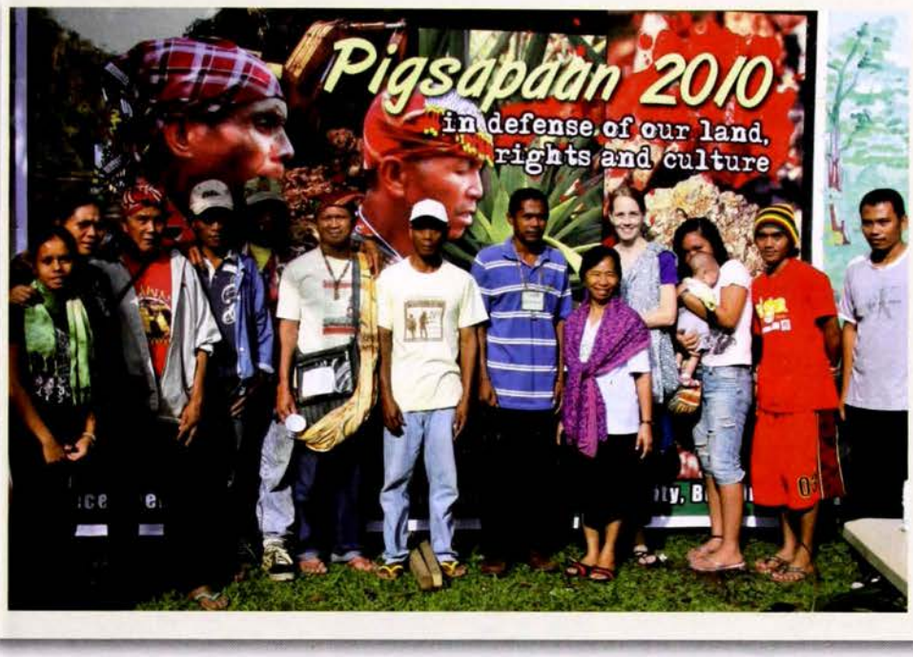
Working for Justice

Jessica Tulloch utilized a similar strategy when she returned to the Philippines in 2002. She focused on community visits in rural Luzon. "You have to be open," she said. "If you're going to work in a community, you have to be absorbed into it for a while." Initially, Tulloch was returning to the Philippines for only two years. "But at the end of 15 months," she said, "I finally understood the landscape and was ready to contribute."

It was around that time that an interfaith nonprofit organization, Initiatives for Peace in Mindanao (InPeace), was formed in Davao City to work for a just peace through advocacy, community organizing, and popular education.

Tulloch has been in Mindanao for nine years now, currently serving with InPeace's Ecological Justice and Indigenous Peoples Program. She also works with Panalipdan Mindanao and Kalumaran—two organizations that defend the environment and the rights of indigenous peoples.

"Generally, mineral wealth is found in the mountains," Tulloch explained. "Indigenous peoples have already been pushed into the mountains by Spanish and American colonization. Now the mining companies want to force them out



of there, too." This is an issue all over the Philippines. According to the World Rainforest Movement, 40 percent of the Philippine territory has already been given away to multinational mining companies.

Indigenous peoples see few benefits from this destruction of their land. "The Philippine government or the mining company might give them a school or a medical clinic," Tulloch noted, "but everything else is taken from them. They have no place left to farm or even to live." It's an uphill battle, she told me, but the people truly believe this is a community worth fighting for.

New US Frontiers

The Rev. Imelda Ramos was the first Filipino pastor to serve in the Alaska Missionary Conference. The membership of her Douglas Community UMC congregation was 98 percent white. "I was unknown to this church, but I wouldn't impose myself," Ramos told me. Undeterred by cultural differences, she was soon participating in and then leading the congregation's life. During her time at Douglas, she performed a number of funerals, many baptisms, and 12 weddings. Then, she met Bob Woolf, an American scientist, on a plane ride from Seattle to Juneau in 2009. They were married at Douglas UMC the same year. "The congregation took care of everything," Ramos said. "Someone sewed the dress, someone brought the flowers, someone decorated the church, and everyone brought something. We didn't spend anything," she laughed. Ramos served the congregation for five years.

"But my plan to go to school was long overdue, and the congregation supported me," she said. In 2010, she entered the Doctorate of Ministry Program at the Pacific School of Religion. She and Bob currently live in San Francisco, where she is doing a year of hospital chaplaincy as part of her doctoral studies.

Called Into the Unknown

Jessica Tulloch is married to an advocate for Filipino farmers' rights, Jade Alexis Palma Gil, with whom she has a one-year-old son. "I'm still here because I continue to learn so much in this place," she says. "It has taught me about the Methodist principle of social and personal holiness. We cannot change the world if we do not change ourselves. And we cannot change ourselves if we don't participate in the process of changing the world."

This is the social change that Imelda Ramos also wants to be part of. After she finishes the school year in San Francisco, she'll return to the Philippines to complete and implement her pastoral studies. "I am called to serve in Mindanao," Ramos says, "working with people who are healing from the trauma of war." But even in returning to the land of her childhood, she is going into a new unknown. "I want to learn from the people in these war-torn communities," she says. "I want to understand who they are and collaborate with them."

Along with Imelda Ramos and Jessica Tulloch, we too are called into the unknown. The gospel expects us to venture into new places, new relationships, and new ways to serve.

Lindsey Kerr is a former Mission Intern who now serves on the California-Nevada Task Force on the Philippines. She is currently studying for an M. Div. degree at the Pacific School of Religion.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Imelda Ramos, in Glacier Bay National Park, Alaska.
PHOTO: COURTESY IMELDA RAMOS
TOP: For the last nine years, Jessica Tulloch (fourth from right) has been working with people and organizations that defend the environment and the rights of the indigenous people of Mindanao.
PHOTO: COURTESY JESSICA TULLOCH
LEFT: Rev. Ramos with children on Olango Island, Philippines.
PHOTO: COURTESY IMELDA RAMOS

"The Russia Initiative IS DOING SOMETHING to Our Hearts"

by Boyce A. Bowdon

"WE'VE NEVER BEEN THE SAME, and our church hasn't either," declared the Rev. Dr. Robert Long, senior pastor of St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Oklahoma City. He was reflecting on the mission trip to Russia that he and 39 St. Luke members made back in June 1992. Dr. Long—then in his early thirties—had been pastor of St. Luke's for less than six months when the General Board of Global Ministries invited his church to join the mission agency's new Russia Initiative.

Global Ministries' representative David Stone explained to Dr. Long that the mission—called "To Russia With God's Love"—would be "friendship evangelism" in action. It meant, Long recalled, that "a mission team from our church would spend a week in Russia living in local people's homes. Our Russian hosts would tell us about their families, occupations, joys, and concerns, and we would tell them about ours. Then we would invite the Russians to come to Oklahoma City and visit us in our homes."

Stone explained to Rev. Long that this was not a short-term project. The goal was to build ongoing relationships and establish covenants of mutual caring and enrichment, reflecting God's love for all. "The time was right for building relationships and covenants with our Russian brothers and sisters," Long observed. "The Berlin Wall had been down for three years and the Soviet Union had recently been dissolved. This mission would be good for our denomination, good for our congregation, and good for the Russians with whom we would become partners and friends in Christ."

But there was an obstacle. The mission trip would cost $100,000—nearly 10 percent of St. Luke's $1.1 million budget. As a downtown church, St. Luke's had lost half of

its congregation between 1960 and 1991, when Rev. Long arrived. During those three decades, the congregation had shrunk from 8,000 to 4,000 members, as city families moved out to the suburbs. By the early 1990s, the church was running a budgetary deficit.

"It had been some time since our church had taken on a project as challenging as the mission to Russia," Long told me. "But I believed that, if we gave our people a vital mission to embrace, we could raise the money we needed." When he presented the proposal, the finance committee approved it. And, as Long had expected, St. Luke's members embraced the idea, came up with creative ways to raise the money needed, and quickly reached their goal.

Birthplace of Communism

Global Ministries assigned St. Luke's team to Ulyanovsk, a city on the Volga River near St. Petersburg. Ulyanovsk was named for Vladimir Ulyanov, who was born there. He later changed his name to Lenin, led Russia's 1917 October Revolution, and gave the Russian Communist Party its name. During Communist rule in Russia, St. Petersburg was renamed Leningrad. "People said that we were going to 'The Bethlehem of Communism,'" Rev. Long recalls. "I told them I couldn't think of a more appropriate place for our mission."

Paula Severe recalled that, when she and the other team members left Oklahoma City, it seemed impossible to believe that they were going to Russia and expecting strangers to welcome them into their homes! "I trembled at the thought and prayed for courage and serenity," Paula said. "I imagined the preparations our hosts must be making and anxieties they might have about our visit. I prayed that God was preparing their hearts and minds to receive us."

A cultural-exchange organization assigned individual team members to hosts they thought might have something in common with them. Paula Severe and Twila Thornton were assigned to a married couple: Sasha and Margaret Usoltseva. Sasha was regional director of transportation in Ulyanovsk, and Margaret was a retired English teacher and school principal. Paula, also a veteran teacher, looked forward to comparing her experiences and views with Margaret's.

"The Usoltseva's apartment was small but inviting," Paula told me. "Margaret led us to their only bedroom. She and her husband planned to sleep in the living room, letting Twila and me take the two single beds and clearing out their two small closets for our use. I was embarrassed to think I had probably brought more clothes with me than Margaret owned."

During one of their first meals together, Margaret asked her American guests: "Now, why are you here?" Paula explained: "We came to meet people like you, to learn about your country, and to tell you about ours. We also hope to help start a United Methodist congregation here." Margaret translated Paula's answer for her husband and then translated his reply into English: "You know we are atheists." Paula confessed that her heart sank. "I counted the days we had left to spend with them," she said, "and I quickly changed the subject."

Later, Margaret revealed that Sasha's grandfather and great-grandfather had been Russian Orthodox priests. When the Communists took over in 1917, both of them had been imprisoned and were never heard from again. Then she explained that, during the years of Communist control, Russians had to declare themselves atheists to avoid punishment.

As Paula and Margaret got to know one another, they discovered that they had more in common than just their interest in education. Both deeply loved their families and both wanted all people to live together in peace. Paula also found that Margaret—like many other Russians—was curious about life in America and eager to know more about United Methodist beliefs. Yet the Oklahoman admits she could never have imagined "that Margaret would be a guiding light in

OPPOSITE PAGE: The nine domes of the 16th century St. Basil's Cathedral rise above pedestrians in Red Square. PHOTO: RONALD UNDERBERG

ABOVE: Dr. Robert Long, senior pastor of St. Luke's UMC. PHOTO: COURTESY ST. LUKE'S UMC

BELOW: "St. Luke's Russian mission centers on building relationships of mutual trust and concern," says Dr. Lauranne Harris (in navy dress) shown here with some of her friends in Ulyanovsk. PHOTO: COURTESY ST. LUKE'S UMC

beginning the new Methodist congregation in Ulyanovsk, and that she would become the church's first lay leader and a part of every decision and every inch of progress that was made." What did quickly become clear to Paula was this: "Every ounce of anxiety that had accompanied me to Russia," she said, "had melted into love for Margaret and her family. I was determined that our relationship would not end when this week was over." More than a decade later, their friendship was still growing when Margaret died of cancer.

Creating a New Family

During their week in Russia, the members of St. Luke's team led a worship service. Rev. Long vividly remembers preparing his sermon. Since he would be preaching in a country where, for decades, people risked their lives if they openly professed to be Christians, he wanted to focus on the core of the gospel.

"I wanted to get across what it means to believe you are God's child and that God loves you and forgives you," he explained. "I wanted to say that God created all of us to love God and to love one another. That was why we had come to visit the Russians, and that was why we wanted them to come and visit us. So I told the stories Jesus told about the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan."

Facing language, cultural, and other barriers made Dr. Long extremely aware that, if anything good happened as a result of his sermon, God would have to make it happen. And God did make amazing things happen during the service.

"What we did not know," Long recalled, "was that Dena—a lady who had never been able to go to church and had never before heard the gospel—was there. And during that service, she heard God calling her to ministry. We thought it might be possible to start a church in Ulyanovsk eventually. But the people of Ulyanovsk started their church themselves, and Dena is now their pastor. At least two other members of the congregation that day have entered the ministry."

When it was time for St. Luke's mission team to leave Ulyanovsk, their Russian hosts and other friends accompanied them to the train station. "We were sobbing," Long said. "The Russians were sobbing, too. It was like a new family had been created.

"Back in Oklahoma City," Long continued, "we told everyone we met how the Russians had welcomed and cared for us. That got our congregation excited about the Russia Initiative. Since then, we have been exchanging visits regularly. I'm not sure how many trips we have taken to Russia—probably 40 at least—and the Russians have also visited us many times."

St. Luke members who have not yet participated in a mission trip have opened their homes to visitors from Ulyanovsk. Many close relationships have formed, and new ones are still forming. "Our families exchange emails, letters, and phone calls with their Russian families," Rev. Long said. "And they go to see one another when they can."

Partnership in Mission

Since 1995, Lauranne Harris, an Oklahoma City doctor who specializes in obstetrics and gynecology, has directed St. Luke's mission to Russia. Dr. Harris says that, ever since the St. Luke delegation made that first mission trip to Russia, members not only of the mission team but of the whole congregation have entered into partnership with their Russian counterparts.

Several doctors went on St. Luke's first mission trip to Russia in 1992. "They didn't diagnose patients or distribute medicines," Dr. Harris said. "Instead, they visited doctors and other personnel in the regional hospital in Ulyanovsk and expressed their eagerness to help. Our doctors were prepared to offer medical supplies and equipment, consultation, or any other assistance needed to help the Russian doctors better serve their patients."

After the Oklahoma team members returned home, they gathered supplies that the Russian doctors had requested and shipped them to Russia or sent money so that other items could be purchased locally. "Even though we make short-term trips," Dr. Harris noted, "we make long-term connections and nurture those relationships. During recent years, our teams have focused less on medicine and more on the social aspects of the work in Ulyanovsk. Ever since the Methodist church there got going, we've asked the worshipers what needs their community has that they feel called to help with. We make it

clear that we are ready to assist them with such projects." One project St. Luke's has helped the congregation in Ulyanovsk carry out is the establishment of a local Bible study at a government-operated retirement home. "Without the Russian congregation, we wouldn't have known that this retirement home even existed," Harris admitted. "But people from the Russian church started going to it, meeting people, and making friends. Then they started a Bible study, just as we had done when we came to Ulyanovsk. Now the Bible study at the retirement center has grown into a church. They named it St. Luke's in honor of our church in Oklahoma City."

"Every goal St. Luke's mission team hoped to accomplish when they made their first mission trip to Ulyanovsk has been met and exceeded," Rev. Long now attests. "The Russia Initiative revived our can-do spirit. It deepened our awareness that being in mission requires listening to others and working with them as partners. It strengthened our commitment to a ministry that helps people experience new life in Christ." The response that St. Luke's mission teams have received in Ulyanovsk is convincing evidence that many people in countries once controlled by Communism are responsive to the beliefs, mission, and ministry of United Methodist Christians.

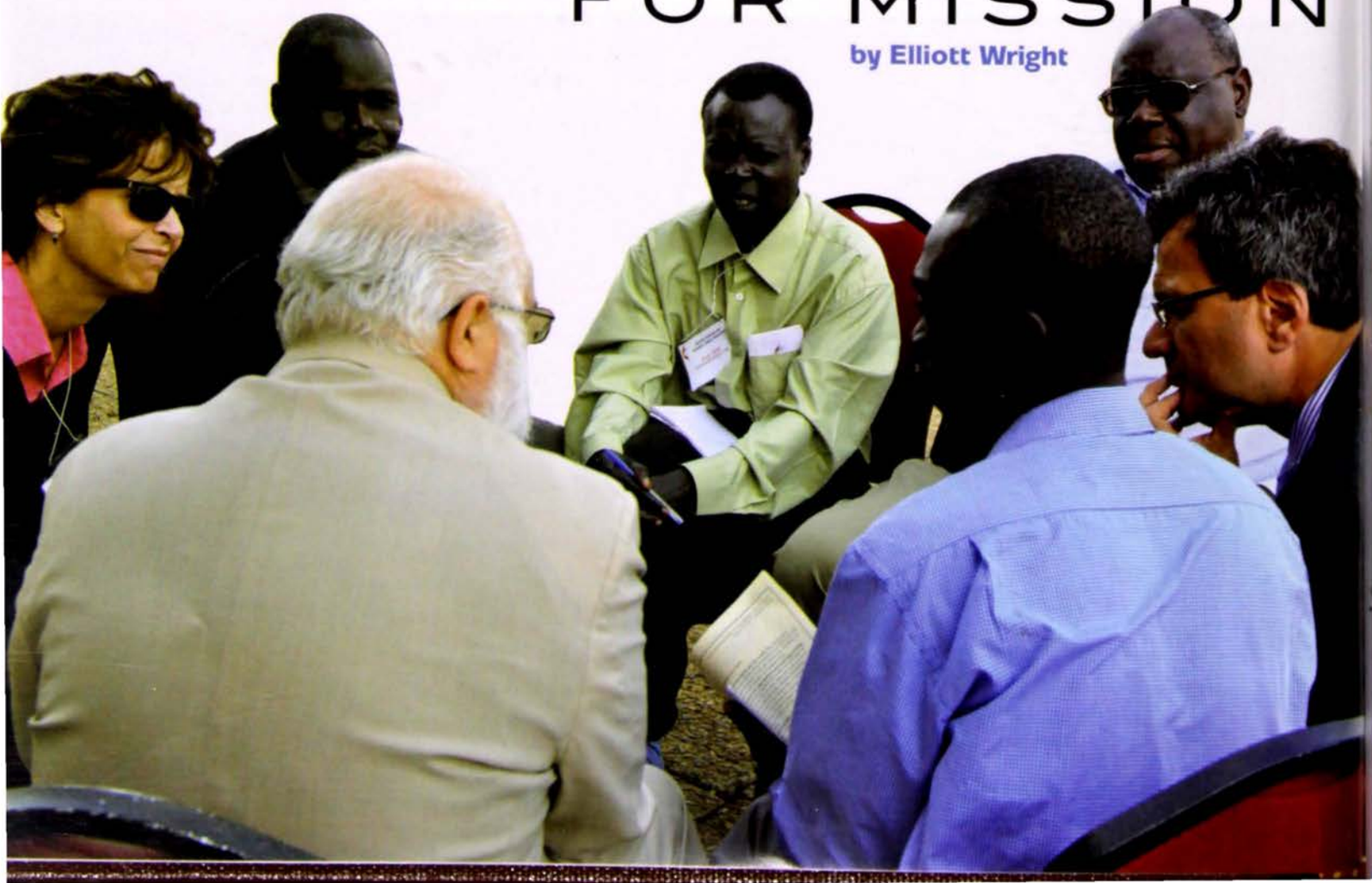
Summing up, Rev. Long credits the Russia Initiative with "doing something to our hearts. It has strengthened our faith in God," he says. "We feel closer to one another. We are less judgmental and more accepting of people who are not like us. And we are more eager than ever to share God's love and bring hope to people both at home and around the world!"

Boyce A. Bowdon formerly served as communications director for the Oklahoma Conference. Now retired, he enjoys freelancing and continuing to learn more about the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: Theme of St. Luke's first mission trip in 1992 was "To Russia With God's Love." PHOTO: COURTESY ST. LUKE'S UMC
LEFT: Dr. Lauranne Harris, specialist in obstetrics and gynecology. PHOTO: COURTESY ST. LUKE'S UMC
ABOVE: United Methodist youth enjoys arts and crafts at a camp in Ulyanovsk. PHOTO: COURTESY ST. LUKE'S UMC
BELOW: St. Luke's UMC in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, helped to establish this United Methodist youth group in Ulyanovsk. PHOTO: COURTESY ST. LUKE'S UMC

ROUNDTABLES FOR MISSION

by Elliott Wright



THE CONCEPT OF THE ROUNDTABLE is finding a fresh application in the global mission of The United Methodist Church. Although "round table" may conjure the image of King Arthur and his knights sitting in a circle symbolizing their equal standing and unity of purpose, the roundtable is also a process.

"Roundtables bring equality, equity, and empowerment into mission relationships," says Thomas Kemper, chief executive of the church's General Board of Global Ministries. Kemper is a strong supporter of the roundtable approach for maintaining mission momentum in particular contexts—typically where mission outreach is well-established.

Recent mission roundtables sponsored by Global Ministries have focused on mission in South Sudan, Cambodia, Argentina, Haiti, and Russia. Their purpose is to bring together participants and partners involved in a particular mission area to consider priorities, resources, and timelines. Critical to the process is the full participation of the communities served by the mission. They are equal partners in the venture, with the same standing as funders and supporters. "Everyone at the table has equal value, voice, and influence," says Kemper.

Participants typically include representatives from Global Ministries (including UMCOR and the Women's Division); other mission agencies (such as the five that constitute the mission in Cambodia); regional United Methodist leaders; the emerging mission area itself; US annual conferences; central conference and ecumenical partners; and large congregations involved in mission partnerships.

Mission roundtables are different from mission summits or consultations, which are primarily spiritual and social celebrations. The roundtables include prayer and worship around work sessions, often dealing with difficult issues having biblical and theological ramifications. Agendas must account for the interests and commitments of all participants. Some examples of tough questions that come up are as follows:

OPPOSITE PAGE: A few participants in the recent South Sudan Roundtable (far left, clockwise) Karen Smith (Ginghamsburg UMC, US), Victor from Uganda, Pastor Isaac Sebit (South Sudan), Bishop James Swanson (Holston Conference, US), Thomas Kemper (General Secretary, GBGM), Faustino Doku (South Sudan), John Nuessle (Associate General Secretary, GBGM).
LEFT: Faustino Doku of Ligitolo, South Sudan. PHOTO: REV. ISAAC SEBIT, LIGITO UMC, SOUTHERN SUDAN

- What are the ministry priorities of members of the local churches in the mission area, and how do mission sponsors and supporters relate to these objectives?
- How will the partners manage a changeover from missionary to local leadership, and are local clergy and lay leaders prepared?
- What is the best way to achieve programmatic and fiscal self-sufficiency? When and how should long-time funders relinquish financial control?
- How should available funds from outside supporters be used?

South Sudan Roundtable

The South Sudan Roundtable, held in August 2011, exemplifies a roundtable in action. South Sudan is a relatively new United Methodist mission area in a newly independent country. The UMC there—part of the East Africa Annual Conference—first began in the early 1990s with an internal structure, a growing number of congregations, and significant support from the Holston Annual Conference. There are strong ties to Global Ministries, particularly UMCOR, and to the Ginghamsburg UMC in Ohio.

To organize the roundtable, participants convened for two days in Kampala, Uganda. The representatives from East Africa included six Sudanese pastors and lay leaders, five Individual United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) in South Sudan, and two conference officials—one of whom was Bishop Daniel Wandabula, the East Africa Central Conference leader. Global Ministries sent six representatives; the UMVIM network, one. Three each came from the Holston Annual Conference (including Bishop James Swanson) and Ginghamsburg UMC in Ohio.

The event opened with worship and an overview of United Methodism in South Sudan. The Sudanese team laid out three primary areas of concern: lifting the burden of poverty (increased by the decades of insurgency and conflict that led up to independence from Sudan, now its neighbor to the north); addressing health needs (including malaria prevention, clean water, nutrition, and health services); and evangelism (increasing the number of congregations and districts). One goal is to develop congregations in the large city of Juba in South Sudan's northern area. United Methodists are currently concentrated in the area of Yei, a city in the southwest.

Fred Dearing—a mission volunteer from the Holston Conference who serves as South Sudan's mission superintendent—registered the hope that Sudanese United Methodists will carry responsibility for achieving their priorities. Bishop Swanson confirmed his conferences' continuing commitment to assist with ministries of education, health, and church development and to provide volunteer labor and supplies. Ginghamsburg Church will continue to focus on the Aweil district in the north, while working with Global Ministries to identify another large US congregation willing to partner in expanding the mission to Juba. According to Grace Nakajje, the East Africa Annual Conference communicator, several other US conferences and congregations have the region on their mission radars and could probably be encouraged to join in the next roundtable in a year or two.

Cambodia Roundtables

Also last August, a different kind of roundtable—one in a series of annual events—took place in Cambodia. The Methodist Mission in this Southeast Asian country has five sponsoring agencies: Global Ministries; the mission arm of The United Methodist Church in France and Switzerland; the Korean Methodist Church; the Methodist Church in Singapore;

and the World Federation of Chinese Methodist Churches. After separate mission launches, the five agencies came together in the early 1990s to pursue a collaborative mission. The Cambodia Methodist Mission has developed a plan for realizing an autonomous Methodist Church in Cambodia by 2016. Cambodia is a Global Ministries' mission initiative and has garnered numerous US partners.

The Cambodia Roundtable—a kind of coordinating board—meets in Phnom Penh with equal Cambodian and US participation, according to the Rev. Jong Sung Kim, Global Ministries' staff liaison to Cambodia. "We review the ministries, set mission and funding priorities, and look at the whole budget," Kim explains. One recurring priority is the education and ordination of pastors and, more recently, equipping indigenous pastors to serve as district superintendents.

In November 2011, there were 140 Methodist congregations with 8,000 members in Cambodia. The church had 10 districts corresponding to 10 provinces; by mid-2011, all had indigenous superintendents. The superintendent of the church body is still a missionary, but Kim predicted that a native Cambodian would fill that spot this year.

The transfer of church leadership to local conference members can be a difficult task. Even the Apostle Paul, evidenced in his New Testament letters, harbored a tendency to want to maintain influence with the churches he founded. Yet he realized that local leadership was essential, in part so he could move on to other places. He had to trust the new Christians to become the bearers of faith. In First Thessalonians 1:4-5a, Paul states that the holy spirit had come to the new churches and into his own life: "For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction...."

Argentina Roundtable

The Argentina Roundtable meets every two years and last convened in November 2010. Partners of this Latin American roundtable include the Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina, Global Ministries (US), the United Church of Canada, the World Church Office of the British Methodist Church, The United Methodist Church of France and Switzerland, and the Council of Evangelical Methodist Churches of Latin America (CIEMAL).

The 2010 roundtable was the fifth meeting for this body, which seems to expand each time it is convened. Bishop Raoul Sosa of Uruguay attended in the interest of expanding mission collaboration in the region. Proceedings got underway with a presentation on political and economic conditions in the country. It was noted that increasing democratic freedoms, beginning in 2007, were welcomed. Bishop Frank de Nully Brown of Argentina reported on the strategic planning of the Argentine Methodist Church.

Partners laid out their own situations and financial capacities. One issue on the table concerned funding. It is likely that block grants to the Argentine church from both the Canadian and French/Swiss churches may be reduced or eliminated. Other pressing concerns included growing pluralism within churches, ministries with college students, clergy training in Wesleyan studies, and funding to cover pastors' needs. Methodists in Patagonia are concerned about mining safety, which struck cords of interest among the Canadians. Consensus was reached on new proposals for funding through The Advance, the second-mile mission giving channel of Global Ministries. One such project is the Cristo Rey Congregation on the north side of Buenos Aires. Other new church starts are in Jujuy and San Louis provinces.

Haiti & Russia Roundtables

The roundtable approach has been of enormous value in the wake of the devastating earthquake in Haiti in January 2010. The need was—and is—so great and the response so massive that a mission roundtable was quickly organized to set relief and rehabilitation priorities. Key to the success of this process is the involvement of the Methodist Church in Haiti. Other key

partners include UMCOR, the UMVIM network, and the Methodist-related humanitarian-response organizations in Canada, Great Britain, and the Caribbean. Habitat for Humanity and several health organizations are also working with the Methodist response.

The Haiti Roundtable, which has met several times, has a particular interest in assuring that post-earthquake rehabilitation programs take communities and families into economic account. UMVIM teams work alongside paid Haitian workers in cleanup and rebuilding. The teams are scheduled in ways that allow the completion of projects in stipulated time frames.

The Rev. James Gulley, Global Ministries/UMCOR coordinator in Haiti, finds the roundtable model valuable in setting the course for long-term rehabilitation. He emphasizes the central role of the Haitians in the extensive network of ministries.

A process of consultations linked to the Russia Mission Initiative evolved smoothly into the roundtable process, with the first such event held in the spring of 2009 at the conclusion of a meeting of Global Ministries' directors. Methodism in Russia and surrounding countries was revived in the early 1990s after decades of suppression by the Soviet Union. In fact, Russia became the first of Global Ministries' new mission initiatives and has garnered significant support from partners in the United States and Western Europe. Many large congregations provide both financial assistance and short-term technical and educational personnel. Most Russian congregations have partner support from US churches.

Today the Russia Initiative, organized into annual conferences, has all-indigenous pastors. On its own, the Russian Church has planned for a more proactive, self-sustaining future. By 2015, Russian United Methodists aim to be growing dynamically, helping people become committed Christians, and attaining recognition in their society through their quality of ministry, education, self-sufficiency, evangelism, and social service.

This developing roadmap was at the heart of the 2009 Russia Roundtable, which was attended by Russian church leaders, Global Ministries' staff, and partners from annual conferences and US congregations. Bishop Hans Växby of the Eurasia Episcopal Area explained that, when the church in Russia spoke of greater self-sufficiency, it did not mean it wanted less mission money but that it "might want to spend money in a different way...allowing congregations to reach toward greater maturity."

"We build a church together," Bishop Växby said at a meeting in April 2011. The value of the United Methodist connection, he noted, is that mission partners help one another not only with money but in building spiritual courage—in supporting the belief that God can accomplish God's purposes.

A Roundtable Guide

In collaboration with partners, Global Ministries is developing a "Mission Roundtable Guide." It will be released after review by a wide range of past and future participants. "Mission roundtables are more than instruments of mission," Thomas Kemper says. "They also include theological and philosophical understanding that goes beyond method. The concept does not need an owner, not even Global Ministries. The manual will describe the spirit and practical steps for making the roundtable experience one of empowerment, equality, and full participation."

Elliott Wright is a freelance writer who formerly served with Global Ministries in the area of public relations and communications.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Missionary Irene Mparutsa teaching at the Methodist Bible School in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. PHOTO: RICHARD LORD
BELOW: Representatives from international assistance agencies and church bodies in the US, Canada, and Great Britain visit a recipient of the Emergency Assistance Plan (PAUA, French acronym) in Haiti. PHOTO: J. ROLLINS/UMCOR

missionmemo

Horn of Africa

Recent fund distributions to support East Africa's famine relief by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) have included: $60,000 to Church World Service to provide family food packages and nutritional supplements for young children, along with support of water programs for five communities in Mwingi, Kenya; $70,000 to International Blue Crescent; $71,004 to Muslim Aid for food and other assistance in Somalia; $20,000 to the ACT Alliance for assistance in Somalia; $70,000 to GlobalMedic to provide clean water to refugees and Kenyan communities; $20,000 to the ACT Alliance for drought-related assistance in Ethiopia; $20,000 to the ACT Alliance and the International Orthodox Christian Charities to help build a school in a refugee camp in Ethiopia; and $99,925 to International Relief and Development to ensure sustainable food and animal-feed security in riverbank areas of Ethiopia.

UMCOR is continuing to seek donations for **Horn of Africa, UMCOR Advance #982450**.

Turkey: Keeping Warm

The distribution of 200 UMCOR-funded heaters by UMCOR's partner, International Blue Crescent (IBC), came like a "miracle" to earthquake survivors in the villages of Ermisler, Akcift, and 17 remote settlements outside the city of Van in Turkey. Families who received the heaters had lost all their belongings, including livestock and crops, when earthquakes rocked the region on October 23 and November 9 in 2011. Most are living in makeshift barracks or tents near their damaged homes. The heaters serve as stoves, allowing families to resolve both cooking and heating challenges as temperatures plummet.

IBC is also providing daily food packages and school supplies for 615 students in a regional school, and UMCOR is providing the children in the affected villages with warm winter clothes.

Give to **UMCOR Advance #982450**, earmarked **Turkey Earthquake**.

UM Leader of Liberia Wins Peace Prize

Liberian head of state, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a United Methodist who spoke at the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, has won the Nobel Peace Prize with two other women leaders. She shares the $1.5 million award with women's rights activist Leymah Gbowee, also from Liberia, and democracy activist Tawakkol Karman of Yemen—the first Arab woman to win.

Interpreter for Encounter with Christ Retires

After nearly two decades of service as director of interpretation for *Encounter with Christ*, the Rev. Wilson T. Boots retired at the end of 2011. Bishops and other members of Encounter's advisory board, along with General Board of Global Ministries' staff who work with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, selected the Rev. Pam Carter to continue the promotion of *Encounter with Christ* mission projects in the region. Pam Carter is a native of North Carolina and a graduate of Wake Forest University and Duke Divinity School. She is also an ordained elder in the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Occupy Wall Street Moves Methodists

The Occupy Movement, which started at Wall Street in New York City's Zuccotti Park in September, has spread throughout the world, primarily because of the Internet and social media. United Methodists and interfaith groups have used these communication channels to organize, share ideas, discuss theological implications, and gather food, clothing, and other supplies to minister to the homeless and protesters.

Some of the online sites where United Methodists and the larger faith communities are connecting: *Occupy Café*; *Occupy Faith*; *Methodists@OWS on Facebook*; *Occupy the Highway*; *United Methodist Church Unofficial Layman's Open Forum on Occupy Wall Street*; *Interfaith Tent at Oakland*; and *The Vision*, the newspaper of the New York Annual Conference of The UMC.

DEATHS **Anne Falkenberg**, retired missionary with almost 7 years of service in the Philippines, died October 7, 2011...**Winnie McKelvy**, retired missionary with 4 years of service in Bolivia, died October 27, 2011... **Norman Paul Brom**, retired missionary with 11 years of service in Brazil, died November 29, 2011...**Joy Barberi**, retired missionary with 41 years of service in Japan, died November 30, 2011...

The Rev. Isaac Agré, a Global Ministries missionary serving in Tunisia, died November 3, 2011. Rev. Agré was working with the Reformed Church of Tunis and with Caritas of the Catholic Church in an ecumenical ministry that receives and supports immigrants and refugees. Isaac and his wife Jacqueline, who is also a missionary, offered a ministry of solidarity with migrants and refugees from many different African countries, including those from their home country. Rev. Agré was a pastor and educator for 25 years in what is today the Côte d'Ivoire Annual Conference of The UMC.

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for the Quality Improvement Program for the hospital.
ers, and meet other needs that arise.

Farewell to Jerri and Bill Savuto

Jerri and Bill Savuto, missionaries with the General Board of Global Ministries, served at Maua Methodist Hospital in Maua, Kenya.

PHOTO: STANLEY GITARI

Bill and Jerri Savuto dance at their farewell party in Kenya.

AFTER NINE DEDICATED YEARS of service to Maua Methodist Hospital in Maua, Kenya, Jerri and Bill Savuto retired from the General Board of Global Ministries in August 2011. Through August 31, 2012, the Savutos will be visiting their supporting churches in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, Nebraska, and Illinois and will be settling into their new lives in the United States.

Dr. Stanley Gitari, director of the Community Health Department at the Maua Hospital—which includes all outreach clinics, Palliative Care, Giving Hope, and the AIDS Orphan Program—gave Jerri and Bill Savuto a farewell party to be remembered. Women's groups of between 700 and 1500 participants from villages near and far lined up to dance, laugh, praise God, and shake hands with the Savutos. The Savutos were honored with the planting of two trees that were dedicated to the work they had done with the AIDS Orphans and Hope Companions. They were presented with unending gifts, and an announcement was made by Stanley Gitari that sufficient money had been raised to complete the building of the hospital kitchen that will be dedicated in the name of Jerri's mother.

The Savutos served at Maua Methodist Hospital from 1998 to 2003; and returned there in January 2007 to serve another four years. Bill continued to work with the Information Technology unit. He also worked with work teams and helped with the AIDS Orphans program. Jerri was responsible for the Quality Improvement Program for the hospital.

Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

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CONNECTING THE CHURCH IN MISSION

Outreach News from Rural Alaska

by Fran Lynch, a Deaconess and missionary with The General Board of Global Ministries, assigned to the Willow Anvik Grayling Church and Community Ministry in Alaska.

THE WILLOW CHURCH AND COMMUNITY PROGRAM is an outreach ministry to the local community and is based out of the Willow UMC in Willow, Alaska. We have the only food bank program in the community and provide food to an average of 135 families per month. This past week one of the Food Bank volunteers brought with her two twin mattresses to give away. They were given to a family in which the mother had broken some ribs the week before. With her money going to medical bills, the family could not afford mattresses for their girls.

PHOTO: FELIPE CASTILLO

Fran Lynch

We partner with the Willow Public Library for the Summer Reading and Feeding Program, providing lunch for all children and adults who attend. We use the church van and do a mobile route to Caswell Lake about 20 miles north of the Library. This is a rather isolated area, and we realized that none of the children there got to attend the Reading Program because there was no transportation. Now there are children standing at the end of their driveways waiting for the church van. They get books and lunch, but mainly the whole family gets a weekly visit from people who care about them.

We also respond to emergency needs of families in the area. This means we work with volunteers and local families to cut and haul wood for the winter, help pay utility bills for electricity or heating fuel, provide gas vouchers, and meet other needs that arise.

Finding Love in Cambodia

by Melissa Hinnen, the information officer of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.

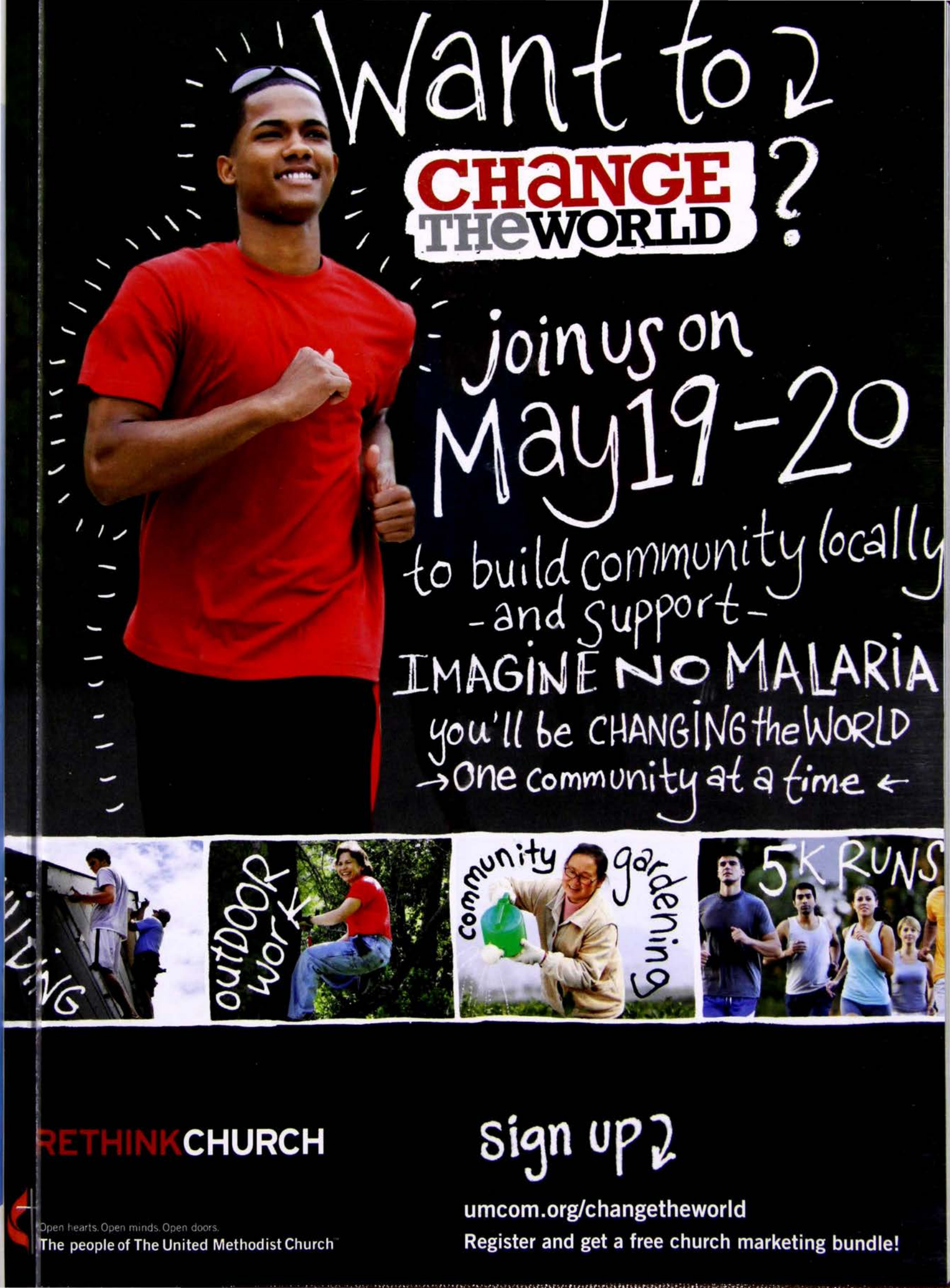
From the moment they greeted me in my hotel lobby in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, I felt a sense of pure joy from the Chans. They are truly extraordinary people who radiate love.

Joseph and Marilyn met once as children, and they did not see each other again until 10 years later in a Thai refugee camp. Marilyn was raised in the northern part of Cambodia, where she went to high school. Joseph was raised in Cambodia but attended a university in Yugoslavia. In the late 1970s, he returned to Phnom Penh because he wanted to help the people under the Communist Khmer Rouge government.

Because they were educated, both Joseph and Marilyn were targeted by the Khmer Rouge and forced into labor. They both escaped, making their way on foot over the border into Thailand. At the refugee camp in Thailand, Marilyn turned around and was surprised to see Joseph standing right behind her. As the pieces came together in their minds, they both cried. Less than a week later they were separated again and brought on buses back over the Thailand border into Cambodia. When the bus released them into the forest, a landmine suddenly exploded and countless people were killed. Marilyn and Joseph each assumed the other had been killed.

Eventually, Marilyn and Joseph reunited. They made their way to Marilyn's mother's house. Arrangements were made for Joseph and Marilyn to be married. "We did not want him to get separated from me again," said Marilyn. After they were married, they decided to make a run for the border. Joseph went ahead of Marilyn and her family to find the best way, but he was not able to get back to them. Marilyn was determined not to lose her husband and set out after him. The path forked into three paths, and, having no idea which way to choose, she took a guess. It was the same path Joseph had chosen. Finally they were reunited and walked together to the refugee camp in Thailand.

PHOTO: RICHARD LORD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HEALED AND FREE

ALIK,* FROM YEREVAN, ARMENIA, NEVER THOUGHT SHE WOULD SURVIVE a traum five-month ordeal of forced prostitution in Dubai. Confined in a small room during the she became increasingly indebted to her captors with every meal they gave her to eat.

BUT SHE DID SURVIVE.

With the help of a psychologist at a shelter for trafficked survivors run by the Un Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) in Armenia, Alik got her life back.

"I was surrounded by so much love from the UMCOR shelter staff, I learned to trust aga she says. "Now, I have a loving husband and a young son."

SUPPORT UMCOR ARMENIA'S ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROJECT, UMCOR ADVANCE #333615.

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