



Big Tent Event!

Do you know about the "Big Tent Event" June 11-13 in Atlanta! "Experience 10 different PCUSA partner conferences, occurring concurrently, with common time set aside for all participants to sample workshops conducted by partner groups, be in worship together, enjoy meals together and attend a transforming Saturday night celebration." Conferences include: New Immigrants Ministries Convocation, National Multicultural Church Conference, National Elders Conference, CPM/COM/Seminary Healthy Ministry Conference, Racial Ethnic Convocation, Stewardship Conference, Communicators Network, Peacemaking Conference, PHEWA Social Justice Biennial conference, and Evangelism and Church Growth Conference. For more information go to www.pcusa.org/bigtent. And for a flyer go to www.pcusa.org/multicultural/bigtent.pdf.

Souper Bowl of Caring

February 1 is Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday! You can still register at www.souperbowl.com. On Souper Bowl Sunday, youth stand at the doors of your church with soup pots and collect dollars and cans to deliver to a local agency. The Hunger committee hopes to Supersize your offering again in 2009 by supplementing your offering with Nickel-A-Meal funds. If you report your total offering on the Souper Bowl website by Feb 28, the Hunger Committee will mail a check to your church to give to the agency of your choosing. There will be flyers at the Presbytery meeting with more information.

Jim McGill, Mission Mission Co-Worker in Malawi, to visit Presbytery January 31-February 1



Jim and Jodi McGill, along with their six adopted children, serve in the northern town of Mzuzu in Malawi. Jodi is a nurse and works as an instructor in the Ekwendeni Hospital's nursing school. Jim works for the Synod of Livingstonia in shallow wells, water treatment and sanitation issues. They are back in the states this year for itineration. Jim will speak at the January 31 Presbytery meeting in the afternoon to share about his work in Malawi. On Sunday February 1 he will speak at Long Creek Presbyterian Church during worship, and then Long Creek will host a gathering at their church at 2:30 pm for the Gaston area churches, as well as anyone else who would like to hear Jim speak.

Mzuzu and Ekwendeni were hit by flooding this past month and one wing of the hospital was destroyed as well as one of the school buildings. Keep this mission station in your prayers as they recover.

Letter from Barbara Nagy in Malawi: January 10, 2009

Malawi has entered 'hunger season', the time of the year when most people have run out of food and are either chronically hungry or truly starving. At Nkhoma we have been helped by gifts from last year's Nickel a Meal program, which provided fertilizer to families supporting orphans, and emergency food relief to malnourished children, pregnant women, HIV and TB patients, etc. This has been a tremendous benefit to the many patients this program has served. As a pediatrician I am always on a soapbox about measuring weights of all kids, and we find the vast majority of them are suffering from acute and/or chronic malnutrition. I tell our staff we are treating the next generation of Malawians, and the care we give will be reflected in the status of the population in general twenty years from now. Malnutrition is so pervasive here it is often overlooked, but we feel it impacts just about every area of life: education, life expectancy especially maternal and child survival, availability of trained personnel in every area especially healthcare, the list could go on a long way. For those interested in general development issues try researching Malawi and Millenium Development Goals on the internet to understand more of what basic areas are being targeted.

We have also started to experience cholera which has stressed hospital resources to the breaking point as Malawi government often doesn't have the resources to respond with things like IV fluids, latex gloves, cleaning supplies. Our most precious resource is nursing staff, which is habitually asked to do far more than is humanly possible. Our pediatrics ward, swollen with malaria cases, had 136 patients last Friday, many critically ill, and a nursing staff of two. I honestly don't know how they manage, and many vital things are left completely undone, yet it is gratifying to see the numbers of patients who not only get well, but feel they have received excellent, Christian care. We are blessed that half of our pediatrics ward recently underwent extensive renovations so we are now able to plug in machines like nebulizers (for asthma), oxygen saturation machines and oxygen concentrators, we are able to wash hands much more easily and there is a bit more space for the patients. Still we have only about 40 beds, which makes it more challenging to provide care for the large numbers that come. We have often (daily!) considered expanding the pediatrics ward, but are always drawn to the prevention side of the problem, how to keep so many kids from falling ill. We had high hopes for funding a community spraying project for our area to reduce malaria bearing mosquitoes, but unfortunately lacked funding. Emphasis on basic vaccinations, nutrition, insecticide treated bednets, family planning and HIV/AIDS work are ongoing.

The new primary school is proceeding slowly but well, and the first two preschool classes have been in session for a week. They hope to occupy their wonderful new classroom building by the end of this month. It is so cute to see my little daughter, Happiness, who is in the three year old class, lining up her stuffed animals and admonishing them to 'speak English!' (Our Malawian parents were surprisingly emphatic in their recommendation that school be taught in English.) Excitement among our staff and local families is extremely high about the new school, yet we need to establish a scholarship program because even the modest tuition of about 80 dollars a term is beyond the means of many of them.

Many and sincere thanks to all who are supporting us, your help makes a tremendous difference to people here in Malawi and to our family!

Barbara, Melia, Anna and Happy Nagy

Letter from Rebecca Young in Indonesia: December 26, 2008

Dear Friends,

One of the exciting things about living and working overseas is not only meeting Indonesians but also getting to know a wide variety of people from other countries who, like me, are living far from home. Most of the Westerners who live in Indonesia are Dutch, due to the fact that Indonesia was a Dutch colony for 350 years. But there are other Europeans, as well as Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, and approximately 10,000 people from the United States. I am lucky to have met many fascinating people from all over the world who have come here to serve and work with the people of Indonesia.



Barbara Hopwood outside her home in Jakarta, July 2008.

When I arrived at Jakarta Theological Seminary last year to begin teaching, there was an American professor by the name of Barbara Hopwood. She taught two subjects: spirituality and Christian education. She was extremely popular with the students. From the first moment I met her, I was impressed with her faith, her easy facility with the language, and her skill and calmness in dealing with Indonesian bureaucracy and all the confusing aspects of living in this very different culture.

It shouldn't be surprising that she was so well-adjusted, since Barbara had been serving for 35 years as a missionary in Indonesia. Barbara worked under the auspices of an organization called OMF International, a mission agency with roots in China that has spread throughout East Asia.



Barbara first landed in Indonesia in her mid-twenties and began teaching at a remote Lutheran seminary in north Sumatra. After several years there, she moved to central Sulawesi to an area called Toraja that is predominantly Christian. Barbara taught for over 15 years at a seminary there. Then she came to Jakarta Theological Seminary and had been there for two years when I arrived.

Jakarta Seminary students in a classroom making get well signs to send to Barbara during her illness, Jakarta,

December 2008.

Luckily for me, her office was directly across the hall from mine and she became a very important mentor to me. (In my June 2008 newsletter there's a photo of Barbara and me at the seminary graduation ceremony.) We met weekly to pray together, often with other members of the faculty, about issues both personal and community-wide within the seminary. She invited me to her home for delicious home-cooked meals. After so many years in Indonesia, she had figured out ways to make homemade breads and cakes that tasted amazingly like the way they taste back in the States.

Barbara had never married. One day as I talked with her about my struggles with being single in a country where everyone over the age of 30 is married, she shared how she had actually felt called by

God to stay single. In spite of the endless queries from Indonesians who could not fathom such a choice, she remained true to her call and devoted her whole life to teaching Christian spirituality to Indonesians.

She did, however, adopt a young Indonesian woman whom she had met at the seminary in Sulawesi and who had needed financial and mentoring help. Just this last summer, Barbara was able to attend the wedding ceremony of her adopted daughter as one of the bride's mothers, seated next to the biological mother. This young woman was only one of many Indonesian students and friends whom Barbara assisted throughout her many years of service.

Barbara retired at the end of the 2007-08 academic year. The seminary gave a party in her honor before she left in July, 2008. She returned to the United States with plans to care for her ailing mother in a suburb of Baltimore. But in August she fell ill and was diagnosed with stomach cancer. It was quite a shock to everyone because she had seemed perfectly healthy when she left Indonesia.

After several months of unsuccessful chemotherapy, Barbara was moved into a hospice center and on December 18, 2008, she passed away. I spoke with her mother shortly afterwards, and she told me how much Indonesia had meant to Barbara and to her life.

As all of us who knew Barbara try to deal with the sorrow of losing her so quickly, I also find myself feeling deeply grateful that her service in Indonesia overlapped with mine. At a tough period during my adaptation to a new position at the seminary and living in the overwhelming city of Jakarta, she was my "still, small voice of calm." She gave me advice and a sense that I would survive and even thrive. We often spoke together of what a privilege it is to spend our lives teaching people about God.

I write about her now with a sense of sadness at the loss, but also in joy at having encountered such a strong woman of faith. I am reminded of those who have gone before me, paving the way for those of us still struggling and growing as we try to follow our call. Like Barbara, there have been generations of missionaries, be they Presbyterian or OMF or whatever their sending organization might be, who quietly and without fanfare have become God's hands and feet, loving the people around them and reminding them that we belong to an awesome God.

Sometimes I feel that in the busy-ness of our lives in the United States, we forget the incredible gift that so many people do for us by going to serve as our representatives among people of other races, religions, and nations. As a newcomer to the field, going rather late in my career, it is remarkable to me how many people have gone before me and spent long periods of time or their entire career overseas. Knowing now how difficult it is, I salute them and the selflessness with which they relinquish the comforts of home to minister to others with their whole lives, not just from 9:00 to 5:00 but 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

So here's to Barbara Hopwood and countless others who have chosen a life of service overseas, with thanks for their tireless, fruitful service, and celebration at their homecoming someday into the peace that passes all understanding. Thanks be to God for this great cloud of witnesses who surround us and our neighbors near and far on this earth, to sing with the angels, "Behold, I bring you great tidings of joy, which shall be to *all* people..."

Rebecca Young

Humanitarian Response to Middle East crisis



A child stands inside his home damaged during an Israeli incursion and airstrikes. Photo credit IRIN.

The situation in Gaza remains difficult and dangerous. The conflict has already caused the loss of a thousand lives, a rapidly mounting score of injured civilians and the systematic destruction of basic means of subsistence. [A report from the Jerusalem U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA) provides details of the effect the crisis has had on civilians in the region.

PDA Response: Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is supporting relief efforts as a member of the Action by Churches Together (ACT) International alliance. ACT efforts include those of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)'s Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR), International Orthodox Christian Charities and other long-time PC(USA) partners. These are initial efforts and will be expanded later as the situation further unfolds. The PDA-supported efforts have included provision of food — including high-energy biscuits for children — medicine and blankets, as well as the deployment of trauma counselors.

How can you can help the church in this response?:

Through your prayers. Please pray for all those whose lives have been and continue to be affected; pray for those working to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Through your generosity. Your contributions will help meet the physical needs of those in all the areas where violence leaves them vulnerable, and the emotional and spiritual needs of the many more who have been traumatized by that violence

Individuals may give through their local Presbyterian congregation, on the secure PC(USA) website, or by sending their check to:

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Individual Remittance Processing
P.O. Box 643700
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

Please include the special designated giving account DR000081 – Middle East

Congregations should send donations through their normal mission giving channels.