

APRIL 2008 issue: **New World Mission Web page**

PCUSA WORLDWIDE is a monthly e-mail newsletter about the international mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). You are invited to share this newsletter with others interested in the world mission of the church such as newsletter editors, mission committees and Christian educators. Free subscriptions are available at <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/list.htm>. Submit story ideas to patrick.cole@pcusa.org.

April 14, 2008

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NEW WORLD MISSION WEB PAGE

It offers mission updates, helpful links and video feature

A new Web page related to Presbyterian World Mission, <http://www.pcusa.org/worldmission>, has been launched. The page includes a message

from World Mission director Hunter Farrell (which will be regularly updated), a video on the work of mission worker Dusty Ellington in Egypt, and mission news. It also links to the programs related to the World Mission ministry area sorted by the three primary emphases of World Mission: sending mission personnel, equipping the PCUSA for mission, and empowering the global church.

"CLEAN WATER-MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD!"

Bolivia Joining Hands network initiates an international campaign

UMAVIDA, the Joining Hands network of Bolivia (Uniendo Manos por la Vida, or Joining Hands for Life) has initiated an international campaign with the theme of access to pure water as a God-given right of every living being on the planet. "Clean water-more precious than gold!" is the slogan.

The focus of the campaign is to research and publish information about the contamination and degradation of surface and subsurface sources of fresh water by extractive, industrial, and other activities. UMAVIDA hopes to find ways to prevent further contamination of drinking water by mining and other industry around the world, but especially in Bolivia.

In January youth from Bolivia, Canada, Peru, and the United States (from Cascade and San Francisco Presbyteries) attended the first International Youth Congress on the Environment in Potosí, Bolivia. The congress was sponsored by UMAVIDA.

Eight million people have died of exhaustion from forced three-month work shifts inside the mine in Potosí. Though once the richest and greatest city of the Western Hemisphere, Potosí today suffers from areas of highly contaminated water and is being stripped of its wealth. It has the distinction of being the poorest city in the poorest state in the poorest country of South America.

The Youth Congress was intended to join hands and hearts internationally to look at the contamination of drinking water and other issues and to find new ways to restore God's creation. Many were encouraged to learn of efforts by youth in the different countries to address these problems.

Next year a second International Youth Congress will be held in Perú to continue this process. It will be hosted by the Joining Hands network in Peru.

We invite all those seeking justice for this tormented planet to join hands with UMAVIDA's water campaign and next year's Youth Congress.-Bob and Julie Dunsmore, Bolivia

Read the Dunsmores' full letter at

http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/dunsmorer/dunsmorer_0803.htm

A Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) **consultation on international water projects and issues** will be held Nov. 13–16. The event is tentatively slated for Sacramento, Calif. Participants will include mission initiators from congregations, middle governing bodies and other groups involved in water projects and issues. Registration information and other details will be announced later.

EXCITING INTERFAITH SEMINAR IN INDONESIA

Recognizing the image of God in one another . . .

"There are those moments in life when you can hardly wait to share an experience with others," writes Rebecca Young. "I had one of those moments when Jakarta Theological Seminary hosted a seminar entitled 'Jesus Christ: Points of Contact and Points of Disagreement between Islam and Christianity.' "

The panel at the seminar consisted of three Indonesians. The first speaker was Bambang Subandrijo, who sees reflected in both Islam and Christianity the same fundamental truth: that humans have no adequate words for the Infinite. When attempting to describe finite human experience of the Infinite, followers of both faiths describe God as truly singular and beyond compare. For Muslims, Jesus is one of the most important prophets of Israel. In Islamic texts Jesus is the only prophet given the honorific titles of Word of God and Spirit of God, as well as being called the Messiah. The Qur'an refers to Jesus as the sign, the image, and the icon of God, much like Colossians 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God."

The second speaker, Hasibullah Satrawi, said the Qur'an praises Jesus in a number of remarkable ways, including highlighting the story of the virgin birth. He reminded his listeners that the three religions-Judaism, Christianity and Islam-are one family. "Let's be one again," he asked, as we remember what we have in common rather than what keeps us apart, and as we work together in caring for one another and for the world.

The third speaker, Trisno Sutanto, Roman Catholic by birth, had been visiting Muslim communities throughout Indonesia. One of his goals was to hear what Muslims had to say about Jesus. He posed the question, "What if we thought about religion as not focusing so much on what we believe as on how we treat others in our everyday life?" With the many problems threatening humankind-poverty, disease, climate change, human trafficking, and so on-should we not be working together rather than against one another merely because of our doctrines?

Rebecca concluded: "I hope you share my excitement in seeing this group of Christians and Muslims join together for a few hours to recognize the image of God in one another, brought together by the power of the one true Image of God himself, Jesus Christ."

Read Rebecca's full letter at

http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/youngr/youngr_0803.htm

LAY LEADERS IN SPAIN LEARN THEOLOGICAL TOOLS

"This is what we needed"

Some 10 months ago Osmundo Ponce arrived in Spain for his new assignment to teach at the United Theological Seminary, related to the Spanish Evangelical Church.

He found high expectations for teaching theology to lay leaders in local churches, and he and a team working with him soon created what they call the Theological Workshop. This is a program, which can be completed in two years, that will give leaders the necessary tools to carry out their ministry. One of its most important elements, Osmundo says, is that it is flexible enough that anyone can take it, including people who "don't have enough time" because of heavy work schedules.

"You can sense in the daily conversation with people in the street a deep search for renewed spirituality," writes Osmundo, "and that's why church leaders must be trained to meet these new pastoral demands."

"This is what we needed," the pastors say. The program is already functioning in Madrid, Barcelona and Pamplona, and it is starting up this semester in Bilbao and Valencia. Methodist, Presbyterian, Anabaptist, and Pentecostal churches are participating. They are also talking about the program with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Portugal.

Read Osmundo's February letter at

http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/ponceo/ponceo_0802.htm

GROWING HOPE

Displaced farmers plant new seeds in Colombia

Jason Woods, a participant in the Colombia accompaniment program, recounts the tragic story of four displaced farmers in Colombia. One man left his home because it was no longer economically viable to live as a farmer in his hometown. The other three were forced from their homes. One said he and his wife left when the violence in the region became too much to bear.

One man was warned that a paramilitary group would be coming to take his children away from him. Because of this advance warning, he had time enough to hide them in different parts of the region. The paramilitary later sent a bomb, via a donkey, to his farm—a clear warning that the paramilitary did not appreciate his lack of willingness to send his children with the group and that the man's life would not last much longer if he stayed where he was. So he left, and the paramilitary took over his farm.

These men are but four out of more than 4 million internally displaced persons in Colombia. The Presbyterian Church of Colombia does not feel the human rights situation is getting better, but is getting worse.

But amidst all of the violence and pain and injustice, these men have found a way to reconnect with the life they knew. Just outside of Barranquilla a 40-acre plot of land is being rented that they can cultivate. Every seed planted on the farm is another step toward cultivating a new life.

These four farmers are now growing hope along with watermelon, yucca, corn and beans.

Read Jason's story at <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/colombia/story.htm>

A vote is pending in Congress on a **FREE TRADE AGREEMENT WITH COLOMBIA**. Alice Winters, longtime missionary in Colombia, writes: "Tell your senators and representatives to **VOTE AGAINST APPROVAL** until Colombia's human rights problems are resolved. There is more and more concern in the churches here about human rights, violence, and the underlying social and economic inequalities."

Read Alice's letter at

http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/wintersa/wintersa_0803.htm. Read more on the FTA issue at the Washington Office's Web site: <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/callalert/index.tt?alertid=11025706&type=CO>

GOOD OUTCOMES AT EMBANGWENI BRING CHALLENGES

Wards are overcrowded and there is a critical shortage of medicines

Last Mother's Day in Malawi the national papers had articles citing the high maternal mortality in the country-984 maternal deaths per 100,000 births-and the high infant mortality rate-42 deaths per 1,000 births. Last year Embangweni Hospital had only 3 maternal deaths out of 2,025 births. Because our outcomes are better than other hospitals, many women flock here to deliver, causing overcrowding of our maternity ward. Nurses have to step over patients lying on the floor to treat the sicker patients on the beds.

Since last July there has been a critical countrywide scarcity of essential medicines and supplies. Central Medical Stores is supposed to supply the district hospitals and hospitals in the Christian Hospital Association of Malawi (CHAM). But Central Medical Stores has for a long time had no basic antibiotics, intravenous fluids, the main medicines to treat malaria, epilepsy medicines besides phenytoin, and most of the safe-motherhood list of drugs.

HIV tests have been unavailable in Malawi for months. VDRL, which screens for syphilis, and tests to screen for hepatitis B have been unavailable since 2006. The lack of HIV tests nationwide has meant no voluntary testing, which includes prenatal mothers, whose babies would benefit from prophylactic Nevarapine if the mother is HIV-positive.

Donor countries are not willing enough to fund programs to ensure essential drugs in the districts or living wages for essential health care personnel. Please pray that priorities change.-Martha Sommers, Malawi

Read Martha's letter at

http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/sommersm/sommersm_0802.htm

APCM FACILITATES MISSION ADVOCACY

The Association of Presbyterians for Cross-Cultural Mission undergirds mission

Founded in 1984, the Association of Presbyterians for Cross-cultural Mission (APCM) is a network of Presbyterians with cross-cultural experience and commitment to AFFIRM the gifts, calling, and vocations of persons in cross-cultural ministry; EXPLORE past, present and future mission theology and practice; FACILITATE mission advocacy with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); SUPPORT the professional development of mission workers; and ASSIST mission workers relocating in the United States.

APCM provides an e-mail newsletter that is a forum for the ongoing discussion of the meaning and goals of cross-cultural mission within the diversity represented in the PCUSA. The focus may include such topics as mission theology and practice, cross-cultural communication and evangelism, partnership in mission, and mission interpretation. To subscribe, visit <http://www.missionpastor.org/links.htm>

STATED CLERK COMMENDS CONDOLEEZZA RICE

Kirkpatrick among leaders applauding diplomatic efforts

Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick was among 28 Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders who sent a letter on March 20, 2008, to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice commending her for her "active support for current diplomatic efforts led by Egypt to turn what was for several days an informal, temporary and fragile cessation of hostilities between Palestinian forces in Gaza and the Israeli Defense Force into a formal, permanent and comprehensive ceasefire covering Israel, Gaza and the West Bank."

The letter also says: "We believe an effective, comprehensive ceasefire is an essential first step among several that both sides must take to renew people's hopes that peace is possible. Achieving this will help restore positive momentum in peace negotiations between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas. The split in governance between Gaza and the West Bank is incompatible with a durable peace agreement. A comprehensive ceasefire would also provide a context in which the United States could support efforts, possibly led by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to help form a new unified Palestinian government capable of representing the West Bank and Gaza and committed to rejecting violence and negotiating a two-state solution with Israel. We pledge our support for active, fair and firm U.S. leadership for Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace." Read more at <http://www.pcusa.org/oga/index.htm>

AND BRIEFLY . . .

- Nuhad Tomeh reports from Lebanon that after the killing in March of the archbishop of the Chaldean church in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul — see http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7294078.stm—many **CHRISTIANS ARE SEEKING SAFER PLACES** in neighboring countries. The killing has created fear and despair among Christians in other countries. Read Nuhad's letter at http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/tomehn/tomehn_0803.htm

- **NEAR TIBET.** Rachel Sterrett, an Amity teacher in China, wrote on March 25: "In spite of the ongoing violence in the Tibetan areas of our province in Gansu, none of my colleagues have been threatened or hurt, although a few have been confined to their school campuses, and all foreigners in Gansu have been given travel advisories. There have been a few protests in Lanzhou by Tibetan students, but they have thankfully remained peaceful." Read Rachel's letter at http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/sterretr/sterretr_0803.htm

- At its meeting the last week of February in Guyana, the Caribbean and North American Council for Mission (CANACOM) elected **TRICIA LLOYD-SIDLE** as its chairperson. Tricia is the PCUSA regional liaison for the Caribbean.

- **FOOD CRISIS IN ARGENTINA.** Katie Griffin wrote on March 27: "The rural producers have been on strike for 15 days. The presidency decided to raise the federal taxes on produce sales from all producers, which will force many of the approximately 6,500 small and medium-sized producers to go out of business. . . . Last night there were violent clashes between protesters and counter-protesters in downtown Buenos Aires. . . . Many of the people we know simply cannot afford the higher prices." Read more: http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/griffink/griffink_0803.htm

- **A DREAM COME TRUE.** It was only a dream on the outskirts of Lusaka, **ZAMBIA**, 10 years ago, when a makeshift school of the Presbyterian congregation at Mandevu served 20 orphans and vulnerable children. In March a new building with four classrooms that are already overflowing with 170 eager children was dedicated. Read Sue and Ted Wright's letter about this special day at http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/wrightc/wrightc_0803.htm

- Each spring Presbyterian Women groups begin collecting money for PW's annual **BIRTHDAY OFFERING**. The Presbyterian Church of **CONGO** and the Presbyterian Church of **KINSHASA** are recipients of one of the 2008 Birthday Offering grants. Their "Building a Strong Future for the Congo" projects will strengthen ministries in education, nutrition and technical assistance assisting the people of the Congo to recover from Congo's devastating 10-year war. Read more at <http://www.pcusa.org/pw/birthday/08-recipients.htm>

- **PAST ISSUES** of the **PCUSA WORLDWIDE** newsletter are available in PDF format from <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/newsletter.htm>