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Division of Overseas Ministries Report – October 13, 2008
David Vargas, President

The Division of Overseas Ministries (DOM) of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Wider Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ continue to participate in a common witness in mission through Global Ministries. The DOM/Global Ministries is part of the Disciples' identity as a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world, sending and receiving persons in mission, and working with partners to heal the brokenness of creation and bring justice and peace to the whole human family. Also, DOM/Global Ministries affirm that the current four priorities of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are imperatives, not just for domestic ministries within the United States and Canada, but also for the church's presence and witness beyond our national boundaries and ... *to the ends of the earth*. With that in mind, and in an effort to encourage pastors, lay leaders, congregations, regions and seminaries to also claim the identity of a Global Mission Church as a priority, DOM/Global Ministries launched in 2008 the following four program initiatives:

A People to People Study Trip for Disciples Seminarians

Thirteen theological students from Disciples seminaries and divinity houses visited Venezuela, June 15-25, 2008. Participants in the first Study Trip included: Amy Walters and Monique Crain (Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis); Joel Saucedo and Casey Abney Matthews (Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth); Christy Newton and Young Jun Yang (Disciples Seminary Foundation, Claremont); Sarah Renfro and Stephanie McCormick (Lexington Theological Seminary, Lexington, Kentucky); Shauna St. Clair and Robyn Fickes (Disciples Divinity House at Vanderbilt, Nashville); Rebecca Anderson and Aaron Smith (Disciples Divinity House, University of Chicago). The group was composed of three African Americans, one Hispanic, one Asian American, and seven Euro Americans, and was co-led by Julia Brown Karimu, DOM vice-president and Mission Personnel executive, and Carmelo Alvarez, a missionary who served as theologian-in-residence. The goals of the study tour were to equip a new generation of pastors to become Global Mission Pastors, capable of turning their congregations into Global Mission Churches; to help empower Disciples of Christ seminaries to become Global Mission Seminaries; to develop leaders with a commitment and passion for God's mission in the world; and to identify individuals interested in serving as missionaries through Global Ministries.

College of Missions Summer Internships for Disciples Seminarians

Three Disciples seminarians served as College of Missions Summer Interns for ten weeks, from June through August 2008, assigned respectively to the Latin America and Caribbean, Africa, and Mission Interpretation and Constituency Relationships offices, based in Indianapolis. Nominations for that assignment were by the deans of Disciples' theological institutions, and the selection was made by a staff committee. The three interns included one Hispanic male, one African American male and one Euro American female, as follows: Luis Giorbolini, a member of Iglesia Cristiana Sinaí in Brooklyn, New York, and second year M.Div. student at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana; Aaron Smith, member of Light of the World Christian Church in Indianapolis and second year M.Div. student at the Divinity School, University of Chicago; and Tracy Seigman, member of High Street Christian Church in Akron, Ohio, and third year M.Div. student at Lexington Theological Seminary.

Global Immersion Trips for Disciples Regional Ministers

Eight regional ministers (or a representative) participated in the first "Be A Global Mission Region Immersion Trip" led by Sandra Gourdet, area executive for Africa, and Bob Shebeck, executive for Mission Interpretation and Constituency Relationships, to the Disciples Community of the Congo, Africa, September 16-October 1, 2008. Those participating in the trip were: Dale Braxton (Alabama/NW Florida), Denny Williams (Arizona), Cathy

Hubbard (Canada), Jon Lacey (Michigan), John Richardson (North Carolina), Bill Edwards (Ohio), Doug Wirt (Oregon), and Don Dewey (Pacific Southwest). Regional ministers participating in this immersion trip were committed to affirm and incorporate global mission as a key component in their regional transformation strategy using the “Be a Global Mission Region” model over the next three years. As part of the trip, each regional minister developed an action plan for their specific constituency.

At the time of this report, another twelve regional ministers were participating in a second Immersion Trip, this time to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, February 5-19, 2009. Participants in this second immersion experience were: Thaddaeus Burwell Allen (West Virginia); Rebecca Lynn Hale (Northwest); Barbara E. Jones (Great River); Walter Ray Miles (Georgia); George Lee Parker (Virginia); Penny Sue Ross-Corona (Mid-America); Glen Jay Stewart (Tennessee); Loy Paxton Jones (Kansas); Sotello Vonzell Long (South Carolina); Don Hiscox (Upper Midwest); Tom Jewell (Oklahoma); and Ralph Datema (Central Rocky Mountain). In addition to the 20 regions that would have participated in “Be A Global Mission Region” Immersion Trips by the end of February 2009, it should also be noted that four regional ministers participated in a similar experience to China in March 2008, under the leadership of Xiaoling Zhu, area executive to East Asia and Pacific, and another visited the Congo under the auspices of DOM/Global Ministries in May 2008. This means that by spring 2009, the leaders of 25 out of 33 regions will have been exposed to this DOM/Global Ministries initiative. Plans are underway for a final immersion trip to Israel/Palestine, Syria and Turkey, early December 2009.

Pairing Home-based Staff With All Disciples Regions.

All Disciples regions are already paired with an Indianapolis-based DOM/Global Ministries staff person. As part of this initiative, the staff participated in all regional assemblies held in 2008. Participating in regional gatherings and engaging in direct communication with regional ministers and staff have been a great learning experience for DOM/Global Ministries staff, and a new way of strengthening relationships with not only regional ministers, but also local pastors and lay leaders.

In addition to these new program in initiatives, and as voted by the DOM/Global Ministries boards, a resolution to claim the identity of a Global Mission Church for all expressions of the church and recognizing the living out of this commitment as one of the priorities of the Disciples church has been forwarded through the General Board for action at the July 29-August 1, 2009 General Assembly.

AFRICA

Although the year 2008 presented many challenges and opportunities, it has been pleasing to note a new commitment to “gift exchange” that comes with global partnerships. The global economic crisis that has weighed much on American citizens has not spared our global partners who continue to be profoundly affected. Critical presence has not been just a catch word for Global Ministries, but is a way of being. In spite of many difficulties, we were present with each other. Our global partners offered gifts of extravagant hospitality to the many groups that traveled to the continent. They also offered sacrificial gifts in kind that came with messages of hope and wisdom. Thoughtful insight, financial contributions were offered during our board meetings. Because of the steadfast support of staff, committed donors to Global Ministries and denominational funding we were able to accompany them in many ways – during political crises and socio-economic hardships with healthcare and educational programs, economic sustainability programs, advocacy, and providing human resources.

There is no single way to describe politics in Africa. What is true is that the road to US style democracy is not always easy. This was the case in Kenya, a country known for stability and growth. When political turmoil erupted in Kenya at the beginning of January 2008 following the December 2007 presidential elections, churches were weakened or compromised by their silence or participation in the emotional events. Other partners, like the All Africa Conference of Churches and the Program for Christian-Muslim Relations, worked hard to bring peace and chart a path to reconciliation. The presence of Global Ministries’ missionary (Phyllis Byrd) during the turmoil, was a balm because of her assistance in organizing some of the peace talks. Global Ministries provided assistance with training programs in conflict management and transformation designed for the young and old. Whereas there was violence following the elections in Kenya, we celebrated with our partners in Ghana their peaceful election and transfer of power. We were present with the Program for Christian Muslim Relations in a small way as they promoted peace on the continent.

The political and socio-economic situation in both Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo required a lot of attention throughout the year. The “war” on the people gave reason for reflection, learning, advocacy, and action. In both countries, it was the resilience and spirit of the people which helped them to maintain their courage while “under fire.” No human explanation can be given for the endurance of the Congolese people in the face of an armed conflict which has caused the direct, or indirect, death of almost six million people since 1998 in what has been dubbed by the International Rescue Committee as “one of the world’s worst and most forgotten crises” and the “world’s deadliest documented conflict since World War II.” The rape of the natural resources, as well as the rape of women and girls who are used as weapons of war, has caused us, as Christians, to look inward to discern our indirect role in fueling the crisis and getting involved in advocacy. One tangible way of being present with our partners in the Congo has included letters to Congress to voice concern that the exploitation of the mineral –coltan - in east Congo, which is used to facilitate our use of electronic equipment, such as cell phones, computers and play stations, is an underlying cause of the war that creates a life of hardship for the people of Congo. We worked during the year to get the message out about this little known war and led two delegations of high powered church leaders to the country.

Although the grave political situation in Zimbabwe is quite complex and goes deeper than the media portrays, it is clear that the majority of the people continue to be bent and on the verge of complete brokenness while their government, in this “war” on the people, fails to restore peace and wholeness. The people who have chosen to remain in the country show great resilience in their fight for liberation from a failed government, hunger, poverty, a collapse of infrastructure such as the health care system, schools, and roads, and hyper-inflation causing widespread unemployment. At their point of deepest need, Global Ministries has consistently been present in the areas of healthcare, emergency food assistance, assistance for victims caught in the cross fire, program assistance for those who work with orphans and vulnerable children, scholarships to help build leadership capacity and advocacy.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Global Ministries has provided healthcare assistance in six hospitals, all but one located in a rural area. Work has started on the Bolenge Hospital - an important symbol of community wholeness – which burned two years ago. Agriculture projects have been supported to help alleviate hunger and encourage sustainability, and women rape victims have a chance at psycho-social support and training.

Healthcare is not only a priority in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe; it is also a priority for all of our partners. HIV/AIDS is only one disease creating havoc in the lives of our partners to which we have responded. Other diseases have caused unnecessary deaths – malaria, measles and other childhood diseases, and most recently, cholera. We have been present by providing staff to accompany our partners. Dawn Barnes works closely with partners in South Africa to provide hospice care for those who otherwise would not find loving care and dignity as they prepare for death. Scott Couper coordinated HIV/AIDS programs for churches in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.

Education has been identified by our partners as a critical need and Global Ministries views it as a priority by supporting educational initiatives from kindergarten to postgraduate studies among partners in Kenya, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, South Africa, Zambia, Lesotho, and Swaziland. School buildings that were destroyed during the war in Angola have been rebuilt or refurbished. Critical presence has meant providing qualified personnel to assist our partners with capacity-building and leadership development – Donna Dudley with DASEP in Angola, Susan Valiquette at Inanda Seminary in South Africa, James and Jayanthi Wilson at Kgolagano Seminary in Botswana, Mark Behle at Matsitise High School in Lesotho, and Carla Giger at Bridgman Center in South Africa.

Economic sustainability and good quality of life are goals articulated by our partners who are faced with challenges that often seem insurmountable. Clean water and food security are basic necessities of life. They have become luxuries of life in many of the countries where we seek to be a presence, and this is a justice issue. Drought is a chronic problem in Kenya, Lesotho and Mozambique. Critical presence in 2008 meant providing clean water for many communities in Kenya and Lesotho with plans for wells in Mozambique in early 2009 so that economic sustainability can become possible. Critical presence has meant having Global Ministries’ missionary, Jon Barnes, assist community leaders in South Africa with community sustainability projects. Critical presence has meant providing seeds, farm land and equipment to meet some of the partners’ deepest needs in Swaziland, Angola, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Angola, and South Africa.

We have received much from our partners. Open arms of welcome were extended to many individuals and groups in 2008 – college students who learned from disadvantaged youth in Botswana, regional ministers and the General Minister and President got a glimpse of the strong faith and courage under fire in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Republic of Congo. Partners in Lesotho, Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, Swaziland, and Angola graciously received individuals and groups. Partnerships were established between the regions of Michigan and Indiana with regions in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Reciprocal visits are being organized for 2009 so that hospitality is not a one-way path.

Conclusion

A lot of mutual learning and sharing took place in 2008. Lives were changed on both sides of the ocean and friendships were formed. As we in the United States allow ourselves to move from our sheltered lives, we do develop a better understanding of the "other." Equally important is having our partners understand us so that, together, we become a critical presence for each other knowing that we are nothing without each other.

EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC

Global Ministries "has timely and appropriately been present with partners in meeting God's people and creation at the point of deepest need" in many countries through out East Asia and the Pacific, such as, accompanying partners in China, as the country experienced massive loss of lives as the result of the May 12, 2008 earthquake; and with the people of the Pacific as they work desperately to save the environment and lives of its people as they suffer the effects resulting from global warming; with partners in Japan as the church advocates that the government abide by "Article 9" of its constitution, which states that the Japanese people will not suffer from war that results from the action of the government; and with the people of the Philippines, where church leaders and community activists have been assassinated and tortured.

Regional: Pacific

Many islands in the Pacific are just about 4 -5 feet higher than sea level, and global warming could make these islands disappear if the climate changes keep getting worse. In June 2008, the executive had deep discussions with Pacific church leaders when he visited Global Ministries' partners in the Pacific. The Pacific Conference of Church (PCC), the ecumenical leading organization, has been working with its member churches to speak out and let the whole world hear their voices. As a partner of PCC, Global Ministries fully supports their ministries to advocate on climate change issues. Theologically, Pacific Theological College (PTC), another Global Ministries' partner, has been encouraging their students to research and advocate on this issue. Mr. Fei Tevi, General Secretary of PCC, is invited to attend General Synod 27 of the United Church of Christ in the summer of 2009. Dr. Feleterika Nokise, the Principal of PTC, is invited to attend the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the summer of 2009.

China

Early January 2008, the 8th National Conference of the TSPM/CCC concluded in Beijing and the names of the new leaders have been announced. Rev. Gao Feng is the President of the China Christian Council and Elder Fu Xianwei, from Shanghai, is now the Chair of the National Committee of the Three Self Patriotic Movement. Rev. Kan Baoping is chosen as the General Secretary of the CCC and Rev. Xu Xiaohong, the General Secretary of the TSPM. This marks the passing of the torch to a new generation of leaders whose average age is around 50. More than half of the new leaders are in their 40s and 50s. There were six Vice-Presidents elected to the CCC and six Vice-Chairs to the TSPM.

An 8.0 earthquake hit Sichuan on May 12, 2008 and resulted in the death of 69,225 people, in addition 17,923 individuals are missing and 374,640 injured. More than 5,000 children died, and 4,800,000 lost homes. Global Ministries' partners, Amity Foundation and Sichuan Radio and TV University staff, were among the first to arrive hours after the quake struck. Amity's relief operations have benefited over 120,000 people in the worst-hit counties. Donations of \$3.5 million have been received and Amity has already disbursed \$920,000 in relief goods, including thousands of polyurethane sheets for shelters, rice, cooking oil, drinking water, noodles, baby food, quilts, and diapers. Amity sent a team of seven social work professors and psychologists from Nanjing, to provide counseling and assess the social and psychological needs of the quake victims. Thousands of after shocks continue to cause damage. The Sichuan Radio and TV University staff donated more than \$30,000 to people who have suffered. Moreover, the university raised more than \$650,000, including \$20,000 from WOC/ OGHS/CGMB, to help people in disaster areas with food, medicine and temporary houses.

New partner relationships developed with Zhoukou Christian Church Council in supporting those with HIV/AIDS. Four houses was built for 4 poor families; trees were planted; 260 families received milking goats for good nutrition; a school was built for HIV/AIDS villages children; and 1000 large print bibles were given to church elder members.

Hong Kong

CGMB developed a new partnership with the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY). The APAY is an alliance of YMCAs in 27 countries in Asia and the Pacific. The YMCAs in Asia are very much community-oriented,

engaged in community-building and reaching out to those who Jesus calls “the least” in society. The YMCAs in different countries have been engaged, not only in dialogue with people of other faiths, but also in interfaith cooperation programs, particularly on issues of grassroots peace-building in areas of Asia where religion is perceived to be an element of a conflict. Together with organizations from the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim faiths, acting as the Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF), they have implemented six consultations or workshops since 2003 and a major annual program, the School of Peace, since 2006. The East Asia and the Pacific Office and the Southern Asia Office recommended Global Ministries, missionary, Rev. Bruce Van Voorhis to serve as the coordinator for Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF).

Japan

The executive attended the Korean Christian Church in Japan’s (KCCJ) celebration of its 100th anniversary, which was held October 12-13, 2008, in Osaka, Japan, and the United Church of Christ in Japan’s 36th General Assembly held October 21-23, 2008 in Tokyo, Japan.

Japan, as a nation, forever renounced war as the Introduction of its Constitution clearly states. "We, the Japanese people resolve that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government" (Introduction of the Constitution). Article 9 is a firm pledge to the people in Okinawa and Asia not to wage war and military invasion ever again. It is a commitment based on the repentance of the aggression committed during the Asia Pacific war. Article 9 is a law that binds the government of Japan to not to wage war under any circumstance.

Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, an initiative convened by the United Nations, refers to Article 9 in the context of the challenges of arms reduction and demilitarization in North East Asia. "Japan should strictly abide by, and preserve, Article 9 of its Constitution. Any revision of this provision would form a threat to peace and stability in the region." Peace loving people in the world expect Japan to keep Article 9. The conference issued a statement to promote the movement for non-violence and peace, not only in Japan, but also in Asia and in the world. The appeal to the Japanese government would constitute stopping construction of a new military base in Okinawa, withdrawing troops deployed abroad, and to acknowledge responsibility and apologize for past aggression against the people of the Pacific region. CGMB fully supports and participates in this mission.

North and South Korea

February 5 through 7, the Global Advocacy and Education associate, Derek Duncan, represented U.S. churches as part of a panel addressing the topic: “The Role of the Churches regarding Peace, Unification and social Development on the Korean Peninsula.”

The associate was a guest of Global Ministries’ partner, the Evangelical Church in Hesse-Nassau, Germany, at a Korean-German Seminar on South and North Korean Unification.

The issue of peace, development and unification is a high priority of Global Ministries’ partners on the Korean Peninsula, including South Korea’s Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) and Korean Confederation of Churches (KCF) in North Korea. Both the PROK and KCF were represented by delegations at the seminar.

February 7 through 8, the Korean-German seminar was followed by a meeting of the Ecumenical Consortium for Peace building and Social Development on the Korean Peninsula. The main focus was how the ecumenical community can advocate Korean re-unification and support Korean churches and communities in the process. Both topics remain urgent issues for Global Ministries’ partners in North and South Korea. The National Council of Churches in Korea is planning a delegation to U.S. partner churches to encourage more vigorous lobbying by U.S. churches and aid in the reform of current U.S. policy.

On June 27, the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) issued a statement by Rev. Yoon Kil-Soo, General Secretary and Rev. Kwon Young-Jong, Chair, Peace and Reunification Committee to welcome the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) declaration of its nuclear program and destruction of the cooling tower. The PROK, having consistently prayed and worked for reconciliation and peace for the Korean peninsula, wholeheartedly welcomes the declaration by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) of its nuclear program and its intention to destroy the cooling tower at its main nuclear reactor, a symbol of the DPRK’s nuclear weapon program.

Micronesia

The Micronesia Council of the United Church of Christ held its General Assembly on the Marshall Islands, June 17-20. The executive, along with Rev. Charles Buck, Conference Minister, attended the General Assembly. Four churches: The Congregational Church of the Marshall Islands-United Church of Christ, The Kosrae Congregational Christian Church, The United Church of Christ of Pohnpei, and the Namoneas Congregational Churches Association-Chuuk joyfully shared their ministries with the input of representatives from UCC-USA and Global Ministries. The Assembly elected a new executive committee of MC-UCC: Rev. Bendar Enichar (General Secretary, UCCP), Rev. Wie Fiti (Moderator, Namoneas), The Rev. Lawson Matatou (Secretary, JRD), The Rev. Paloka Charley (Treasurer, Kosrae). The next General Assembly will be in Kosrae in 2010.

Philippines

UCCP Bishop Eliezer Pascua was part of the high-level delegation invited to present testimony to the U.S. Senate South Asia and Pacific Foreign Affairs Sub-committee. Many Members of Congress were surprised to hear evidence of the human rights violations linked to the Philippine government, Army and police forces, including a report from the Philippine government's Melo Commission investigation. Bolstered by a new resolution on the Philippines situation passed at UCC General Synod in June, a Global Ministries campaign "Stop the Killings! In the Philippines" was initiated to continue education on the human rights situation, increase advocacy against the government's actions, and raise support for church-related victims and their families. Global Ministries' staff and the United Nations have joined in ecumenical efforts to petition the international community to intercede.

At least 66 people have died from the ongoing conflict in Mindanao, and 479,223 people have either lost their homes or livelihood. The number of evacuees sheltered in evacuation centers has also shot up from 18,080 families (89,024 people) to 22,861 families (111,133 people). The UCCP is appealing to the Household of God and ecumenical partners for immediate assistance. Both WOC and OGHs have provided \$10,000 emergency support for food and medicine to the UCCP through the East Asia and the Pacific office.

A UCCP pastor, Berlin Guerrero, was abducted on May 27, 2007 by elements of the Naval Intelligence Security Forces. He was allegedly tortured before being turned over to the Philippine National Police (PNP). Only then was he shown a copy of a warrant of arrest for murder charges. On August 11, 2008, detained Pastor Berlin Guerrero was ordered released to the custody of his attorneys, by the Court of Appeals (CA). Guerrero was detained for 1 year, 3 months and 15 days.

In Memoriam

Former Missionary, Rev. George Cherryhomes, died in Denver on April 23, 2008. He was ordained to the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Rev. George Cherryhomes was sent to China as a missionary from 1946 until 1950, and to Thailand from 1952 until 1956. He served as an associate pastor for the Center Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Denver, CO before and after his retirement.

Former Missionary, Rev. Leonard Brummett, a former missionary to the Philippines from 1952-1958 died on July 14, 2008. Rev. Brummett was ordained to the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He served pastorates in Little Rock, AK, Columbia, MO, and Mount Carmel, IL. Following his retirement, he served as interim pastor for five churches in Kentucky and Indiana.

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

Global Ministries is accompanying church partners in Latin America and the Caribbean in ministries of Critical Presence through capacity building programs related to the training of pastors and lay leaders; social economic development programs; and peace building. Global Ministries participates in a ministry of mutuality, whereby there is an exchange of people through the presence of missionaries and church to church visits.

Critical presence priority: To support the strengthening of partner churches and ecumenical organizations through leadership training.

Global Ministries continues to financially support the following theological schools in Latin America and the Caribbean: **Mexico** - The Round Table for Mission Development of the Disciples of Christ and the Congregational Churches of Mexico; **Honduras** - the Theological Community of Honduras and the Theological Center of the

Evangelical and Reformed Church of Honduras; **Costa Rica** - the Latin American Bible University; **Venezuela:** Pacto – the theological center from the Pentecostal Evangelical Union Church of Venezuela; **Argentina:** the Institute of Graduate Theological Studies (ISEDET); **Chile** - The Theological Community of Chile; **Cuba** - The Evangelical Seminary of Matanzas; **Haiti** - the St. Andrew Seminary of the National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti (CONASPEH); and **Puerto Rico** - the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico.

Critical presence priority: Pastoral ministries related to fear and hopelessness where people are desperate for meaning.

Hurricanes affected the Caribbean area during the last days of August and September 2008, damaging Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Haiti. Humanitarian support came from One Great Hour of Sharing (United Church of Christ), Week of Compassion (Christian Church Disciples of Christ), as well as from churches and donors, to support the relief efforts of Global Ministries partners such as the Cuban Council of Churches, the National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti, House of Hope in Haiti, the Evangelical Dominican Church in the Dominican Republic, and the United Church of Jamaica and the Grand Cayman Islands.

Colombia – Last March, armed forces of Colombia entered into Ecuador to destroy an armed group from Colombia that crossed the border, creating a serious international crisis between the governments of Colombia and Ecuador. The civil war in Colombia has caused more than 35,000 deaths, 15,000 disappearances and four million displaced people. Churches from the region sent a pastoral letter affirming their willingness to walk in solidarity with the people, denouncing kidnapping and urging a negotiated solution and the release of all political prisoners. The churches recognize the right of their countries to respect their territorial integrity and to look for ways of working together for peace and justice. Lastly, they asked churches and religious leaders to pray.

The Commission on Restoration, Life and Peace of the Evangelical Council of Churches of Colombia (CEDECOL) keeps their prophetic ministry among the displaced people and communities affected by the armed conflict in Colombia. Last September, attorney Ricardo Esquivia, the National Coordinator of the Commission received the International Peace Award from the Fellowship of Reconciliation at their Peace Festival celebrated in New York City.

El Salvador - The Evangelical Lutheran Church of El Salvador established a Truth, Justice and Peace Program that entails visits to rural areas to investigate, document, and follow-up on local problems related to human rights violations. This program reaches all of the zones where the Synod has work, particularly the rural areas because people in those areas don't often have access to information about human rights that could help them in the transition toward a true democracy. The program is raising the level of awareness of those who have been victimized.

On May 17, 2008, Bishop Medardo Gomez received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree at the Commencement Service of Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) in Indianapolis, Indiana. The award is in recognition of his “pastoral influence in creating a just society, his role in the National Peace Debate, and for his faith and message that inspires others to work together to promote peace, justice and goodwill all over the world.” Bishop Gomez was the keynote speaker at the CTS graduation. Also, he preached at Central Christian Church, where former missionary and current CGMB board member Linda McCrae is the pastor, and he gave a presentation at the Disciples Center. After the visit to Indianapolis, Bishop Gomez and his wife visited First Christian Church in Wilmington, NC, where Ailsa Guardiola is pastor. Ailsa and her husband, La Marco Gonzalez are former missionaries with the Lutheran Church in El Salvador.

Critical presence priority: Dangerous or life-threatening situations related to social, economical and political realities.

Mexico - The very first Youth Encounter was celebrated last July in San Luis Potosí with the participation of 41 youth from the Congregational Churches of Mexico (ICCM), the Alliance of Evangelical Christian Churches Disciples of Christ of Mexico (AICE) and the Fraternity of Evangelical Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) of Mexico (CICE). The youth presented an open letter to the national churches that was received by the presidents of AICE and CICE, Manuel Tovar and Alfredo Perez respectively, and the Superintendent of ICCM, Miguel Villa. In

that letter, the youth expressed their deep interest and commitment to the mission of the churches in Mexico in the context of the social, economical and political realities of the twenty-first century.

Paraguay - After more than 50 years with only one ruling party, the Paraguayan people elected a new president from a different party. Fernando Lugo began his responsibilities last August in a country where only 15% of the workers receive the minimal monthly wage of \$270.00, and only 17% of the workers have pension/retirement funds. The Disciples of Christ in Paraguay celebrated a retreat in September where they launched the plan for mission development for the upcoming years. Representatives from the Disciples in Argentina participated in the encounter. The mission development plan includes reaffirming their identity as a protestant ecumenical church in the new context of democracy and in light of the challenges of the 21st century. The plan also includes strengthening the local churches, the establishment of new congregations, and the capacity-building of new pastors and lay people through a strong educational program. They also reaffirmed their purpose of working together with the Disciples of Christ from Argentina in their common goals.

Peru - As an affirmation of education as a human right, the Association of Legal Assistance and Social Action (ALAS) began a scholarship program for prisoners. Five women and 14 men were included in the first group to receive a college education while they are serving their time. The program was established in collaboration with two private universities in Peru, and allows the inmates to study various disciplines. Global Ministries is providing scholarships to support this initiative.

Critical presence priority: Interchurch and interfaith relations

Chiapas, Mexico - In March 2008, for the first time, representatives from AICE, CICE and the Congregational Churches visited San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico to learn first hand about the root causes of the social conflicts there, and the response provided by churches and ecumenical organizations. They contacted the Roman Catholic Diocese, the Intercultural Studies and Research Institute (INESIN), and Melel Xojobal. INESIN and Melel Xojobal are promoting interfaith relations with the Mayan culture and Christianity.

Critical presence priority: Conflict transformation and resolution

In January 2008, the Shalom Center of the Pentecostal Church of Chile held their Leader Training Conference with the participation of the three national youth presidents of the Alliance of Evangelical Churches (Disciples of Christ), the Confraternity of Evangelical Churches (Disciples of Christ), and the Congregational Churches of Mexico.

A very important aspect of critical presence's accompaniment is the presence of missionaries.

Global Mission Interns - Alexander Morse concluded his appointment as Global Mission Intern with Caminante Educational Project in Dominican Republic in June of 2008. Erin McKinney began a new assignment as a global mission intern with Caminante in the fall. Last December, Kevin Howe ended his 18-month service as global mission intern serving with the Christian Commission for Development (CCD). He plans to enter law school next fall.

Volunteers - **John Wallace Chavez** ended his one-year appointment as a long-term volunteer with the Shalom Center of the Pentecostal Church of Chile last October. He has already returned to college. **Barbara de Souza**, a registered nurse and an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, continues her service as a long-term volunteer missionary at the Health Educator Training Program of the Institute for Studies on Religion (ISER), in Brazil. **Scott Nicholson** ended his service as a short-term volunteer with the Social Organizations of Saracen, Colombia. He began a new long-term volunteer assignment with the Christian Peacemaker Team.

Regular missionaries - **Gloria Vicente** continues her work with Guatemalan Cultural Action (ACG) in Guatemala; **Michael Joseph** is still working with the Restoration, Life and Peace Commission (CRVP) of the Evangelical Council of Churches of Colombia, Colombia. **Elena Huegel**, works with the Shalom Center of the Pentecostal Church of Chile (IPC), Chile, and **Carmelo Alvarez**, the Latin American Evangelical Pentecostal Commission (CEPLA) of Venezuela. **Justino Pérez and Zaida Rivera** are CGMB missionaries serving as consultants for church

capacity-building, church ministries and reconciliation in collaboration with the three national churches in Mexico; and **Linda and Bruce Hanson** are serving as CGMB missionaries with the Christian Commission on Development (CCD) located in Tegucigalpa, and the Honduran Theological Community (CTH). Bruce is teaching HIV/AIDS education, prevention and care, while Linda is teaching theological courses. The Hanson's returned to Honduras last summer for a new appointment, after finishing their home assignment. In November, **Kimberly and Patrick Bentrott** began a four-year appointment with the National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti (CONASPEH). Kimberly, a family practitioner medical doctor, is serving as health consultant to the council and working with two clinics. Patrick, an ordained UCC minister, serves as a theological consultant for the council, and as a professor at St. Andrew Seminary in Port Au Prince.

MIDDLE EAST AND EUROPE

Throughout the year, the Middle East and Europe Office continued to engage with partners in ministries of Critical Presence: accompaniment, interfaith relations, advocacy and education, health, and other kinds of witness that have made a difference in the lives of people. Below, some of that work is highlighted.

As the calendar turned from 2008 to 2009, a new crisis raged in Gaza. Even as the fighting passed a few weeks into the New Year, the humanitarian situation in Gaza was bleak, as reported by Disciples/Global Ministries' partners there. The crisis drew attention to the continuing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, in which innocent civilians have borne the brunt of the cost, in many ways. While attention was focused on Gaza, talk of comprehensive peace was far from the discourse. Contributions in response through Week of Compassion and One Great Hour of Sharing, meant that the Disciples and the United Church of Christ, through Global Ministries, were at the point of deepest need, helping to relieve the humanitarian disaster with our Christian partners (who serve the whole community) in Gaza. Even so, the requirement for a fair and just—and urgent—peace was what was expressed to a Disciples group that visited Israel and Palestine in October 2008. This visit was another kind of critical presence, a physical manifestation of *acompañamiento*.

From September 28-October 10, Gloria Hernandez from the Office of Disciples Women and Peter Makari, executive of the Middle East and Europe, staffed the annual Women-to-Women Pilgrimage. This trip was offered since 2010 is designated as the study year for Israel and Palestine. Over the course of the two weeks, the women had a Ministries and Mission Interpreters training session, and then embarked on a full itinerary that included time in Nazareth, Haifa, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, and other locations. The group of 16 women experienced the opportunity to reflect in Biblical sites, as well as to meet with many Palestinian partners and members of the Israeli peace community. Their engagement with Palestinian and Israeli women, arranged by Disciples' member and Global Ministries' missionary, Dr. Cathy Nichols, was transformative for all of the women. Exploring the lived reality of people—both Israeli and Palestinian—in their struggles for dignified life, for peace with justice, and for stability, in the context of one of the world's most enduring conflicts, and in the geography of the Biblical narratives, was particularly moving. Each of the women shared vivid memories of someone they met, as the final debriefing took place at the Friends Meeting House in Ramallah, where Mrs. Jean Zaru is the clerk of one of the group's final encounters. Accompaniment was experienced by both the Disciples women and by partners throughout the visit. Such an expression of critical presence is personal and direct.

Another prominent Disciple visited the Middle East this summer with the Global Ministries area executive. The Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, currently the National Council of Churches' (NCCC) General Secretary, along with the President of the NCCC, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, of the Armenian Apostolic Church, made clear the US ecumenical commitment to partners in the Middle East during their first international trip together in their NCCC capacities. Rev. Kinnamon, a Disciples member, and Archbishop Aykazian, visited Israel and Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon on their 10-day trip. The area executive provided staffing for them as the Middle East liaison for an NCCC-member church, and participated as vice chair of the NCCC Interfaith Relations Commission. The trip enabled the NCCC leadership to express the solidarity of US churches; to learn more about the diminishing Christian presence in Jerusalem and Israel-Palestine due to Israeli practices of denying Palestinian right of return and family unification; and to see first-hand the extent of the Iraqi refugee impact in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. However, the main purpose was to meet with church leaders—and other leaders—throughout the region and hear directly from them the challenges and opportunities—their deepest need—that they face in their different contexts. It is our North American need—and obligation—to actively seek to learn the whole story, and sometimes that can only happen through such a visit. The area executive's participation was representative of the Disciples and UCC's ecumenical commitment.

The Disciples continue to participate in ecumenical advocacy to work for peace in the Middle East. The main platform for this advocacy is Churches for Middle East Peace, a Washington, DC-based organization of which the Christian Church is a founding member. Most recently in 2008, General Minister and President Sharon Watkins joined other US heads of communion in a December letter urging then-President-Elect Barack Obama to ensure that “your Administration must provide sustained, high-level diplomatic leadership toward the clear goal of a final status agreement. Building on past discussions, we ask you to encourage Israeli and Palestinian leaders to make historic compromises necessary for peace. Your commitment to working for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel can help strengthen U.S. security and improve stability and relationships throughout the Middle East. We believe that Jerusalem – home to two peoples and three religions – has the potential to become a powerful symbol of hope and coexistence for people across the region and the world.” This letter, subsequently signed by people from many denominations, including the Disciples, is an opportunity for our church leadership and members to raise a voice on behalf of those whose voices are often silenced. It is a critical presence in the form of advocacy for peace and justice, and the resolution of conflict.

Given the nature of relationships in the Middle East, and the area executive’s academic work and experience in interfaith dialogue, the area executive represents the Disciples on the NCCC Interfaith Relations Commission, and serves, in this new quadrennium, as vice chair. The current chair is Dr. Diana Eck, professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University and director and of Harvard’s Pluralism Project. The Interfaith Relations Commission is busy working in several areas, including nurturing relationships with communities of other faiths and developing educational resources. In 2008, the Commission completed an ecumenical response to the major Muslim leaders’ letter, *A Common Word Between Us and You*, a significant initiative which lifts up love of God and love of neighbor as common principles in Islam and Christianity. The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President, the Rev. Robert Welsh, President of the Council on Christian Unity, and the area executive co-signed a response from the Disciples which can be found on the *Common Word* webpage (www.commonword.org). The area executive also participated in the drafting of the World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches responses. In addition, the Interfaith Relations Commission completed work in 2008 on a resource on Christian Zionism, a theology that has problematic implications for public policy in the Middle East, and that does not take into account the Palestinian Christian community with which the Disciples have long and extensive partnerships. Finally, the Commission released a cautionary statement on the film *Obsession: Radical Islam’s War Against the West*.

In addition to the Interfaith Relations Commission, the Disciples participate actively in two national ecumenical interfaith dialogue settings: a Jewish-Christian Dialogue table, and the National Muslim-Christian Initiative. The area executive attends both on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Jewish-Christian Dialogue, a table that, in its current manifestation, is about five years old, deals primarily with the Middle East and related issues such as the land and theology, Christian Zionism, and Christian Liberation Theology. This dialogue table met in May and September 2008. The National Muslim-Christian Initiative met in February and September 2008. The mission statement of the Initiative is, “*We, from various streams of Muslim and Christian communities, seek to enhance mutual understanding, respect, appreciation, and support of what is sacred for each other through dialogue, education and sustained visible encounters that foster and nurture relationships.*” For this Initiative, foci include educational resources and response to crises. In these times of greater awareness of religious diversity in the US, it is especially important to foster such ties. These two tables attempt to provide opportunities for discussion of current and relevant issues, as well as to offer a model of dialogue for other settings of the religious communities. Interfaith dialogue and involvement is an important component of critical presence, as we are all present with each other in the world, and can do much together to address serious issues.

Finally, the cooperation between Global Ministries and Week of Compassion is certainly evident in the Middle East and Europe. Week of Compassion provides scholarship assistance to budding church leadership in the region for seminary and other studies; as well as supporting a variety of programs, including mental health therapy and training in Palestine, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel; human rights work by an Israeli organization, support for Sudanese and Iraqi refugees through nutritional and training programs in Egypt and Syria, Christian-Muslim dialogue in Lebanon and the Arab world; and support for the Global Mission Intern (GMI) program. Currently, there is one GMI serving in Israel-Palestine, part-time with a Palestinian liberation theology center partner and part-time with an Israeli human rights organization. All of these forms of accompaniment meet critical needs.

In all, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), whose first missionary to Jerusalem arrived there in 1849, has continued its active engagement at the point of deepest need in an area associated with conflict. We often forget that behind the images on television are real people seeking to go about their daily lives: school, work, shopping, and social engagements. Our connections through the Church with people working and witnessing to make a difference are inspiring. They connect us as human beings in new ways, and help in the effort to bring God's shalom—salaam—peace to bear.

SOUTHERN ASIA

The region of Southern Asia has experienced a few positive and several negative developments during the last year. They include political changes, leadership change within the church, violent religious and communal conflicts, wars, and natural calamities. The witness and ministries of our church partners during this period in the region has born significant fruits. Global Ministries' presence and solidarity with our partners in these ministries has been quite critical.

Global Ministries' support has enabled completion of some significant mission projects during 2008. Tsunami rehabilitation continues, but one major project has been completed by Global Ministries' partner, **Peace Trust** in southern India. In January, the executive for Southern Asia and a group of students from Lancaster Theological Seminary attended the dedication of a village of 30 homes which were constructed with funds raised for tsunami relief by Week of Compassion and One Great Hour of Sharing. The **Tamilnadu Theological Seminary** has begun a program of training differently abled individuals for careers in the printing industry. For this project, Global Ministries purchased a printing press and provided other start-up funds. Global Ministries has also supported the construction of a new building at **Lucy Perry Noble School** to replace a building that was condemned and removed a few years ago. This building is now serving the students with six classrooms and a library. **The Unemployed Young People's Association** has established a Women's Center which offers both vocational training and legal services to women in the community, thereby helping to empower women in the workplace, in their families and in society. Finally, over the last two years the Southern Asia Office has raised funds to support the construction of a girl's hostel at the **Ewart Women's Christian College near Madras, India**. This hostel will house some of the neediest students, particularly girls from *Dalit communities* (former 'untouchables') in very remote villages, enabling them to secure an education that would otherwise be out of their reach.

In **Nepal**, the shift from monarchy to democracy is complete with the election of the first Constituent Assembly in April and the abolition of monarchy altogether in June by a majority vote of the Assembly. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) won the majority seats and has formed the first democratically elected government with its chief, Mr. Prachanda as the Chief Minister. The release of their first budget in September marked another transforming moment in the history of Nepal with its promise to cancel the debts of the poorest and the farmers with allowances, especially to the downtrodden (former untouchables). "Disadvantaged people, including widows, disabled people and so-called untouchables, will get a monthly allowance of about \$8 – a large sum in a Nepalese village. There will be four extra years of free education for some poor children..." (BBC-9/19/08). The other significant development in this former Hindu kingdom is the constitutional religious freedom and secularism being built into the new constitution. It is important to note that our partner, the National Council of Churches in Nepal, has been a strong advocate and ally in making the above changes.

Myanmar was devastated by a deadly cyclone on May 2, 2008, with more than 100,000 people dead and 220,000 missing. More than two million people were adversely affected by loss of homes and livelihoods, injuries, diseases, and starvation. The military government of Myanmar blocked international aid and relief workers entering the country for several weeks, aggravating the misery of the victims. Much of the limited relief supplies allowed into the country were appropriated for military use. However, our church partners within the country were able to receive support through the regional ecumenical body, the Christian Conference of Asia and also Action by Churches Together. Rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts are going on and it will take a long time to fully recover from the damages. The military government raised the official death toll to more than 22,000 and 40,000 others are missing. The U.N. said some one million people were homeless in the Southern Asian country. Several hundred thousand people were in dire need of shelter and clean drinking water. Military helicopters dropped food and clean drinking water, but a month later more than one million people still didn't have adequate food, water or shelter.

In **East Timor**, our partner church, the Protestant Church of East Timor (IPTL), had its first major leadership change in July 2008 after the country's independence in 2002. Rev. Moises Da Silva has been elected as the new Moderator, replacing Rev. Francisco de Vasconcelos at the end of his term. The new leadership team has undertaken a much needed survey of the church, with membership details, socio-economic conditions, pastoral needs etc. Special emphasis is being put on leadership development for the church. The Lisa Dila School, in the mountainous region (started through the partnership of the Northern Plains Conference of UCC), is making good progress. Rev. Jim Moos, the representative from the Northern Plains Conference and our former board member, along with another member from the conference, attended the celebrations associated with the dedication of the new school building. Another step that IPTL is taking in the area of education is to revive its 'Christian University of Timor.' A significant part of our missionary's work in East Timor (Carlos Madrazo) is now devoted to this effort of the local church.

Global Ministries' emerging partnership with the Church in **Bhutan** is growing steadily. The most remarkable thing that happened during 2008 is the formation of the National Council of Churches in Bhutan. The seeds for this were sown three years earlier when the executive led a delegation of Asian ecumenical leaders and initiated discussions. It is a difficult place to be a Christian institution. Christianity is sufficient justification for many forms of discrimination in Bhutan society. Thus far, Global Ministries' support has been to promote leadership development and capacity-building. Currently, one of their leaders doing theological studies in Singapore, is being supported by Global Ministries in our attempt to help in capacity-building of the church in Bhutan.

Similarly, in **Cambodia** a new partnership has been initiated with the Kampuchea Christian Council. Following a meeting of the executive with the leaders there, discussions continue to explore ways of developing this relationship and strengthening Global Ministries' presence with this church and its mission

In **India** there have been several floods and violent religious conflicts, as well as some signs of inter-religious harmony and cooperation. Parts of eastern and northeastern India were affected by heavy floods in June, August and September, causing more than 200 deaths and affecting more than 2 million people with a loss of homes, properties etc. Our partner CASA (Church's Auxiliary for Social Action) has been working among the victims providing relief and rehabilitation.

In a continuing religious conflict between Hindus and Christians, 28 Christians in the state of Orissa were killed, and more than 100 churches were either burned down or partially destroyed. The violence was sparked when a militant Hindu guru and four of his followers were gunned down by Maoists in the region. The fundamentalist and militant Hindu organizations and individuals blamed the Christians for the murder and started attacking the Christians, Christian homes, institutions and churches. The Maoists were fighting, among other things, against the Hindu caste domination over the Dalits and Tribals, most of whom are extremely poor. Most of the Christians in this region also come from the Dalit and Tribal communities. The Church in the region is accused of forcefully converting the poor Dalits and Tribals to Christianity, and the guru who was killed was actively engaged in reconverting Christians back to Hinduism. This angered the Maoists, several of whom are also Christians. What is at the root of the conflict has to do more with the caste system than with the religions, as such. Christianity is seen as providing some form of relief from the caste oppression. At the same time, the approach of several fundamentalist Christian groups and their missionaries continues to fuel the conflict as they denigrate Hindu gods and goddesses in their literature and speeches, and condemn the Hindus as living in darkness and sin. Such a hostile approach has played into the hands of those resenting the challenges to the caste domination. The state of Orissa has been the hotspot of such violent conflict for almost a decade, and now it is spreading to some other states in the south and in the west too. The Church of North India, the Catholic Church in India, and several other Christian and secular bodies have taken up the matter with the central (federal) government, which in turn has asked the respective state governments to take stern action against those who engage in violence. It is interesting to note that these specific states are currently ruled by Hindu political parties. In the state of Orissa, many of the affected Christians are still hiding in jungles for fear of further attacks.

Signs elsewhere in India, contrary to the above situation, show rays of hope. Near the southern city of Madurai, in a cluster of five villages, some agricultural projects are being supported jointly by Food Resource Bank and CGM. All the villagers are Hindus, belonging to various caste groups. In August, CGM Board Chair, Rev. Deborah Blood, and the area executive, visited a couple of those villages, along with Dr. Carr, the regional representative on our board. One of the village leaders approached the team and asked for support to rebuild their temple, a Hindu temple.

He said that he was keen on getting Global Ministries' support, not just for the money, but more for our participation, as the villagers wanted their temple to be built with support from Hindus, Christians and Muslims, expressing harmony and cooperation among the different religious groups in that area. In an evening function in the neighboring village where several new houses built for the flood victims were dedicated, the Hindu villagers had put the sign of the cross on the dedication stone, expressing their solidarity with the Christians who had come forward to help them. Global Ministries' presence in these villages is indeed critical as it is beginning to break down barriers, not only of a religious nature, but also of caste groups.

In **Sri Lanka**, while the violent ethnic conflict between the minority Tamils and the majority Sinhalese is now in its 26th year with no foreseeable solution or decrease in violence, the unpleasant division within our partner church, the Jaffna Diocese of CSI continues in legal stalemate. The new church, the Church of the American Ceylon Mission awaits formal partnership with Global Ministries, partly with the hope of gaining ownership of the churches and institutions, while the disputed bishop of JDCSI continues with court actions to take control of properties and institutions, one by one.

Ecumenical Cooperation: The Asia Pacific Forum is one of the regional forums sponsored by Church World Service. The Asia-Pacific desks of the mainline Protestant denominations in the US and Canada come together twice a year in this forum, and at present, the executive is a co-chair of this forum. The Christian Conference of Asia invited the Forum to have one of its meetings in Asia in order to strengthen relationships with the regional ecumenical body and the churches in Asia. In the second week of October 2008, the Forum held its fall meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, at the headquarters of Christian Conference of Asia. Guests from Myanmar and Pacific Council of Churches were also present, and ways for further cooperation between the North American churches and CCA were discussed.

MISSION PERSONNEL

Through the Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ, missionaries are participating in ministries of Critical Presence in over 40 countries around the world. They are engaged in a variety of ministries such as: theological education, leadership development, community and development work, human rights, health ministries, children's ministries, and pastoral ministries.

A total of 139 missionaries served in 42 countries in 2008, which included 60 fully-supported missionaries, 9 global mission interns, 9 long-term volunteers, and 61 associates. In addition, 12 individuals served as short-term volunteers.

Eight persons, including three re-appointees, were appointed to church and/or church-related institutions around the world. Terms varied from fully supported to long-term volunteer staff. This distribution by area of total appointments was Africa 1; East Asia and the Pacific 1; Europe 0; Latin America and the Caribbean 2; Middle East 4; Southern Asia 0.

The two new global mission interns supported by Week of Compassion funds are: Lydia Bartholomew, Palestine and Emily Christmas, South Africa.

There were 7 short-term volunteers (2 weeks to 11 months) appointed in 2008. A list of names and term dates are available upon request.

Six individuals completed their service with the Common Global Ministries Board in the category of regular appointees: Jeffrey Moore, Lesotho; Tod & Ana Gobledale, Australia; Michal Dobson, Thailand; Dale & Bethsaba Nafziger, Nepal. One individual resigned their service with the Common Global Ministries Board in the category of regular appointee: Lydia Johnson, New Zealand.

Three individuals completed their terms as global mission interns: Alex Morse, Dominican Republic; Varsha Vijayakumar, Switzerland; Krista Johnson, Jerusalem.

Two individuals completed their service as a long term volunteers (1-2 years) with the Board: John Wallace, Chile; Nancy Molin Longatan, Philippines.

Twelve individuals completed short-term volunteer assignments (ranging from 2 weeks to 11 months) in 2008. A list of names is available upon request.

Missionary Relationships

From January 1 to December 31, 2008, 19 missionary units were involved in a ministry of critical presence through missionary visits and relationship building: Jeffrey Moore (2 months of interpretation); Tod and Ana Gobledale (4 months of interpretation); Bruce and Linda Hanson (4 months of interpretation); Doug and Liz Searles (2 months of interpretation); Jeffrey Mensendiek (3 months of interpretation); Dale and Bethsaba Nafziger (2 months of interpretation); William and Veronica Kyle (2 months of interpretation); Krista Johnson (3 months of interpretation); Alex Morse (1 month of interpretation); Judy Chan (1 month of interpretation); Steve and Lisa Smith (1 month of interpretation); John Wallace (1 month of interpretation); and Tim Rose (4 months of interpretation). Of those visits, 191 were to UCC congregations and 173 to Disciples congregations. (19 congregations were visited per missionary unit.) There were a total of 678 missionary presentations done. (36 presentations were given per missionary unit with an average of 23 presentations per month of interpretation.)

People-to-People Pilgrimages

There were 82 People-to-People Pilgrimage trips scheduled for 2008. Out of this number, 3 trips were re-scheduled for 2009. The trips included visits to the following areas: Africa, 16; East Asia and the Pacific, 3; Latin America and the Caribbean, 53; Middle East and Europe, 4; Southern Asia, 3.

The following countries received groups during 2008: Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Venezuela, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Angola, Swaziland, Mozambique, Republic of Congo, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho and South Africa, Swaziland, China, Philippines, Japan, Israel and Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, Poland, Laos, Sri Lanka; and Thailand.

FINANCE

The Division of Overseas Ministries (DOM) total revenue in 2008 from all sources is estimated at nearly \$8 million, down approximately \$700 thousand from 2007. Budgeted revenue was up \$87 thousand while designated giving was down \$785 thousand.

Of the total revenue, \$2.6 million, or 33%, is designated giving for special programs, projects, capital and new church funding. One point six million dollars, or 20%, is from Wider Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ as part of the funding of our joint work together as Global Ministries. The balance of the revenue, \$3.8 million, or 47%, comes from Disciples Mission Fund (DMF), investments of DOM, United Christian Missionary Society (UCMS) endowment distributions, Christian Church Foundation (CCF) permanent fund distributions and operating fund gifts and miscellaneous income. DMF (including the special day offerings) and the DOM, UCMS and CCF endowment revenues made up 20% each of the revenue. The balance, seven percent, came from the operating fund gifts from individuals and congregations, reimbursements and interest income.

The DOM Endowment assets are invested with the CCF in the Beasley Growth Fund. Annually DOM takes a draw, which is 5% of the average prior 20 quarter rolling market values of the total investment. This is used to support operations and designated spending based on the restriction of the endowment. In 2008, this draw was \$613,774.

An independent audit is performed annually of the financial records and accounting systems of DOM. A complete audit will be provided for the Yearbook once the auditors report to the finance committee of the board of directors the financial results of the audit and address any material internal control weaknesses or suggested improvement to internal controls in a management letter. As part of full disclosure and accountability, DOM wishes to disclose the 2008 salary (including housing allowance) of the president of \$100,911.

MISSION INTERPRETATION AND CONSTITUENCY RELATIONSHIPS

Global Ministries' weekly updates: These weekly updates, which highlight four or five stories or information from partners and missionaries, continues to grow in quality, as well as the number of constituents being reached. At the end of 2008, there were over 10,000 e-mail addresses receiving this weekly update. These updates are driving constituents to the Global Ministries website to read and search for additional information for global involvement.

Ministries and Mission Interpretation (MMI) trainings: In 2008, the number of trained Disciples MMIs more than doubled from 140 to over 320. This sustained effort in training new MMIs was facilitated by the training of all People-to-People pilgrimage participants who are involved with a Global Ministries-sponsored trip. In 2008, five group trips received the MMI training. In October 2008, a national Missionworks/MMI training event was held in which 130 UCC and Disciples members participated. The on-going challenge of the growing MMI network which now includes 615 UCC and Disciples' constituents, is to maintain a personal connection and provide timely coaching and encouragement to each member. Also in 2008, a third revision of the MMI handbook was completed, which allows individuals to do self-contained training in their local congregations with their mission/outreach committees.

New Be A Global Mission Church Resources: In 2008, two new resources were added to the Be A Global Mission Church initiative. A resource entitled *Be A Global Mission Youth Group* was developed for the Summer CYF event and is posted on the Global Ministries website. This resource helps youth groups create a plan for global mission involvement over a school year. The second resource is entitled *Disciples Women in Global Mission*. In partnership with the office of Disciples Women, Global Ministries developed a resource for Women's groups who are looking for direction in the area of their global involvement. This resource is also available on the Global Ministries website.

Transformation and New Church Start movements: Global Ministries continues to partner two initiatives flowing from the Disciples 2020 Vision. The Be a Global Mission Church initiative has been offered as a catalyst for transforming local congregations. Trips for New Church Pastors/Leaders and Pastors/Leaders involved in transformation continue to be an effective way for these two movements to be connected to the global church and experience the energy that these relationships can bring to their individual congregations. In February 2008, a group of New Church Pastors participated in a trip to Honduras to interact with partners and discern how their new congregations can be global right from the start. In May 2008, Global Ministries was involved in presenting global opportunities during a New Church Pastors' training in Bethany, West Virginia. Along the same lines, Global Ministries has been involved in the series of God's Positioning Spirit events for congregational transformation. An Immersion Trip for leaders of the congregational transformation movement is in the works.

Global Advocacy and Education Report for 2009

Congo. The Indianapolis Associate for Global Advocacy coordinated a new advocacy campaign with Friends of the Congo, developing a partnership which has resulted in collaborative work to lobby against imported Coltan in the U.S. This is a new coalition that includes civil society partners. Global Ministries sponsored the Congo Awareness Week, October 19-25, 2009, where a worship resource was disseminated across the world for faith communities. The advocacy office prepared a sign-on letter supporting Conflict Coltan and Cassiterite Act of 2008 bill.

Environmental Justice. Cleveland advocacy associate has served on the UCC Environment and Energy Task force, which developed and resourced a national UCC pastoral letter on climate change released in April, and has been part of an inter-ministry staff committee coordinating denominational environmental justice and stewardship efforts. The Cleveland advocacy associate attended Church World Service consultation on climate change September 24, 2008, coordinating ecumenical advocacy efforts on international energy, food, and anti-poverty development policies, leading up to the international review of the Kyoto protocol in December 2009. Climate Change advocacy and education on its impact on global partners will be a priority in 2009.

Haiti. Global Ministries continues to work with grass root organizations supporting the cancellation of debt in Haiti.

Philippines. Continuing to respond to the attacks against community and church leaders in the country, including Global Ministries partner, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Global Ministries staff at the United Nations have joined international ecumenical efforts in submitting testimony implicating the government of the Philippines before the UN Human Rights Council in April. International support was raised over the summer in support of UCCP pastor, Berlin Guerrero, who was arrested and tortured in May 2007. In June 2008, Bishop Eliazer Pascua of the UCCP and Rev. Guerrero's wife visited US churches and Conferences in Hawaii, California, Michigan and Minnesota to raise support and awareness of the situation. Given international pressure, a Filipino Appeals Court reviewed Rev. Guerrero's detention and ruled he be released pending further substantial evidence against him, and he was subsequently released September 12, 2008.

Sudan. Extensive Sudan advocacy has continued with ecumenical partners and enabled enhanced interfaith partnerships. In April, Global Ministries signed an Interfaith Statement on Sudan and advocacy letters to Congress. The Tents of Hope campaign proved to be a successful grassroots effort, engaging significant participation of Disciples and UCC churches, seminaries, etc. In June, the Cleveland tent was displayed at the Ohio Conference (UCC) Annual Meeting, where Ohio youth painted their own tent, and then was among several tents brought by local youth groups to the UCC National Youth Event in Knoxville, TN in July, where the Cleveland advocacy associate led participants in three workshops on Darfur in painting an NYE tent. The Cleveland advocacy associate also participated in planning an interfaith Tents of Hope/Sudan exhibit held July 15-28, 2008 at the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage in Beachwood, OH, and participated as part of the steering committee, in the November 7-9 national "Gathering of the Tents" held in Washington, DC

Trade, Poverty and Hunger. The Cleveland advocacy associate has continued coalition work with denominational and ecumenical partners on trade and poverty issues, meeting in October with the MESA trade committee of Mexican and Canadian partners to coordinate advocacy on hemispheric trade issues under new US and Canadian Administrations. The office participated with US and Latin American ecumenical partners in planning for the Global Week of Action of Trade held October 14-21, 2008 and sponsored by the WCC-related Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. Both Cleveland and Indianapolis associates are participating in an advocacy process for reforming US aid policy sponsored by Bread for the World.

Zimbabwe. The advocacy office has supported national and international organizations on issues surrounding the election in Zimbabwe, including sending letters to our congregations asking for prayers for the election, and providing updates on the website process of the sharing of leadership conversations.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Special Giving Revenue and Ministry with Donors: In 2008, the Global Ministries Resource Development Office, in coordination with the Financial Development Office of Wider Church Ministries/Global Ministries in Cleveland, continued its efforts to raise direct special gifts for the work of Global Ministries according to the following priorities: 1) Unrestricted Gifts, 2) Gifts for Missionary and Long-Term Volunteer Support, including gifts for new missionary appointments, 3) Gifts for Critical Presence, in support of Global Ministries Area program partner grants, and 4) Restricted Gifts for donor-specified partner programs or theme-based designations.

A total of 1524 individuals, congregations, Disciple and UCC judicatories (regions, conferences, areas, associations) and other organizations provided direct gifts through the Division of Overseas Ministries for the work of Global Ministries (both restricted and unrestricted) in 2008 as compared to 1687 such donors for 2007. Of these donors, 246 were Disciple congregations, areas and regions. Of the 1105 individual donors providing gifts to the Division of Overseas Ministries in 2008, 114 were new donors. One positive note of 2008 is that while designated gifts were lower in total amount as compared to 2007, the total amount of unrestricted gifts to Global Ministries through DOM increased significantly.

In 2008, four permanent funds were established in the Division of Overseas Ministries:

The *Dr. Ralph Thomas and Reverend Mary Maxine Palmer Endowment Fund* was set up as a future DOM permanent fund in April 2008. The Palmers, who served as missionaries and home-based staff of the United Christian Missionary Society (UCMS) and DOM for many years, announced a major planned gift to the work of the Division of Overseas Ministries through the establishment of a charitable gift annuity with the Christian Church Foundation, for which they have designated any residual (and other bequests and gifts in their honor) to be turned over to the Division of Overseas Ministries for general support of the work.

The *Alice Rist Langford Fund for the Division of Overseas Ministries* was established in May 2008 by Reverend Alice Langford, who served, among many other ministries, as Treasurer of the Division of Overseas Ministries 1984-1991. This DOM permanent fund provides unrestricted revenue into perpetuity for the Division of Overseas Ministries.

The *Gourdet Education Fund* was set up as a DOM permanent fund in June 2008, in order to provide scholarship support for students sponsored by Global Ministries' partner churches in Haiti and Africa. The Gourdets, who served as missionaries for 30 years in several countries in Africa, Haiti, and now in the U.S., state that this fund

keep[s] alive their philosophy that an investment in people and education brings a far greater return and has a greater impact on a nation than any mutual fund or money tucked away in a bank.

By establishing the ***Ortiz Cruzado Family Fund for Global Ministries*** in December 2008, Félix Ortiz Cotto and Maria Esther Cruzado, together with their sons Ernesto A. and Félix E. Ortiz Cruzado, want to share and connect their resources in a permanent way to the ministries of DOM/Global Ministries and to the people that have formed them throughout their nearly 25 years of service with the Division of Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries overseas and in the United States. Once the Fund reaches a certain level, the annual distributions will provide resources on a permanent basis for the work of the Division of Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Appeals and Special Campaigns: The ***2008 Global Ministries Spring Appeal***, was mailed in April to 20,710 households. There were a total of 253 gifts to the Spring Appeal, submitted to both the Indianapolis and Cleveland offices.

The ***2008 Indianapolis Year-End Appeal*** was mailed to 14,889 households of Disciple constituents, constituents from denominations other than UCC, and constituents for whom no denominational affiliation is known. There were a total of 261 gifts to the Indianapolis Year-End Appeal as compared to a total of 204 gifts to the 2007 Indianapolis Year-End Appeal.

The Office of Resource Development promoted ***Alternative Christmas giving opportunities*** in 2008. As of this writing there were 92 donors who gave Alternative Christmas totaling approximately \$13,000 through this campaign during 2008, compared to 88 donors who gave about \$14,400 in 2007. Each person honored by an Alternative Christmas gift received a Global Ministries Christmas card announcing the gift and a 4x6 photograph of a Global Ministries partner project.

Activities and Events: *Actions related to Donor Cultivation, Solicitation and Stewardship:* The development staff of the Office of Resource Development and the Office of Financial Development in Cleveland coordinates their work with donors to Global Ministries. During 2008, the staff of the Office for Resource Development (includes the executive, program associate and administrative assistant for Resource Development, all working from Indianapolis and the associate for Resource Development, who works from Austin Texas) carried out such actions in the form of 71 telephone conversations, 619 emails and 212 postal mailings. Moreover, the executive and associate for Resource Development had 137 meetings with donors across the country.

CHILD SPONSORSHIP

The Child Sponsorship Program is the international children's ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. The program's mission is to aid children at risk around the world by providing a convenient way for individuals and churches to extend a helping hand to meet the needs of children, together with Global Ministries' partners. Sponsors provide support for children to be housed, clothed, fed and provided with basic health care, and tuition cost, school supplies and fees are made available by a number of the participating agencies. By and large, some of the world's neediest children are given an opportunity to have access to a sustainable fullness of life in a loving environment because of individuals and Christian churches thousands of miles away contributing to their local agencies.

Office staff is responsible for collecting and disbursement of all donations. One hundred percent of all designated donations go to the children and their agencies. More than \$255,000.00 was expended to children for sponsorship and unsponsored children supported by committed donors and benefactors. More than \$10,000.00 was donated and sent for needy children in Haiti via the National Spiritual Council of Haitian Churches (CONASPEH) where local churches serve poor children in their congregations and promote social development and educational stability. Almost \$50,000.00 was sent to an elementary school in East Jerusalem to provide educational opportunities for Muslim and Christian children. During the year, financial aid of more than \$17,000.00 was donated to the abandoned and orphaned children at the Mt. Selinda Orphanage in Zimbabwe. In 2008, more than 200 new children were assigned to sponsors. Several sponsors took on the responsibility of additional children for sponsorship. This reflected a 25% increase in the number of sponsors from the previous year. The success of the program has been demonstrated by many of the positive letters and telephone calls received from pleased and committed sponsors, and the letters of appreciation from children who have been transformed along the way.

Children are eligible for sponsorship until they are 18 years of age, or leave a participating agency. Whereas, we have a long way to go, over the years, thousands of children and their families have been positively transformed because of the program. Children in the program are at risk from malnourishment, poverty, refugee situations, abandonment, civil war, and the inequity in the distribution of wealth in under developed countries. More children are losing their lives because of HIV/AIDS, directly and indirectly with the loss of family members. The care of children takes place with dignity and integrity by Global Ministries' partners in their local communities. Disciples and UCC church members, and local churches find themselves satisfied in so many ways while doing God's work for *the least of these*. Mission trips for sponsors to visit their sponsored children were coordinated by office staff. The cost of sponsoring a child varies from center to center according to the services provided and the cost of living in a country. The focal point of the program is to reach the poorest of the poor ~ one child at a time.

Recommended Action:

The General Board receives the report from the Division of Overseas Ministries