

PCUSA WORLDWIDE newsletter

MAY 22, 2006

GOOD NEWS ABOUT MISSION WORKER FUNDING

Messages from Marion McClure and John Detterick

• FROM MARION MCCLURE, DIRECTOR OF WORLDWIDE MINISTRIES

May 19, 2006

Dear colleagues and friends,

In the last several weeks, we have been working with all our might and creativity on the specific challenge of funding for mission personnel. We in Worldwide have found everyone around the General Assembly Council and church eager to give their best attention to finding solutions so that the church would not have to call anyone back from mission service for financial reasons alone or outside the rhythm of appointed terms of service. That was most reassuring, and we made good progress together.

And then came a wonderful surprise. John Detterick describes it well in his Weekly Letter, so I will simply paste that below. There will be more communication about this to come, of course, as we all place ourselves at the disposal of the Rev. Allison Seed, the rising chair of the GAC, for work on the long-term aspects of funding for mission workers.

Thank you for your prayers and your patience concerning these challenging issues!

• EXCERPT FROM DETTERICK'S WEEKLY LETTER

God is good! All the time God is good! I know this is true, but sometimes I still get surprised at God's providence. One of this week's great blessings was one of those surprising moments.

During the Council meeting we correctly informed you that in 2007 the revenue forecast included a \$1.2 million drop in endowment funding which would remove funding for 55 mission personnel. At that point Marian McClure's staff knew that 40 people in mission service would be ending their service through normal attrition, which meant that funding was still needed for the remaining 15 positions. Prior to the 40 people leaving through normal attrition the total number of mission personnel was 275.

We said we did not know how we would fund the remaining 15 positions. We also indicated that we were still not sure of how to cover the forecasted drop in Directed Mission Support. At that time we were still working on the calculation of how much that would be.

After much work and analysis by our colleagues in Worldwide Ministries and Mission Support Services we had concluded last week that the shortfall in funding for mission personnel was in the neighborhood of \$2.5 million. We asked Chair Nancy Kahaian to convene a conference call meeting of the Executive Committee to approve a plan to cover this amount, including a special appeal.

I frankly was embarrassed that we had not identified this problem earlier and while we had a reasonable plan I was not looking forward to implementing it. Nancy scheduled the Executive Committee conference call for Thursday afternoon. Then, amazingly, God intervened.

On Tuesday evening Bob Leech, president of the Foundation, called and asked me to meet him before a scheduled dinner we were both attending. You can imagine my feelings as he informed me that the Foundation had just learned that a very large bequest was coming to the General Assembly Council through the Foundation and that the funds were unrestricted.

It took a while for me understand clearly that in the next few months we will be receiving an unrestricted bequest that will more than cover the amount needed to maintain all mission personnel other than those who will have left by natural attrition by the end of the year 2006. This means that the level of mission personnel in the field would remain at 235. In fact, we may even be able to replace a handful of the 40 positions. This is wonderful, providential news. God is indeed good!

On Thursday the Executive Committee approved a slight modification of the budget that reflects the increase in costs to maintain the level of mission personnel at 235 during the 2007-08 planning period. Of course that number may go up as the Joining Hearts & Hands campaign adds new mission positions. It is good that we now are assured of maintaining a solid base of mission personnel while the campaign focuses on adding more positions. Of course we would love to be able to maintain the base at the 275 level of last fall but with the drop in funding from endowment and directed mission support funding that is not currently possible. I am just extremely relieved that the level is not lower than our new base of 235.

As good as this news is, we all must acknowledge that it is a short-term solution. In two years we need to find funding to replace the \$2.5 million surprise gift that supplemented the current 2007-08 budget. We have talked with chair-elect Allison Seed about making the development of a long-term solution for funding mission personnel a priority. She has indicated the assignment of that task will be one of her early actions.

God is indeed good.

Read the Presbyterian News Service release about the bequest at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2006/06279.htm>.