

UMMA UpDate #59, September 18, 2008

e-bulletin of the

United Methodist Missionary Association

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"Linking mission workers worldwide and moving forward"

Summer issue:

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[1] United Methodist Missionary Association (UMMA) Annual Meeting

UMMA will hold its 2008 Annual Gathering & Business Meeting, Stamford Marriott Hotel, Stamford, CT from October 12-14, 2008. All members of UMMA are invited to attend. Room rates are discounted to \$80.00 per person per night per room (double occupancy) for Oct. 12 and 13. Please submit your names for room reservation by Friday, Sept. 19 to Jim Gulley jim.gulley@comcast.net. Ask Jim about Day Visitor passes if you can't stay overnight.

The Gathering will begin at 3:00 pm with devotions led by Norma Kehrberg followed by call to order and introduction by Jim Gulley, Chair. Edward Paup, new General Secretary of GBGM (formerly Bishop) speaks on "A Vision for Mission through GBGM and the UMC". Q&A with the new General Secretary will follow. At 5:00 pm, Jim Gulley will give his report "The Year 2008 in Review + Word from the Trenches" followed by the Treasurer's report by Richard Vreeland.

Other highlights will be attending GBGM Board Member Program Orientation Sessions & Committee Meetings, attending GBGM Board Meeting Plenary sessions, Overview of the Board / Multimedia Presentation will focus on the 4 Quadrennial Goals, the Welcome Dinner – General Secretary's Address. The General Secretary will also lead the Bible Study during the week.

[2] Response to the new General Secretary by Jim Gulley, chair

Dear Ed/General Secretary Paup:

This morning in my day room near Incheon Airport, Seoul, Korea, I received your letter to United Methodists as you assume your new duties as General Secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries. On behalf of the United Methodist Missionary Association (UMMA), welcome to the post. To borrow from the political scene: "We are fired up and ready to go!" with you on this new journey. As missionaries (current and

former), we are fairly well-informed on where GBGM has been. We are now ready to envision with you and the GBGM team where and how God is calling United Methodists to engage in mission together....

[3] **Theology of Commission Consultation by Norma Kehrberg**

A two-day consultation on the Theology of Commissioning was held at Stony Point, New York from August 24-26, 2008. The consultation began at the conclusion of the GBGM Mission Personnel Conference.

The consultation developed out of a request from the National Association of Deaconess and Home Missioners particularly in regard to the language of commissioning used at the commissioning services of the GBGM. At a meeting of representatives of the missionary associations in New York December 3-4, 2007, it was agreed by the association representatives to hold a consultation on the Theology of Commissioning. Leadership for the consultation would be taken by NADAM with Darlene DiDomineck, designated the coordinator of the consultation. Representatives of the other missionary associations, UMMA and Church and Community Workers association would participate on the planning team and in the consultation. Also present in the consultation was a representative from the Young Adult Missionary community.

During the time together, three papers were presented: Consecration/Commissioning and the Deaconess Community by Betty J. Letzig, retired Deaconess; The Theology and Practice of Commissioning in the Wesleyan Tradition by Dr. Philip Wingeier-Rayo, GBGM missionary and Professor of Mission at Pfeiffer University and Biblical Perspectives on Commissioning by Dr. Doug Wingeier, Emeritus Professor of Practical Theology of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and former GBGM missionary. Betty J. Letzig also developed and shared a selected history of the deaconess movement within the various configurations within former bodies of what is now the United Methodist Church.

GBGM staff members present for all or most of the consultation included Rev. Edith Gleaves, Becky Dodson Louter and Harriet Olson. Additionally Fred Price, Glen Rowley and Steve Goldstein were present for a short time.

The majority of time was spent in discussing the meaning, purpose and current practices of commissioning as understood by the participants present as well as a review of one commissioning service. One participant had been commissioned four times. Out of the discussion, the group developed shared understandings. These understandings will be reviewed and acted on by the missionary associations with the shared results forwarded to the appropriate staff at GBGM. It is anticipated that this will be finalized by mid-November, 2008.

Members present on behalf of UMMA included: Phil and Diana Wingeier-Rayo, Ellen and Jeff Hoover, Doug Wingeier, Jim and Helen Dwyer and Norma Kehrberg

It is anticipated that UMMA will discuss the shared understandings at the UMMA Gathering in October, 2008 and forward the results through the chair to the leaders of the other missionary associations before forwarding a combined response to GBGM staff. August 24-26, 2008, Stony Point, New York

[4] **Biblical Perspectives on Commissioning by Doug Wingeier**

Emeritus Professor of Practical Theology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, at the Theology of Commissioning Forum, Stony Point, NY, August 24-26, 2008

The word “commission” appears only twice in the Bible. One is in Ezra 8:36

where it refers to the directives or decrees sent by the king of Persia with the returning exiles to his officials in the outlying provinces. The other, in Paul's speech to Agrippa in Acts 26:12, points to the official authorization from the high priest to arrest Christians that he was carrying to Damascus. Since neither of these involves or envisions a formal, liturgical act authorizing and sending persons into service, it is necessary to expand the search for biblical guidance on what we today in United Methodism think of as "commissioning."

My extensive search has taken me to the dictionary (for definitions), the thesaurus (for synonyms), the Discipline (for Par. 1313 on deaconesses), the Book of Worship (for the Orders for Commissioning Missionaries and Deaconesses), and the recently produced DVD on "Church and Community: Kaleidoscopic Ministry." With this background, I returned to the Bible to examine instances on both testaments where persons underwent experiences similar to what we call commissioning."

Webster's 7th New Collegiate Dictionary provides the following definitions of "commission" relevant to our search: (1) an authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform acts; a charge; (2) authority to act for, in behalf of, or in place of another; (3) an act of entrusting or giving authority (4) and (of a ship) making ready for active service. "Commissioning" is defined as: to furnish with a commission; to confer a formal commission on; and to order to be made. My Word Perfect thesaurus provides these synonyms: to appoint, authorize, charge, empower, contract, order, request, requisition.

Commissions, and commissioning occur in several familiar contexts: the military, ship-building, government (groups assigned a specific task), and religion, where the words are used to refer to sins (of commission) and to the church's formal act of dedication, consecration or commitment to sacred tasks of persons like missionaries, deaconesses, probationary members, and church and community workers. Comparable terms include: call or vocation, ordination, consecration, dedication, installation, authentication, recognition and appointment.

Paragraph 1313 of the 2004 Discipline, which states the purpose of the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner, includes the following eleven aspects relevant to commissioning: purpose: to express love and concern for needs in the world; function: to enable the full ministry and mission of the people of God; mandate: to alleviate suffering, eradicate injustice, develop human potential, and build global community; qualification; professional training; empowerment; by the Holy Spirit; expectation; to devote one's life to Christ-like service; legitimation; the authority of the Church; recognition; approved and appointed by the bishop; condition; available for service in the church or beyond; terms; full-time service; and options: diverse forms of service to make Jesus Christ known in the world. ...

[Because of space email space limitations, we have to skip down to the conclusion. The full text will be available: **click to:** <http://www.umma-global.org> **and see Reports.**

Conclusion

Elements of commissioning in the Old Testament accounts that go beyond contemporary usage, and therefore could inform it, include: attention to need, crisis, and emotional state; invocation of awe, mystery, and divine manifestations; emphasis on responsibility to others, accountability to God, and being a blessing after receiving one; speaking a prophetic word confronting sin and evil; accepting difficult assignments; acknowledging unworthiness and limitations; persistence, receptivity, and emphasis on continuing learning and growth; and reminders of God's grace, authority, and

empowerment.

Present-day commissioning practice could benefit from attention to the following dimensions highlighted in the New Testament instances examined: In the context: time, place, prayerful preparation, inclusiveness and hospitality. Regarding the charge, the mission of justice and liberation, self-denial and willingness to suffer, taking authority, working in partnership, following directions, maintaining a present focus, affirming equality and building inclusive community, challenging prejudice, custom and tradition, and following the Spirit's leading. For the agents/authorities, sacramentality, challenge, naming, promising, authorizing, proclaiming, setting apart and sending. Concerning the participants, prior experience, present stress and distraction, prayerful discernment, listening and responding, acceptance of difference, follow-up nourishment and strengthening, and a sense of being sent. With respect to the activity of God/Jesus/Spirit, setting limits, endorsing, granting authority, inspiring, inviting, calling, sending, guiding, promising, confronting, bestowing, blessing, and empowering.

In a concluding word from Jesus recorded in an incident not explored in this study – the request from the sons of Zebedee to sit on either side of Jesus in his glory (Mark 10:35-45) – those being commissioned who “wish to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom (i.e., a deliverance) for many.”

[5] OUR READERS WRITE

Dear Richard, I had not been in touch with the group for over a year, except through other missionaries. I will send in my membership money and get back on the list. This was very informative with news from so many Missionaries. I will look forward to keeping up through my computer now. Thanks again for the UMMA UpDate. I remember when we set it up UMMA at a missionary conference in 1996. I will look forward to hearing from the group again. *Kyrie Eleison*, (as Hank Lacey used to say). - Delaine Dehainaut, served in Latin American countries

Thanks Ric, for your informative and encouraging newsletter. Sometimes, I find it hard to keep up with all the small amounts of annual stuff, so Dick Vreeland will be receiving a check for our lifetime memberships any day now. We expect to get many years of news. In Latin America, the GBGM has scheduled a retreat of active missionaries for November. While it's not open to former missionaries, it is certainly a wonderful opportunity for those of us who are still active to get to know one another and to have time with GBGM representatives. I don't know what other regional meetings of active personnel are planned. - Janet & Roy May, Costa Rica

Dear Schwenks! Richard: Thank you so very much for the editorial work put into the UMMA bulletin. Waverly was hard hit by the Iowa floods but our basement is slowly drying. Best to you both. - Earlene (Hamel) Hawley, P3 to the Philippines, ca. 1951-53

Hi, Ric, We're just back from attending the Korea Missionary reunion in Lake Junaluska. It was a great meeting with over 250 in attendance. This involves numerous protestant mission groups as well as alumni from some of the international schools. There were lots of Mish Kids, most of whom are no longer kids, and even some grandchildren and great grandchildren. The Methodists (United and otherwise) had the largest number in

attendance. During our separate denominational meeting Shirley Wu passed out application forms for UMMA. I'm not sure how many responded. Quite a few of them already belong. - Gene Matthews, Iowa City

Ric, Thanks for including me in the UMMA mailings. I would like to be a part of the suggested long-term discussion topics on UMC Restructure and Relationships to Autonomous Churches. Please refer me to the conveners. I am recovering from quadruple bypass surgery in early May. Otherwise all is well. Take care. Robert J. Harman Danbury WI 715-259-4217

Dear Ric, Thanks for the informative newsletters. As I do itineration I am finding that the face of mission and the relationship of the missionary to the local congregation has changed greatly over the years. I look forward to discuss some of the changes I have witnessed and how missionaries can continue to improve the way we relate to our supporting congregations and conferences. The falling value of the dollar is reaching a crisis with regard to financing of our work at Mujila Falls (and I am sure at most other mission projects around the world) and, I think, calls for some re-evaluation and focus by GBGM and UMCOR on how they can continue to assist the missionaries they place in the world to insure that they continue to do the job that they were called to perform. - Paul L. Webster, serving in Zambia

Dear Ric, Thanks for the recent UMMA Update #58. We enjoy getting and reading them--except for notices of ones we'll not see again on earth. Since we have joined UMMA we have gotten Updates from #42 up to the recently arrived #58. We are unable to find #53 and #56. Would it be possible to e-mail them to us? We look forward to seeing you at our SE Asia Reunion in Nashville next June. - Frank and Rosalie Amos

Dear Family and Friends: We are writing to share our deep concern for the people of Cuba who have suffered a tremendous blow from three storms in rapid succession – Gustav, Hanna, and Ike. There was damage or destruction of almost half of the Methodist churches and parsonages throughout the island. Because our General Board of Global Ministries is not able to send financial assistance (see http://gbgm-umc.org/global_news/full_article.cfm?articleid=5139), if you feel led to help our Methodist brothers and sisters in Cuba, please send your contribution to the Florida Conference. Make checks to Florida Conference Treasurer, designating them for "Disaster Relief, Methodist Church in Cuba," and send them to: Conference Center, 1140 McDonald St., Lakeland, FL 33801. Please pray for everyone in Cuba during this incredibly difficult time. We think it might be helpful to urge our Senators and Representatives to waive the embargo against Cuba for at least a specified period of time in order to allow aid to reach the Cuban people in their time of need. "Love your enemies, do good... Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:35, 36). Thank you and God bless you, Betty and Walt Whitehurst BettyW5209@aol.com

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“Wars are a failure of human imagination.” – Liberato Bautista

“How does a country win an occupation that costs 10 billion dollars every month?”

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[6] MISSIONARY GATHERINGS AND REUNIONS

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April 2009 GBGM Board Meeting + Meeting of 2009 Mission Forum Planning Team

June 26-28, 2009 Malaysia/Singapore/Indonesia Missionary Reunion at Scarritt-Bennett, Nashville, Contact: David & Shirley Wu, shirleyawu@yahoo.com

August 2009, Tentative Joint Mission Forum and Global Mission Personnel Conference (exact date and theme to be determined)

September 25-28, 2009, Nigeria Missionary Reunion, UMC Canyon Camp, west of Oklahoma City. Contact: Delphine Jewell, 14901 N. Penn Ave. - Apt. 379, Oklahoma City, OK 73134; Phone: 405-753-9035; Email: edjewell@juno.com

October 20-23, 2009 Brazilian Missionary Reunion, Lake Junaluska. Contact: Jane Spencer, jane.robert@verizon.net

[7] TREASURER'S TIPS by Richard Vreeland

Where have all of our members gone? As of September 17 we have 146 Voting Members (who paid 2008 dues, including 2 Lifetime Members) and 25 Affiliate Members. Last year we had a total of 264 Voting Members and 70 Affiliates. With the year nearly 75% complete, it is troubling that our membership is only about a half that of last year.

Once again I am asking you to review your check register to make sure that you have sent in that payment which you thought was done. If you have any questions, please e-mail me for clarification: RLVreeland@sbcglobal.net . If you find that you haven't paid, please complete the following form and send in your 2008 UMMA information and dues payment. We appreciate all who support for the association and the work which we are trying to do on your behalf.

When completing the form, please print clearly, especially your e-mail address. This is the quickest way to acknowledge receipt of your check. Thank you.

[8] THIS IS YOUR INVITATION, Join UMMA 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 *COMPLIMENTARY COPY* of UMMA UpDate and will want to join or keep up your annual membership dues. If you have paid already, many thanks.

--- Please fill in this form, cut off here, and send to Richard Vreeland with 2008 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 missionary, including USA:

Annual 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