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General Assembly
Mission Council



Dear Presbyterian mission leaders,

According to the Quechua-speaking people of Peru's Andes Mountains, there are many kinds of rain. Two kinds come to mind when I think about how our church is engaged in God's mission today. One is the slight drizzle that barely moistens the ground, the kind that can make people shake their heads and grumble. But people respond with shouts of joy and prayers of thanks when the other kind, the ground-soaking rain that brings life to all living things, begins to fall. In an era of increasingly decentralized mission, when congregations in the same presbytery can bump into each other in, say, Thailand, and ask themselves why they didn't coordinate their work better, many Presbyterians are discovering that we can be more faithful and effective when we engage in God's mission

together through mission networks and by coordinating our work with others.

Our global partners are pleading with us to "get our act together" to be part of the rain of blessing that God intends for all God's creation—in the communities of back-breaking poverty, in places where many people live without a witness to Jesus Christ, and in contexts of frightening violence. Our partners have identified three critical global issues that they want us to work with them—and each other to:

- address the root causes of **poverty**, especially as it impacts women and children;
- strengthen the capacity of the global church to **witness** to God's love in Christ; and,
- work for **reconciliation** in cultures of violence, including our own.

Imagine what it would look like for thousands of Presbyterian congregations to agree with our global partners and mission workers to focus a part of their mission vision and energy toward one or more of these three critical global initiatives? The impact would be phenomenal—women and children freed from poverty's grip, many people introduced to God's love, and violence reduced.

In this issue of *Mission Crossroads*, we'll look more closely at the issue of reconciliation and see how Presbyterians around the world are working together for reconciliation in obedience to the One in whom "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:19-20). Let us know how your congregation is working against violence both near and far on www.missioncrossroads.org!

Throughout 2010, many of you prayed, contributed your time and ideas, sent supportive letters, and gave generously to Presbyterian World Mission in this remarkable time of change. We can send as many mission co-workers as the church will support. Our partners around the world have asked to connect and engage with us, and our co-workers and partners are deeply grateful for your support, but we want you to know: the best is yet to come. The showers of blessing are coming . . . let it pour!!

In Christ's peace,
Hunter Farrell,
Director, Presbyterian World Mission

Mission Crossroads is a General Assembly Mission Council publication about the church's mission around the world.

Presbyterian World Mission is committed to sending mission personnel, empowering the global church, and equipping the PC(USA) for mission.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Dr. Michael Tut Pur, medical director of PC(USA)-supported Akobo Hospital, and Presbyterian mission co-worker Nancy McGaughey, RN, welcome a load of long-awaited medical supplies flown into southern Sudan.



General Assembly
Mission Council

World Roundup



The Presbyterian Border Ministry Proyecto Amistad, where Presbyterian mission co-worker **Chris McReynolds** serves, has embarked on new efforts in transformative Christian education. Using excellent Christian education

curricula and providing quality teacher training and material support through U.S. and Mexico partnerships, *Proyecto Amistad* is providing small churches with the tools they need to carry out children's club activities and classes each weekend. Read more www.pcusa.org/mcreynolds2010



Presbyterian mission co-workers **Bob and Stacey Bronkema**, working with the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy, assist students and refugees who come to Russia from the developing world. Students and refugees from Asia and Africa have been victims of racist attacks on the streets of Moscow. The Bronkemas have developed relationships with Russian officials, the diplomatic community, corporations and nonprofit agencies in an effort to increase the safety of immigrants and to augment the services offered at the Chaplaincy. Read more www.pcusa.org/bronkema2010

Presbyterian mission co-worker **Dan Turk** was instrumental in establishing the fruit tree extension project of the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar that is "bearing fruit" in providing needed food and income, as well as offering an



alternative to the making and transportation of moonshine. The project is supported in part by Central Florida Presbytery from its 2 Cents a Meal program. Read more www.pcusa.org/turk2010

Presbyterian mission co-worker **Jim McGill** in Malawi reports renewed funding for Child to Child Health Clubs through the



new "Healthy Women Healthy Families" initiative of the PC(USA)'s International Health Ministries office. The initiative got off the ground with money from the Women's Thank Offering; it is now able to expand to other areas. Congregations can participate in the program by contacting Gail Bingham at (800) 728-7228, ext. 5573 or gail.bingham@pcusa.org. Read more www.pcusa.org/mcgill2010



Sook Hee Bae, Presbyterian mission co-worker, is the facilitator of the Women Ministers Association (WMA) of the Presbyterian

Church of Korea, which has more than 2,000 members. Bae works to empower women clergy by offering continuing education and professional counseling. She also assists the WMA in running two shelters, one for runaway juveniles and one for victims of domestic violence. Read more www.pcusa.org/sook-hee-and-kj-bae

Presbyterian mission co-worker **Farsijana Adeney-Risakotta** and the Indonesian Women's Coalition helped thousands of families who lost their homes after the eruption of Mount Merapi last fall. Some returned to their villages, only to find them buried beneath several meters of ash. In December 2010 Bernie Adeney-Risakotta was interviewed about the mystical side of Merapi for the PBS NewsHour. Watch the segment www.pcusa.org/risakotta-video



The HIV/AIDS pandemic has not only robbed children of their parents, it has also robbed older parents of their adult children. **Janet Guyer**, Presbyterian HIV/AIDS consultant for southern Africa, calls these parents the “older orphans” because, at an age when they would expect to be cared for by their children, they are parenting their grandchildren. Guyer works with partner churches in Malawi, Zambia and South Africa to broaden their response to the AIDS/HIV crisis. Read more about her work www.pcusa.org/janet-guyer



Thirteen students graduated in 2010 from Justo Mwale Theological University College (JMTUC) in Zambia—two from the Church of Central Africa–Presbyterian Synod of Livingstonia, two from the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, eight from the Reformed Church of Zambia and one from the Anglican Church in Zambia. In East Central Africa pastors are in short supply; the ratio of members to pastors ranges from 452:1 to 8,633:1. Mission co-worker **Rev. Dustin Ellington**, newly appointed by the PC(USA), has joined the JMTUC faculty. Read more www.pcusa.org/collins2010

All in a day's work: An elderly Malawian pastor had developed tingling and numbness in his hands and feet and had not walked for over two years; he also had severe anemia and was developing heart failure. Lacking laboratory capabilities to make a firm diagnosis, Presbyterian mission co-worker Dr. **Barbara Nagy** said they decided on a therapeutic trial of Vitamin B12 injections. Several weeks later



the man was walking, leaping and praising God up and down the hospital corridors. Read Nagy's letter www.pcusa.org/nagy2010

Presbyterian mission co-worker **Jed Koball**, companionship facilitator for the Joining Hands network in Peru, was invited by one of the PC(USA)'s partner organizations, CEDEPAS (El Centro Ecu  nico de Promoci  n y Acci  n Social), to teach a two-day course to a group of 20 evangelical lay leaders and pastors on the theme of eco-theology. Together they studied Mark's Gospel and explored Jesus' relationship with nature. Read more www.pcusa.org/koball2010



This is a critical time for Sudan. In January 2011, residents of southern Sudan voted overwhelmingly in a referendum to separate from northern Sudan, and the region is set to become an independent state on July 9, 2011. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has served in Sudan for more than 100 years, joining with partner churches and organizations in a holistic approach to ministry that includes education and leadership development, community development, evangelism and new church development. In this issue of *Mission Crossroads*, we highlight Sudan, the context of the church's commitment there and the basis of hope for Sudan's future.

Church Critical to Sudan's Future

About a month before a historic vote would determine the future of southern Sudan, a group of Presbyterians and partners convened in Louisville to worship, discuss mission and share stories from the country.

The Sudan Mission Network got updates on the ongoing work of mission partners and involved groups like Nile Theological College, Volunteers in Medical Missions, and Across, a Christian NGO that builds the church and communities for renewal. The Rev. James Par Tap, moderator of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church, was also present.

Much of the December 6–7 meeting focused on the January 9 referendum to decide whether Southern Sudan would secede from the rest of the country. The referendum came out of Sudan's 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended the country's decades-long civil war.

Roger Winter, special advisor to the "autonomous" Government of Southern Sudan, spoke at length about his experiences in the country.

The south—made up of largely Christians and animists—has essentially been devoid of development, Winter said, adding that the lack of economic progress there is not accidental. Khartoum—the northern and predominantly Muslim capital of Sudan—has not simply benignly neglected the south.

Winter outlined what he sees as three key problems of Southern Sudan: its government is weak in every possible sense, governmental corruption is rampant and there is widespread communal violence.

The first two problems can be addressed, Winter said. Change will be a long and difficult process, but it is possible. But he isn't so sure about ending the violence.

"Honestly, this is the one I really don't know how to deal with," he said, appealing to the mission network to use its relationships within Sudanese

communities to find solutions.

Michael Weller, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s regional liaison for the Horn of Africa, also acknowledged the strength of relationships fostered by and within the Sudan Mission Network, which is a core of knowledge, interest and support for the country.

"Thank you for your community and the continuation of your commitment," he said.

Despite the many struggles in the Horn of Africa, Sudanese people continue to present the word of Jesus Christ and to show courage in their faith, Weller said. And despite much concern that the referenda wouldn't happen peacefully—or at all—the Sudanese are determined to persevere and continue to be people of God in their land.

The Sudanese Presbyterian Evangelical Church and the Presbyterian Church of Sudan will be present to minister to communities—and will need international support. As with Moses in the wilderness, people will have high expectations of the church, Weller said.

"They're going to need our encouragement and our listening ears and our ability to respond as they seek to minister to these amazing people," he said. "We are looking forward to seeing the wonderful things God will accomplish."

Prior to the vote, the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church's Tap said the situation in Sudan was not good. He was seeing a level of fear he hadn't seen before, and many people who had moved to the north (or even to other countries) wanted to go home before the vote.

In the month leading up to the vote, the PC(USA) invited Presbyterians to join in a season of prayer with and for Sudan. For nine designated dates, Presbyterians were encouraged to pray for 30 minutes as Sudanese prayed at the same time in their country.



Members of a church leadership training program at Kumo Bible School.



Second graduating class of Kumo Bible School.

Women share their views on violence against women and children at a meeting in Akobo in 2009.



All Photos courtesy of Resource Centre for Civil Leadership (RECONCILE).

Debbie Braaksma, visits with Church of the Sudan partner Rev. Both Reath at an airstrip.



Sudanese women of the embattled Nuer and Murle communities exchange gifts during the Trust and Peace Building meeting in Pibor last year.



Supporting the Sudanese, ‘Whatever Ways we Can’

During her two decades of service as a mission worker in Sudan and other countries in Africa, the Rev. Debbie Braaksma has witnessed life at its most brutal and at its most beautiful.

“I’ve gone through the entire range of emotions,” Braaksma said, recalling her time in Sudan. “I have seen things that would break your heart and witnessed some of the most uplifting examples of faith you could possibly imagine.”

Last February, Braaksma began serving as coordinator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s work in Africa. She now keeps up with the ongoing struggle for peace in Sudan from her desk in Louisville, Ky. It is not easy for her, watching from a distance after being in the midst of all the turmoil for so many years.

“The Presbyterian Church has had such a very strong presence there for more than 100 years,” Braaksma said. “Between the Presbyterian Evangelical Church of the Sudan in the north and the Presbyterian Church of the Sudan in the south,

we are doing tremendous things to help enrich the lives of as many of the Sudanese people as possible.”

While in Sudan, Braaksma and her husband, Del, worked with RECONCILE, an ecumenical organization seeking to bring peace to the war-torn country, under a joint appointment of the PC (USA) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA).

“What we did together with our RECONCILE colleagues and what RECONCILE is still doing is helping educate and facilitate the training of the Sudanese people in peace building,” Braaksma said. “RECONCILE also works very hard in trying to resolve interethnic conflicts between communities and tribes.”

Braaksma said RECONCILE is working with the women of the Murle and Nuer communities to end the violence that has killed hundreds of men, women and children in recent years.

Through RECONCILE, a meeting was held last February between women of the two communities. In a show of faith, unity and trust, the women

brought their children and handed them to the women of the other community. “It was their decision to hold the meeting; we merely assisted them in making it happen,” Braaksma said. “We don’t run the programs. We support the Sudanese people in whatever way we can.”

When the long-awaited referendum on secession took place in south Sudan January 9–15, Braaksma said, PC(USA) partners the Presbyterian Church of Sudan, RECONCILE, Across and the Sudan Council of Churches did everything they could to ensure a peaceful process.

The referendum, to determine whether the region should remain a part of Sudan or become independent, was part of the 2005 Naivasha Agreement between the Khartoum central government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement.

“The Presbyterian Church of the Sudan made trips to all of its presbyteries to educate church members and all who wanted to listen in on the voting process and encourage a referendum without bloodshed,” Braaksma said. “Most, if not all, of these people have never voted before, so this is very new to them.”

She added, “This is a turning point in the history of Sudan and its people. There has been so much bloodshed for decades in Sudan. We need to continue to pray for peace. The PC(USA) will continue to walk with our sisters and brothers in Christ to help them move forward.”

There is still much for the PC(USA) to do in Sudan. Partners in the region have lifted up the following needs:

- Leadership training. Many pastors are leading congregations with minimal training.
- Seminary help. Nile Theological College has moved its English-language programs to the south, and financial assistance is needed.
- Continued assistance in peace building. Many areas in the south have been ravaged by interethnic fighting despite the 2005 peace agreement.
- Education in the south. In areas where the Presbyterian Church of Sudan is strong, 36 percent of schools are meeting under trees in the open air. Only 12 percent of teachers are trained.
- Help in reducing infant and maternal mortality rates, which are among the highest in the world.
- Evangelism. People do not yet know the good news of Jesus Christ.

“This is a crucial time for the country of Sudan,” Braaksma said. “Our fellow Presbyterians in the north strongly need our continued support at this time, as they are a very small minority in the country. They are concerned that their rights to worship and witness be respected. The south of Sudan has experienced a momentous change. Thousands upon

thousands of people who had moved to the north have returned to the south. There is extreme strain on an already broken and inadequate infrastructure, but also a great hope as pastors, teachers and other skilled professionals are streaming into the south.”

Although there is always a fear of interethnic conflicts being used as a tool to destabilize the south, Braaksma said Christians are “committed to stand as a powerful witness to the love of Jesus Christ in order to bring reconciliation. Our brothers and sisters in Christ need us to stand with them as they respond to the challenges of this changing Sudan now more than ever.”

PC(USA) Partners with Sudanese Presbyterians for Major Impact

- We are helping the Presbyterian Church of Sudan establish Community Health Evangelism programs to provide skills for communities to mobilize themselves to holistically address needs and promote Christian growth. PC(USA) mission co-worker Aliamma George, a registered nurse, serves with this program.
- We support the peace-building work of RECONCILE and the Sudan Council of Churches.
- We support the health and education work of Across. PC(USA) mission co-worker Nancy McGaughey trains community health workers, and Dr. Ingrid Reneau is working to expand education in Sudan.
- We support theological education. Rev. Debbie Blane teaches at Nile Theological College. Rev. Jacob George teaches at the Giffen Bible School.
- The Sudan Mission Network connects Presbyterians who have high interest in Sudan and strongly promotes the programs of our partners.

Find out more at
www.pcusa.org/sudan

Meet our Mission Co-Workers in Sudan



Jacob & Aliamma George

Jacob and Aliamma George arrived in Sudan in late 2010, just weeks before balloting began on the referendum that gave south Sudan independence.

The Georges begin mission service with a sense of optimism, despite the massive challenges facing south Sudan.

“People are friendly and the church is growing very fast,” they wrote in a recent email. “The freedom for south Sudan will be very good for the Christians.”

The Georges are serving in Malakal, where Jacob is teaching at Giffen Bible School, and he and Aliamma, a registered nurse, will work together in a Community Health Evangelism (CHE) program. The CHE movement’s goal is to combine evangelism with community development strategies such as clean water, general sanitation, agricultural diversification, small businesses formation and literacy.

The Georges, who are originally from India, moved to Sudan from Houston, Texas, where Jacob served as pastor of Emmanuel Church of South India, a congregation affiliated with both the Church of South India and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

“I served as a pastor and teacher in Houston for 30 years,” Jacob says. “Now the time has come to do this outside the country. I take it as a challenge to go to Sudan as a theological educator.”

Aliamma first developed an interest in Sudan by meeting Sudanese refugees who visited the clinic where she worked. “I had positive encounters with them,” she says, “and I am happy for the chance to help their home country.”

Jacob says that Sudanese Christians carry a message that gives hope to a country torn apart by war and poverty. “I believe that the gospel can change communities, and then eventually the nation.”



Ingrid Reneau

Ingrid Reneau hopes her work will help make education the norm rather than the exception in south Sudan.

Nearly three-quarters of the people in south Sudan lack basic literacy, and just over one-third of those above the age of 6 have attended school.

Reneau wants the people of south Sudan to realize that God “has not blessed them with any less capacity to learn and be educated, for lack of opportunity is not ever the same thing as lack of capacity and ability.”

Since 2007, Reneau has been helping the church-run school system, a key education provider in a country bereft of a strong public school system, to build its capacity and improve teaching methodologies.

Reneau, who holds a doctorate in English literature from Rutgers University, was an assistant professor at the University of South Carolina from 2000 to 2005.

Her trek toward mission service started in 2003, when she began “a radical, transforming journey of actually living the Scriptures that I have often repeated to myself: ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways, acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths’” (Proverbs 3: 5–6).

Reneau started working with children and youth at jobs that paid only minimum wage. She considered seminary, but then sensed a call to use her gifts as an educator in service to God.

Education is “an aspect of everyone living life more abundantly,” says Reneau, who works with Across, an interdenominational development agency that partners with the PC(USA). She wants political independence to be “the catalyst for social, economic and spiritual interdependence as well.”

“In this way, there will be more possibilities for human development in all segments of the Sudanese society,” Reneau says, “and surely this will manifest the fulfillment of political independence in the reality of much more liberated, empowered lives, especially for girls and women.”



Nancy McGaughey

As thousands of south Sudanese stream home anticipating an independent south Sudan, many are encountering the ministry of Nancy McGaughey and her colleagues.

McGaughey, a registered nurse, is working with the PC(USA) partner agency Across.

“Across is operating two way stations for the returnees in Lakes state, which means my counterpart and I are responsible for hiring and running clinics at each site,” McGaughey wrote in a recent email. “They are anticipating 30,000 returnees to this state alone. Neither of the sites is near where we live. One is a 1½- hour drive; the other is a three-hour drive over less-than-adequate roads. But it is exciting to be a part of this history of southern Sudan.”

Many southern Sudanese went north to escape war and are now coming home to build a new life in south Sudan. Others fear that the situation for southerners will grow more difficult in the north when Sudan splits into two nations. The government expects that half a million will return by July, when the new country is formed.

As Across’s health coordinator, McGaughey is charged with working on long-term strategies and policy development. She also teaches community health and nutrition.

McGaughey began mission service in Sudan in 2009. Previously, she served in Presbyterian mission for 15 years in Nepal before returning home to Indiana for family medical reasons in 2002.

While in Nepal, she says, she learned how people of other cultures can become just like family, how to worship God in different ways and how to depend on God for everything.

“I went into mission service thinking of the difference I would make in the lives of others, but returned realizing that the biggest difference was made in my own life,” she says. Even so, many south Sudanese Christians are deeply grateful to Nancy for helping them to open up a chain of clinics that will service thousands of people currently without access to basic health services.



Debbie Blane

Debbie Blane finds herself in transition as south Sudan prepares for independence.

Blane has taught at Nile Theological College in Khartoum, Sudan, since 2009. She and the school’s degree programs offered in the English language moved to Malakal in south Sudan in February. Classes taught in the Arabic language will continue in Khartoum.

Blane says the school is hoping to encounter a more receptive environment in south Sudan, whose population is composed mostly of Christian and adherents of traditional religions, than in the Muslim-dominated north. The school was founded in 1991 with the help of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission workers to serve northern and southern Sudanese. Nile leaders had anticipated that the English track would eventually move south due to limited space in Khartoum, but Blane says that the vote for independence sped up the process.

Blane is teaching future pastors who will one day be leaders across south Sudan.

She and others are hoping that the gospel will help bring unity to south Sudan, which has been divided along ethnic lines. “Being able to put energy into building a stable country and not wasting the energy on ethnic fighting is going to be crucial for the southern Sudanese,” Blane says.

Her prayer is “that teaching Jesus’ principles of nonviolence and a theology of participation, education and equality” will help the south Sudanese transcend prejudices.

As classes begin in Malakal, Blane, a minister member of Cascades Presbytery, says she hopes that the school will grow larger and stronger as access to theological education becomes easier for students from south Sudan. “I also hope and pray that more of the students will have their spouses and children living with them while they attend classes.”

Dr. John McClerry with his wife, Pearl, who served at Dolieb Hill from 1921–1923. Dolieb Hill was an isolated and generally unhealthy place to work. In the two decades of the mission, six doctors served there successively, the last of these being McClerry.



Sudan: More than a Century of Mission

When reports appeared in America about the success of Britain's reconquest of Sudan in September 1898, one of the earliest headlines in the journal of the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA) was "On to Khartoum!" The UPCNA, which was centered in Pennsylvania, had already established an "American Mission" in Egypt in 1854. It now sent J. Kelly Giffen and Andrew Watson, two of its missionaries working in Egypt, on a reconnaissance trip to Sudan. Giffen would return to north Sudan in December 1901 to establish a church in Khartoum, and to south Sudan in March 1902 to establish a mission station at Dolieb Hill on the Sobat River. These trips were respectively the origins of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) and the Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCOS).

The British officially did not allow missionaries in the north but did allow Christian churches and schools to be established for Egyptian civil servants working in the north. Taking advantage of this loophole, Presbyterians concentrated on education in the north, establishing four schools as early as 1904. Because the mission was serving Egyptian government workers, its schools and churches were in the greater Khartoum area and Wadi Halfa, and it was not until 1947–48 that it also established schools in Atbara, Gedaref and El Obeid.

In the south the mission station at Dolieb Hill was a center for evangelism, education and medicine. Its primary focus, however, was "industrial mission," which was designed to model a strong work ethic and train Sudanese as agriculturalists. The Shilluk people were not highly responsive to this strategy, and the work was slow going. New stations, however, were eventually opened: first at Nasir in 1912, and Akobo in 1938. In the late 1940s, after years of frustration and unfruitful toil, things suddenly seemed to change. The peoples of the south showed a new receptivity to the gospel and to education. In a few

years Presbyterians opened seven new mission centers and reached out to new groups: Nuer, Anuak and Dinka. This success can also in part be attributed to the visionary leadership in these years of Presbyterian missionaries Don McClure and Lowrie Anderson.

By the conclusion of the colonial period in 1955 the missionaries had succeeded in planting the seeds of Christianity, but less than 1 percent of the population was then Christian. Today, conservative estimates are that 10 percent of the whole country and 25 percent of the south are now Christian. Many, however, insist that the number of Christians in the south may be as high as 50 percent or even 70 percent. A substantial number of these are Presbyterians, members of either the SPEC or PCOS.

During its many years of involvement in Sudan, the PC(USA) has supported many institutions. In the north, the denomination inaugurated and continues to provide crucial support to institutions of higher education such as Nile Theological College and Gereif Bible School. In the south, it was instrumental in establishing elementary and secondary schools as well as medical clinics. One recent success story is the Presbyterian hospital in Akobo, a facility that struggled to remain open during the civil war and at one point had to close. The PC(USA) and the PCOS have worked together to renovate and reopen the hospital, and patients are now receiving treatment from a qualified medical staff. As south Sudan seeks to rebuild its war-ravaged infrastructure, these ministries, which are now operated by the PCOS, promise to play a vital role in the development of the new country.

Over the years the presbyteries of Shenango, Redstone and Trinity have been major supporters of mission work in the country, and PC(USA)'s World Mission continues to support five mission co-workers in the south. Our partners in the country include the Sudan Council of Churches, RECONCILE and ACROSS.



Celebrate Sudan event at Shenango Presbytery on World Communion Sunday in October.

Church leadership training class at Kumo Bible School.

Focus on Sudan Mission Grows Presbytery's Funding

When it comes to funding world mission, the 68 churches of Shenango Presbytery in western Pennsylvania are generous in their giving. They are also quite knowledgeable about their contributions, knowing precisely where their money is going and how it is being used.

According to Executive Presbyter Dr. David Dawson, nearly 60 percent of the presbytery's \$500,000 in contributions to world mission is designated for specific projects and mission workers in war-torn Sudan.

"We're really not doing anything different from what we have been doing for the last 15 or 16 years," Dawson said. "That was when we began our partnership with the Sudan Mission Network and the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church. We have found that by suggesting specific organizations and projects and encouraging our churches to designate their contributions to those specific projects, it allows church members to connect on a personal level to what they are helping do thousands of miles away."

Among the projects Shenango encourages its churches to donate to are Nile Theological College, Gerief Bible School, Kumo Bible School and Biblical Training Center, Women's Center, Darfur Relief,

Advanced Degrees, Street Boys Ministry and Darfur School Outreach.

The presbytery utilizes several means to generate interest in world mission in its churches. Shenango distributes pamphlets to each of its churches, detailing specific donation opportunities in Sudan. It also holds workshops and has mission workers from Sudan visit churches whenever possible. Each year a special offering for Sudan is held on World Communion Sunday in October. It is followed by a Celebrate Sudan gathering at the presbytery office, where each church presents its special offering to Sudan. The 2010 event raised around \$20,000.

Dawson said the presbytery also sends a mission team to Sudan every two years.

"Our presbytery has always had a high level of giving to world missions," Dawson said. "We have not had a decline in giving in each of the last 20 years. I would say that over the last 15 years we have given at least \$1 million to causes in the Sudan."

For more information

Shenango Presbytery: www.shenango.org

The Sudan Advocacy Action Forum:

www.sudanadvocacy.com

The Long Road to Independence

Southern Sudan

Because Southern Sudan has an illiteracy rate of about 85 percent, the referendum on independence held in January included two symbols on its ballots: an open hand, meaning farewell to the north; and a pair of clasped hands, meaning unity. The symbols, however, carried a subliminal message. The hand with the open palm was the right, the appropriate hand for waving goodbye; but the clasped hands were the left hands, which would be taboo in the south. Though a land devastated by war and one of the poorest in the world, Sudan has a rich history and a culture of many subtleties.

There were human beings in the region of Sudan as early as 60,000 years ago, and settlements have been discovered from as early as 8000 B.C. For most of recorded history it has been a satellite of its more imposing neighbor, Egypt. Often known as Nubia or the kingdom of Cush, Sudan is mentioned some forty-seven times in the Bible, usually as an example of the remotest place that the ancient Israelites could imagine.

Sudan is found in the New Testament in the story of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8). The word Ethiopia in the first century was a generic Greek word for the dark-skinned people of Africa. The use of the word for the nation of Ethiopia is a modern occurrence; its ancient name was Abyssinia. So the Ethiopian eunuch was an African, and the story was told to show that the gospel was spreading even to this continent. But we also know that the Ethiopian eunuch was an African from the region of present-day Sudan because he was described as “an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians.” The Kandake was the queen mother of the kingdom of Cush.

In the sixth century A.D. Nubia consisted of three kingdoms that lay between modern Aswan and Khartoum: Nobatia, Makuria and Alodia. The Byzantine empress Theodora sent missionaries to the region around the year A.D. 540. They succeeded in Christianizing northern Sudan, which remained a Christian land throughout much of the European Middle Ages. In the 11th century, the Nubian kings became Muslim, and from then on pressure was put

on the Christian kingdoms to convert. With those kingdoms isolated from other Christian nations, Christianity in Sudan slowly faded and by 1500 had disappeared.

Sudan, whose name is derived from the Arabic expression Bilad-es Sudan—“land of the blacks”—was ruled by Egypt from 1821 to 1885. It was the Egyptians who saw the strategic importance of the confluence of the Blue and White Nile Rivers, establishing a military headquarters there that eventually became the city of Khartoum. Khartoum means “elephant tusk,” a name given to the city because of the shape of the land where the rivers meet. The Egyptians proved to be heartless rulers of Sudan, initiating a slave trade against the black-skinned people, regularly raiding villages and sending thousands of people into bondage. Europeans began to intercede against this in the 1870s, causing instability in northern Sudan.

The Sudanese rebelled against their Egyptian masters in 1881 under the leadership of Muhammad Ahmad ibin Abd Allah, who styled himself the Mahdi—an eschatological figure in Islam. By early 1885, the Mahdi's forces had conquered the country after famously laying siege to the city of Khartoum. The British governor Charles Gordon defended the city for nearly a year in the hope of forcing the British government to intervene. Prime Minister William Gladstone refused but eventually sent a single steamboat up the Nile to retrieve any who would be evacuated. But it arrived too late. The city was overrun, Gordon became a martyr to the cause, and Sudan entered a horrific 13½-year period, the Mahdiyya, in which the central government ruthlessly attempted to subdue and govern the land, killing perhaps as many as three-quarters of the population—5 to 6 million people.

The British returned in the next decade to avenge the death of Gordon. Under General Herbert Kitchener, who would later become famous (or infamous) in the Boer War in South Africa and the First World War, the British built a railway between 1896 and 1898 from North Egypt to within marching distance of Khartoum. They defeated the Sudanese in



The UPCNA missionary station at Dolieb Hill, circa 1920.

the Battle of Omdurman, during which about 9,700 Sudanese died but only 47 of the Anglo-Egyptian force did. The 21st Lancers distinguished themselves in the fight, engaging in the last cavalry charge in British history, one in which the young Subaltern Winston Churchill participated. (Churchill later wrote his first major book about this event, *The River War: An Account of the Reconquest of the Soudan*, which helped to launch his political career.) Because the British conquered Sudan on behalf of Egypt, it established a joint Anglo-Egyptian government, known as the Condominium.

During the colonial period, 1898–1955, the British as a matter of policy did not allow missionaries in the northern part of the country, which was Muslim and generally populated by brown-skinned people. They did, however, allow missionaries in the south, which was black African and animist. Three principal groups rushed in, dividing the territory between them: the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England and the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA). These three established the principal Christian churches that exist today in Sudan.

During the years of the Condominium, the north advanced much more quickly than the south. The Arab Muslims of the north had a more developed society and were able to construct roads, schools, hospitals and all the infrastructure necessary for rapid progress. The south was made up of black tribal people, whom the colonizers tended to marginalize. With the approach of independence on January 1, 1956, the north and south inevitably clashed. Amid growing hostilities, the Khartoum government nationalized the mission schools in 1957 and expelled the missionaries in 1964. The north wanted to rule the south and impose Sharia law—the traditional Islamic law—while the south wanted a large measure of autonomy and religious freedom. Two civil wars occurred, in 1955–1972 and 1983–2005. Sometimes known as Anyanya I and II after the name of a southern rebel army in the first conflict, the civil wars resulted in the deaths of more than 2.5 million people. In the early 1970s, oil was discovered in the south, giving the north increased impetus to dominate the region.

The world paid scant attention to these events

until the mid-1990s, when it became apparent that Sudan was also a major exporter of terror. Imagining the nation playing an important role in the Islamic resurgence then occurring in the world, the Sudan government decided to open its territory to a variety of terrorist groups to establish training camps. Among those represented were Hamas, Hezbollah and al-Qaeda. Ilich Ramirez Sánchez —a.k.a. Carlos the Jackal—was captured by French intelligence officers in Khartoum in August 1994, and Osama bin Laden lived in Khartoum between 1992 and 1996 before being deported to Afghanistan by the Sudan government under American pressure. The U.S. Congress placed sanctions on Sudan in 1997 for its sponsorship of terror and its oppression of Christians.

During two distinct periods, 1993–1994 and 2003–2005, the northern Darfur state also rebelled. The government responded as it had in the south by arming neighboring tribes to form militias—in this case known as the Janjawid, “devils on horseback”—to crush the uprising. Genocide is not too harsh a word to describe the brutal treatment meted out by the north, either directly or through its proxies; and in fact, in 2009 the International Criminal Court indicted Sudan’s president, Omar al-Bashir, for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of January 9, 2005, which brought the conflict to an end, it was agreed that south Sudan would be semiautonomous for six years and that a referendum on independence would be held in January 2011. With the referendum complete, south Sudan is now poised either to plunge back into war or to become the newest nation in the world—or both. The vote for independence also raises the possibility of intertribal conflict. Though the future of south Sudan is uncertain, record numbers turned out to vote in the referendum, and reports from the region indicate that southerners are jubilant over the prospect of independence and hopeful for the future.



Southern Sudanese ready to dance!





Roma Liturgy choir in
an orthodox church near
Michalovce, Slovakia.

Working Alongside Roma in Christ's Name

Friends in the United States have asked me about the forced eviction of Roma from France to Romania last year: "Aren't they citizens of the European Union, with freedom of movement guaranteed constitutionally?" Can you imagine Latinos being evicted from New York to Kansas?

One might think Roma people are a group of new immigrants to Europe, which—of course—would not excuse maltreatment, but might explain national behavior in light of an increase of racism and xenophobia in Europe.

500 years of exclusion

Roma (also known by the pejorative name Gypsies) have lived for over 500 years in Europe, and they have faced a 500-year history of mistreatment. They were outlawed and banned from cities and towns because of their different skin color, habits, culture and religion. At the same time they were called "asocial" because of the nomadic lifestyle they were forced to take on. They were enslaved, and later the German Nazis sought to exterminate them alongside the Jews. Half a million Roma were killed in death camps. After World War II Roma in Eastern Europe were forced to assimilate, to give up their culture and to settle. After the political changes in the early 1990s, the new regimes were seemingly unable to support this weak ethnic group. Ghettos have mushroomed at the outskirts of cities and towns, where Roma often live in slums, uprooted, unemployed, locked out from adequate education. Roma stand as a fast-growing, desperate minority of an estimated 10 million in the center of Europe.

Roma today—segregation and poverty

Ian Hancock, a scholar at the University of Texas and a Roma himself, analyzed the situation in his keynote to a European Union conference in Brussels last year. He quoted a 2005 editorial in *The Economist* that described

Romanis in Europe as being "at the bottom of every socio-economic indicator: the poorest, the most unemployed, the least educated, the shortest-lived, the most welfare-dependent, the most imprisoned and the most segregated." And an EU report called the situation "one of the most important political, social and humanitarian questions in today's Europe." Hancock stated: "We are halfway through the Decade of Roma Inclusion, but clearly the results of efforts to bring change have still to be judged, and we're not doing too well so far."

His advice to Roma: "Seeing ourselves as victims, though, is a loser's game; we must use our own skills to change our situation, and if we don't have those skills then we must get them."

Education for both Roma and non-Roma

Hancock urges making "education our highest priority" but not "speaking simply of education for Romani people, but also for the non-Romani populations."

Even though this desired process of "communication and compromise," as Hancock puts it, needs a political framework, it is foremost a bottom-up process and thus, I think, it challenges Christians and churches, not only in Europe but around the world.

In our outreach to Romani people, the PC(USA) works with other U.S. denominations and in close partnership with Reformed and other national churches, local parishes and Christian organizations and groups across the continent. Several PC(USA) mission workers are involved directly in the implementation of programs and projects.

From short-term excitement to long-term dialogue

Short-term mission trips can be exciting for the first-time participant, but more important and more rewarding is the building of long-term relationships.

Among the first in the PC(USA) to discover this in relationship with Roma was Winnetka Presbyterian Church in Illinois. A first visit of a small Presbyterian group to Roma communities in Hungary and Carpath Ukraine (western Ukraine adjacent to Hungary) took place almost ten years ago. Those involved were enthusiastic about the sense of community and hospitality, along with the lively atmosphere in the small village churches, but were shocked by the poverty, poor living and health conditions (in particular in hard winters) and by the frosty interethnic relationships and social exclusion.

So members from Winnetka came again and again, each time bringing other congregation members or a new pastor, praying and singing together, playing with the kids in summer camps and being invited for meals and learning much from the Roma. They also learned how to support without creating dependencies.

Other examples in which long-term relationships are built into the program from the start include the Roma Gadje Dialogue through Service initiative (www.rgdt.net). Several PC(USA), Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Reformed Church of America and other young adult volunteers have spent a year serving in a Roma preschool, youth club or similar setting. This happens in a so-called “tandem situation” that includes a local volunteer from the respective region. The result is an exciting dynamic—a triangle of relationships: the Roma, the Eastern European and the Western volunteer. There is much to learn from one another and, as a result, much to learn about one’s own identity. In addition, the RGDTS is a program not only for non-Roma going to Roma communities but also for Roma seeking non-Roma placements—for instance, in diaconal or environmental programs in Western Europe.

Capacity building

With friends in Hungary and Carpath Ukraine, the late Harold Kurtz of Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship developed the idea of holistic capacity building through Roma leadership training. I remember vividly his vision of all God’s people expressing their faith in their own way (their own music and hymns, worship spaces and manner of worship) and developing their own leadership. As a “crazy American missionary” he was able to encourage Roma women to speak in front of non-Roma women about their deepest concerns. And he was one of the first teachers in the leadership training program for Roma adults. But to have a program like this is only a first step. The more difficult process is to get non-Roma church leadership to accept the Roma graduates into their new roles.

Self-help elements

Our church’s Self-Development of People program was among the first U.S. faith-based organizations to support a Roma subsistence farming project in the village of Komoroz in Carpath Ukraine and, later, in a

self-organized housing project in Debrecen, Hungary.

Another project, the “Basket Project—Weaving a Future” of Presbyterian Women (PW), takes into account the Roma traditional knowledge and skills of basket weaving and seeks to bolster participants’ business skills. The focus is on how to move from a small, self-subsidizing family business to a larger cooperative manufacturing, accounting and marketing system. To help develop these skills and to give the project greater exposure, PW has arranged to sell Roma baskets in PC(USA) churches. For Roma women, who, like Roma men, have been excluded from being entrepreneurs, the challenge can be daunting. For many participants, society is only slowly losing its preconception after 60 years of communism that entrepreneurial activities are related to capitalist greed.

We must be aware that all these processes are step-by-step and be careful that our Western “project and results orientation” does not dominate. Likewise, patience is required, particularly when we are involved in major infrastructure projects, such as providing clean water for Roma communities. Eastern culture is defined about relationships. (You are born into a community and you may stay there your entire life, if you don’t want to get lost.) Building a new community does not easily happen as a matter of choice.

Support networking among Roma

Another role the PC(USA) has undertaken is facilitating relationships between Roma of different regions or different countries—for instance, in Russia, where distances are huge and visiting one another is not easy, or between Roma in Russia and Roma in Carpath Ukraine. The impact is amazing! These encounters demonstrate that Roma have much to learn from one another without the introduction of foreign concepts. It is a joy to see these long-discriminated-against children of God use their own skills to change their situation.

Burkhard Paetzold serves as the PC(USA) regional liaison for Central and Eastern Europe.

Join us!

The PC(USA) has a solid decade of work alongside Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. In the decade ahead, our engagement through partner churches will only grow. Join us through work with PW, through support to mission workers in Europe or by participating directly in the projects—for instance, as a Young Adult Volunteer—and programs that bring dignity and hope to these long-residing citizens of Europe. Learn more at www.pcusa.org/romapeople.

New Mission Co-Workers Appointed January 2011



Andrew Berg and Margarita Valbuena

Guatemala/Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies
in Central America (CEDEPCA)

Intercultural encounter facilitators

Home church (Andrew): First Presbyterian Church,
Birmingham, Michigan

Home church (Margarita): St. James Presbyterian
Church, Chicago, Illinois

Ruth Brown

Democratic Republic of Congo/Presbyterian
Community of Congo

Food security and agricultural development specialist

Home church: Ginter Park Presbyterian,
Richmond, Virginia

Rev. Sharon Bryant

Thailand/Church of Christ in Thailand
Coordinator of Christian volunteers

Home presbytery: Grace

Miriam Maldonado Escobar

U.S.–Mexico border/National Presbyterian
Church of Mexico

Team ministry with her husband, Mark Adams,
the U.S. coordinator for Frontera de Cristo

Home church: Iglesia Presbiteriana Lirio de
los Valles, Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico



Rev. Derek Forbes

Zimbabwe/Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

Consultant for effective administration

Home presbytery: Denver

Chris McReynolds

U.S.–Mexico border/National Presbyterian Church of Mexico

U.S. coordinator, Proyecto Amistad

Home church: First Presbyterian Church, Del Rio, Texas

(Changed pattern of service from long-term volunteer to mission co-worker)

Dennis and Maribel Smith

South America/partner churches in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay
Regional liaison for the Southern Cone of South America and Brazil (Dennis)

Team ministry (Maribel)

Home church: San Juan Apóstol Church, Guatemala City

(Reassigned from service in Guatemala)

Rev. Josh and Kim Vis

Brazil/Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil
Professor at Ecumenical Institute of Graduate Studies (Josh)

Team ministry (Kim)

Home church: First Presbyterian Church, Durham, North Carolina



Hôpital Ste-Croix after the earthquake.

Hôpital Ste-Croix in Haiti Reopens

After being closed for nearly eight months following the massive earthquake in Haiti, Hôpital Ste-Croix (Holy Cross Hospital) in Léogâne reopened last September. The medicine wing of the hospital had been repaired and set up with about 30 beds. A tent hospital manned by volunteer doctors and nurses from all over the world was closed, but the hospital's outpatient clinic, open during the aftermath of the earthquake, continued to see almost 1,000 people a week.

Rising water from Hurricane Tomas in November brought floodwaters rushing into the hospital, but volunteers from First Presbyterian Church in Ann Arbor, Mich., who were there at the time, helped avert too much damage. As water poured into the first floor of the hospital, the church's Medical Mission Task Force members evacuated patients to the second floor and moved X-ray machines to the higher floors.

Mobile clinics began visiting the mountain and seaside plains areas where people find it difficult to get to the cities.

Middle East Christians Gather

In November at the Dhour Choueir Evangelical Center, a conference center in the Lebanese mountains, participants from the Assembly of Presbyterian Churches in Iraq, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, and the PC(USA) Syria-Lebanon and Iraq Partnership mission networks met for a three-day consultation. The group included 16 participants from the United States, 12 from Iraq and 15 from Syria and Lebanon. "Through worship and prayer, dialogue and fellowship, the hope was to come away with a better sense of how we as Americans can best help, encourage, preserve, advocate for and protect the faithful presence of Presbyterian Christians in the region," said Carol Dolezal-Ng, a PC(USA) mission worker.

The representatives from Iraq spoke about the current situation in which there is a Presbyterian presence in Kirkuk, Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. "There is a bright side and a dark side," one pastor said. "Today Iraqis can proclaim our faith freely . . . but the dark side is, there is no security—death can come at any time. We don't know if we will be living tomorrow or not."

The consultation and subsequent visits to churches of the Synod of Syria and Lebanon was organized by the two mission networks and led by Marilyn Borst, associate director for partnership development at The Outreach Foundation, and Rev. Nuhad Tomeh, PC(USA) regional liaison for Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and the Gulf.

Partnership: Training Trainers

Mission workers often play an important role in helping the MPC(USA)'s partner churches mature by training people who will train others. Those who are trained are enabled to help their churches fulfill their mission.

Dustin Ellington, serving at Justo Mwale Theological College in Zambia, observes that this is true in his field of theological education. "Faces light up as students discover things that will help with their own teaching and preaching," he says. "I have especially observed this while training them to develop the craft of observing more and more of what is there in a biblical passage, relying on clues in the passage and interpreting it in the light of the whole book of the Bible in which it is found. One gifted student, Mbao, claims this can 'open up the text for Africa,' because once the skill is learned, one doesn't need a lot of other books to be able to interpret Scripture in a thorough and responsible way. This ability is crucial for African Christians since they have grown rapidly in numbers and now face the challenge of thinking through what it means to live as Christians in their own cultural situation."

Brenda Harcourt, in Kenya, is another trainer of trainers. She says the Gitoro church is a church with fairly new members who take seriously their commitment to share their faith and their responsibility to care for new members. "They reach out to individuals in the community around them that are hurting, taking food to the hungry and responding to other needs when the cry is heard." This church has never asked Harcourt for funds—"they only ask that I help them with training to better equip them to meet the challenges that God has set before them."



Miriam Adeney

Miriam Adeney Addresses APMP

Speaking at the 2010 meeting of the Association of Presbyterian Mission Promoters (APMP, formerly the Association of Presbyterian Mission Pastors) in December, missiologist Miriam Adeney said effective mission partnerships must include nurturing the spiritual maturity of believers, serving the needy in a variety of ways and witnessing to the saving power of Jesus Christ. Dispelling the myth that engagement in world mission

necessarily costs a lot of money, Adeney suggested "six simple steps any congregation can do with no money":

1. Ask high school/college youth what global issues they are studying, and pray about them
2. Ask business people what countries they buy from and sell to, and pray for those countries
3. Challenge members to pray about world news—one item each week—and to talk about those issues
4. Develop a program to befriend foreigners living in your community
5. Develop relationships with your church's mission workers
6. Create an adult education class on the biblical basis for mission

Adeney also spoke to the group about the significance of partnership and the opportunity for short-term mission trips to China, as well as the importance of reconciliation and sustainable development in Africa and Latin America.

Review Panel Reports on Mission Field Abuse Allegations

At its October meeting the General Assembly Mission Council received the final report of the Independent Abuse Review Panel. The Council had established the panel and charged it with the responsibility of investigating allegations of abuse (mainly of children) at a number of Presbyterian mission boarding schools. The report substantiated reports of abuse in eight countries in five regions over a 40-year period, between 1950 and 1990. The investigators determined that 30 people had been victims of abuse, some repeatedly, and they named nine offenders, none currently active in the mission field.

On reading the committee's findings, Linda Valentine, GAMC executive director, said, "We all have great pain, grief, a sense of responsibility." In a moving moment in the meeting the Council offered its "deepest apologies" to the victims of abuse and prayed for forgiveness and healing. The Council expressed its commitment to continuing prayer and concern for the victims and to refining existing policies to prevent abuse in the future. In a report to World Mission colleagues, Hunter Farrell, director, asked that the Presbyterian mission family face its past honestly and continue to pray for truth, justice and healing, both for those who were abused and for those who abused. Read the entire report at www.pcusa.org/reviewpanelreport.

Community Health Evangelism Training

Community Health Evangelism (CHE) is a ministry that seeks to transform lives through a blend of evangelism, discipleship and community-based development. Eleven Africa-based mission personnel joined World Mission Africa coordinator Rev. Debbie Braaksma in an interactive CHE workshop that may be a model for future engagement with church partners in health and development projects.

"This is a holistic approach to community development that takes people from where they are and builds their capacity to identify local issues, mobilize resources and bring about sustainable, positive changes," said Bob Ellis, International Health and Development coordinator. The five-day workshop took place in Kenya last year and focused on CHE's core values, including integration of physical and spiritual ministries, community ownership and emphasis on preventive health. Read more in the Spring 2010 issue of Health & Development News.

Involved with CHE in Sudan are Nancy McGaughey, R.N., who works with PC(USA) mission partner Across as a health coordinator, based at Adol, and Rev. Jacob George and Aliamma George, R.N., based at Giffen Bible School in Malakal. The Georges teach CHE as part of the regular curriculum to prepare candidates for ministry using a holistic, community-based approach, as well as serving on a PC(USA) mission team working to strengthen all ministries at a community-based level in southern Sudan.

World Mission Joins the Big Tent

World Mission will be one of three new groups represented at the 2011 Big Tent in Indianapolis June 30–July 2. Nine PC(USA) conferences will meet concurrently, allowing participants to attend workshops, worship and meet in plenary sessions with people from across the denomination. World Mission's conference, titled "World Mission Matters," will be shaped around three critical global issues that partner churches around the world have asked that we address together.

An invitation from World Mission: Be part of God's work to change the world. Join with hundreds of Presbyterians who share your passion for world mission as we work to address root causes of poverty, strengthen the global church's capacity to witness to the love of God in Christ and work for reconciliation in cultures plagued by violence. The conference is focused to equip participants for more faithful and effective mission. Among the many WM workshops to be offered are:

- Global Discipleship: Effective Networking for World Change
- Identifying and Addressing the Root Causes of Poverty
- Reconciliation: Insights from a World in Conflict
- Preparing for Short-Term Mission: Understanding Best (and Worst) Practices

Big Tent organizers are anticipating 1,600–1,700 participants. Registration is available online at www.pcusa.org/bigtent.



Supporters rally in Manila in for human rights and the release of the Morong 43.

40 of 'Morong 43' Released

On December 10 Filipino President Benigno Aquino ordered the Justice Department to withdraw the charges against the "Morong 43," who had been held in detention for 10 months. The 43 were arrested in a rest house in Morong, Rizal, in February by the military, which claimed they were members of the communist New People's Army. The 43 said they were health workers attending a seminar. Among the 43 was Dr. Alexis Montes, a longtime lay leader in the health ministry of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. The release of 40 of the "Morong 43" came after a hunger strike and numerous pleas from various human rights and health groups, including Presbyterian groups.

The Morong court granted the release of the "Morong 43" on the condition that they did not have any pending court cases. On December 17, 23 female members of the group stepped out of the Camp Bagong Diwa detention center in Taguig to an eager audience of tearful relatives, supporters and human rights lawyers who had gathered at the gate. The next day the 15 male detainees in the same camp were also released. On December 28 two additional members of the "Morong 43," Filipino health workers, were released, bringing the number of those freed to 40. A legal team is working on the release of the three remaining in jail.

*Amgad Beblawi
(far right) and Linda
Valentine (center) with
mission personnel
in the Middle East*



Making Connections for Holistic Witness

Amgad Beblawi on his Role as Area Coordinator of the Middle East, Europe and Central Asia

I am the legacy of Presbyterian mission,” says Amgad Beblawi. Born in a Presbyterian mission hospital in Egypt, Beblawi grew up in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt (Synod of the Nile), a mission started by the United Presbyterian Church of North America in the mid-1800s.

“I know how important it was for the apostle Paul to leave Jerusalem to preach the gospel,” Beblawi says. “That mission of God continued through the centuries. I am a part of the body of Christ as a result. And now I continue in the work. It’s very exciting.”

Beblawi is referring to his new role as area coordinator for the PC(USA)’s mission work in the Middle East, Europe and Central Asia. In these often-troubled places, Presbyterian mission workers proclaim Christ’s good news, empower vulnerable people and build bridges of reconciliation among cultures of violence.

“There are teachers, development workers, theology professors, pastors, doctors, economics teachers, social workers—the list goes on,” Beblawi says of those who serve alongside global partners. “We try to provide the support system they need.”

Beblawi’s office also links U.S. Presbyterian congregations with mission workers and global partners: “Churches call us to say they have an interest in, say, Lebanon or Poland. We try to connect them with mission workers in the hope that the churches will support them with prayer and financial gifts.”

Recently, when a church in Georgia heard about the plight of Christians in the Middle East, the church contacted Presbyterian World Mission to learn how to help. “I was able to give them information about Presbyterian involvement there and what churches in the Middle East do,” says Beblawi. “I also told them about our mission workers who partner

with Christians there. In the end, this church decided to support two of our mission workers.”

Beblawi also provides perspectives of partner churches in the Middle East for the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Mission Council. He previously served as the General Assembly Mission Council’s associate supporting Middle Eastern congregations in the United States.

Growing Christ’s church has been Beblawi’s passion since his youth. When he was in high school, he and a friend became concerned that the children’s Sunday school at their congregation in Suhag, Egypt, had declined. “We felt we could be Sunday school teachers and revive the Sunday school,” he says. They drove around town in a horse-drawn wagon offering children a ride to church.

Beblawi immigrated to the United States in 1985 and received master’s degrees in theology and biblical studies from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He has 15 years of experience in church and parachurch ministries, higher education administration and academic and career counseling. Beblawi succeeds Victor Makari as Middle East coordinator and Jon Chapman as Europe coordinator. Both retired in 2010.

Beblawi says his responsibility is not to become an expert on these regions, but rather to facilitate the church’s service in God’s mission. “It’s such a privilege to be part of the worldwide body of Christ,” he says. “And because the body of Christ does not divide along national borders or according to political agendas, a significant part of our mission endeavor today is really ecumenical work. We practice being a connectional church, not just within our PC(USA) congregations in the United States, but throughout the world. To help connect the church in this way is very, very fulfilling.”

The Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) Program offers exciting opportunities in Christian service and learning for young adults (19 to 30 years of age.) Young Adult Volunteers serve in communities of need at 16 sites in the United States and abroad for a term equivalent to one academic year.

"YAV Dad" Jeff DeYoe, who also happens to be the Senior Pastor of Worthington Presbyterian Church, Columbus, Ohio, recently wrote the following letter to Hunter Farrell, Director of Presbyterian World Mission, after being inspired by his recent visit to his YAV daughter's YAV site in Guatemala.

Dear Hunter,

My wife, Ruth, and I recently returned from spending a week in Guatemala with our daughter, Tina, who is serving our church in the Young Adult Volunteer program. While we were there, we also had the opportunity to meet a couple of other YAVs who are there for the year.

I just want to share with you my admiration for these young people and their commitment to serve the PC(USA) in this way. They are most certainly serving in very challenging circumstances. Tina is working at a women's shelter/day care program in Quetzaltenango. We visited her workplace in the city and saw how desperate life can be for very young teenagers who have had children, and for those who have needed to escape abusive situations. While visiting such workplaces as Tina's, we learned that if it were not for these young volunteers who come from our church and other committed churches and organizations from the U.S., Europe, Australia and elsewhere, there would be much less offered to Guatemalans facing such challenges.

Tina lives with her host family outside the city in a poor, rural area. We had the opportunity to stay with them and meet their extended family. We even celebrated the host mom's birthday last Saturday night in true Guatemalan style! On our last night there, we were invited by the sister-in-law of Tina's host family to come to her home for supper. Although I have eaten at some very poor tables in Colombia, Jamaica, Palestine, and on a Navajo reservation, this was the poorest table at which I have ever eaten. Yet I was simply blown away by the hospitality and loving and warm welcome we received.

As a parent, I am thankful for the way the PC(USA) maintains a support program that helps these young folks emotionally and spiritually with periodic retreats, as well as with contact people for personal support. I am also impressed by how the YAVs who are in proximity to each other work to stay connected to enhance their mutual support.

Having observed Tina's circumstances and after hearing the stories of other YAVs, I want to express to you how well our denomination is being served by these very gifted, faithful, and committed young people. It brings tears to my eyes just thinking about the kind of commitment it takes to do what they are doing

for a year! You simply cannot be prouder of your church than when you visit these young people in their mission surroundings and realize how much of a heart they have for this important work.

I believe that this is a clear example of truly living out the gospel in the way Christ has called us to, and I am humbled by the fact that my daughter grew up in two different Presbyterian congregations from which she learned this kind of commitment to service in Christ.

Thanks for all you do in support of this important program. This is the type of theologically/spiritually sound mission that makes our church's witness in the world unique and relevant!

Rev. Jeff DeYoe
Senior Pastor, Worthington Presbyterian Church
Worthington, Ohio

'I believe that this is a clear example of truly living out the gospel in the way Christ has called us to...'

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Global Kaleidoscope

Prayer at the Border

Members of Presbyterian churches from West Texas and Juárez gathered for a prayer service October 15 on both sides of the border fence between Sunland Park, New Mexico, and Anapra, Mexico. The worship service was planned as a show of unity combating mistrust and fear due to the rampant violence in Juárez. Rev. Judy Fletcher, executive of the Synod of the Sun, preached at the communion service, which was the opening of a stated meeting of the Presbytery of Tres Rios.

The Presbyterians came together to pray for a community that is being torn apart by a drug war. Juárez has been named the deadliest city in North America. Mexican police were on hand, along with Border Patrol agents, to make sure the group stayed safe.

Networking for the Roma and Russian People

Al and Ellen Smith, mission workers in Russia, have been intimately involved with both the Roma Mission Network, which met in Kursk in November, and the Russia Network, which met in Denver in October. Ellen Smith reported that the Roma meeting showed marked growth of the network “at least in part in response to a great need seen among the churches engaged in Roma ministry.” Participating in the three-day Russia Network meeting were five Russians, along with 40 Americans. They learned from each other about the practical—and impractical—side of the Twinning Program in Russia.



An Egyptian man took his child to Cairo's Tahrir Square as thousands celebrated the announcement of President Mubarek's resignation on February 11.

Mission Workers and Partners in Egypt Safe

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission personnel and leaders of the Synod of the Nile, our partner church in Egypt, remain safe following the resignation of Mohamed Hosni Mubarek on February 11 in Egypt. Please continue to pray for them as they return to the work of their ministries and for the people of Egypt that they may have wisdom, patience and perseverance during this time of change.

Visit www.pcusa.org and search for “Egypt” to read a letter from a mission co-worker in Egypt, see photographs from the street party and learn how you can donate to partners in Egypt.