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NEW MISSION WORKERS BEGINNING SERVICE

Assignments include hunger work, health ministries and leadership training

Twelve newly appointed mission workers completed their orientation for international service in January and have begun or will shortly begin their assignments. It is one of the largest orientations of new mission personnel in recent years.

Rev. Sara Armstrong and **Rusty Edmondson** are serving in Peru, where they coordinate partnership relationships between the Evangelical Presbyterian Reformed Church of Peru (IEPRP) and PC(USA) entities.

Alexandra Buck, serving with the Joining Hands program in Peru, is facilitating the development of a fair trade bridge that will enable Peruvian artisans to sell their creations to consumers in the United States.

Amanda Craft has begun service in Guatemala, where she will aid the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala's efforts in women's leadership development and Christian education.

Rev. David Diercksen is a U.S. coordinator with the Presbyterian Border Ministry, serving at Puentes de Cristo. This site focuses its mission endeavors in the Reynosa, Mexico, area across from McAllen, Texas.

Dr. John and Gwenda Fletcher are serving in the Democratic Republic of Congo. John, a physician, is on the staff of the Christian Medical Institute of the Kasai. Gwenda works with the Presbyterian Community of Congo to help its education department. The Fletchers previously served in the Congo from 1989 to 2002.

Rev. Brenda Harcourt is working with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Kenya as a leadership trainer. She previously served as a seminary professor in Ghana.

Rev. Jed Koball is serving with the Joining Hands program to facilitate relationships among the Presbyterian Hunger Program, the Uniendo Manos Contra la Pobreza network in Peru, and **U.S.** congregations.

Nancy McGaughey, a registered nurse, is serving in Sudan as a health coordinator with the Association of Christian Resource Organizations Serving Sudan (ACROSS).

Rev. Stacey Steck in Costa Rica is focusing on leadership development, strategic planning, and stewardship. He will also assist visiting mission teams.

Nathaniel Veltman is serving in Ethiopia, assisting the five synods of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church MeKane Yesus to develop sustainable development programs that address critical human needs.

Read the PNS story at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09116.htm> and Linda Valentine's comments in her "Let your light shine" blog about being with the new mission appointees at their meeting in Atlanta at <http://www.presbyterian.typepad.com/lindavalentine/>

HAITI SCHOOL GRADUATES FIRST PROFESSIONAL NURSE LEADERS

13 men and women complete PC(USA)-backed program

Graduation ceremonies were held Jan. 10 in Port-au-Prince for the charter class of a new professional nursing program supported in part by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Thirteen young Haitian men and women are the first four-year baccalaureate graduates of the Faculté des Sciences Infirmières de l'Université Episcopale d'Haïti (Faculty of Nursing Science of the Episcopal University of Haiti, or FSIL).

"This is one of the most hopeful, long-range solutions to devastating problems in Haiti," said FSIL Dean Hilda Alcindor.

The school was built in 2003–2004 with funding from the Medical Benevolence Foundation (MBF) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in partnership with the International Health Ministries program of World Mission, and the American Schools and Hospitals Abroad program of USAID.

Read the PNS story at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09099.htm>.

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILATION IN ETHIOPIA

A 12-year-old estrangement is healed

Twelve years ago there was a schism in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). The root cause was a conflict over the language of worship: would Amharic, the dominant language of both

the nation and the church--and a force for unity in the church--be used to the exclusion of other languages? Each side had valid reasons for their position, and each side defended those positions with vigor and belligerence. When the two factions split into two churches, the bitterness only increased. Congregations were torn apart. Eventually, even some of the partner churches took sides in the dispute and directed their mission efforts exclusively to one or the other church. Through the years there have been 26 separate initiatives attempting reconciliation between the two sides, but failure after failure only created deeper divisions.

Last summer, in the Ethiopian diaspora community in Minnesota, the first reconciliation took place. Both sides admitted that the original issue about language had been made worse by pride and anger. Both sides admitted that countless human and material resources had been wasted in the conflict, while opportunities for growth and mission had been squandered. Pastors from the two competing churches met in worship, embraced and cried, and washed each other's feet in a public ceremony of penitence and humility. The news and spirit of that reconciliation swept across the world to Ethiopia, and reconciliation ceremonies have been held in congregation after congregation, with former enemies admitting how badly they have behaved toward one another and humbly asking—and granting—forgiveness. The leaders of the two churches have met and agreed on the necessary steps to be taken over the next year to complete the full reunion of the two churches, with the agreement that worship is best in the language of the heart.—Bruce Whearty, Ethiopia

Read more at http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/wheartyb/wheartyb_0902.htm

TEXTBOOKS OFFER HELP FOR ASIA PASTORS, CHURCHES

A basic theological library to be written by those who understand the Asian context

The Philippine Theological Society has begun producing textbooks by scholars who live and work in the Philippines.

Paul Matheny, PC(USA) mission worker, wrote and published one of the first books of this project, *The Genealogy and Geography of Philosophical and Theological Thinking*. It is the first of a series entitled *Faith and the Christian Life*. His second book in the series is at the publishers, and he will also be writing a third volume.

Filipino theological students, like other students in Southeast Asia, have little choice but to use expensive textbooks published in the United States and England and written by scholars working in a First World context. There are significant drawbacks to this situation. The Western-based authors do not understand the problems and struggles of Asian Christians, who seek to be faithful in contexts dramatically different from those of the wealthy and secure American and European Christians. In addition, because the books are prohibitively expensive, pastors and scholars own and use few books. Many have little or no access to libraries.

These textbooks will help the churches whose pastors are among the poorest. The books are already in use in Myanmar, the Philippines and Korea, as well as in the libraries of many seminaries in the area.

Read Paul Matheny's letter at

http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/mathenyp/mathenyp_0901.htm.

SHINING EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE REACHING OUT

Amid the violence, abuse and food crisis in the Congo

In the Democratic Republic of Congo the extent of the atrocities committed against women and girls by competing militias and government forces supports the claim that these should be considered crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Violence against women and girls also contributes to the food crisis. Women, who do much of the work to maintain planted crops, are afraid to walk to their fields. Men are also afraid; they risk being forcibly conscripted or killed. Without people to work in the field harvests diminish. Militia and government forces who steal food from villages add another disincentive for production.

The environment of instability and abuse has led to the death of over 5 million people in the Congo in less than a decade. People flee their land as villages are raided and homes burned. All the while, diamonds and other minerals morally contaminated by the blood that has been spilt to obtain them mysteriously find their way to international markets. Resources that should be helping the country feed itself and build its infrastructure are used to finance war and destruction.

Amid this depressing atmosphere are shining examples of people who from their deep faith and compassion reach out to others. They are more beautiful and valuable than any of the shiny stones lifted from the dirt. We hear of church-run hospitals treating the physical and emotional wounds the women have received. We hear of pastors and church members taking refugees into their homes. Most of those providing hospitality do not have enough to care for the health and education of their own family.—Jeff and Christi Boyd, Cameroon. Jeff is regional liaison for Central Africa, which includes Cameroon, Congo, and Equatorial Guinea, and Christi works with Joining Hands in Cameroon.

Read the Boyds' letter: http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/boydj/boydj_0812.htm.

AND BRIEFLY . . .

- A **JOINING HANDS NEWSLETTER** is published online periodically. To read the special edition at the close of 2008 visit <http://www.relufa.org/partners/jhnewsletter.htm>.
- Every presbytery is being asked to appoint a **WORLD MISSION ADVOCATE** and send him or her to a World Mission Advocates Gathering May 7–9 in Louisville. The presbytery or the attendee will be responsible for travel and a \$300 registration fee, which includes room and board for three days and two nights. For information contact Lis Valle at Lis.Valle@pcusa.org.
- **KENYA DROUGHT.** "The rains did not come this year. Three million people face starvation as the drought holds on. The scorched Kenyan soil gives up very little sustenance to families who herd their cattle, scavenging for food and water. . . ."—Lyle and Terry Dykstra, Kenya Read more: http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/dykstral/dykstral_0902.htm
- **INTERFAITH TOOL KIT.** The Interfaith Relations office has a new resource that provides "how to do it" pieces and examples of what others have done as well as materials for study. The "tools" in the kit are downloadable from the Web site <http://www.pcusa.org/interfaith/>.
- **JUST COFFEE: CAFFEINE WITH A CONSCIENCE** by PC(USA) mission co-worker Mark Adams, published in January, is "a great combination of personal narrative, theological reflection, macro-level analysis, and instructive inspiration . . . a must-read for all those interested in building relationships between the peoples of the United States and Mexico and beyond based on mutual respect and cooperation." Read more or to order: http://www.fronteradecristo.org/just_coffee_book.shtml.

- Afro-Colombians constitute the highest number of displaced persons in **COLOMBIA** today. The Presbyterian Church of Colombia seeks to accompany the Afro-Colombian people of Palenque, reminding them that they are not alone and supporting their efforts to secure their legal and human rights. Read Presbyterian companions Judy Sheppard Bierbaum and Beth Beall's story at <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/colombia/accompaniment.htm>.
- Read Joe Angi's touching story about a Kurdish refugee from **IRAN**: http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/angij/angij_0812c.htm.
- The Presbytery of the Western Reserve is sponsoring a 15-day travel/study seminar in **SOUTH AFRICA**, July 6–23, 2009. The trip is part of the presbytery's ongoing mission partnership with the Sisonke Masliwe Indlala network. The trip includes visits to three rural provinces, as well as Cape Town and Kruger Park. The Sisonke Masliwe Indlala network is a faith-based effort to fight for land justice as a means to overcome hunger and poverty.
- **QUOTE OF THE MONTH.** "The opportunity to be in a classroom with the men and women who, as they are transformed, transform the lives of others, gives every class urgency and meaning." —Elisabeth Cook, teacher at Latin American Biblical University (UBL) in San José, Costa Rica
- **PAST ISSUES** of the **PCUSA WORLDWIDE** newsletter are available in PDF format from <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/newsletter>.