

PCUSA Worldwide March issue: Hope for Kenya

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. Subscriptions are available at <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/list.htm>. Submit story ideas to patrick.cole@pcusa.org.

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"HERE WE ARE AGAIN, HUMANKIND KILLING ONE ANOTHER"

Kenyan pastors offer hope in the midst of chaos

How do we tell the story of our beloved Kenya, a nation shocked by the violence that has erupted? Kenya was considered the jewel of East Africa, with a growing economy and a fragile, yet viable democracy. Now that has all changed.

Politicians greedy for power unearthed old tribal grievances of land grabbing and economic disparity. When the results of the election were announced, violence erupted. No matter who had won the election, the country was poised for conflict.

For a while mobs roamed at will, hacking to death with machetes any person they found in their midst who was from another tribe. Businesses and homes were burned and looted, the work of a lifetime destroyed. People fled back to their ancestral homelands, to displaced persons camps, and to police stations for protection. More than 1,000 people have been killed, and 600,000 refugees are crowded into camps with small amounts of food, water, and shelter, while a health crisis looms on the horizon.

Our former clinical pastoral education students, who are now Presbyterian ministers, tell us they are visiting the displaced persons camps. They are doing their very best to listen to the stories, bind up the wounds, and give the hope and love of Jesus Christ.

A fragile peace is holding due to the peace negotiations that have brought a lull in the fighting. (But) I weep while listening to Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings, used so often during World War II for the funerals of the many who died in that war. Here we are again, humankind killing and terrorizing one another.

We meet in churches and pray. We comfort and speak tenderly to one another. Our eyes are glazed over, our spirits numb. There is a deep sadness within the Christian community and fervent prayers that hope will rush in on the wings of eagles and sweep away the demons of despair. And, yes, we pray earnestly that peace will return to this beautiful land of Kenya. -Lyle and Terry Dykstra, Kenya
http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/dykstral/dykstral_0802.htm

MAKING MISSION TRIPS MATTER

Effective trips include preparation and relationship building

According to one survey, 1.6 million U.S. Christians (2.1 percent of all church members) went on an international mission trip of 14 days or less in 2005. Participants go on these trips with the intent of strengthening communities and churches abroad and experiencing spiritual transformation. While mission trips can have remarkable results, there is potential for harming the communities they visit. Mission trips "can be terribly destructive and can be the impetus of very bad feelings," says Robert Priest of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, one of the first missiologists to study short-term mission. "How to work in ways that do not do that is a major challenge."

The March cover story of *Presbyterians Today* tells how congregations are meeting this challenge by emphasizing preparation, partnership cultural sensitivity and relationship building. Read more at <http://www.pcusa.org/today/cover.htm>

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

Jerry Van Marter reports from Russia

Jerry Van Marter spent 12 days in Russia in early February and filed stories about mission programs that range from orphanages to a soup kitchen, a multi-denominational Moscow Chaplaincy congregation, and a theological seminary. An excerpt:

Novosaratovka Theological Seminary (NTS), which serves the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia and Other States (ELCROS), offers probably the most rigorous theological education in Russia, says Gary Payton, PCUSA regional liaison for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Poland.

Next fall NTS will mark its 10th anniversary with a celebration and theological symposium on the topic of ministry in diaspora. The topic is particularly germane because NTS students are destined for pastorates throughout the western former Soviet republics.

PCUSA mission worker Joe Kang is one of four NTS faculty members. He says NTS took "a giant step forward" last fall with the appointment of its first Russian president, Rev. Anton Tikhomirov, after having German Lutheran presidents for its first nine years.

Tikhomirov became a lay pastor of his ELCROS congregation in 1996 without any formal theological training. He graduated from college in 1997 and enrolled at NTS, then went to Germany to study for his master's degree and doctoral degrees before returning to NTS as a professor.

Tikhomirov is acutely aware of the need to train more pastors. So ELCROS has broken more new ground by offering extension classes to students and pastors who are unable to live on campus and attend classes full time. Two-thirds of NTS' 60 students are in the extension program.

Vladimir Tatarnikov, one of Joe Kang's prize students, will be a minister in his native Belarus, serving two of the four ELCROS congregations in that country.

Visit <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/russia/> to read Jerry's stories. View his pictorial blog and at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnewsrussia.blogspot.com/>

RESPECTFUL WITNESS IN THAILAND

Christians pray that a prominent political family will become followers of Jesus

The convention center was filled with two or three thousand Christians who love Chiang Mai and gather for the "Bless Chiang Mai" event once a year to pray for God's blessing on the city and province. The mayor had been invited to attend the opening of the event, but she was summoned to the Royal Palace. She asked her husband and her mother, a

former House Representative, to come on her behalf. They arrived near the end of the three-hour event, when Pastor Loypoh Suriyabubbhaand, an ethnic Karen, was beginning his prayers for the government and political situation of Chiang Mai and Thailand.

Pastor Loypoh invited the mayor's mother and husband to stand, and he asked the whole crowd to pray that this important family would meet Jesus. The crowd prayed loudly and passionately. After more prayers, the special guests were invited to bring greetings to the gathering. They graciously expressed appreciation for the prayers of the people, which showed such great concern for their family and for Chiang Mai.

The mayor's mother said she would recommend that the mayor support this prayer event as an important annual event for the city. The mayor's husband noted his appreciation for the witness of the Christian community. He mentioned having been a student at Bangkok Christian College and enjoying the plays and music of the Christian Communications Institute (CCI) during Spiritual Emphasis Week each year.

This leading political family of Chiang Mai heard the prayers for their family by the Jesus followers as an expression of love and compassion. I believe the personal relationship between Pastor Loypoh and this family and the respectful and creative ways that CCI and the Christian schools in Thailand have shared the good news of Jesus over many years helped.-Esther Wakeman, Thailand

Read Esther's February letter at

http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/collinsr/collinsr_0802b.htm

FAMILY TIES BIND EGYPT AND IOWA FOR GENERATIONS

Iowa Presbyterians continue to help combat poverty

Dot Turnbull hasn't had to brush the dust off her shoes once she comes indoors for more than 40 years now. Not since she left the ancient, narrow and sandy streets of Assiut, a city crammed centuries ago between the Nile and the baking Egyptian desert where she and her husband, Bob, served for 14 years. She's 83 now and long retired.

Dot's sister-in-law, Margaret Magill, wanted to see the Egypt that their family had grown up hearing about all of their lives. It took 50 years, but she got there. The two women made the trip six years ago. They were half of the Joining Hands contingent of Des Moines Presbytery, which is partnered with an Egyptian nationwide coalition of Christians and Muslims in religious groups, non-governmental agencies and grassroots organizations called Together for Family Development.

Since Des Moines Presbytery signed on to Joining Hands in 2000 the Iowans have offered quiet support to Together for Family Development, which is working legislatively to require Egyptian schools to be handicapped-accessible so that disabled children may be educated. Otherwise, they are consigned to poverty.

Margaret has traveled twice to Egypt as part of Joining Hands, and she intends to go again. Her daughter, Elizabeth, made her third trip in February to be part of a strategy session with Together for Family Development.

Read the full story at <http://www.pcusa.org/joininghands/turnbull.htm>

"GUNFIRE WILL NOT SILENCE OUR CALL FOR PEACE"

Dennis Smith sees Guatemala in the context of violence

Preparing for the 2008 WACC (World Association for Christian Communication) World Congress to convene in Cape Town, South Africa, in October (the theme: "Communication Is Peace"), Dennis Smith writes:

Gunfire awakened us at 1:35 this morning. 12 rounds? 15? I was too disoriented to keep track. No screams, no sirens, but we were left wondering who had fired those rounds and why. We live in a middle-middle class neighborhood in Guatemala City-one of the most violent cities in Latin America.

Violence has many roots: the persistent legacy of 36 years of civil war; centuries of racism; a polarized economy controlled by a tiny, wealthy elite; endemic violence against women and children. In Guatemala we speak of a culture of violence intimately tied to a culture of impunity. About 85 percent of the population consider themselves to be Christian, but violence and injustice continue to plague our daily lives. Last year the chief of the national police, a regular church attender, admitted on his weekly TV program, broadcast by a local Christian channel, that government forces practiced extrajudicial executions.

Life in Guatemala has already taught me that there is no magic formula for peace. Peacebuilding is hard work that often bears little fruit for generations.

Desmond Tutu will be one of the speakers in Cape Town. Participants in the five-day event will share stories of how communication has helped to shape new ways of thinking and being.-Dennis Smith, PCUSA mission worker and former president of WACC-Latin America

Read the full text of Dennis' press release at <http://www.waccglobal.info/Press-Centre/Dennis-Smith.html>

AND BRIEFLY . . .

• **CALM RETURNS TO CAMEROON.** Cameroon experienced civil unrest in late February and early March, but the violent protests have ended after concessions by the government. Amid the strife, PCUSA mission workers and church partners requested prayer for Cameroon. Read more at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08162.htm>

- April 20-22: **CALMING THE STORM: MIDDLE EAST PEACEMAKING IN A TURBULENT TIME**, the Churches for Middle East Peace Annual Conference, will be held in Washington, D.C. For more information download a flyer from <http://www.cmep.org>
- April 27 and 28 are **DAYS OF PRAYER AND ACTION FOR COLOMBIA**. Materials to help organize for both the day of prayer (April 27) and for the day of action (April 28) are downloadable from <http://www.witnessforpeace.org/campaigns/days.html>. Included in the packet are background information, sample sermons, prayers and liturgies, and resources for the Day of Action.
- On Feb. 27 a delegation of Presbyterians from Community Presbyterian Church of Walnut Grove, Calif., was able to visit **JAILED PHILIPPINES STUDENT PASTOR** Berlin Guerrero, who has been held by the country's government for nearly a year. Guerrero's supporters have presented their case to the Philippines' Supreme Court asking for dismissal on the grounds of false arrest and lack of evidence. Read the PNS story at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08160.htm>
- **YAV VIDEO**, "Seeing the faces of adversity." In this new six-minute video Libby Hunter tells about working with youth in Northern Ireland who are dealing with religious and political strife, and Kori Phillips describes encounters with marginalized people in Peru. Both served in the Young Adult Volunteer program in 2006-2007. View the video at <http://www.pcusa.org/msr/youngadult.htm>
- An interview with **KENNETH BAILEY** entitled "Middle East's 'Forgotten Faithful'" is available on the Presbyterians Today Online Web site <http://www.pcusa.org/today/featured-story5.htm>. "There are more Arabic-speaking Christians in the Middle East than Jews in the entire world," he says. "Many think the Middle East only has Jews and Arabs in it. If they hear Arabs are Christians, they think they must have a Muslim background. But they don't."
- **ENCOUNTER WITH ETHIOPIA**. In cooperation with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, the Interfaith Relations Office and the Africa Office are planning a **TRAVEL-STUDY SEMINAR** in Ethiopia, November 5-15, 2008. The cost is \$1,400, including all lodging and meals but not airfare and visas. For more information, visit <http://www.pcusa.org/interfaith/>
- Several **MISSION NETWORKS** will meet in April:
 - Ecumenical Interfaith, April 13-14
 - Mexico, April 14-17
 - Ethiopia, April 24-26
 - Honduras, April 28-May 1

For more information, contact the appropriate area office (check the World Mission country pages at <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/>) or Interfaith's Web site <http://www.pcusa.org/interfaith/>

The Congo Mission Network recommends attendance at the 2008 Congo Global Action Conference, March 30-April 1, in Washington, D.C. For information contact Jan Sullivan at sull1300@comcast.net.

- The inaugural meeting of the **PRESBYTERIAN IRELAND MISSION NETWORK** will be held May 2-3 (Friday lunch-Saturday lunch) at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. The Europe Area Office will cover room and board for participants; they cover their travel costs. To register and for further information, contact Rev. Jon Chapman at (888) 728-7228 ext. 5352; Jon.Chapman@pcusa.org
- International Health Ministries' **2008 NETWORKERS MOTHER'S DAY PROJECT** makes it possible each spring for U.S. Presbyterians to support malaria prevention programs in Africa while also honoring their mothers and other women on Mother's Day. NetWorkers Mother's Day cards are available in exchange for a donation to the NetWorkers Malaria Prevention Program. For more information and available resources visit <http://www.pcusa.org/health/international/networkers-mothers-day.htm>
- **PAST ISSUES OF PCUSA WORLDWIDE NEWSLETTER** are available in PDF format from <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/newsletter.htm>