



NEWSCOPE

THE WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR UNITED METHODIST LEADERS

UMCOR Joins on-the-Ground Relief for Haiti

The UM Committee on Relief and a host of other faith-based groups are on the ground in Haiti as they determine how to assist earthquake survivors. With more than \$2 million in donations received by Jan. 20, UMCOR already has provided emergency grants to the Methodist Church of Haiti and GlobalMedic, a Canadian relief agency, to address immediate needs. An assessment team led by UMCOR's Melissa Crutchfield was gathering in the Dominican Republic Jan. 20 and preparing to enter Haiti. She is accompanied by five others with the relief agency, the UM Board of Global Ministries and UM Communications. Other UM-supported organizations, including Church World Service, Action by Churches Together International (ACT) and Stop Hunger Now, also are responding with aid.

ACT has deployed a "rapid support team" to Haiti, which will work with members with offices already in Haiti. UMCOR is a pending member of the new ACT Alliance. UMCOR's partnership with GlobalMedic will focus on the distribution of clean drinking water, says the Rev. Tom Hazelwood, an UMCOR executive. It also will provide medical attention to earthquake survivors. A water distribution hub will provide 65,000 people daily with clean drinking water.

One of the tasks for the UMCOR team in Haiti is meeting with Gesner Paul, who leads the Methodist Church of Haiti, to assess how best to work with church members there. Mission volunteers from The UMC have been a strong presence in Haiti for years, so another priority is organizing for future volunteer teams. "We know the (immediate) need is for medical volunteers," Hazelwood said. "We're looking at trying to centralize the volunteer process." Bishop Joel Martinez, interim general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries, is advising volunteer teams not to set out for Haiti immediately. "The time for volunteers will come, and their assistance will be crucial," Martinez said.

Church World Service has sent Don Tatlock, its Latin America and Caribbean program manager, to coordinate its efforts in Haiti. Church World Service relief kits and blankets are being distributed in Port-au-Prince, and the agency's partners in ACT are bringing in water and sanitation equipment.

A planeload of 80,000 pounds of water, medicine and medical supplies organized by Stop Hunger Now is being distributed in Haiti, says the Rev. Ray Buchanan, the UM pastor who is the food aid group's founder and president. Meal donations have come from a variety of sources, including a Jan. 18 packaging event in Lynchburg, Va., organized by the Rev. Larry Davies, the UM district superintendent there.

Volunteers also are needed in the United States to help assemble health kits and other relief supplies for Haiti at UMCOR's two supply depots—Sager Brown in Baldwin, La., and UMCOR West in Salt Lake City—as well as other church-owned regional warehouses. Those interested in volunteering at UMCOR West can contact Director Brian Diggs at (801) 973-7250, or e-mail WestDepot@umcor.org. To volunteer at Sager Brown, call (800) 814-8765. Gifts to support UMCOR's Haiti Relief efforts can be made to Haiti Emergency, UMCOR [Advance #418325](#). Checks can be made to UMCOR with "Advance #418325 Haiti Emergency" in the memo line. Checks can be put in the church's offering plate or mailed to: UMCOR, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087. The entire amount of each gift will be used to help the people of Haiti. —Linda Bloom, *UMNS*

Nashville Path 1 Forum Finds 'First Fruit' in Montana's Adams-Griffin

Morie Adams-Griffin, 34, finds much joy as pastor of Living Waters UM in Belgrade, Mont. But he knew he needed the kind of help offered at the inaugural Path 1 Coaching Forum. He not only attended that three days of training and fellowship; he became what New Church Strategist Gary Shockley calls "the first fruit."

While he was still in Nashville, Adams-Griffin signed a covenant with Shockley to have one of the Path 1 mentor-coaches, Alabama's Jim Robey, become his coach. "Starting a new church has been one of the most challenging things I've done in my life," says Adams-Griffin. "A coach can really help with direction, help in keeping focus, keeping me sane and keeping me healthy. I've always known that. We're in the fourth year of a new church start," says Adams-Griffin, the founding pastor of the church that was "dropped" into Belgrade by Bozeman UMC. "They instigated the project with conference leadership. Many of the members from Bozeman became our core group of folks when we started."

Despite the excitement of helping give birth to a new church—it began with a group of about 30 adults and now has about 80 people attending regularly—and the support he was getting from his conference and from the Bozeman "parent" church, Adams-Griffin needed something else. "Coaching was definitely at the top of our [the conference] priority list," he says. He believes he struck gold when he walked into a roomful of mentor-coaches (there were 18 running the sessions at the Nashville forum) and sat down at a table where Robey also was seated. In short order, the contract was signed, setting up times and terms for Robey's input, which includes regular phone calls as well as at least one site visit to Montana to consult with Adams-Griffin and the stakeholders.

• NEW PLACES FOR NEW PEOPLE •

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Robey, who pastored for 30 years before he turned to a full-time ministry of coaching from his Gulf Shores, Ala., home base, says he was thrilled that Adams-Griffin asked him. "This will be my first Path 1 coaching situation, Robey said. "One of my passions and my calling is bringing the ministry of coaching more fully into the UMC. This felt like confirmation of that."

Robey says coaching is essential to pastors. "It is important to have someone who walks beside you in your ministry." Adams-Griffin says coaching is "an important emphasis" as churches try to deal with the cultural shifts and "reach out to the younger population . . . and redefine the church. . . . The event [the coaching forum] was fantastic. I got a lot out of it personally. I'm looking at it on two levels: as one who wants to receive some coaching and as one who wants to become a coach eventually." As for being Path 1's "first fruit," he just laughs. "I'm always good at being a guinea pig. Why not give this a try?" —*Tim Ghianni, GBOD*

Downturn Prompts Questions on Clergy Pensions

The impact of the prolonged economic downturn is leading some in The UMC to call for an examination of how its U.S. clergy pensions are funded. While the plans administered by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits remain solvent, the denomination's 62 U.S. regional bodies, or annual conferences, are concerned about escalating contribution costs. Although everyone realizes that stock market fluctuations can have an impact, "the 2008 crash made us more aware of what could happen," said Jean Edin, president of the Association of UM Conference Pensions and Benefits Officers.

Clergy themselves are feeling some uncertainty about what level of support their pension plan will provide for retirement years. That uncertainty could push some pastors to keep working until the denomination's maximum retirement age of 72.

During the past year, the pension agency has been engaged in conversation with annual conference treasurers and pension officers about the economy's potential impact on pension plans in 2011 and beyond. Bishop B. Michael Watson, chairperson of the pension board's board of directors, said the agency is "trying to find a balance" between its responsibility to participants in the clergy pension program and the needs of annual conferences and local churches. In July, pension directors approved a "premium holiday" for the Comprehensive Protection Plan under which conferences provide disability and death benefits. That action is expected to put in excess of \$110 million back into the conferences over a three-year period. The "financial strength" of the conferences "varies greatly," the bishop pointed out.

“Knowing the absolute reality concerning every annual conference is probably something we could do better, that the church could do better,” he said. “So far, in our history, every annual conference has carried out their responsibility well.”

Clergy currently are covered by the Clergy Retirement Security Program, which dates to the beginning of 2007. Retirees also are paid under the previous Ministerial Pension Plan, which was in effect from 1982 to 2006 and provides a lifetime annuity, and under what Edin referred to as the “pre-1982 plan.”

Pension valuations—or the value of the plans at a given point in time—produced by board actuaries and sent to conferences this fall for 2011 were based on a Jan. 1, 2009, financial snapshot. Any market recovery would not be reflected until the next valuation, so that the 2009 calendar year, which would affect the 2012 valuation, “can have wonderful market returns but it is not going to affect what we have been told is our amount due for 2011,” In the long run, Edin pointed out, the denomination must determine how to make the pensions financially “sustainable” while providing a “quality” benefit program for clergy. “They are giving a career’s worth of time for the most part,” she said. “We want the benefits to be sustainable...so they can have a decent retirement.” —*Linda Bloom and Kathy Gilbert, UMNS*

UMs Help Typhoon Survivors Recover

In late September and October, four typhoons hit the Philippines, leaving more than a thousand dead and an estimated 1.3 million people displaced. The waters destroyed crops along with homes. That’s why 1,600 farming families will receive packets of seeds through the UM Committee on Relief (UMCOR) as part of its long-term recovery effort with Action by Churches Together International.

Rice and vegetable seeds will help provide self-sufficiency.

• MINISTRY WITH THE POOR •

Becoming a part of the ACT response has helped the UM relief agency leverage additional funds to expand its reach. “It not only gives us access; it formalizes our partnerships with other groups in the Philippines,” explained Melissa Crutchfield, the executive who coordinates the agency’s international response. Those other groups include ACT members Christian Aid, Lutheran World Relief and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. UMCOR’s relief efforts touch on what Bishop Lito Cabacungan Tangonan of Manila called the “greatest” need of the Filipino people, “rehabilitation programs for their destroyed houses, livelihood, rice and vegetable farms.”

The day-to-day work has been managed by the UMCOR Philippines office. With the help of church workers, volunteers and other partners, UMs distributed about 1,850 food and non-food item relief packages in the Laguna, Bulacan and Rizal provinces by Dec. 1. In addition to the seed distribution, another 100 families will receive boats to improve fishing capabilities and provide transportation. Micro-credit loans will be offered to 850 flood-affected families to re-start small businesses, including those who manufacture or sell shoes, sandals and bags. Some 440 families will receive construction materials to repair damaged houses and storage sheds and build relocation centers or temporary shelters. Other participants will receive business-related training.

UM-related institutions working with UMCOR in its recovery efforts include Kapatiran-Kaunlaran Foundation Inc., a social development institution focused on the poor, and the Asuncion A. Perez Memorial Center Inc., a charitable organization. Union Theological Seminary is providing psycho-social assistance to those traumatized by the typhoons. A \$40,000 grant from UMCOR partner Muslim Aid, and in-kind contributions of water-purification tablets, units and filters from GlobalMedic, a Canadian-based emergency response organization, will support additional relief activities not covered under the ACT appeal. UMs also will “benefit from some additional disaster capacity training” through Lutheran World Relief, Crutchfield said.

The UMC is using two avenues of collecting donations for relief and recovery work in the Philippines. Donations to UMCOR’s humanitarian work can be made through [Philippines Emergency, UMCOR Advance #240235](#). Funds collected through the Churchwide Appeal for Philippines Disasters, issued by the Council of Bishops, will be used both for humanitarian and church-related efforts, such as rebuilding facilities and assisting with pastors’ salaries and other local church needs, at the direction of the bishops in the Philippines. Donations to the appeal can be made directly through local churches. Conference treasurers will forward contributions to the General Council on Finance and Administration No. 818-002-PHP. In addition, givers can donate online at [umcappel.org](#). —*Linda Bloom, UMNS*

Short Takes

Major Gift Completes Endowed Chair Honoring UM Scholar John B. Cobb, Jr. Claremont School of Theology announced this week the establishment of an endowed chair in honor of John B. Cobb, Jr., thanks to a generous

pledge from Rev. Dr. Mary Ellen Kilsby of Long Beach, Calif. The chair will be named the “Kilsby family and John B. Cobb, Jr., Chair in Process Theology.” The campaign for the chair, which began in 2006, raised \$865,000 in gifts and pledges toward the initial \$1.5 million goal. The Kilsby Family’s pledge of an additional \$800,000 over eight years completes the campaign, though efforts will continue to raise the endowment.

“John Cobb is not only a preeminent intellectual but also a remarkable inspiration to all his students and colleagues,” says Jerry D. Campbell, president of the school. “We are proud of Claremont graduate Mary Ellen and we are grateful to her family for honoring this important figure and ensuring his legacy will endure at Claremont.”

UM Music Video Gives Hope to Haitians. Stefan Youngblood wanted to give hope to Haiti. First, he donated money. Now he’s donating a song. “We Will Rise,” a song he composed, is being used in a music video to raise funds for Haiti through the UM Committee on Relief. “It’s a song that’s meant to inspire people in the midst of all the hopelessness and despair,” said Youngblood, 48, of Raleigh, N.C. He leads music for The Gathering, a contemporary service at Edenton Street UMC.

Youngblood wrote the song after Hurricane Marilyn slammed into the Virgin Islands in 1995. He lived in St. Croix at the time. “On the day before the hurricane, people were boarding up windows and buying up candles,” he said. “I bought a piano.” He wrote the song by candlelight with his children in tow. He rounded up a couple of dozen children from the island for the first recording. The song resurfaced after a cyclone devastated Myanmar in 2008. The version being used by UMCOR was recorded using North Carolina talent after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Youngblood tapped college students, high school students, professional singers and children from various churches to sing. He said his sister, a former producer for Oprah Winfrey, put together the music video after Haiti’s earthquake last week using photographs from the scene.

Youngblood is answering phone calls from across the country about the song. A caller from Haiti was interested in recording the song in Creole. “People seem surprised that I’m giving out the sheet music and the choir tracks,” Youngblood said. “Everything is free. This is what I can do.” UMCOR hopes video watchers will be inspired to donate to its Haitian relief effort. —*Susan Hogan for UMNS*

Forthcoming Events

Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University will host Ministers Week Feb. 1–3 at the Hughes-Trigg Student Center on the SMU campus in Dallas. The annual gathering complements the university’s year-long observance of the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin’s birth with “The Pew and the Petri Dish: Contemporary Issues in Religion and Science.” This continuing education program includes endowed lecture-ships, a variety of worship services, workshops, and symposia, drawing participants from throughout the United States and beyond. Registration, pricing, event details, and lodging information are available [online](#).

Bishop Minerva Carcaño will be among the keynote speakers at the 2010 Ecumenical Advocacy Days Mar. 19–22. The theme of the annual event is “A Place to Call Home: Immigrants, Refugees, and Displaced Peoples.” Carcaño, chair of the UM Taskforce on Immigration, is episcopal leader of the Desert Southwest Annual Conference, which includes Arizona and small portions of California and Utah. Further information is available at [Ecumenical Advocacy Days](#).

Positions Available

General Conference is looking for the right person to serve as Worship & Music Director for the 2012 General Conference, Apr. 24–May 4, 2012. Deadline for applicants is Feb. 1, 2010. Any questions should be addressed to Alan Morrison, business manager of General Conference (615- 369-2350; amorrison@gcfa.org).

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