

PCUSA Worldwide

July 13, 2007 **Presbyterians on PBS**

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PBS HIGHLIGHTS "FRIENDS OF LA OROYA"

"Religion & Ethics" program focuses on polluted area in Peru

On June 29 the "Religion & Ethics" program on PBS presented "Friends of La Oroya," a story "about an international, interfaith coalition working on behalf of La Oroya, Peru, considered one of the most polluted areas of the world." "Friends of La Oroya," which has members in both the United States and Peru, was founded with the help of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission worker Hunter Farrell and the PCUSA's Joining Hands Network. Next month Farrell becomes director of the PCUSA's World Mission program area.

The report reads in part:

Nestled in the Andes Mountains, an 85-year-old metal smelting plant spews lead, arsenic and other toxins into the air and the nearby Mantaro River. Visitors say the impact is inescapable.

ELINOR STOCK, a Presbyterian minister in St. Louis, Mo.: As soon as you get there, within a few minutes, your eyes and your ears and your nose start burning, and you can

just feel the pollution: flakes of dust all over you. It's like a moonscape. There's no vegetation on the hills because of the acid.

KIM LAWTON, R&E reporter: The Friends of La Oroya and the Mantaro Coalition is especially concerned about the children in La Oroya's community of 35,000. According to a study by St. Louis University, 97 percent of the children there have dangerously high levels of lead in their blood.

STOCK: We wouldn't tolerate that in the United States. And we cannot tolerate it anywhere else, either as people of faith, as human beings, and especially when it's caused by corporate pollution. . . . It's the justice principle, that all belong to God and all are children of God, and all should have equal access to fresh air, clean water and an environment of health and wholeness.

Watch the report or read a transcript at

www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1044/cover.html

For related stories visit the Joining Hands Web site: www.pcusa.org/joininghands

LATE WORD FROM PAKISTAN

Mission workers request prayer for the nation

PCUSA mission couple Marianne Vermeer and Robert Johnson report they are not near the violence in Pakistan, but they say the situation is tense and are requesting prayer for the country.

"Islamabad is over four hours from Lahore. In some ways, the situation in Islamabad (with the Red Mosque, or "Lall Masjid") is an isolated one, centered on a single madrassah and mosque," the write in a July 12 letter. The couple note that few Pakistanis in their area are in sympathy with the militants. "We are being cautious, and keeping informed," they write. "Moreover, our Pakistani friends are being vigilant on our behalf. They worry about us more than we worry about ourselves!"

Read the full letter at

www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/johnsonr/johnsonr_0707b.htm

"CHANGE COMES SLOWLY . . . "

Ellen Dozier writes about a Guatemalan woman of courage:

We were nearing the end of a Guatemala presbytery women's meeting when Wilma (not her real name) spoke up: "About a month ago my husband came into the house. He spit out harsh, vindictive words, and then beat me. He didn't say why, what I had done or anything, he just beat me and then left."

Some of the other women told Wilma she had rights, she was a person of value, and she should not put up with this behavior of her husband.

Wilma is a woman with the courage to venture from her isolated, rural community to participate in our activities-Bible studies, workshops, visits with other women's groups. She is a leader in her community. She has heard over and over-and probably believes on one level-that the Bible affirms her as a daughter of the living God. But here she is, struggling to believe in herself as a person of value and worth.

She explained that she did not want to leave her husband because she did not want her family to fall apart. The discussion went on for some time; we then formed a circle and prayed for her.

Change comes ever so slowly when women have been told for generations that they are "second-class citizens," that they are the cause of sin in this world, and that their place is in the kitchen and bedroom.

Read more of Ellen's letter at

www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/doziere/doziere_0706.htm

CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS ARE TALKING TOGETHER

. . . and building peace between communities that have been in conflict

PROCMURA (Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa) has two main goals; the first is to work with churches throughout sub-Saharan Africa promoting a responsible and faithful Christian witness to their Muslim neighbors. The approach involves peacefully engaging Muslims out of respect for their status as people made in the image of God.

PROCMURA's second goal is bringing together Christians and Muslims in dialogue over practical issues of pressing importance to both communities. This has meant working alongside Muslims in building peace between communities that have been in conflict, in places as varied as Sudan and Sierra Leone. PROCMURA is also bringing together Christian and Muslim women and youth in separate forums to discuss how adherents of both faiths can join to combat the scourge of HIV/AIDS in their communities. Many of these workshops have been very successful and contributed a great deal to positive Christian-Muslim relationships throughout the continent.

In Sierra Leone especially, Christians and Muslims tend to regard one another as equals; Muslims attend Christian schools as a matter of routine and comfortably attend church on Sundays with their Christian counterparts. This is in a country where Muslims compose the majority of the population.-Kirk Harris, Young Adult Volunteer intern with PROCMURA

Read Kirk's April letter about his visits in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia at www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/yav/yav_harrisk_0704.htm

MISSION PASTORS TO MEET IN NOVEMBER

APMP will consider "The Shape of Things to Come . . . "

When the Association of Presbyterian Mission Pastors (APMP) meets November 28-30 in Louisville, Ky., for its annual conference, the keynote will be "The Shape of Things to Come: Preparing for Our Role in God's Work." Today's churches are living through a time of rapid change, both locally and globally. Speakers will explore answers to such questions as: What are the challenges in the days ahead for the participation of the North American church in God's global mission? What will mission partnerships look like? How can we best prepare ourselves for the emerging challenges and opportunities? How can our mission ministries best lead and interface with the emerging missional visions of our congregations?

APMP is a professional association of pastors and mission directors on the staffs of PCUSA congregations who have responsibilities for global and local mission. For more information visit www.missionpastor.org/

AND MORE . . .

- To date 140 of the denomination's 173 presbyteries are committed to participating in the October **MISSION CHALLENGE '07**, and 40 international mission personnel will be itinerating throughout the country. For more information visit www.pcusa.org/missionchallenge07/
- Registration continues for **WORLD MISSION '07**. Deadline: August 20, 2007. Visit www.pcusa.org/missioncelebration/index.htm
- The Summer 2007 issue of **HIGHLIGHTS** will be going into the mail this month. "Highlights" a twice-yearly print publication about PCUSA mission around the world, is available at no cost. The cover story: "Empowering Congolese Women." To subscribe go to www.pcusa.org/wmd/list.htm
- The Web site for the September **AFRICAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE, TUMEKUTANA**, "We have come together,"-is now available. For learn more about how to be involved visit www.pcusa.org/worldwide/tumekutana.htm
- A new ecumenical advocacy initiative, the **PALESTINE/ISRAEL ECUMENICAL FORUM**, was launched at the culmination of a World Council of Churches (WCC) conference in Jordan in June. It will be an expression of churches' "commitment to inter-religious action for peace and justice that serves all the peoples of the region." For more information visit www2.wcc-coe.org/pressreleasesen.nsf/index/pu-07-19.html

• **NEARLY 100 SMALL CONGREGATIONS IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS OF EGYPT DO NOT HAVE A PASTOR OR CHURCH WORKER.** The Egyptian church, in cooperation with the Evangelical Theological Seminary at Cairo, has a plan to prepare a cadre of commissioned lay people to serve as evangelists, literary trainers and community development workers, reaching out to hundreds of thousands of the unchurched. Contributions can be made to this project through ECO 052801 at www.pcusa.org/give/online/projectSelectAction.do?numberString=E052801

• **GOOD NEWS FROM BOLIVIA.** "The poor and hungry have stopped believing that God wills them to be poor," Robert and Julie Dunsmore write, citing steps taken by the government to enable a new program for health care coverage. Health care will be available for all Bolivian citizens up to age 25. Read more of the Dunsmares' letters at www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/dunsmorer.htm

For questions or comments, send an e-mail to <mailto:PCUSAWORLDWIDE-owner@halak.pcusa.org>

To learn more, visit www.pcusa.org/worldwide/

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