

July 13, 2006 **Saving Lives in Colombia**

PCUSA WORLDWIDE is a monthly e-mail newsletter about the international mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

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ACCOMPANERS IN COLOMBIA CREDITED WITH SAVING LIVES

Accompaniers say just being there shows Americans care

At a press conference at the General Assembly Milton Mejia, immediate past executive secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Colombia, spoke about the Presbyterian accompaniment program in Colombia. Just by their presence, he said, over the past two years 22 American "accompaniers" have probably saved the lives of many rural Colombians uprooted from their homes by violence or the threat of violence.

Almost 3 million of Colombia's 42 million people are displaced. They live in camps generally located outside Colombia's large cities.

"They asked us for unarmed accompaniers, and we realized we could not say no," said Anne Bristow, coordinator of Colombian affairs for Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. "Our accompaniers are learning the price that people must sometimes pay when they speak out for justice. We've developed an enormous respect for their courage in the face of arrests and death threats."

Alice Winters, who has worked almost 30 years as a PCUSA missionary in Colombia, said the accompaniers' presence "sends the message that violence will not go unnoticed. One companioner told me he didn't feel like he'd done anything, but just his being there says Americans care. We know what's going on, and we're watching." And, she said, the program demonstrates that "God is present and at work, and there's hope."

Accompaniers stay four to eight weeks in Colombia. They have ranged in age from 23 to 73. Some pay their own way; others are sponsored in part by churches or other groups. The program

is jointly sponsored by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, and the Worldwide Ministries Division. Read the G.A. news release about the press conference at <http://www.pcusa.org/ga217/newsandphotos/ga06090.htm>.

DAN AND ELIZABETH TURK HONORED AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Mission workers to Madagascar receive award from Presbyterians Restoring Creation

In recognition of their work, ranging from reforestation to the prevention of malaria and HIV/AIDS, Dan and Elizabeth Turk were given a lifetime achievement award by Presbyterians for Restoring Creation at the General Assembly in June. Accompanied by their trilingual children, Robert and Frances, the Turks have worked as PCUSA mission personnel in Madagascar since 1997, serving in partnership with the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar.

The island of Madagascar has 18 million people, about three-fourths of whom live on less than a dollar a day. One child in eight dies of a preventable disease before reaching age 5.

Elizabeth, a nurse, has focused her work on public health programs that have kept Madagascar's AIDS infection rate below 2 percent, much lower than rates throughout most of southern and central Africa. She also directs programs to distribute malaria-preventing mosquito nets free to pregnant women and young children.

Dan is a forester who has encouraged and helped arrange the planting of fast-growing eucalyptus trees used for fuel. He also has educated children about reforestation and planted fruit trees in order to help stabilize farmers' output. Read the G.A. story at <http://www.pcusa.org/ga217/newsandphotos/ga06106.htm>.

RETIRING MISSION PERSONNEL RECOGNIZED

Together they have given 251 years of service

The General Assembly recognized eight mission workers who are retiring from international mission service after 20 or more years of service. Introducing them at a reception in their honor, Marian McClure, WMD director, said the retiring workers together represent 251 years of active mission service. The mission workers honored:

Henry and Lottie Haswell, Brazil, 1972-2006. Read more about their service at <http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/haswellh.htm>.

Gilberto and Maria Medina, Venezuela and Mexico, 1985-1995; 1996-2006. Read more about their service at <http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/medinag.htm>.

Carlos and Deborah Clugy-Soto, Democratic Republic of Congo and Venezuela, 1985-1989, 1990-2005. (The Clugy-Sotos also served as a missionary-in-residence in Louisville, Ky., 1889-1990. Carlos is now serving as pastor of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in El Paso; Deborah is working for Project Vida, an ecumenical service agency in El Paso.) Read more about their service at <http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/clugysotoc.htm>.

Frederick and Margaret Stock, Pakistan, 1956-1979. Margaret Stock also served in Egypt, 1950-53. They are now living and working in Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan as long-term

volunteers. Read more about their service at <http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/stockf.htm>.

A DREAM OF PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND

A Melkite priest has hope in the midst of violence

Marthame and Elizabeth, former mission workers in Israel/Palestine and recent missionaries-in-residence in Louisville, Ky., write:

Amid the news filled with a violent downturn in the situation in Gaza and the rest of Palestine and Israel, our dear friend Father Firas sent us a message about the situation in Zababdeh, his hometown and our home from 2000 to 2003. The words are spellbinding, challenging, and yet oddly hopeful.

When we met him in 2000, Firas dreamed of becoming a priest and reopening Zababdeh's Melkite church, which had been closed for 15 years. In 2001 he found himself out of work. In spite of his seemingly desperate situation, Firas never lost hope. What followed was nothing short of a miracle. In December 2002 Firas, the unemployed father of three became Father Firas, the Melkite priest. The abandoned Melkite church reopened its doors and heard the gospel for the first time in nearly 20 years. Here is an excerpt from Fr. Firas' letter.

"The life is very bad; the economy is very bad; and the people are losing hope. In Zababdeh the people are very angry, and they feel that there is no future. Government employees have not received their salaries. Some have begun to sell their jewelry and gold in order to buy groceries. Some have even sold their land.

"Our lives have become even more dangerous, as both Hamas and Fateh are trying to increase their power-through political support and strength of arms. I wonder: are we on a train headed toward civil war?

"The Israeli attacks against the Palestinian cities have not stopped at all. Instead they have increased, especially at night. This has brought fear to our children and to all of the people.

"But if you live in the Holy Land, you must ask yourself about the dream of peace. We are living in the middle of war, and yet I still see peace coming through the eyes of the children. This is not my dream; it is my faith."

Read the full letter from Father Firas at www.pcusa.org/worldwide/israelpalestine/firas.htm

GERIATRIC NURSE IS WAITING FOR FUNDS TO BEGIN MISSION SERVICE

Denise England is one of 10 would-be mission workers "in the pipeline"

Denise England is a geriatric nurse from Iowa who "has a real heart for serving in Egypt," says Jan Opdyke, director of the Mission Initiative: Joining Hearts & Hands (MIJHH) campaign. And there is a place for England to serve a geriatric population in Egypt.

She has leased out her home in anticipation of going. She is ready-except for the funding.

The MIJHH campaign is specifically promoting England and others like her in the hope that a congregation will make a connection. This would-be missionary is visiting congregations herself so that people can match a human face to the appeal.

K.T. Ockels, coordinator of mission service and recruitment, says 10 people are in the pipeline for international mission service, but currently there is no money to send them.

Adapted from a Presbyterian News Service story by Toya Hill. Read more about MIJHH at <http://www.pcusa.org/joiningheartsandhands>.

MISSION NETWORKS FORMING FOR DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND JAMAICA

Interested? Individuals, congregations, presbyteries sought.

Mission networks bring together Presbyterians from around the United States who have a mission interest in a specific region, country or focus. They gather periodically to share information and insights and ways of involvement. In 2006-2007 two new networks are being established for countries in the Caribbean region: the Dominican Republic and Jamaica.

As increasing numbers of congregations and presbyteries are directly involved in trips and projects outside the United States, networks provide for direct communication, mutual learning, and coordination of effort when appropriate.

If your presbytery or congregation is engaged in mission in either Jamaica or the Dominican Republic, your input is needed. Please send a contact name and information to the Caribbean liaison and mission co-worker, Tricia Lloyd-Sidle at revtjls@yahoo.com; 197 N. Bellaire Ave., Louisville, KY 40206; tel. 502-681-4059.

NEW STAFF APPOINTMENTS IN WORLDWIDE MINISTRIES

Experienced leaders assume new roles

Jon Chapman, who served as WMD's area coordinator for Southern and East Africa for 13 years, has accepted the new position of area coordinator for Europe/Ecumenical Councils/Advocacy. The son of missionaries in Kenya, he has previously served as synod staff, interim pastor, and campus minister.

Stan DeVoogd, who was on the staff of Ecumenical & Mission Partnerships with responsibility for facilitating partnerships in Latin America, the Caribbean and Mexico, is filling the newly created position of area coordinator for Central America and Mexico. A Presbyterian elder, he earlier served as WMD's regional liaison for Mexico and U.S. coordinator for the Presbyterian Border Ministry and has also taught at the Inter American School in Guatemala.

Shannon Langley, who was coordinator of WMD's Global Education and International Leadership Development office until that office was eliminated, has accepted the position as coordinator of the new Direct Mission Involvement office. She previously served as a mission co-worker in the Dominican Republic. Her new responsibilities include facilitating the international Young Adult Volunteer program, the Mission to the U.S.A. program, and the LINKS (international short-term volunteer) program.

Victor Makari, formerly area coordinator for the Middle East and Europe, in addition to continuing as coordinator for the Middle East on a half-time basis, has been appointed as coordinator/executive director for the Jinishian Memorial Program. A native of Egypt, he served pastorates in Pennsylvania and Ohio before joining the national staff of the PCUSA.

AND MORE . . .

• **A GIFT FROM MAURITIUS TO SUDAN.** St. Columba, a parish of the Presbyterian Church of Mauritius, has sent a gift of \$1,000 to the PCUSA to be used to help with pressing needs in Sudan in the area of health, education or women's work. St. Columba, an English-speaking congregation of 70 members, makes this kind of offering each month.

• **A DES MOINES PRESBYTERY GROUP VISITED EGYPT** last November to see how a "Joining Hands" hunger advocacy network functions in the context of a country that is "90 percent Muslim and 90 percent desert." Hunger Action Enabler Nancy Lister-Settle reported that the focus of the Egyptian network is "people, primarily children, with disabilities"-and "our Egyptian partners have left us in the dust when it comes to advocacy." Read her report at <http://www.pcusa.org/joininghands/stories/journal-lister-settle.htm>.

• **VANUATU** is a Pacific Ocean archipelago where the PCUSA has had a presence for more than 150 years. Read more at <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/vanuatu/feature.htm>.

• The **2005 ANNUAL REPORT OF PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (PDA)** is now available and has been mailed to all PCUSA churches. The report includes a DVD with nine short video updates on work in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Indonesia tsunami response. It can be ordered online at the www.pcusa.org/marketplace or by calling Presbyterian Distribution Service at 1-800-524-2612. The item number is 74340 06 007.

To learn more, visit <http://www.pcusa.org/wmd/>

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