

**UMMA UpDate #67, Advent 2009**  
e-bulletin of the  
United Methodist Missionary Association  
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*"Linking mission workers worldwide and moving forward"*

*Advent-Christmas issue:*

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[1] **ADVENT BLESSING from BETHLEHEM** by international church workers  
*Dear Friends,*

*It is the Advent season and here in Bethlehem people have hung the lights and put up the Christmas trees despite the concern that Christians will be denied permits again this year so that they can not get together with family members who live in Jerusalem or inside Israel.*

*Every month a group of people like me who work for different denominations in the U.S. get together to discuss new resources, advocacy ideas, and to share information so as to best utilize our time and collective energy. This group is known as the Ecumenical Advisory Group and is intended to be a contact in the land called "Holy" for our different denominations who may want more information, advice on advocacy initiatives, or just a general resource for more information on the situation or for assistance in hosting groups to the region.*

*Each year we put together a letter at Advent and Lent with the hope that the different churches will share the letter with their congregations not only as a reminder that we are all one in the body of Christ, but with hope that people will remember the Christians of the land of Jesus who have been faithful witnesses for thousands of years and be moved to ease their suffering.*

*Please take a moment to read the letter, pass it on to friends, read it to your congregations, and pray for all those around the world and in Bethlehem who are unable to enjoy the season, but still manage to find hope and solace in the knowledge of Christ's birth. May the blessings of the season be with you all! - Janet Lahr Lewis, UM Liaison in Israel and Palestine*

*Following is an Advent letter from internationals working in the land of Christ's birth from various U.S. churches.*

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*"O Come, O Come Emmanuel!"*

*Advent is upon us! The Church year begins anew. Advent is about yearning, anticipation, longing: "O Come, O Come Emmanuel!" we will sing and pray as we make the advent journey to Christmas. It is an exciting time for those of us living here, as people from all*

*over the world come to experience the land of Jesus' birth. It is also a time when we are reminded that God's justice and peace has still not come to this land and its people.*

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel!*

*The year 2009 began with the Israeli offensive on Gaza, with 1,387 Palestinians and 13 Israelis killed and over 5000 Palestinians and 182 Israelis injured. As the year continued, hundreds of Palestinians were uprooted by home demolitions or evictions and many thousands more face the threat of demolition, eviction and displacement. As the year draws to an end, we note the deepening trauma the occupation creates in the lives of the people we walk alongside. Land confiscation, settlement expansion, home demolitions, increased tension in and over Jerusalem – all central elements of the Israeli occupation - make everyday life uncertain, difficult and stressful.*

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel!*

*Reflecting on the society into which Jesus was born, we see many similarities to life here today. The ancient Israelites were occupied and suffered at the hands of a foreign power. The Roman occupiers lived freely, able to use and abuse the local population at will, while the subjugated peoples lived in constant uncertainty and anxiety, never sure how they would be treated or whether they would be singled out for random punishment. This is being repeated today for Palestinians living under the longest occupation in modern history, generally trying to live life and survive, but sometimes crossing the line into illegal and counterproductive violence, such as firing rockets from Gaza into Israel.*

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel!*

*Mary caught the hopes of so many, then and now, when she sang: "God has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. God has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich empty away" (Luke 2:53-54). We know that Jesus' life reflected that vision of Mary. Christ came to earth to bring about a new reality: a Godly realm where the oppressed are lifted up; where the meek, the hungry, and the peacemakers are blessed; where all nations stand before God's penetrating gaze.*

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel!*

*What the Palestinian community faces, Jesus knew when he walked these stony hills. More than 2000 years later, as we reflect on this situation, we are faced with many frustrations and much distress. Those of us with ministries here are often asked by visitors how, on returning home, they can add to the momentum for justice and peace. We urge, with the World Week of Peace of the World Council of Churches, that we all Pray, Educate and Advocate in our communities. To support you, our friends and partners in ministry, we also share resources from our churches below.*

*Advent is a time for hope: a hope which can transform the life of the occupied and occupier alike; a hope which can bring a new era for all people to live in freedom and justice. In this Advent season: pray for God's justice and peace in Israel and Palestine; and find out more about the realities here by visiting or learning more from the resources of our churches. Then - well informed and sustained and encouraged through prayer – please act! Not for the sake of action: but that justice will be done, that peace will reign, that all peoples may flourish with life in fullness. That is the promise of the baby in the manger who became the risen Christ.*

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel! O Come, O Come Emmanuel!*

*Blessings and Peace this Advent-tide from those of us here in the land of Christ's birth.*

*Note: The original letter included footnotes documenting the figures above.*

Bethany Fullerton, Bethlehem

Allison K. Schmitt, deployed staff member, Global Mission, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, [www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Peace-Not-Walls.aspx](http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Peace-Not-Walls.aspx)

Rev. Ian W. Alexander, Global Ministries, UCC/Disciples, <http://globalministries.org/mee/advocacy/>

Heather & Ryan Lehman, along with Peter Miller, Jerusalem

Janet Lahr Lewis, United Methodist Liaison in Israel and Palestine, [www.umc-gbcs.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=frLJK2PKLqF&b=3631781&ct=3957939](http://www.umc-gbcs.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=frLJK2PKLqF&b=3631781&ct=3957939)

Rev. Mark K. Holman, Pastor of the English-speaking Congregation at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer Old City, Jerusalem  
[www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Peace-Not-Walls.aspx](http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Peace-Not-Walls.aspx)

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*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:1-2*

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#### Awad Advent Wishes and Blessings

The blessing of Christmas for Christians today is the same as on the very first Christmas: God sent his son in human flesh to become the Savior of the world. And just as the star of Bethlehem and angelic choirs drew a chosen few on the first Christmas, worshippers today come to the city to incarnate into their lives the wonder and majesty of the event....More understanding about the situation is needed to make the future of Bethlehem and the region secure. With the challenges of the wall isolating the city into an island enclave cut off from Jerusalem and the rest of Israel, Bethlehem's Christians look to their brothers and sisters in Christ around the world for spiritual and moral support. If we could have two wishes this Christmas, the first is that the Christians of Bethlehem and the Holy Land will be encouraged and strengthened spiritually to stay in the land of their birth. The second is to see a peaceful solution to the decade's long Palestinian/Israeli conflict. With this short message of Christmas cheer, hope and goodwill, we wish you a very joyful Christmas and pray that your hearts overflow with bountiful blessings from above. - Alex and Brenda Awad

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*O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by,  
yet in thy dark streets shineth the ever lasting Light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight....  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heav'n,  
No ear may hear His coming, But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him still, The dear Christ enters in.*

- Phillips Brooks

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*Who would send a baby to heal a world in pain?*

*Who would send a baby, a tiny child?  
When the world is crying for the Promised One,  
Who would send His only Son?*

*– Mary Kay Beall  
\* \* \**

*Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?  
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?  
This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you.*

*Mary did you know?  
– words and music by Mark Lowry & Buddy Greene*

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## [2] **Christmas Greetings from Jim Gulley, UMMA chair**

Dear Colleagues in Mission, Through Advent and Christmas we hear how the "incarnate" God has come to us in Jesus, to dwell and remain with us. Further, we learn through Jesus that this world is not just a portal to another world but is the arena of God's gracious, living and transforming presence for us and all creation. The message is good news indeed, that we need not search further ... for God has found us!

On November 15, I returned from two weeks in Senegal, West Africa with a group of "unusual suspects". Eight of us traveled to Senegal to meet two of our Fulani friends Oumar Niang and Aliou Ba both of whom have been living and working among us in Summit County, Colorado, for more than 10 years. They went ahead of us for 2-3 month visits with their families. Our purpose was to meet their families, learn about their daily lives and see if we, the relatively poor and the relatively wealthy, might work together to promote development in Senegal.

Our Friends and Families of West Africa team was an unlikely lot. We range in ages from nine to near sixty-nine years. We practice occupations that include massage therapist, realtor, writer, photographer, health educator, grant writer and ag./community development specialist, retail manager; one is an elementary student. We embrace a range of personal faiths, including Muslim, Christian, Unitarian and possibly uncertain or none-of-the-above.

There in Senegal in the crucible of two-weeks of day-through-night living together, we had the chance to practice our faith. And yet, I would say, we were shy, possibly eager not to offend, probably concerned what others might think. If we had them, we kept our Bibles and books of devotion mostly in our bags and our pendant crosses mostly close to our chests.

Yet, we saw first-hand that our Muslim brothers had none of the bashfulness of us Christians. They did not wear their religion on their sleeves but on their knees, as they stopped all their activities, day and night, always discreetly, quietly but with a calm certainty that this was time for prayer, possibly a few minutes late, but clearly time for prayer. After they finished praying, they went on with other daily tasks. We learned about practical Islam in the villages of Senegal not through lectures and debates but through visits to the local "thiernos" (religious leaders), Koranic teachers with their students at night and village chiefs, students, teachers, health workers, women farmers and many others as they all graciously welcomed us to their villages.

All of us were overwhelmed by the openness, friendliness and generosity of people who have far fewer material possessions than the average American. They housed, fed and even clothed us each with gifts out of their limited resources in a most genuine and joyful way. We paid for virtually nothing in their villages.

We were not your garden variety Volunteers-in-Mission team. Yet, perhaps we were the kind of team that we need to form more often to address the scandals of racism, partisanship and dogmatic religious fervor rumbling through our own and other lands. I dare say that the "evangelism" that we need most is that which is "incarnated" and engages other people living out their own faiths (or lack thereof), as we unashamedly go forth living out our own faith, daily and through intentional inter-faith ventures such as ours. One team member witnessed:

"For me personally, this was a trip I will never forget in that it expanded my world view and appreciation of the many unique aspects of this culture and how privileged we are. I was moved to tears by the receptions we received in the villages. I do feel I was transformed and reminded of the wealth that lies in the human spirit. I was allowed to partake and share in the daily lives of these warm and hospitable people."

Perhaps in going we are the ones who need to be transformed as we reach out to other cultures, other faiths. Our calling is not simply to believe but to "incarnate" - embody and exhibit - the qualities of life in our world that we encounter in Jesus. Let us continue to "incarnate" God's mission in the year ahead.

As I was preparing my thoughts, I was reminded in a communication that I have been supported as the Chair of the United Methodist Missionary Association (UMMA) in many ways by a number of remarkable people. Some of us have the label "missionary" while others are known as "staff" of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). Some are designated "active", others "inactive" or retired. Some have joined the ranks of the no-longer-employed by Global Ministries. It has been a tumultuous year for GBGM as it has been for almost every institution in our society. Yet through the tumult, we remain a called people, who share the same mission, called to incarnate the Spirit of Christ that transforms lives of the poor, the suffering, the imprisoned, the marginalized, the unbelievers and even those who would be our enemies and systems which oppress.

I want especially to recognize one of our UMMA colleagues at GBGM, Helen Dwyer, Missionary-in-Residence for the past two and one-half years, who will shortly leave her post. Helen has incarnated the Spirit of Christ which speaks the truth in love and courage. In a letter of appreciation sent earlier, we tried to convey how deeply we valued her life and work as MIR:

*"Helen, ... Your hard work as MIR, your ideas, vision, courage and steadfast love of truth and justice in carrying out your mandate is a great part of why we have been able to make many advances during the last two years in our relationships and how we envision the MIR position and relationships in the future, as well as our vision for a Mission Board that is inclusive, open, just, caring and healthy.*

*You have acted courageously in favor of Christ's mission, the missionary community, and a healthier Board. You have not acted in a self-serving way, nor have you used your position to get ahead personally. You are truly a great example of someone faithfully attempting to follow Christ's example to bring about God's reign here on this earth.*

*We do feel hopeful and optimistic that we will see some of the fruits of your work and of UMMA's work that will further and deepen Christ's mission being carried out through the work of the GBGM."*

We trust that together with GBGM staff, we will find a replacement who can serve as effectively and faithfully as Helen has. Thank you, Helen.

To all UMMA members and all GBGM Board members and Staff, let us continue to engage one another as we work toward faithfully engaging the world in God's mission through Christ Jesus. May the incarnate God's grace and peace remain with us throughout the coming year!

### [3] Our Readers Write: Climate Witness & Faithful Reform in Health Care

Jim Wallis is one of my "culture heroes" or prophets of this generation. He has been a voice for social justice for a quarter-century, living in the District of Columbia, and speaking truth to power in effective ways. His comments on the health-care reform are well reasoned, and I forward them for your reading [quotes from Sojourners]. – Vinson H. Sutlive

*The Christian Post* states: "With the launch of a massive faith-based, pro-health reform campaign, one of the initiative's most prominent supporters clarified that those involved are not advocating a particular health reform plan, but the moral position that the health system must be fixed. **'This isn't a political issue, it is a deeply theological issue, a biblical issue, and a moral issue,'** said Jim Wallis, president of Sojourners. 'So we are not going to at any time during the debate weigh in on the particulars of policy questions...[We'll] leave the plumbing to the politicians.'

Today, right now, let's join together making the health-care debate factual, worthy of our families and communities. Let's put the special interests on notice that we want real health-care reform, not misinformation and fear-mongering.

One very misleading TV ad by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce claims the health care bill "makes a tough economy even worse"...[However, the bill doesn't take effect until 2013]. "Presumably, the economy will be in somewhat better shape by then." What about those "crushing tax increases" the Chamber ad complains about? It's correct that the health bill would raise taxes by hundreds of billions of dollars over 10 years. The vast majority of the revenue would come from a surtax of 5.4 percent on adjusted gross income over \$1 million (for couples) or \$500,000 (for single people). Are those new taxes "crushing"? Most people won't have to pay the tax. ["To whom much is given, much is required." Luke 12:48]

Sojourners has created a rapid response Website where you will find what you need to fight for the truth: [Sojourners' Health Care Reform Resources](#).

CALL your Members of Congress today, toll-free, at #1-866-279-5474 and ask them to vote for health-care reform.

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Dear Richard, Please inform people to be a **Host or Attend a Candlelight Vigil on December 8, 2009 as a National Day of Action for U.S. Health Care Reform.**

We are so close to achieving historic health care reform! The critical Senate votes are coming up in the next few weeks and we must show our support for quality health care

for all people, and legislation that includes a public option. On December 8th, communities of faith, labor, racial-ethnic minorities, health care providers, advocates, and civil rights organizations will join together in a U.S. national day of candlelight vigils to make our support known and our voices heard. If you have never participated in a public event, now is the time. If you have already been to a vigil or other public activity, we need you to do it again! **Please join us!** Our legislators need to know just how much support there is for this life-changing effort! If you are close to Washington, DC please **RSVP through Faithful Reform in Healthcare** and join us at our nation's capitol. Bring a candle and/or flashlight for yourself AND bring a couple extra candles to share for those who decide to come at the last minute or just happen to be passing by!  
**Candlelight Vigil for Health Care for All, Tuesday, December 8th ~ 5:30 - 6:30 pm,** Upper Senate Park in Washington DC on Constitution Avenue, next to the Russell Senate Office Building

**If you cannot come to DC**, please host a candlelight vigil for health care for all in your church or community. Here are some toolkits provided by Faithful Reform in Healthcare to make planning your vigil easy, as well as tips for publicizing it to the media.

**Candlelight Prayer Vigil**, Planning Tool Kit [PDF](#) | [Word](#), Publicity/Media Tool Kit [PDF](#) | [Word](#) **Service of Remembrance**, Planning Tool Kit [PDF](#) |

For more information, feel free to contact: Rev. Cynthia Abrams, Director, Alcohol, Other Addictions and Health Care Program [cabrams@umc-gbcs.org](mailto:cabrams@umc-gbcs.org)

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Dear Readers of UMMA UpDate, Caring (my dear wife and proofreader) are thankful for the dedicated health providers and many prayers that gave our grandson, Jeremiah, a second chance to live. He is now active in kindergarten. We wish you all a Blessed peaceful Christmas and New Year, Ric and Caring Schwenk

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WASHINGTON (UMNS). - United Methodist Women and the United Methodist Board of Church and Society were among sponsors of a Nov. 5 "**Climate Witness**" on the east lawn of the U.S. Capitol. The witness, coordinated by Church World Service, preceded visits with U.S. senators urging them to support climate change legislation that ensures vulnerable communities can thrive. The Rev. John McCullough, a United Methodist and top executive of Church World Service, called climate change the "most serious ethical imperative of our time." UMNS Daily Digest - November 11, 2009 (Keyword: climate change)

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*"It's not what we have but how we use it." - Theodore Roosevelt  
who preserved 230 million acres of land for future generations. T.R.'s conservation  
legacy: 18 National Monuments, 51 Bird sanctuaries, 150 National Forests  
What will be our legacy to improve the world and the lives of others?*

*Thank you Lord for guiding our forbearers to a land of opportunity.  
Forgive us when we fail to pass it on better than we found it. May you help us to act  
wisely so that our descendants will bless us for being on the right side of history.*

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#### [4] **MISSIONARY GATHERINGS in 2010**

July 23-25, **Congo Reunion**, for missionaries, Congolese and other interested friends, Lake Junaluska, Contact: Joanne Maughlin, 6602 Fisher Ave., Falls Church, VA 22046, Ph: 703-536-4153, [jmaughlin@yahoo.com](mailto:jmaughlin@yahoo.com) &/or David Allen, [davidl284@bellsouth.net](mailto:davidl284@bellsouth.net) , 904 529-9607, P.O. Box 122, Penny Farms, FL 32079.

July 30-Aug. 1, **Servants of Sierra Leone Reunion 2010**, Momodu & Saffie Kamara, 706 Americus Dr SE, Cedar Rapids, IA, Ph: 319-393-9645, [momodukamara@gmail.com](mailto:momodukamara@gmail.com)

Aug. 6-8, **Chile Gathering, All Missionaries & Volunteers-in-Mission** who have served in Chile, both past and present, are welcome. Scarritt-Bennett Center, Nashville, TN, Contact: Joyce and Dan Frankfother, PO Box 40, Milledgeville, IL 61051, Email: [jaffother@frontiernet.net](mailto:jaffother@frontiernet.net), Ph: 815-225-7113; Cell: 815-266-9070

Sept 30-Oct 4, **Stony Point Reunion Winter Class of 1967**, Oklahoma City, OK, Contact: Caroline & Glenn Folmsbee, 1801 Logan Dr., Norman, OK 73069, Ph: 405-364-6053, Email: [gcfolmsbee@att.net](mailto:gcfolmsbee@att.net)

October 14-17, **Rethink Mission: Reflection & Action**, Scarritt Bennett Center, Nashville, Contact: Richard Vreeland, 182 Ameren Way – Apt. 752, Ballwin, MO 63021-3317, USA, Tel: (636) 825-6351; email: [RLVreeland@sbcglobal.net](mailto:RLVreeland@sbcglobal.net)

Nov 8-10, **US-2 Class of 1962**, Lake Junaluska, NC, Contact: Mary Beth (Gottula) Byrne, W7839 Crestview Dr., Whitewater, WI 53190-4239, Ph: 262-473-8723, Cell: 262-215-3123, E-mail: [mbbyrne@netwurx.net](mailto:mbbyrne@netwurx.net)

#### [5] **TREASURER'S TIPS by Richard Vreeland**

As we are rapidly approaching the end of the year, those of you who have not as yet paid your dues for 2009 might want to consider doubling up and pay both 2009 and 2010 at the same time (it will save you a 44-cent stamp and will put you ahead for the next year). Some may even want to consider making a lifetime payment and never have to worry again about whether or not you are covered for the current year. This can be done by check or by giving us a paid-up life insurance policy which you may no longer need. Ric reports that his accountant allows his payment to be reported as "professional dues" when itemizing his tax return. Looking forward to hearing from you yet this year if you have not paid already. Have a blessed holiday. [RLVreeland@sbcglobal.net](mailto:RLVreeland@sbcglobal.net)

#### [6] **THIS IS YOUR INVITATION to Join or Renew your Membership**

We hope you will include the work of UMMA in your prayers and consider one of the following new options for membership: If you are not yet a member, we hope you like

this \*COMPLIMENTARYCOPY\* of UMMA UpDate and will want to join or keep up your professional membership dues. If you have paid already, Many Thanks.

--- Please fill in this form, cut off here, and send to address below with your dues ---

Your Name (Given, SURNAME):

Spouse's Name (Given, SURNAME):

Address:

City:

State/Province:

Zip:

Country:

Email:

Phone:

Please list the country(s) where you served as a GBGM missionary, including USA:

Professional membership dues payment options. Check one [box]

Membership for a couple: \$40.00;  Lifetime membership for a couple: \$800

Individual membership: \$25.00;  Lifetime membership for an individual: \$500

Affiliate membership (no vote—just interested in mission work & UpDates): \$15.00

Please make checks payable to: "UMMA" and mail to:

**Richard Vreeland**  
**182 Ameren Way - Apt. 752**  
**Ballwin, MO 63021-3317**