

January 2009 issue: **Seeking peace in Gaza**

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.

January 20, 2009

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PRESBYTERIANS DEDICATED TO PEACE EFFORTS IN GAZA

Stated clerk calls for prayers and commitment to action

As a fragile peace continues to take shape in Gaza, Presbyterians have been praying for peace and responding to the humanitarian emergency created by the violence.

On January 7 stated clerk Gradye Parsons issued a statement on the Gaza-Israel crisis calling for an immediate end to the violence and reiterating the church's call for a "two-state solution." He wrote: "As followers of the Prince of Peace, who has shown us that true victory comes only through non-violent reconciliation, we yearn for an end to sixty years of conflict, violence, and oppression, all of which have left scars on all parties regardless of ethnic, religious, or political identification and have contributed to wider uncertainty about global peace. It will require not only our fervent prayers, but a renewed commitment to action so that when a cease-fire is achieved, it is followed by a new commitment by all parties to the rule of law as the only path to justice, security, and freedom for all."

Read the full statement: <http://www.pcusa.org/oga/letters-statements.htm>

Visit <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/israelpalestine/pray-gaza.htm> to learn about, act and pray for Gaza and Israel.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is responding to humanitarian needs created by the crisis. To give online visit <http://www.pcusa.org/pda>.

ZIMBABWE: GRIM NEWS. POLITICAL STALEMATE. HUNGER. . . .

But there are those who "fan the flame of hope"

Sue and Ted Wright, PC(USA) regional liaisons, write:

You have heard the news, all of it grim. Political stalemate. Hyper-inflation. Hunger. Cholera. This country was once southern Africa's pride. Now it's the basket case. Well, not entirely.

Yes, many have left—some were forced to, others went in search of greener pasture. The local currency is worthless. Factories have closed. Store shelves are almost empty. Teachers can now earn more by selling fruit on the street than they can in their classrooms. Farms produce only a fraction of their potential. Millions are starving.

But as God said to Elijah, "...there are yet seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal....," so in our time God still has His faithful who fan the flame of hope. Let us introduce Craig and Joan.

Joan was once a fine tennis player, a real star on court, whose obsession ruined her marriage. Left behind with three sons, she struggled to survive, her life filled with anger and regret. When a friend tried to share with her about the love of Jesus Christ, Joan doubted that any good God could forgive such a wantonly selfish person. She asked for a sign: "If your promise is true, Lord, show me something in the sky!" And she saw a shooting star.

Since then Joan has devoted her life to the poor. Her youngest son, Craig, shares the ministry. Certain days a week, you find street kids at their gate. They come for handouts of tea and bread, sometimes Band-Aids or clothing. Slowly these kids develop trust. They regard the elderly white lady as nurse, the man as referee, and both as friends.

Joan and Craig call their ministry "Home of Hope." To read more:
http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/wrightc/wrightc_0812.htm

"THE CLASSROOM IS A LOT LIKE A WORSHIP SERVICE"

Debbie Blane has 60 young people in her "congregations" in China

Sometimes I am frustrated because I cannot begin class with prayer and when a student comes to seek my advice I cannot pray with that student. But three times a week when I begin my classes by saying, "Good morning, class!" or "Good afternoon, class!" I am filled with the awareness that God has given me a microcosm of a congregation with each of these classrooms filled with students.

While I cannot pray as we begin our experience of solemn assembly, I can be filled with gratitude that God has found a way for me to engage in the ministry that gives me passion within that of the Word and sacrament—I have young people to work with on a college campus. I have a congregation. Since I have three congregations, two hours each, I have 60 young people to love as God works through me in shaping them and molding them and forming them.

The classroom is really quite a lot like a worship service. There are those who have a deep thirst for learning. And there are some who I can't figure out why they are in college—they are just playing. They

talk to one another and they try to hide their cell phones under their desks—this is hilarious to me actually. Clearly they do not realize that they have a mother in charge of the class. God called me from being the mother of 2 to being the mother of 60. I have eyes in the back of my head.—Debbie Blane, Nanjing, China

Read more: http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/blaned/blaned_0810.htm

MISSION WORKERS IN RUSSIA ARRANGE AUTISM CONFERENCE

40 participants attend the two-day seminar

Alan and Ellen Smith arranged an autism conference in Moscow in October. A developmental pediatrician, Dr. Jane Charles, and a psychologist, Dr. Lucia Horowitz, both specialists on autism from South Carolina, participated in the two-day conference, which was hosted by the St. Dmitry sisterhood (a lay sisterhood of the Orthodox Church involved in many spheres of diaconal ministry across Moscow).

With the help of a Thank Offering from Presbyterian Women, some 40 participants from 12 different cities in 7 different regions were invited to the conference. These included Orthodox nuns and members of lay sisterhoods involved in the care and education of special needs children and their families, people working at state-run and church-run orphanages, a pediatrician, teachers and social workers involved with special needs children, and parents of autistic children.

Dr. Charles gave an in-depth presentation on the A to Zs of autism, providing attendees a clearer understanding of the disorder and its many faces. She also shared medical treatment of autism, including medicines used to treat different aspects of the condition. Dr. Horowitz focused on intervention strategies, including behavior management, to help children reach their potential. She shared concrete models for developing and implementing curriculum.

Ellen Smith says the Presbyterian Women's Thank Offering "helped plant seeds of understanding, of strategic response, and of friendship between colleagues across the boundaries of language and culture." It is hoped that the autism conference will be an annual one. Read more: http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/smitha/smitha_0810b.htm

GOD IS AT WORK IN FRIJOLILLO, MEXICO

"These are exciting times"

God is really doing a work in raising up the leadership of the Frijolillo church. At 6:00 a.m. every day, Monday through Saturday, three or four leaders gather in the sanctuary for prayer. They have worship together (which includes biblical leadership teaching) each Friday evening. And for the past month they have maintained a heavy visitation schedule praying over the sick, offering messages of hope to the discouraged, and presenting the gospel to men who have walked along the margins of faith for far too long.

Praise God three men have made decisions for Christ! We even celebrated a day of fasting and prayer in preparation for an evangelistic event being prepared in a neighboring community. Please pray for those receiving Christ, for the church leadership (spiritual protection, strength, and wisdom), and for the church as a whole, that God's purposes would be wholly fulfilled. These are exciting times.—Susie Frerichs

To read more: http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/frerichss/frerichss_0812.htm

AND BRIEFLY . . .

- A PDF of the **2009 PRESBYTERIAN WORLD MISSION GIVING OPPORTUNITIES / Presbyterian Mission Personnel** document is now on the Web at <http://www.pcusa.org/mission/>. Also available online is the 2009 Directed Mission Support pledge form for congregations.

<http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/index.htm>

- Upcoming **MISSION NETWORK** meetings:

El Salvador, April 20–24, in El Salvador

Ethiopia, April 23–25, at Fremont Presbyterian Church, Sacramento, Calif.

For more information visit <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/get-involved/networks.htm>

- James (Randy) Ackley, newly appointed coordinator for **PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE** (PDA), began his work Dec. 15. A former litigation attorney, his work for 14 years with the American Red Cross included a major role in that agency's response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. His background includes media relations, disaster preparedness, disaster management, psychosocial support, water and sanitation, community development and public health.

- The women's group of the Presbyterian Church in Kirkuk, **IRAQ**, has started a **PRISON MINISTRY** to share the message of the gospel—of forgiveness, God's love, hope, and faith. They also provide for prisoners' physical needs, taking them clothes, health kits, and cookies. Even the prison guards were surprised to see this, saying "nothing like this ever happened—that people who are not related to these prisoners have come to visit and care for them." —Nuhad Tomeh, Lebanon

- Uneasy peace in **NORTHERN IRELAND**. Doug Baker wrote in November: "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland slip out of the headlines and many people could easily conclude that violent conflict here has been consigned to the past and that the new political structures are operating smoothly. Sadly the reality is that the inter-party power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive set up under the Belfast (1998) and St Andrew's Agreements (2006) has not met since June because Sinn Fein and the largest pro-British (Unionist) party, the DUP, cannot agree on critical agenda items. Read more:

http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/bakerd/bakerd_0811.htm

- **PRAYER REQUEST** from **COLOMBIA**. December and January are called "summer" because this is, supposedly, the dry season when the weather is fair. ("Winter" is the rainy season.) But this year the rain has not let up, and the huge Magdalena River, which runs the length of the country and flows into the sea near Barranquilla, has flooded a number of towns along its banks, causing the worst flooding in over 40 years. Many people have been left homeless and need your prayers.—Alice Winters, Colombia

- Plans to form a new global body, the **WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES**, representing 80 million Reformed Christians worldwide, have taken a step forward. A meeting Oct. 6–10 in the Netherlands was the first joint session of the governing bodies of the two organizations to unite, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), in which the PC(USA) participates, and the Reformed Ecumenical Council. Approval of the final draft of a constitution and by-laws is scheduled for the new body's inaugural general council in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in June 2010. Read more:

<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08762.htm>

- **HOPE HOME** is a residential home in Chiang Mai, **THAILAND**, for kids with special needs. Missionary Shelly Faucett has begun "play therapy" with the seven kids living there, all of whom have cognitive impairment, cerebral palsy, brain damage, or fetal alcohol syndrome, and who are either orphans or have been abandoned. One of them, Mai, spent the first 11 years of his life in a cage

underneath a bamboo hut but is now getting the physical therapy and attention he needs. Read more: http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/faucettb/faucettb_0810.htm

- Ariel Givens, a Young Adult Volunteer serving in **INDIA**, writes about a hospitable foot-washing experience: http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/yav/yav_givensa_0810.htm
- The Presbytery of East Iowa is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its mission partnership with the Presbytery of Ceara of the Independent Presbyterian Church of **BRAZIL**. During that time, nearly 100 East Iowans have traveled to Brazil to participate in the partnership. The next group of partners will travel to Fortaleza, Brazil, June 11–24. They will experience vibrant worship, visit established churches and hear about plans for new churches, and learn about Ceara's educational outreach programs.
- **QUOTE OF THE MONTH.** Taking a stand for life may be as simple as churches teaching their communities to boil water in a time of cholera. In other circumstances churches will be called to confront violent regimes. —Nyansako-ni-Nka, Cameroonian pastor and president of the All-Africa Conference of Churches
- **PAST ISSUES** of the **PCUSA WORLDWIDE newsletter** are available in PDF format from <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/newsletter>