

Paradigm shift in mission

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A PARADIGM SHIFT IN MISSION

Dallas gathering seeks cooperation among Presbyterian mission initiators

A consultation this week in Dallas, Texas, signals a "paradigm change moment" in the relationship of the General Assembly Council's World Mission ministry with "mission initiators" from across the church, according to Hunter Farrell, director of World Mission.

The Wednesday through Friday gathering is titled "Renewed Call to Presbyterian Mission in the World: A Dialogue for Our Shared Future." The event is seeking to build greater trust among PCUSA mission initiators, supporters and missionaries, Farrell says, and to

identify and agree on "benchmarks" (core values) and mission practices that should characterize all Presbyterian work.

Participating in the conference are representatives from Medical Benevolence Foundation, the Outreach Foundation, Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, PCUSA mission personnel, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, Presbyterian Global Fellowship, Witherspoon Society, Presbyterian Women, World Mission Initiative, New Wilmington Mission Conference, Presbyterians for Renewal, mission networks, large congregations, presbytery partnerships, immigrant congregations, the Association of Presbyterian Mission Pastors, Presbyterian professors of missiology, Young Adult Volunteers, World Mission and other GAC ministry areas, and the GAC itself.

Farrell requests that Presbyterians pray for the gathering. "Pray with many in the church that God would enable us to listen to each other and to see ourselves for what we are: 'mere earthen vessels' created by God to be sent into the world to share the liberating love of Christ and to find healing and wholeness for our own brokenness as we participate in God's mission," he says.

The text of papers being presented and a list of participants can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/renewed.htm>. The site will also feature news reports on the gathering.

Principal presenters include Scott Sunquist, mission professor at Pittsburgh Seminary; Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Bill Young, executive director of the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship; and Sherron George, missiologist and PCUSA regional liaison for South America.

PRAY FOR THE PEOPLE OF PAKISTAN

Mission workers write after Benazir Bhutto's assassination

The people of Pakistan need your prayers. Since the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, there has been an air of uncertainty and melancholy here. Many of those who did not support Bhutto still see her death as a blow to civil society and the chance to return the nation to democracy. Now that the violence has stopped, there are even more difficult questions that have arisen, none with apparent answers.

What this nation needs now is healing: healing from the grief of Benazir's death, healing from the rage that accompanied that grief, healing from the anger being expressed at the government right now.

As always, the common people-the huge majority who would never harm a neighbor under any circumstance-are the ones who suffered. They are the ones who always need to be borne in mind, and held up in prayer, whenever you hear about political violence.

Right now [January 2] there is relative calm. Pray for the sake of the nation that it stays that way. Pray for the peace of the church, which is primarily comprised of some of the poorest people in the nation. Pour your heart out to God for the church and world. Your sisters and brothers in mission depend on you.—*Name withheld for security reasons*

Read the latest news about the Lahore bombing at
<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08027.htm>

"DETERMINED TO BECOME SELF-SUSTAINING"

A church in Cuba has changed dramatically

It had been four years since I last visited Taguasco, Cuba, and worshipped with the small, primarily elderly, congregation. The Presbyterian Church there has grown and changed dramatically. The sanctuary was filled with people of all ages, mostly women and children. The worship service included lively singing by congregation and choirs, drama by the youth, lay liturgical leadership, and a strong Biblical sermon by the pastor.

Determined to become self-sustaining, the congregation has begun several projects to supplement offerings. We rode in the horse-drawn cart that brings people from the town's outskirts to church activities and operates as a taxi the rest of the time. We visited the pigs that will be sold at the appropriate time, purchased the crafts made entirely of materials gathered from nature, and participated in the lunch that is cooked and sold (at a reduced price) each Sunday. A few pesos here, a few pesos there, and a huge increase in dignity and gratitude!—*Tricia Lloyd-Sidle, regional liaison for the Caribbean*

Read Tricia's December letter at
http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/lloydsidlep/lloydsidlep_0712.htm

EBOLA OUTBREAK IS OVER

Congolese government announces the good news

In the September e-newsletter we reported an outbreak of Ebola in the Congo. The good news: the Congolese government health officials have now announced that the Ebola outbreak in Kasai Occidental province is over. Authorities waited 42 days since the last Ebola-related death in the village of Kampungu before making the announcement—double the time of the 21-day incubation period of the virus. The outbreak of Ebola haemorrhagic fever claimed the lives of 21 of the 26 people infected in the Kasai Occidental province.

Kampungu is about 10 miles north of Luebo, the site of the first Presbyterian mission station in the Congo. The Luebo Presbyterian Hospital served as a laboratory for Ebola diagnostic testing during the outbreak, and the rural health organization SANRU, which is associated with Presbyterian clinics and hospitals in the region, assisted Communicable Disease Center and Doctors without Borders personnel who were sent to the area.

According to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance's September situation report about the Ebola outbreak-- <http://www.pcusa.org/pda/response/africa/drc-ebola091807.htm> --186 deaths had been registered in hospitals or clinics, although it was possible that many others were dying without being counted. PDA provided funds from One Great Hour of Sharing to aid with this, possibly the largest outbreak of the Ebola virus that has occurred in the Congo.

A HOME VISIT AND COMPASSION MAKE A DIFFERENCE

An HIV-affected family in India finds new hope

A 37-year-old widow who is HIV-positive brought her two young children with skin rashes to one of the medical camps the community health project conducted in a flood-affected village on the border between Nepal and India last fall. She told PCUSA missionaries Scott and Melanie Smith how their visit to her home with a food and hygiene packet had made a big difference in her life.

Before the floods she had been a field laborer and earned four kilograms (nine pounds) of grain. Her family survived on this. When the fields went under water, there was no work and she could not get enough food to feed her family. She was surprised when the flood-relief team visited her home to deliver a food packet. The villagers had refused to visit her family because they feared becoming infected with HIV/AIDS if they went near her house. When they saw members of the Emmanuel Health Association (EHA) relief team going into her home, her neighbors changed their minds and saw it was safe to mix with people who are HIV-positive. The visit from the EHA team not only brought food but it brought love and new hope from her community.

This little family managed to ration out their food packet for 15 days, and although they still have a daily struggle to survive, they experience a renewed compassion and acceptance that continues to touch their lives.

Rear more stories of hope in Scott and Melanie's December letter at http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/smiths/smiths_0712.htm

VOLUNTEER MISSION SERVICE FOR YOUNG ADULTS AND OTHERS

Opportunities to offer time, skills, and a ministry of presence

From Nashville to Nairobi, PCUSA mission volunteers serve for a few weeks or a few years. Their service varies, depending on the location and their abilities, but ranges from working with youth in Cincinnati to ministering to street children in Buenos Aires or providing a ministry of presence in a rural village in Kenya or southeast Alaska. Of special emphasis is the Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) program, which is designed to connect young adults between the ages of 19 and 30 with the church and to train future

mission personnel and leaders. With a choice of sites overseas and around the United States, YAVs serve for one year and usually work in church-based community programs.

To learn about the Young Adult Volunteer program and opportunities both overseas and in the United States, visit <http://www.pcusa.org/msr/youngadult.htm> and <http://www.pcusa.org/nvo/youngadultvolunteers/yav.htm>

AND BRIEFLY . . .

• **PNS STORIES KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE KENYA SITUATION.**

January 7: Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu says he has great hopes that a peaceful resolution can be reached between Kenyan parties engaged in a violent conflict after presidential elections. Read more at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08013.htm>

January 8: Kenyan churches have joined in an effort to provide humanitarian assistance for hundreds of thousands of people displaced... Religious groups held national prayers for peace at Sunday services on Jan. 6. Read more at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08016.htm>

January 9: Church leaders have rallied their efforts in the last two weeks to bring an end to the violence and provide relief to those affected. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has an account for Kenya disaster response and relief (DR000131). Read more at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08023.htm>

January 10 from PCUSA missionary Marta Bennett: We really hoped we would prove that Kenya had taken a major step towards democracy with this election. But instead we have been set back years... Read more at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08026.htm>

• **FALL 2007/WINTER 2008 ISSUE OF HIGHLIGHTS.** Mailed earlier this month, the latest issue of *Highlights* features among other stories the accompaniment program in Colombia, Linda Valentine's blog about her Asia trip, and an AIDS prevention effort in North India. To subscribe online (free), go to <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/highlights.htm>

To request additional copies, call PDS at (800) 524-2612.

• **MISSIONARY LETTERS AVAILABLE FOR YOUR WEB SITE.** The Mission Connections office offers a free service that will put 10 selected letters from Presbyterian mission workers on your Web site each week. As new information is updated in the RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed, the content displayed on your Web site will automatically change. Visit <http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/rss.htm> to register or to see how this can look on your Web site.

- **"THE LARGEST REFORMED PROTESTANT BODY IN THE MIDDLE EAST."** Presbyterian missionaries arrived in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1823. Alda Faris, a native of Lebanon now living in Austin, Texas, and new moderator of the National Middle Eastern Presbyterian Caucus, says, "As a result of that mission endeavor, today we are the largest Reformed Protestant body in the Middle East."

- **WHAT DO YAVs DO AND LEARN?** Mission workers Glen and Carol Hallead wrote about three Youth Adult Volunteers (YAVs) who had completed their year of service in Ghana that they had done "amazing things." These included moving into a village that they had to hike to, carrying whatever was needed on their backs, and eating freshly boiled rat, banku, and other foods "the consistency of which is so foreign to our tongues that it takes a long, purposeful, and hard swallow to get it down." Read the Halleads' letter at

http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/halleadg/halleadg_0708.htm

- **CHOON AND YEN HEE LIM** this summer celebrated their 10th anniversary of work in Taiwan. Read their November letter telling about the beginning of their Aboriginal College Ministry, and of a ministry with the largest Christian group in Hualien, which started with three students from the Buddhist Nursing College:

http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/limc/limc_0711.htm

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