

## REPORT OF GBGM MEETING

April 7-10, 2003

Birmingham , Alabama

UMMA Representatives: Howard Heiner, Norma Kehrberg  
Comments added by Kristin and Dave Markay, MIRs

It was Tuesday morning, April 8, 2003, day two of the Board Meeting which is traditionally set aside for the address of the General Secretary, the Reverend Randy Day. The hotel ballroom filled quickly and additional chairs were brought in to accommodate the Conference Secretaries of Global Ministries who joined the assembly to hear the General Secretary's address. All waited in anticipation, yet with some apprehension, fully aware of the difficult financial status of the board. How would the new General Secretary of a board with a severe financial crisis address the mission board to provide the leadership to guide the church at this time of peril.

"I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, who sends us into all the world with the Gospel – the good news of love for God and neighbor and liberation from sin and despair. I also greet you in the name of the more than 2,000 men and women who witness to that Gospel as mission personnel – including staff – supported by the General Board of Global Ministries. Grace and peace to you who are the directors of this agency, the overseers of our common ministry and mission.

"War, terrorism, economic stagnation, increasing poverty,, epidemics, economic degradation, hunger, injustice and fear all calling for a response from a global mission organization" at a time when resources are lower than they have been in the last decade.

"We meet in a time of great peril for the world and for our Board: war is at the head of the list. Iraq is heavy on our hearts. The people of that internally and externally battered land including brothers and sisters in the faith, the men and women of the coalition forces, including our Untied Methodist sons and daughters, British, American and Australian. My heart is so heavy, that I want to pause right here and lift a pray of peace to God,. Can we stand and lift our voices and our faces in supplication for peace to the God of all nations. Let us look to God."

In the first few minutes of Randy Day's address we were rooted in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ and all parts of the mission family were acknowledged and incorporated, mission personnel, staff, and directors who testify and work on behalf of mission and the church.

R. Day highlighted four ways for the General Board of Global Ministries to be engaged in the work it is called to do at a time of low investment returns and declining general contributions. This IS not a time to try to survive but to be on fire for mission, to focus, take initiative, utilize the available resources by giving up notions of scarcity and release the energy of a mobilized group for mission. The second way was to use the resources, human and financial, wisely and strategically. Included in this discussion was the statement that the Board must more fully utilize the commitment and dedication of the 1,947 persons in mission in 25 categories serving 67 nations around the world with their unique perspectives enhanced by years of cross-cultural experience and sensitivity.

The third way was to cultivate the connection of partnership and mission constituencies including the new formal initiatives, annual, central conference, partner Methodist and ecumenical denominations, district, congregations and other national agencies. R. Day expressed that he believes the number and extent of this mission will grow as individuals and congregations directly touch and are touched by mission. The fourth way enunciated by Randy Day was to speak clearly and boldly. He highlighted the role of communication as an essential in spreading the gospel. Day stated that communication will

play a major role in mission revival, in terms of prayer service and support.

(Randy Day's full address is available on the GBGM web page.)

The financial status of the board was somewhat reflected in the "toned down" exuberance of past board meetings, and the directors seemed to have more time to be engaged in dialogue among themselves and as a whole.

The venue in Birmingham presented a moving opportunity to greet the members of the host committee who had made elaborate plans for the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Gathering at a fellowship dinner followed by two addresses. One was given by the former District Attorney who presented the court case for the bombing of the four little girls at the 16<sup>th</sup> street Baptist Church.

Stephen Freerrer, General Treasurer, presented the financial report. He indicated that the year 2002 was a year of accomplishments but of continued challenges. He reported that giving to the Missionary Advance was up 15% over 2001 and was strongly up in November and December 2002. Expenses came in \$3.5 million below budgeted levels, reflecting strong managerial attention to costs.

However, the picture for 2003 remains the same. Financial challenges continue and asset values accelerated their decline. The Collins and the Special Benefits Trust were lower in the year 2002 but this will be offset in 2003 as the sawmill is now fully operating. The year's ahead will continue to reveal conservative budgets and strict managing of costs.

#### MISSION PERSONNEL UNIT AND UMMA

Although there were the usual tensions or lack of information from the deputy general secretary in getting details about the agenda of MPU, Edith Gleaves established a meeting between the UMMA representatives and Curtis Henderson and herself on Monday for lunch. Unfortunately Edith (Gleaves) was hospitalized for a collapsed lung and was not able to attend the board meeting.

On Monday, Curtis invited Stephen Goldstein to join the luncheon meeting. A previous meeting had been scheduled with Sally Dyck, but it was not possible to change the MPU luncheon and a late plane arrival made it impossible to contact Sally, so she too joined the luncheon. This meeting provided an opportunity for much discussion and mutual sharing.

In addition to discussion items for the board agenda there was also opportunity to discuss possible items for inclusion in the planned May meeting. Curtis Henderson proposed that UMMA consider a resolution to General Conference which would give official status to UMMA such as for the Deaconesses and Church and Community Workers. Both UMMA representatives are reluctant to do this as it is felt that the Board of Global Ministries would want to identify with and utilize the perspectives of the mission personnel community. This needs to be discussed further.

Later in the afternoon when the Mission Personnel Unit convened, the minutes of the October meeting were approved and UMMA received a copy of the Minutes from Curtis Henderson, the chair. The minutes clearly state that UMMA's agenda from October 2002 were forwarded to the Policy and Bylaw Committee.

Edith Gleaves' report was read. Excerpts include: "The months since my last report to This body have been among the most challenging ever experienced by the GBGM. This has been particularly the case for the mission Personnel Program Area. Due to the financial crisis experienced by GBGM, deep reductions in budget, program and staff has culminated ultimately in necessary reductions in mission personnel in order to stay with the director approved 2003 budget....."

....The bottom line concerning Standard Support Missionaries is that only 18 contracts which were eligible for renewal will not be renewed. In order to keep the number of reductions as low as possible eighteen (18) Standard Support contracts which come to their natural end between July 1 and December 31, 2003 were shortened to end by June 30, (1) 2003. This date was chosen with thought especially for those missionaries who are clergy in order to facilitate the process of(f) appointment for the missionary. We are working on a case by case basis to ensure that the shortening of terms will not affect immediate or eventual post-retirement benefits.

.....  
....Mark and Nancy Garrison who served in Walter Schenck's region as missionaries are serving in Interim capacities for Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Nancy Garrison has also been assigned Interim Executive duties with the Youth and Young Adult Program. Kathleen Masters, who served as director for the Mission Resource Center, is serving Interim in North America East and West Region. Kathleen is serving in the capacity of Katie Wilkes Ball who is on medical leave. "

Edith's report stated that due to recent changes in pension by the General Board of Pensions, two additional members of Mission Personnel staff will be retiring earlier than expected. Wilma Roberts and Betty Purkey. Bill and Jerri Savutos, missionaries currently serving in Wilma's region, will be stepping into the Interim position effective May 1, 2003. Becky Dodson who is in the process of becoming a Deaconess, will work in Betty's area.

Edith's report closed with this remark, "There is still much reason to celebrate even in these challenging times. We thank God for the grace that has led us thus far, for the love that is keeping us to our tasks, and for the hope that takes us into the future."

Agenda items included changes in the Mission Personnel Handbook. The changes in themselves appeared not as substantial but more to clarify items already in the handbook, i.e. non GBGM missionary spouse must also have medical clearance prior to departure for assignment.

Agenda items forwarded to the Policy and Bylaw Committee that were sent back to MPU for approval were then reviewed again, including policy for use of local schools, standard support missionary grievance policy, and disability policies. There were also changes in the Collins Health Benefits for active and retired mission personnel. The staff indicated that these were drawn out of a variety of possible changes to the policy. Until they are approved by the board, they will not be reported here. Unfortunately, one involves the dental policy for retirees but did not address increasing the per annum cap on dental allowance. It is not clear whether it was even discussed as an option. The full range of options in changes were not shared.

The Mission Personnel staff distributed the Mission Personnel Statistics report. There are now 325 in the category of GBGM missionaries. The total of commissioned personnel is 916. Of that number, 420 are based in the US and 496 are based overseas. The total number of non-commissioned mission personnel is 786. The overall total bottom line figure on the statistics report is 1,947.

Although UMMA representatives had been promised the minutes of the Policy and Bylaw Committee that dealt with UMMA concerns before the meeting, it was not possible to obtain. In the end, this was primarily due to the illness of Edith Gleaves during the Board meeting. However, by the end of the MPU meeting, there was still no word on what exactly had happened to the UMMA issues in the Policy and Bylaw Committee. One director on the MPU, and also serving on the Policy and Bylaw Committee said that there would be follow up.

The UMMA issues were placed on the table by chair, Curtis Henderson. (See attachment 1), Aside from the request to have a report on the action taken on the items submitted in October, other items

included the resumption of various groups or meetings of mission personnel, associations, staff and directors including the Mission Personnel Conference, the Mission Forum and, of course, the Collins Task Force.

At about this time, Bishop Martinez joined the meeting and even though there were serious financial difficulties, he encouraged the Mission Personnel Unit to address the substance of the issue and not necessary from a financial standpoint. Bishop Martinez indicated that the financial issues are dealt with by the Finance Committee.

The outcome of the discussion of the various mission personnel, staff and director interfaces, was that a small group of directors will draw up a possible way forward. The MIRS and the Chair of UMMA were also named to the task force to draw UP (us) the proposal or process to present to the October meeting.

#### REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The GBGM Treasurer – Steve Feerrar – does not have an easy task explaining a difficult situation to the directors. Times are tough! The encouraging news is a attitude by the Treasurer and many directors that we need to address the issues in an open and straight forward manner. These are the highlights of Steve's report for 2002:

##### Financial Highlights, 2002

1. World Service receipts held steady after strong 2001.
2. Missionary Advance giving up 14%.
3. Expenses were managed 3.5 million below budgeted levels.
4. Slight improvement in cash position at year-end.

##### Financial Challenges, 2003 – 04

1. Asset values (stock values) have continued to decline; reserves are below required levels.
2. Continued liquidity issues (available cash) constrain payments to constituents and programs.
3. Significant increases continue in health and liability insurance costs.
4. Cost containment efforts remain restrictive.

##### Looking Ahead

1. 2004 revenues are projected to be below budgeted 2003 expenditures.
2. Recovery of capital markets will provide liquidity and some recovery in reserve accounts.
3. Cost Containment practices will continue.
4. Doing more with less.
5. Efforts are underway to enhance gifts and other sources of financial resource.

#### REPORT FROM THE POLICY AN BYLAW COMMITTEE

The Policy and Bylaw Committee dealt with the changes in the missionary handbook and the changes in the health benefits, all of which were approved by the committee to forward to the plenary.

Toward the end of the meeting, one of the directors from MPU inquired about the UMMA items that were forwarded in October. Apparently in a conference call in February they were all addressed and in the minutes. It was the understanding of the staff of the Policy and Bylaw Committee that UMMA

had received a copy of the minutes as that was the intent.. Since that had not occurred a director had an extra copy and we now have their policy.

Following are the minutes from the Conference Call of February 12, 2003 of the Policy and Bylaw Committee which handled UMMA's requests to the Mission Personnel Unit in October 2002. (See attachment 2)

"The United Methodist Missionary Association (UMMA) had forwarded a list of six recommendations to the Mission Personnel Program Area. Mission Personnel determined that it would be well for the Policy and Bylaw Committee to review and respond to the recommendations since Mission Personnel does not have authority as a policy making body.

Rene Wilbur (GBGM STAFF TO THE POLICY AND BYLAW COMMITTEE) requested and was granted an opportunity to inform the Committee regarding each of the items. She first pointed out that this list of recommendations came to the Program Area prior to the Annual Meeting of the Board in October and that two of the concerns, items 3 and 4 have been addressed since then.

Item 1 has been addressed with the development of a program of Mission Forums. One such event has already been held. The Board would like to hold another which would be inclusive of missionaries from several categories of mission service. However budget constraints have not made that immediately possible. There will be further on as it is feasible, however.

Item 2 requires more information since there is no explanation as to what is referred to by "Monetary cuts". At the moment, there is no awareness in the Program Area that cuts have been made which fall outside the letters of agreement with the missionaries.

Item 5 referencing the clause "termination at will" in the letters of agreement with missionaries, is outside the decision-making responsibility of the Program Area. It is a legal clause which must be included in contracts, letters of agreement or hiring agreements with persons who are receiving compensation from a New York-based corporation, which GBGM is. This has been explained several times but is still deemed unacceptable by UMMA. Nevertheless, GBGM must comply with the regulations of the state. Owen pointed out that this same regulation exists in several other states and is not unusual.

Item six is addressed by the incorporation of the Grievance Policy which was reviewed and approved by this Committee in this meeting. Upon approval by the full Board, it will become a policy and should alleviate the concern of UMMA."

These minutes were presented the close of the meeting to the UMMA representative as a matter of information. They were not up for discussion and the matter was closed.

There was a short follow up with the Staff of this committee following the meeting indicating that the "termination at will" cause can be used defensively and offensively. If it is used defensively, it is a protection device of the agency or corporation. However, in the experience observed in some cases of mission personnel during the last 12 months, that term has also been used in an offensive manner. This is the concern of UMMA.

#### PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: DAVE & KRISTIN MARKAY

"Randy Day's opening address seemed to set the tone for the week's meetings. His conciliatory spirit, his push for openness and transparency, his expressed desire to include the missionary community in a more substantial way - all signaled a positive change taking place. That tone seemed to carry into the

Mission Personnel Committee's discussions. One positive result was the creation of a task force to look into reforming some sort of missionary consultation. It is clear that the money for the kind of missionary gatherings that used to take place, is just not there. However, the committee seemed to want to find creative ways of getting the dialogue restarted. For the first time that we are aware, Directors will actually be participating on this task force - together with MIR's, MP staff, UMMA president, and perhaps others. That task force's discussion began informally before we left Birmingham, and has begun in a more formal way since our return to NYC. We will, of course, be seeking opinions and input from missionary groups like UMMA as the brainstorming develops.

"The Missionary Handbook continues to be updated and changed. We will be getting word out to the missionary community about decisions approved in Birmingham about: adoption policy, active health benefits plan changes, Collins health benefit plans, grievance policy, short and long-term disability policy, Wellness benefits, retirement issues, housing costs involving non-missionary spouses, and some other issues. We are currently urging the Area Regional Secretaries to send out the changes to the persons in his/her area. We will also be sending out MIR updates on email, as well as trying to get helpful info put on the GBGM web page.

"UMMA was represented well by Norma and Howard. Their notes attest to their dedication and tenacious efforts on your behalf. The UMMA meeting with folks from CCW was a good step in easing some tensions between the groups. We pray for good results from the upcoming meeting in St. Louis, called by Randy Day.

"The two of us spent much of the time in Birmingham helping to lead a training event for Conference Committees on Mission Personnel. In that group, there was much concern about cuts in missionary personnel, and much support for a new openness at the GBGM. Staff people involved in the training heard these comments plainly, and we hope that they take some of the suggestions to heart.

"We continue to feel that the doors of dialogue are opening. It is important for both sides in this long-running tension to assume a new mode of discussion. If we carry only past hurts into our discussions, we are likely to find only intransigence on the other side. If, however, we come to the table in a spirit of cooperation, much can be accomplished. The issues are important enough to stand on their own. Personal dynamics, although crucial, should not be the primary focus. We are confident that UMMA's leadership will push for justice on the issues they have lifted up for so long. We'll do all we can to facilitate the dialogue and advocate for the entire missionary community.

"The next issue of Mission Matters is at the printers. We will also be seeking UMMA input about a proposed draft from the Mission Development Committee on the global context of mission."

#### PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: HOWARD HEINER

I wish you all could have been at Birmingham to hear Rev. Randy Day's address. After seven years of struggle it was music to my ears.

There were many great points which Norma has highlighted so well above. I would like to quote a key statement Randy made: "The greatest challenge this board faces in 2003 and going forward is that of re-igniting the fires of mission where they burn low in this great denomination and of channeling and consolidating the passion where they burn brightly."

I do not live in some illusion that a wand will be waved over the GBGM and all is going to be sweetness and light. These are tough times for the world - fear, injustice and environmental degradation. But a united group of directors, staff and mission personnel led by the Spirit can make a

tremendous difference in the mission outreach of the Board.

We mission personnel need to be open and seize this opportunity to respond to the General Secretary's challenge for a united ministry to all. Let us allow the Spirit to re-ignite the fires of mission in each one of our lives.

I had the opportunity to talk to a number of directors and staff - the vast majority were thrilled by the invitation to participate in making a difference. Randy stated: "Mission is our full-time message in everything we say, and do, and think."

I really did not want to make the trip to Birmingham and face the struggle again. I was wrong! I came away with a tremendous blessing from the new spirit that is sweeping through the Board. But also another blessing was to be in Birmingham, a historical location of the civil rights movement, to be reminded again of the sacrifice of our Afro-American sister and brothers in Christ.

Thank you for allowing me to be your representative to this historic meeting.

#### PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: NORMA KEHRBERG

There appeared to be a much more relaxed atmosphere at the meeting. Selected directors of GBGM came up to us to inquire about issues and concerns, unlike past meetings where UMMA reps had to go to them. If the openness that is now evident in the atmosphere and in the ideas expressed in the address of the General Secretary, UMMA may be able to go about the original reason for its organization AND to promote and enhance the mission programs of our church utilizing active and retired missionaries.

One note for all: An action of the General Board of Pensions has resulted in the retirement of 24 lay staff of the General Board due to the way the pension will be calculated for lay staff of the church. This will have a profound affect on the work of GBGM and the fallout cannot even be calculated as yet. One is the retirement of Wilma Roberts in Mission Personnel. Wilma has played a key role in the lives of mission personnel, having been a missionary and working with Bob Harman in the old World Division. Since then she has had a variety of stated official roles, but they have always included a portfolio which included concerns of mission personnel.

#### ATTACHMENTS

### # 1 Recommendations to the Mission Personnel Committee From the United Methodist Missionary Association (UMMA), Apr., '03

1. Report on follow up of recommendations requested of the Mission Personnel Committee in the October, 2002 meeting.
2. Consider resuming the twice yearly Mission Personnel Consultations with new guidelines and directives with representatives from mission personnel associations, staff and directors.
3. Consider resuming the Collins Pension Plan Task Force made up of representatives of recipients and managers of the plan.
4. Consider restarting the Mission Forums with revised goals and guidelines involving mission personnel, directors and staff in various parts of the world.

5. Clarify Education Endowment Fund procedures so that information on the expected distribution from the Endowment Fund is made available routinely so that parents can adequately plan for their children's' higher education.

## #2 REQUESTS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION, Oct., '02

1. Report on progress of establishing a mechanism within GBGM by which the Directors can draw upon the experiences and perspectives of mission personnel for input to better inform their decisions.
2. Report on the removal of monetary cuts to mission personnel currently serving under the terms and circumstances of a letter of agreement until the end of their current terms.
3. Present a letter of explanation from the President of the Board to all staff, missionaries and host organizations outlining:
  - a. Actions being taken to alleviate the GBGM financial crisis; and
  - b. How priorities are being established in the new financial environment of the GBGM
4. Clarify how the downsizing of mission personnel avoided any discrimination due to age, county or type of assignment.
5. Remove the unjust "termination at will" clause from letters of agreement.
6. Present the draft appeal process that will allow individuals or associations to appeal policy decisions as interpreted by the GBGM Cabinet.