

Being One in Mission

BY LINDA BRYANT VALENTINE

There is a new hunger across the denomination to reclaim and reconnect with our rich missional history. Not only do we want to get out of the pews to take part in what God is doing in the world, our life-transforming encounters with PC(USA) mission personnel are inspiring us to respond to God's call to do mission in bold, new ways. As Steve Hayner, Peachtree Associate Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth at Columbia Theological Seminary, has observed, "Churches that are growing see their primary purpose as joining God's mission in the world rather than focusing on what happens in the 'clubhouse.'"

In that same passionate embrace of God's mission, groups from my own home church have gone to Honduras year after year, building not only homes there, but also friendships that have the power to endure through Christ Jesus. On one memorable trip, as we dedicated a house at the end of a hot, sweaty week, the homeowner said to us, "I have seen God in your sweat."

During Mission Challenge '07, the largest iteration of Presbyterian mission workers in recent memory, PC(USA) mission coworker Burkhard Paetzold also was poignantly reminded of the scriptural question, "Who is my neighbor?"

Burkhard, who has been serving as facilitator for the PC(USA)'s work with the Roma people in Central and Eastern Europe, visited presbyteries in North and South Dakota and Iowa,



Photo courtesy of Burkhard Paetzold

Mission coworker Burkhard Paetzold, works throughout Eastern Europe with Roma families, like this family in Komoroz, Carpath-Ukraine.

and spent a week in Dakota Presbytery, a nongeo-graphic, Native American presbytery.

An International and Local Call

After speaking of the hardships, prejudice and persecution endured by the Roma people, Burkhard witnessed an animated conversation in response. His audience drew an important parallel about how they had been treating their own Native American neighbors right here in the United States.

Perhaps the most significant impact of our involvement in international mission lies in showing us the very thing that Christ is calling us to do right here.

Presbyterian Women understand well the importance of global partnerships for understanding how God is inviting us to participate in Christ's mission, locally, nationally and internationally. Experiences such as the Global Exchange open our eyes to just how intimately interrelated we are.

In 2009, we will have an extraordinary opportunity as God's people to become closer still, as the General Assembly Council's World Mission ministry area once again undertakes the ambitious World Mission Challenge. This collaborative and intentionally connectional program will send 40 PC(USA) mission personnel into 140 presbyteries from September 25 through October 18 to share how God is at work around the world. Several mission workers will be accompanied by international partners, in a

pilot project being done in cooperation with the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program.

Understanding that we all are one in mission—and working in partnership—is a hallmark both of Presbyterian Women and Presbyterian World Mission. As the great missional hymn proclaims, "A single, great commission compels us from above to plan and work together that all may know Christ's love."* May it be so!

*"We All Are One in Mission," #435 in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1990)

Linda Bryant Valentine is executive director of the General Assembly Council.



Learn more!

Learn more about the World Mission Challenge, including how your presbytery can host a mission speaker—visit www.pcusa.org/missionchallenge.