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Mission Crossroads

Fall 2020



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in Pandemic:
Confronting COVID-19 Together*

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Mission Crossroads is a Presbyterian Mission Agency publication about God's mission around the world through the PC(USA) and our church partners.

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On the cover:

The Rev. Fursan Zumot and the Rev. Dr. Victor Makari greet each other with a socially distanced elbow bump outside the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem.



Photo by Douglas Dicks

AT THE CROSSROADS

Philip Woods, Associate Director, Strategy, Program and Recruitment, World Mission



Partnership in pandemic: *Confronting COVID-19 together*

As the coronavirus pandemic began to impact large swaths of the planet earlier this year, I took part in a Zoom meeting with colleagues around the world and heard deeply moving stories of how COVID-19 is affecting people and communities from Fiji through Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe to California. Some of the stories highlight how the pandemic is bringing out the best in people, such as neighbors getting groceries for the vulnerable and leaving them on the doorstep for collection. Others highlighted how a frightening scenario has become terrifying, like in the Philippines, where a form of martial law had been imposed with the police and military empowered to shoot people whom they believed posed a threat. A colleague from Ghana said that some people there are saying “people dying is the reality people have to face for some to survive.” Others spoke of the dilemma of pastors in their contexts, so used to being physically present for people in times of crisis, and now having to keep their distance. This is especially hard in places where you can't just organize a digital alternative to Sunday worship, and where funerals have become unmarked or anonymous affairs. Everywhere people spoke of the economic dimension. People are facing hardships due to loss of employment, which for many has meant the loss of their ability to feed themselves and their families day to day.

A microscopic virus has upended life for all of us everywhere, creating not just a health and economic crisis, but other crises as well. This virus and its side effects have impacted every part of life. As a consequence, the pandemic also has sparked incredible compassion and creativity as people and churches have responded in remarkable ways. This edition of *Mission Crossroads* captures stories from global partners who continue to lead in mission and ministry through the challenges of this pandemic. Worldwide, the impact of COVID-19 has varied from place to place, with some communities and populations being hit harder than others, and the stories reflect this.

Mission co-workers have been no less affected, facing difficult choices of whether to shelter in place with our partners or returning to the U.S. to be closer to family. Whatever their decision, they have remained at work, finding creative ways to social distance yet remain present. This has included discovering the rich opportunities of virtually connecting with supporting churches in the U.S., opening up a whole new world of partnership possibilities. Similarly, our Louisville-based staff have learned how to remain connected with partners and mission co-workers, even succeeding in organizing online international consultations and virtual mission trips.

The pandemic has hit us all hard, and we grieve the loss of so many exceptional people and people dear to us whose lives have been cut short by this virus. The story of this time, though, is much larger. In its full telling, we can see the hope of the resurrection breaking through as new life emerges — transforming us all.

Ready to live out Matthew 25 in bold faithfulness

Learning to 'be present' for those in need

“Pastor, I’d like to give some gift cards to people in the ministry who need food. Who needs help?”

Nina is from Mexico and has lived in the U.S. for over 30 years. She is a leader of the Presbyterian Hispanic Latino Ministry of Preston Highway, a ministry of the Mid-Kentucky Presbytery. When Nina hears that someone has a need, she volunteers to help. During the pandemic, Nina has been quick to step up and learn which families need food, infant formula or help paying a utility bill. Her pastor, the Rev. Elmer Zavala, thanks Nina and others for their support. He reminds them time and again: “When you are strong, you can help those who need food, or who need a ride to an appointment.”

In Matthew 25, three parables are strung together like pearls. They seem unrelated, but they fit together beautifully: The first is about young women waiting to welcome the groom. He’s late, and some of them don’t have enough oil in their lamps to receive him in the way expected once he arrives. **Only some are ready.**

In the parable of the talents, the workers use resources entrusted to them by their manager when he goes on a trip. He returns to find that two of them have put the resources to use in profitable ways, while one has not. **Two are boldly faithful with what they’ve been given;** while one is fearful.

Finally, in the parable of the judgment of the nations, Jesus says that those who help people who are hungry, thirsty, naked, strangers, sick and imprisoned are essentially helping Jesus. And that helping is not only about “stuff” to give people

Photo by Beatriz Benavidez



Nina is a leader in her church, the Presbyterian Hispanic Latino Ministry of Preston Highway in Louisville.

(water, food and clothing) but also about accompaniment (welcome, caring and visiting). **Some are living out their faith through actions,** providing material resources and also through a ministry of presence to be with the “least of these.”

These three parables sum up what it means to be a church that is alive. Like Nina, when we are strong and comfortable, we lift up those who are vulnerable. We are ready to hear God’s call because we have our eyes, ears, hearts and hands open to those around us — including those outside our comfort zone and community. It’s about using all our gifts with boldness and in faith. It’s about using resources to respond to God’s call, *being present* with those who need help, and allowing others to be present with us, even when we believe we are strong.

Is your congregation ready to hear God’s call in your community and across the world? How will you respond with bold faithfulness,

especially during this time of social isolation? And how will you “show up” with resources and accompaniment with the most vulnerable?

Ellen Sherby, coordinator, *Equipping for Mission Involvement*, is married to the Rev. Elmer Zavala, pastor of the Presbyterian Hispanic Latino Ministry of Preston Highway in Louisville.

Show Up!

There are many ways you and your congregation can “show up” and help others during this time of COVID-19.

- Food banks and church food pantries need volunteers who are healthy, masked and using good hand-washing protocol. Check with your presbytery or a neighboring one to learn which community or church food banks might need help.
- Learn about vibrancy in the global church. Go to pcausa.org/missionconnections to connect with and support mission co-workers serving globally during the pandemic.
- Read *Neighborhood Church: Transforming Your Congregation into a Powerhouse for Mission* by Krin Van Tatenhove and Rob Mueller.
- Find out how you can support Presbyterian Disaster Assistance’s COVID-19 response by visiting pda.pcausa.org/situation/COVID-19.

Presbyterian Church of East Africa

'If people don't work today, they won't eat tomorrow'

On March 15, the Kenyan government confirmed the first cases of COVID-19 and announced a nationwide ban on large gatherings, along with the closure of schools and nonessential businesses. Two days later, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) held a press conference to announce the closure of its worship services.

Even as PCEA leaders discussed the closing of in-person worship services, they recognized the human impact of the government directives. The then-secretary general of the PCEA, the Rev. Peter Kaniah Kariuki — who would himself die of complications from COVID-19 just four months later — summed it up clearly: “For many of our people, if they don’t work today, they won’t eat tomorrow.” In a country with nearly 65% of its people working in the informal labor sector, those same directives meant keeping people safe would lead to food insecurity.

“When people are hungry, it’s not about giving them bread for one day,” Kariuki said. “It is about walking

with them throughout their period of need whereby you will be able to testify to the goodness of the Lord when you see the daybreak together.”

Within two weeks of closures, the leaders of the PCEA had mobilized 4.5 million church members to provide food and support. In April and May, the “Adopt a Family” initiative fed more than 32,000 families throughout East Africa, and its efforts continue. Parishes and presbyteries have heeded God’s command to love one another in times of joy and struggle. PCEA members and friends have given bags of maize and flour, vegetables and milk, tea leaves and sugar, and money to purchase essentials. The initiative also received an \$8,500 grant from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

In collaborating with local congregations and community administrative officials, the PCEA identified the families most at risk and is providing a monthly food delivery to sustain a family of four. On average, it costs around \$50 to feed a family of four for a

month, as well as to provide masks, antibacterial soap and hand sanitizer.

Some of the members who are donating are also struggling financially. “We have some faithful members who have committed to giving 50 Kenya shillings a week (around 50 cents), and they have been donating each week for the past eight weeks,” Kariuki said. “We also have some rural congregations who could not donate money. One such congregation from Nyahururu, a fertile part of the country, sent an entire truckload of corn that they had recently harvested for families in the informal settlements of Nairobi.”

To begin or strengthen a relationship with partner churches in Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia, email the Rev. Paula Cooper, regional liaison for East Central Africa, at paula.cooper@pcusa.org.

The Rev. Lauren Scharstein is deputy director for mission with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.

Photos by PCEA Mission Department



Adopt a Family volunteers distribute food packages to at-risk families at Presbyterian Church of East Africa’s Kangemi parish in Nairobi, Kenya.



Adopt a Family volunteers at Presbyterian Church of East Africa’s St. Andrew’s Church in Nairobi prepare to deliver food packages to 125 families in Kibera’s informal settlement.



Members of Presbyterian Church in East Africa’s Magadi churches in Kajiado County collect donated food items for their families.

ON THE FRONT LINES

Mission co-worker Larry Sthreshley is fighting the pandemic in Congo

Larry Sthreshley, a mission co-worker for more than 30 years in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), once more finds himself on the front lines combating a global pandemic. For years it was Ebola. Now it's COVID-19.

Photo by Jill Lowrey



Mask production has helped to contain COVID-19 in Congo.

Sthreshley directs one of the largest church-run health programs in Africa, assisting the government to provide medical care to more than 9 million people in 870 health centers and 50 hospitals in four provinces of the country.

"The impact [of COVID-19] is not proportional," said Sthreshley. "As hard as it seems in the U.S., it's going to be harder for the Congolese. On a micro-level, they just don't have the margin to absorb something like this. They can't even shelter in place for more than a couple of days without going out and risking their lives."

As of August, there were more than 200 deaths. Fortunately, the government took action early

to close borders, schools and nonessential stores. That gave the health sector time to prepare.

UKAID has given IMA World Health, a faith-based global nonprofit, \$6 million to provide health facilities with personal protective equipment, messaging for medical staff and the general population on how to protect against COVID-19, and training on how to treat COVID-19 patients who don't need intensive care.

When the government authorizes drug treatments, the funds will be used to supply drugs to the health centers and hospitals. Kinshasa, the capital city, is a priority for UKAID, so the COVID-19 response will also include health facilities in Kinshasa, covering 40% of the population. The nine health facilities managed by the Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa will receive assistance through this COVID-19 funding.

The experience Sthreshley has in fighting Ebola has been remarkably helpful in planning the COVID-19 response.

"You identify the case, track down contacts and isolate those contacts. We aren't doing that as intensively with COVID-19," he said. "We had a big network of people going from home to home, taking temperatures twice a day for all the Ebola contact patients. With COVID-19, we will identify the cases and distribute masks and educational materials to the contacts, but we won't be going on a daily basis to their homes. That would actually increase the risk, because it's so much more contagious than Ebola. A lot of things like the hand-washing and other protocols are also very similar."

Photo by Crystal Stafford



Red Mongana soap is a popular brand in Democratic Republic of Congo and will be purchased for health facilities in the fight to protect the Congolese from the coronavirus.

The population in Congo is young compared to western countries. About 62% of the population is under 25. Only 2.7% of the population is over 65. But there are a significant number of adults with diabetes and hypertension, as well as thousands of vulnerable children who suffer from acute and chronic malnutrition.

Larry and Inge Sthreshley grew up as children of missionaries in Congo. His parents were Presbyterian missionaries who served in the two Kasai provinces in the south-central region. Her parents were Methodist missionaries who served in the Katanga province in the far southeastern section of the country.

Kathy Melvin is director of mission communications with the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

TAKE ACTION

Support the work of Larry and Inge Sthreshley in Congo:

pcusa.org/donate/E200412

In Rwanda, integrity shines through difficult times

PIASS staff works together to solve COVID-19 economic crisis

The Rev. Mary Catherine “Kay” Day, a mission co-worker in Rwanda, believes she has witnessed true integrity in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2013, Day has been a lecturer in English and practical theology, preparing students for pastoral ministry at the Protestant Institute of Arts and Sciences (PIASS). The school strives to produce graduates who will contribute to Rwanda’s spiritual, intellectual and socio-economic life. Like many organizations around the world, PIASS faced critical decisions about its future.

Using a large screen in the conference hall, Musemakweli recapped the problem and outlined three possible solutions. The first was to close as other organizations had. The second was for everyone to take only 30% of their salary for four months and continue to operate with online teaching. This would not be a salary, but literally a living wage, just enough to get by. The third option was to offer the 30% to whoever wanted to take it and the rest could leave and search for other means of support, with the option to return in September.

Senior staff proposed an amendment that lower-paid staff receive 50% of their salary. Since their incomes are low to begin with, 30% of what they make would not be enough to survive on. They make 50,000 to 100,00 Rwandan francs a month, the equivalent of \$50 to \$100 U.S.

The amendment was overwhelmingly approved. The result was that everyone could keep their jobs and the school would remain operational.

Another concern was how the institution would make payments to the bank with no money coming in. Musemakweli assured everyone that the school would take out loans, sell some unused property or do whatever it took to stay operational.

The final concern addressed by the group was that reduced salaries would allow people to live, but not pay back any loans they had taken out. Musemakweli told the group that he had consulted with a bank and would draft a letter explaining



The campus of the Protestant Institute of Arts and Sciences.

that employees were not receiving salaries but would pay back the loans once salaries were resumed.

“I wanted to sing praise, for the grace of a caring institution that wanted to provide for the people who serve the institution and the compassion of my fellow staff members, caring for the least among us,” Day said.

The Rev. Mary Catherine “Kay” Day, a mission co-worker serving alongside the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, helps prepare men and women for pastoral ministry.

Kathy Melvin is director of mission communications with the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Photos by Kathy Melvin



The Rev. Mary Catherine “Kay” Day with PIASS vice chancellor and professor Elisée Musemakweli.

Having been closed for face-to-face teaching since March, and unable to open until September, PIASS was not in a good financial position. The school had not been able to pay staff in April, but rather than making an internal decision, it called together its management, board and general staff. Together they would decide a way forward, led by vice chancellor and professor Elisée Musemakweli.

**HELP EQUIP
CHURCH LEADERS**

Support the ministry of mission co-worker
Mary Catherine “Kay” Day in Rwanda:
pcusa.org/donate/E200502

‘Project Miaro’ responds to domestic violence — and the coronavirus

The Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM) often stretches limited resources and expands established ministries to respond to new challenges.

Its Chaplaincy to Marginalized People, known as SAFFIFAA, has played an important role in alerting communities to the dangers of labor contracts and human trafficking. With the help of a consortium of PC(USA) congregations on Florida’s “Space Coast,” SAFFIFAA launched a new initiative at the beginning of 2020. “Project Miaro” (“protect”) aims to prevent domestic violence, often one of the factors that drives women and young people to seek work far from home.

Before Project Miaro started, the coronavirus pandemic began to sweep around the world. Madagascar recorded its first case of COVID-19 on March 20; two days later, the government imposed lockdown measures in Antananarivo, the capital city.

In response, SAFFIFAA began to rethink Project Miaro. Public education is a key component of the

program, so SAFFIFAA incorporated COVID-19 precautions in its training.

Pastor Helivao Poget, SAFFIFAA’s director, realized that people would also need nutritional support. The 28 participating families, like most of Madagascar’s people, live a hand-to-mouth existence, working to satisfy their needs each day. Lockdown regulations restricted access to markets, making starvation a greater threat for many households than the coronavirus.

The Malagasy government established price-controlled markets that sold rice and cooking oil at discounted rates, “but when people do not have money, even ‘cheap’ goods seem expensive,” Pastor Helivao said.

On Easter Sunday, SAFFIFAA arranged for the participating households to receive rice, meat, sugar, oil, soap and a small amount of cash to see them through the holidays. Later, when restrictions on public gatherings relaxed, SAFFIFAA began bringing the participants together for weekly fellowship.

“When we received the families, we respected all the relevant hygiene and social distancing rules,” Pastor Helivao said. “Pastor Rado Bera Randrianaivoarivelo, head of the FJKM Chaplaincy program, led devotions, and SAFFIFAA staff passed out face masks, soap and food parcels.”

Pastor Helivao explained how healthy eating can enhance immunity. She also began a conversation around domestic violence, initially lifting up Jesus’ command to love and respect one another. In subsequent weeks,



FJKM “Shepherds” conduct a healing prayer service for “Miaro” families. Shepherds are a branch of service like elders or deacons that is unique to Madagascar.

she shared materials that SAFFIFAA had produced to teach strategies for combating domestic violence.

Miaro also brings young women together to build their self-esteem and confidence. “We often start with movement and dance, which is relaxing and encourages good interaction,” Pastor Helivao explained. “Then we have a pastor and a psychologist lead discussion. In this atmosphere of teaching, listening and re-creation, the girls find it easy to open up, to share their feelings and suffering, and to move toward healing.”

Dr. Douglas Tilton is regional liaison for Southern Africa, including Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

PRAY, ADVOCATE,
GIVE

Make a gift and designate it for “SAFFIFAA”:
pcusa.org/donate/E052045

Photos by Rija Randrianasolo



Pastor Helivao Poget, left, counsels a participant in the “Miaro” initiative.

God's love and a warm Peruvian welcome

Pastor César provides food, temporary shelter and legal counsel for growing numbers of refugees

Last fall, I had the most unexpected weekend with a small community of Venezuelan refugees in the desert town of Piura, near the northern border of Peru.

Prior to the trip, an opportunity arose to help our partners in Peru get a small grant to address the urgent needs of Venezuelan refugees. Over the previous two years, Peru had received over a million refugees escaping an untenable situation in Venezuela. Most arrived by foot coming across the northern border having passed through Colombia and Ecuador.

Early on, Peru had opened its doors and granted asylum to hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans. Often their kids arrived malnourished due to lack of food in Venezuela. Along the journey they suffered exploitation and other abuses. And upon arrival, with little more than a couple of bags and their kids in tow, they encountered a growing xenophobia.

To be fair, as many shared with me, most Peruvians are very kind and hospitable. Nonetheless, as in all societies throughout the world, migrant xenophobia is growing. So, when our partners had the

opportunity to get a grant to help meet urgent needs of food, health care and legal counsel, I was happy to oblige. What I did not want to do was perpetuate the deeply embedded stereotype of the “white savior” who comes to the rescue.

The grant funds were used to support an initiative of Pastor César, who had no other place to congregate folks than the small living room of his home.

Pastor César would walk the streets in search of newly arriving Venezuelans, invite them to a meal at his home, connect them with free legal services and temporary housing, and with the grant funds provide them with weekly groceries for their first three months in country.

I knew it was not enough, but it was something, and it was deeply appreciated. I felt wrong receiving the profound thanks expressed to me by Pastor César and the Venezuelan community he walks with. And, I felt it necessary to address the elephant in the room: I, too, am an immigrant in this country. And, while I may understand something about the pain of leaving one's home country behind, I can never comprehend the suffering and sacrifice made by millions in search of food for their children and a roof over their heads.

Let's be clear — the xenophobia faced by so many refugees in this

Photos by Jed Hawkes Koball



Children of Venezuelan families who have recently arrived in Peru sing a song expressing their gratitude and the beauty of their culture.

world is a xenophobia deeply rooted in white supremacy. Should a Venezuelan refugee and I walk down the same street with no one knowing anything of our pasts or our reasons for being in Peru, we would be treated very differently by those we encountered along the way, simply because of the differences in the color of our skin and the accents with which we speak.

My intention was not to express guilt, rather to acknowledge the unjust world in which we walk. What followed was a sharing of hearts — profound stories of loss, hurt, pain and anger, as well as stories of grace and mercy found among complete strangers. Tears of sadness mixed with tears of laughter and even joy. And song broke out! As did food — Venezuelan treats made by hand with the few resources they had. We ate, and we were filled in so many ways.

Today, in the midst of a global pandemic that has hit Peru as severely as any country in the world, despite quick and draconian measures taken by the government, the refugees from Venezuela now find themselves in even more dire straits. Food insecurity is rapidly on the rise, hospitals are overwhelmed, and many Venezuelans are being evicted from their homes out of increased xenophobia. Despite closed borders, thousands of refugees have fled Peru to return to Venezuela, which they now see as a more tenable situation. Unsurprising to me, though, Pastor César's compassion toward those who stay only grows.

Before returning to Lima from my visit with Pastor César and friends, he said he had a small gift for me from people who were not able to join us that day. Then he handed me a copy of the Quran, the holy book of Islam. I was as confused as



Pastor Pedro Bullón of the Red Uniendo Manos Peru, center (light blue shirt with horizontal stripes), gathers in the town square with Venezuelan refugees who have recently arrived in Chiclayo, Peru.

you might be. Little did I know that the Venezuelans are not the only refugees who have come from afar.

Some years ago, a group of Syrians also sought to make their home in the north of Peru, escaping their own untenable situation. Pastor César has developed a close relationship with them. In fact, he has opened up his living room to provide them a place for their own times of prayer and praise. And, together they have worked side by side in the interests of the Venezuelans who have sought refuge in the midst of increasing risk.

Upon saying goodbye that day, I gave them all my profound gratitude and committed myself to share their story — not only the pain and suffering, but the blessing that they are to me, to Piura, to Peru, to the world. Because they are.

There in the desert, on the far margins of society, with a Quran in one hand and an arepa (Venezuelan

cornmeal bread) in the other, the Good News of God's Love that I first learned through Jesus had rarely felt so alive. The refugees and immigrants among us enrich our lives and bring us closer to God.

May we welcome them as the blessing they are.

The Rev. Jed Hawkes Koball and his wife, Jenny, serve as mission co-workers in Peru. Jed accompanies the work of Joining Hands, a Presbyterian Hunger Program partner, in identifying and interpreting root causes of poverty, and Jenny coordinates the Young Adult Volunteers program.

**S H A R E
G O D ' S L O V E**

Support the work of
Jed and Jenny in Peru:

pcusa.org/donate/E200447

A story of God's providence

CEDEPCA's virtual journey to Guatemala takes flight in the midst of COVID-19

I left my job as a pastor of Hamblen Park Presbyterian Church in Spokane, Washington, and was commissioned by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as a mission co-worker right when COVID-19 hit.

In my new role as a mission co-worker and facilitator for the Intercultural Encounters Program of the Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America (CEDEPCA), I host and accompany travelers from the U.S. and Canada to Guatemala. When the border was closed and the PC(USA) travel ban was announced, it felt like I was free-falling. How would I be able to carry out my mission co-worker responsibilities in any meaningful way from Spokane?

Through technology I started videoconferencing with others on the Intercultural Encounters team at CEDEPCA — all Guatemalans. We bonded with one another right away. My colleagues in Guatemala were having to dream up new ways of carrying out their mission without travelers coming, and I was in the unique position of having no preset ideas of how things had been done before.

At first, we thought we would meet virtually with the groups of North Americans who had planned to visit Guatemala in 2020. Then we decided to open these virtual meetings to anyone in the U.S. and Canada. It felt like an incredible opportunity to include people who, for one reason or another, may never be able to visit Guatemala in person. We committed to sharing a new topic each month and to making our “virtual journeys” feel more like an exciting journey than a routine webinar.

One of the providential things we discovered right away is that, due



The CEDEPCA Intercultural Encounters Program team — now known as the “virtual flight crew” — met for the first time in Guatemala in January. Left to right: Esvin Sirin, Rebeca Noriega, the Rev. Betsey Moe and Nancy Carrera.

to unpredictable internet and power outages in Guatemala, the technology for the virtual journeys worked best if it was hosted in the U.S., which is where my husband, Eric, comes in! Eric is the “wizard behind the curtain” for these complex Zoom meetings, which involve a mix of live speakers, breakout rooms, videos and PowerPoint slides. Most of the video production is done by the staff in Guatemala, and almost all of our contributors are Guatemalan, but we are able to share it all smoothly from our home in Spokane.

In July the 90-minute virtual journey from Guatemala to San Francisco and back covered topics of migration, deportation and COVID-19. The August journey focused on the topic of women's experience in Central America. The “trips” have helped virtual travelers break free from pandemic isolation, at least in mind and heart. “The hope is that all travelers return home with fresh perspectives and ideas to be a voice for

the voiceless in their communities,” said Judith Castañeda, general coordinator of CEDEPCA.

For more information on the topic of CEDEPCA's next virtual journey, contact Nancy Carrera, nancyc@cedepca.org, or Betsey Moe, betsey.moe@pcusa.org.

The Rev. Betsey Moe is a mission co-worker and facilitator of the Intercultural Encounters Program of the Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America. She and her husband, Eric, are currently serving virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic.

STRENGTHEN MISSION PARTNERSHIPS

Support the work of
Betsey and Eric Moe in Guatemala:
pcusa.org/donate/E200538

No life without water

World Mission partner seeks to preserve life in the Middle East by harvesting rainwater

The Applied Research Institute — Jerusalem (ARIJ) is a nonprofit Palestinian organization dedicated to promoting sustainable development in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian Territories and the self-reliance of the Palestinian people through greater control over natural resources such as water.

Throughout history, humankind has struggled to obtain and contain large amounts of water for drinking, for agriculture and for livestock. Recently, ARIJ has been working to rehabilitate and recondition the ancient Roman cisterns in the West Bank, between Bethlehem and Hebron, for harvesting rainwater.

Eighty-three such cisterns have potential, and if cleaned, plastered and outfitted, could become water-holding catchments for farmers and those who raise livestock. Currently, about 55% of the surveyed cisterns are in use, with another 45% having over time been backfilled with garbage, stones or other debris. Almost half of the cisterns in use have leakage issues, yet if repaired could contribute to the water supply in the West Bank.

In Palestine particularly, water scarcity is compounded by the political realities of the Israeli occupation. Israeli military control of water resources is a major cause of today's water shortages in the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinian water consumption is approximately 55 liters (less than 15 gallons) per person per day, while the minimum recommendation from the

Photo by the Applied Research Institute — Jerusalem



An ancient Roman well in the Bethlehem wilderness is among those being repaired and used to hold rainwater for livestock in the West Bank.

World Health Organization is 88 to 100 liters (about 23 to 26 gallons).

Some years ago, the Israeli national report on climate change forecast a decrease in precipitation of 4%–8%, as well as a shortened, delayed rainy season. Facing today's water crisis in the West Bank and considering the restriction on the ability to dig or develop wells and utilize other sources of water, there is hope that these ancient cisterns marked for rehabilitation by ARIJ might provide a new — yet old — solution to obtaining water in this beleaguered land.

In its capacity as a national research institute, ARIJ lists the following among its goals:

- To effectively disseminate information and knowledge to Palestinian society.
- To actively participate in identifying and understanding community problems.
- To identify and adapt the most appropriate technology to meet the needs and requirements of the community and the society.

Other ongoing projects include enhancing access to clean and safe drinking water in Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jala; promoting wastewater treatment and reuse in scarce water areas, and training for water management plans; introducing feasible and sustainable hydro-agricultural systems to benefit poor people; securing food for poor people through introducing friendly and sustainable agricultural techniques; and training for social inclusion in community

development by providing platforms for planning and advocacy.

ARIJ has been a partner organization of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for more than two decades, and has recently received contributions for rehabilitating a few damaged wells from Presbyterian World Mission and the Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the PC(USA).

Douglas Dicks is facilitator for education for justice and peacemaking in Israel and Palestine.

The Rev. Dr. Victor Makari is a liaison for ecumenical partnerships in Israel and Palestine, serving alongside his wife, Sara.

MEET NEEDS

Support God's mission in the Middle East:
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EUROPE

Challenges facing the church in challenging times

Europe, like all other continents, is facing the acute challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments are struggling to find answers in a dynamic priority-setting process in responding to new, as well as long-time, existing challenges. The COVID-19 crisis has opened our eyes to problems, arising in an increasingly interdependent world that need global and cooperative approaches. Like infections spreading across borders, climate change and pollution do not stop at national borders. International crime and terrorism, as well as global economic problems need globally coordinated solutions. It has become obvious that individual countries are less effective in tackling existing problems when acting on their own than when they coordinate with

others. Partnerships and networks amplify the ability to react to challenges of our times.

An additional dimension of most of the existing concerns is that they seem detached from the everyday lives of ordinary people — people who often live far away from power centers and are not immediately affected by decisions of international politics. More and more people have disagreed with the view that global issues can best be addressed through global approaches. Will the pandemic change this perspective and lead to more solidarity or will it amplify isolation? The enormous differences in social economic conditions point to the fact that only small groups of people have reaped the benefits of globalization and that the majority

of the population bears the brunt of the negative outcomes of this process. Almost everywhere in the world, globalization has been accompanied by growing inequalities and eroding prospects for the middle and lower class. In addition, many feel that they are subject to uncontrollable global forces that threaten their identities. Many people have become suspicious and argue that globalization and international cooperation is beneficial only for out-of-touch elites pursuing their own profits while neglecting people's concerns.

The European Union is a collaborative of 27 countries that participate in the process of growing together. These countries have declared their commitment to solidarity, justice and freedom, respect and tolerance. The leaders of these countries work together to transform these commitments by integrating their forces in specific areas of state policies, such as trade, economic competition, ecology and climate change, creating a union of shared values — values that have been put to the test again during the COVID-19 crisis.

Sympathizing with respectful declarations of good intentions, a key question arose: How can obvious efforts for international cooperation and joint policymaking be reconciled, considering the legitimate desire of many people to own and control policies that affect their daily lives?

In a period where values like solidarity, justice and respect of others are under threat, it is important that churches show through their actions how these values can be put into practice. Visionary statements are

Photos by Christine Kristof



Churches are contemplating the future.



Serving and praying together.

credible only if people themselves try to live up to the values they promote. Political declarations without people's support lose their relevance, and sooner or later, become empty desires. Even best intentions, as people in some part of Europe experienced through the tragic history of the 20th century, can turn against the people.

How do visions relate to the reality of everyday life? How are they relevant to people's worries, joys and troubles, and their aspirations for a better life? To their longing of being respected and living in peace with closer and more distant neighbors?

Open and sincere dialogue of church with politics, not as support of political power or politics but rather as an instrument of God's mission in society through the church, is critical. What are essential presuppositions of such dialogue?

First is confident and sound theology. Matthew 25:31–46 offers the building blocks of such theology. Some others are assembled around the biblical keywords of service (diaconia) and fellowship (koinonia).

From the very beginning of the church, Christians have pursued their message through diaconia (Ephesians 6:7; 1 Corinthians

16:15–18; Philippians 2:30). It is a fundamental attribute of the church and a guiding motive for its mission. Diaconia is based on communication and participation, directed toward wider society and toward the fundamental economic, political and cultural structures that shape life.

An important function of diaconia is working both with and on behalf of those whom it seeks to serve. This role encompasses identifying and challenging injustices at every level — locally, nationally and internationally. It means addressing the huge disparities of income and wealth that mark the globalized economy. But it also means advocating on behalf of those who are excluded because of race, gender, faith, ability or age. It points to the need for all to change, so all may live in dignity. Diaconia also has a ministry and a duty to address all injustices, covering the vast territory from unjust use of force to injustices against nature and God's Creation. Such activity goes back to the foundational values of modern culture and rests on our fundamental belief in the equality of people before God, and of people made in the image of God.

A local church can only fully realize itself when it is a serving, diaconal

church. In church history, Christian diaconia has always been understood as a contribution to the creation of a fellowship of solidarity, in the sense of a koinonia of persons (1 John 1:7). It is an expression of the fullness of the body of Christ. From a theological perspective, diaconia is inseparably related to koinonia. As the prominent 20th century theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) pointed out: "The church is only the church when it is there for other people."

The Rev. Dr. Peter Pavlovic resides in Brussels, the seat of the European Union. An inspirational advocate for economic and ecological justice, he is engaged in promoting the church's voice in society and raising the church's concerns in dialogue with politics. This passion is a foundation for his work with the Conference of European Churches and the European Christian Environment Network.

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My purple notebook

A passport through the pandemic



“Mama, you spend too much time on your phone,” said my daughter, Aurelie, during family discussions about changes to our family’s routines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It had been a few weeks since the Philippine government imposed “enhanced community quarantine” measures. Schools were closed, which meant Aurelie’s after-school routine of playing with her best friend or going to taekwondo had stopped. I would no longer report to the office or finish my workday at the local gym. Sunday worship was now online. I was trying to

make sense of the coronavirus, stay in touch with friends and family and read books, all from the palm of my hand.

These words cut deep and caught me off guard. Trying to appreciate my daughter’s honesty, I still needed time to acknowledge and begin to find new rhythms, since our apartment was morphing into multipurpose space. That’s when my husband, Juan, handed me the purple notebook. “Write down the things that you don’t want to forget,” he said.

The purple notebook sits next to my computer tablet, with its lined

pages ready for my color-coded notes. I haven’t calculated if using this notebook means more time with my daughter — it may just mean more hours with my purple notebook than my phone.

Black or blue ink is the normal tone; pink ink raises the urgency; pink highlighter translates roughly to, “Do this before you do anything else.” The first details in that notebook are the names of four medical centers recommended by our barangay (immediate neighborhood) that are designated for COVID-19 patients. On the next page are notes from an

Photos by Cathy Chang



Colleagues from Compass PH visited one of the facilities in Manila for stranded overseas Filipino workers in quarantine.

online meeting about observations from colleagues at Migrante International about urgent needs of Filipino migrants and their families.

More than a to-do list, this notebook includes plans and preparations, lessons and learnings from many online collaborative conversations. Still considered important, not everything has made it into the notebook. Juan and I have talked through multiple conversations about what we value as co-parents, co-teachers and co-workers. We have connected more often with our families and discussed everything from racism to the Korean War to caring for aging parents.

I consider my notebook a passport of knowledge. It reminds me that I can still travel and meet virtually with colleagues around Asia and around the world.

I am amazed that colleagues have invited me to make a difference in the lives of stranded migrants; to work for the betterment of the Filipino people; and to discuss and develop connections of worship-related resources from mission co-workers and global partners. During the pandemic, these Filipino colleagues have witnessed increasing government crackdowns against human rights.

Colleagues affiliated with the Christian Conference of Asia, as a regional ecumenical conciliar body, have hosted webinars around the impact of COVID-19 specific to concerns such as women and gender-based violence, food insecurity and migration.

Philippine churches, as well as local and international human rights organizations, have criticized specific actions and responses of the Philippine government related to the pandemic, yet have remained hopeful for the work of the United Nations to call the government to accountability.

With Churches Witnessing with Migrants, there is an emerging Philippines network and growing international network of Asian, African and Middle Eastern colleagues committed to solidarity and support with migrants, refugees and uprooted peoples.

What excites me is how this notebook has traced our movement from online meeting spaces to new opportunities. April 8 was the initial meeting of my Migrante International colleagues to discuss how we might respond more effectively to short- and long-term needs of overseas Filipino workers.

Based on data from Migrante International and Compass PH about stranded seafarers who hail mostly from Visayas, we are mobilizing and organizing around shared concerns. Initial estimates of up to 1 million land-based and sea-based Filipino migrants are expected to return to the Philippines by the end of 2020. Many have already lost their jobs because they were forced to resign under “no work, no pay” conditions, have had their wages withheld or have experienced significant reduction in their working hours and wages. Philippine embassies, consulates and government agencies cannot respond to their appeals for repatriation or testing. Meanwhile families of migrants are often disqualified from social amelioration programs because at least one family member works abroad. The Philippines has a record high unemployment rate of 45.5%.

Due to the recent explosion in Beirut and other challenges in the Middle East, the overall situation for migrants is worsening. Seafarers are still stranded in China and Sri Lanka. Many migrants are returning home to the Philippines where they are encountering



The Rev. Cathy Chang, top left, meets with mission partners from her home base in the Philippines.

challenges with quarantine facilities and testing. Food, transportation and coordination with the government agencies of their home provinces are in short supply. Thankfully colleagues have created a unified response called “Damayang Migrante,” where community and government responses can support the immediate needs of migrants and their families.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the exploitation already facing sea-based migrants,” said Joanna Concepcion, chairperson of Migrante International. “Their health is deteriorating and the longer they are denied support and assistance, the longer their lives are placed in even more danger. Governments are not allowing them to dock in ports and they remain stranded in open seas. They deserve humanitarian support, not exclusion and discrimination.”

The Rev. Cathy Chang is regional facilitator for addressing migration and human trafficking issues in Southeast Asia.

**H E L P
TRANSFORM LIVES**

Support the work of Cathy Chang
in Southeast Asia:
pcusa.org/donate/E200533

Pacific Island churches begin the journey to a ‘new normal’

Can these lessons resonate worldwide?

The Rev. Dr. Tēvita Koloa’ia Havea, moderator of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), a PC(USA) global partner, says 2020 will mark a turning point for the Pacific Islands in how it understands everything from ecumenism, ecology and politics to development.

In a letter to PCC churches, he encourages leaders to look at lessons from the past to create a “new normal.” While his words are aimed at Christians in the Pacific Islands, they may resonate in any region of the world.

“The impact of the coronavirus, while deeply tragic on the one hand, offers us a unique opportunity to envision life anew. Never before is our world so blessed with creativity and ingenuity, yet so vexed by our foolishness in believing that there are no limits to our powers and to what we can do. The coronavirus or COVID-19, in a most striking and startling way, revealed this folly. It lays bare and shatters the poignant illusion of this ‘normal’ and its ‘inevitability’ that the world, and we in the region, have taken for granted.”



Photo provided by UCA Assembly

Pacific Conference of Churches Moderator the Rev. Dr. Tēvita Koloa’ia Havea (left) with Uniting Church in Australia President Dr. Deidre Palmer in 2018.



Ecumenism

As our forebears read the stars, he said, it is now time for current church leaders to create a future vision of a new normal, conditioned by experiences, cultures, traditions and worldviews. The endeavor began at gatherings in 2016–17 by the Papua New Guinea Council of Churches, a member of the World Council of Churches, enabling the emergence of a shift of understanding ecumenism from “unity of the body of Christ” to the “Household of God.”

Ecology

In talking about the need to conserve and sustain the natural environment, Havea quoted the Rev. Leslie Boseto, a Pacific theologian, who said, “As Christians we are obliged to be good stewards of God’s Creations and today more than ever, we must make informed decisions about how to conserve and our children enjoy the cultural, social and economic treasures that have defined our people for a millennium.”

He also quoted Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, an ecumenical elder from Samoa, whom he said described the concept of the “household” well.

“I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a ‘tofi’ (inheritance)

with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging.”

Politics

Havea encouraged churches to come together on common political goals and to break the habit of listening only to like-minded people, learning instead to talk across artificial political boundaries to shared beliefs. He said political education at institutions of higher learning should ask students not what they expect from life, but rather, “What does life expect from you?” We must ask, “What does our political life expect from us?” rather than, “What do we expect from politics?” This is another reason why today’s leaders, according to Havea, need to write this aspect of story for the “new normal.”

Development

Havea writes that it is possible to conceive of another way of measuring development and progress and it is imperative that both church and political institutions are united by common developmental goals and duties to each other.

He writes, “It is evident that it is impossible to move forward without scripting this aspect of the story of the ‘new normal’ as we see, and anchoring it on our traditions, philosophies, cultures and faith traditions, and the wisdom therein. Unless we do this, development and its measures currently continue to favor the few and disadvantage the many among us, and the ‘normal’ that was will be the story of the ‘new normal.’ We as leaders — church, political and traditional — must script this aspect of our story together; it cannot be otherwise.”

Despite the enormous impacts of climate change, natural disasters and now the coronavirus, Havea said church leaders must seize the opportunity to look at the world in a new way.

The Pacific Island region is a unique and culturally diverse region where more than 2,000 languages are spoken.

Kathy Melvin is director of mission communications with the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

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Further the work of World Mission among partners in Asia and the Pacific:
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Pacific Island nations are located in the Pacific Ocean, east of both Australia and the Philippines, as far west as Papua, New Guinea, and as far east as Easter Island. The region, which also includes the Australian continent, is also referred to as Oceania.

Mission co-workers continue to serve during the pandemic

Faithfully walking alongside partners around the world

Like nearly everyone in the world, mission co-workers are learning to adapt and adjust to the challenges of a global pandemic, but one thing has not changed: They continue to walk daily alongside global partners.

Tracey King-Ortega, World Mission's regional liaison for Central America, currently sheltering-in-place in California, says COVID-19 is like an X-ray that has exposed the most vulnerable in every part of the world and brought into stark relief the importance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Matthew 25 invitation (pcusa.org/matthew25).

"Throughout Scripture we see how Jesus sought out 'the least of these,' talked to them, touched them, ate with them, treated them with dignity and invited them into community," she said. "As we read in Matthew 25, on the final day of judgment, the question asked is simply, 'What did you do for the poor and needy?'"

King-Ortega continues to work virtually with partners in Central America and follows closely how the pandemic is impacting Latin American society. It varies by country. Costa Rica has done a good job of containing the virus with restrictive measures and universal health care. Both Honduras and El Salvador enacted strict lockdown measures to try to prevent the spread, but the economic impact is a huge burden.

José Lamont Jones was planning to visit churches and build support for his ministry in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, but his plans have been delayed due to the pandemic. He continues to work creatively from his home in the Dominican Republic, so he can realize his call to serve.

While building support with U.S. churches, Jones and his wife have been helping out at local congregations by making masks, cooking and delivering meals and shopping for

senior members. Each Monday, mission co-workers in Africa gather for prayer, for family members, for friends and partners in the U.S., and in Africa.

Living relatively close to China with three young children, mission co-workers the **Rev. Dr. Jonathan and Emily Seitz** feel comfortably safe in Taipei, Taiwan. With only seven deaths in the entire country, Taiwan has become a model for dealing with COVID-19.

When the PC(USA) asked mission co-workers to return to the U.S., the Seitz family asked to shelter-in-place with the support of the PC(USA)'s global partner, the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, with whom they have served since 2009. Jonathan teaches at the Taiwan Theological Seminary, where most of his students are preparing for pastoral ministry.

Jonathan is able to teach in person again since restrictions have been lifted and his children have returned to school.

Those interested in extending a virtual invitation to a mission co-worker should email mission.live@pcusa.org or call 800-728-7228, ext. 5075.

Kathy Melvin is director of mission communications with the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

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MISSION CO-WORKERS**

Make a gift for the sending and support of PC(USA) mission co-workers:
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Photo by Rich Copley



José Lamont Jones, mission co-worker, Democratic Republic of Congo

A YEAR OF SERVICE FOR YAVIRTUAL A LIFETIME OF CHANGE



YAVs go virtual!

Virtual in 2020–21 and in-person in 2021–22

For the first time in its nearly 30-year history, the Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) program is virtual in 2020–21 (October through May).

“Participating in a YAV year is supposed to provide young adults with two primary things: an opportunity to directly address root causes of poverty, and a chance to explore the meaning of Christian faith and accountability,” said Diamond Duman, a virtual YAV from Key West, Florida. “The goal has not changed; the method has become different. I am engaging in the virtual YAV program with aims to still enact change in my community, combat poverty and grow in my faith during trying times. I know the information I gain and the skills I learn will make me a stronger activist when I am called to be a leader of progress.”

YAVs are working on social and racial justice issues through the lens of Presbyterian Mission’s Matthew 25 invitation to dismantle structural racism, eradicate systemic poverty and build congregational vitality. YAVs are being guided by staff in the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Office of the General Assembly, ecumenical partners and other church leaders across the denomination.

“The ability to ‘go virtual’ has allowed the YAV program to partner in a broader ministry context, which

would not have been possible during a regular YAV year,” said Destini Hodges, YAV associate for recruitment. “We have partners at the national, mid council and congregational level to assist us in interpreting our new Core Values, while lifting up what it means to be a connectional church doing mission in partnership.” Once COVID-19 is no longer a threat, Hodges said that what virtual YAVs do this year could potentially lay the groundwork for a new mission model that remains a vital part of the YAV program in years to come.

The Rev. Everdith Landrau, coordinator of the YAV program, said that although face-to-face encounters are irreplaceable, virtual service does offer a space for theological reflection, engagement and discipleship. “We believe this virtual program will invigorate our 2021–22 recruitment season, while giving the 2020–21 class unique options created just for them.”

Kathy Melvin is director of mission communications with the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

YAVs can choose from two options:

OPTION A

Take part in a virtual YAV year (2020–21):

Commit to participating in training modules (six hours each week) focused on social justice, advocacy and the Matthew 25 invitation related to dismantling structural racism. For the first time, as a one-time exception, the virtual year will also be open to 18-year-olds who are interested in exploring the YAV program. *(Student loan repayment assistance is available. No stipend and no health insurance are provided.)*

OPTION B

Take part in a two-year YAV journey (2020–22):

Commit to participating in the virtual year (2020–21) and the in-person year (2021–22). This option allows YAVs to begin fundraising for their in-person YAV year early. *(In addition, they also can apply for student loan repayment assistance for the 2020–21 virtual year, available in four installments.)*

Plans may change based on the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic. Check for updates at youngadultvolunteers.org. Learn about the Matthew 25 invitation at pcusa.org/matthew25.

SUPPORT YAVS

Make a gift to support faith in action through YAVs:

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The joy of giving

Legacy gift addresses poverty, particularly for women and children

Rarely in my vocational journey have I had the pleasure of meeting a fellow Christian traveler for whom giving provided such profound joy. The Rev. Jane Hays was such a pilgrim. She gave from the heart. During her life, Jane's generosity touched countless lives and left a legacy of love.

I met Jane in 2012, about a year after the death of her second husband, Bill Hays. Visiting with her in her modest Denver home always promised unexpected delights. Because Jane had the gift of hospitality, she usually served lunch in the garden room at the back of her house, as we spoke about our mutual passion for justice, particularly, for Jane, advocacy for women and children.

On one visit, we were joined by colleagues from Presbyterian World Mission. Jane was interested in World Mission's work of eradicating systemic poverty globally, particularly for women and children. Jane's late husband, Bill, had given her shares of Colgate Palmolive stock she wished to sell, with the intention of giving half to Presbyterian World Mission and splitting the remainder between two of her other passions in Colorado, the Lakewood Youth Center and Highlands Presbyterian Camp & Retreat Center. Since she intended for her gift to be at least \$500,000, she said, if necessary, she would supplement the stock sale with a cash gift. The sale ultimately resulted in a gift to Presbyterian World Mission for just over \$503,000.

When we expressed our deep gratitude for her generosity, she smiled. The wealth was not really hers, she said,



The Rev. Jane Hays

"I am merely the agent, and I receive such joy from giving." After Jane died in 2017, her estate provided funds to Highlands that made it possible for the camp to retire its mortgage.

When I reflect on Jane's life, I recall her love of God, Christ's church, family, community and neighbors.

From her involvement in Christian Endeavor as a young woman, where she met her first husband, Jim Huff, Jane developed an interest in working with young people. After miscarrying twice, she and Jim adopted three children. Their call to serve God led Jim to Louisville Seminary at age 40. Following his graduation, they accepted a call to serve the Presbyterian Church in Princeton, Kentucky, where Jim was pastor for only 3½ years before the chronic and debilitating consequences of diabetes forced his early retirement. Jane, Jim and their three children relocated to Winter Park, Florida. Soon after their move, Jim died following a long and painful illness, leaving Jane to raise their children alone. It was this experience that deepened

Jane's devotion to addressing the needs of women and children.

Five years after Jim's death, Jane met and married Bill Hays, who had proposed to her as they both placed lilies on the cross during Easter worship at the Presbyterian Church in Winter Park. They moved to Colorado, where Jane entered Iliff Theological Seminary at age 55, later becoming one of the first women pastors ordained in the Presbytery of Denver. She once told me there were at least two before her. Her first call was as parish associate at Shepherd of the Hills Presbyterian Church in Lakewood, where she served until her retirement in 1995.

In my role in Mission Engagement and Support, I still have much to learn from Jane's work and witness. She has inspired me to give more generously, and to never shy away from asking others about their passion for giving. This is how we are each called to live our lives. And, as Jane once told me, "The answer is always no if you don't ask."

René Myers is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s mission engagement advisor for the West region, Synods of the Rocky Mountains, Alaska-Northwest, Pacific, Southern California and Hawaii.

Contact her at rene.myers@pcusa.org or 951-214-2679.

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Jaff Bamenjo
Coordinator, Network for the Fight Against Hunger (RELUFA)
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Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission

World Roundup

Photo by Tammy Warren



† God's Mission in GHANA

Addressing root causes of poverty

John Etheredge serves as a long-term volunteer in the community of Ho, Ghana. It's a call he and his late wife, Anne, both heard but had to put on hold. He is now obediently heeding God's call to mission in Africa for the both of them.

John's work, alongside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ghana, assists the denomination's efforts to address root causes of poverty among youth and older adults. Working with the Neny Haborbor program, John mentors and tutors low-income primary and middle school youth who have dropped out of school. His work also supports a skills-training program for girls who have left school, primarily due to pregnancy

and child-rearing responsibilities. In addition, John volunteers as a peer counselor at Shepherd's Center of Aging, a church-based social center that empowers older adults living alone in the community.

Looking back, John can see that God has been preparing him for this work in Ghana his entire life. Preparation has come through serving as a ruling elder in Presbyterian churches near his home in North Carolina, his involvement with Self-Development of People, coaching boys' soccer, helping build a school playground, serving on the boards of mental health and social service agencies and in many other ways.

"I have come to understand poverty, oppression and injustice more deeply and have learned ways to combat these destructive forces," John said. "It's important for minority voices to be heard in this important work."

Support John's work in Ghana:
pcusa.org/donate/E074871

Photo by Kathy Melvin



† God's Mission in the PHILIPPINES

Sharing a spirit of reconciliation and resilience

Cobbie and Dessa Palm work alongside The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). Cobbie has served in mission for more than 20 years, while Dessa accepted mission appointment in 2012.

Both Cobbie and Dessa were born in the Philippines. While Dessa is of Filipino descent, Cobbie is the son of longtime Presbyterian missionaries who have a deep understanding of the struggles of the Filipino people.

Dessa works as the artistic director of Youth Advocates Through Theater Arts (YATTA), which partners with local UCCP churches that use theater for evangelism and advocacy. Through YATTA, young artists/teachers/

advocates use theater arts to address challenging subjects, such as human trafficking, gender-based violence, children's rights, teen pregnancy and sexual abuse.

Cobbie facilitates several UCCP mission priorities. He leads church development seminars for pastors and spiritual formation for seminary students. He also coordinates projects related to clean water, waste and sanitation, and develops curriculum and church training programs to promote peace and reconciliation for the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform. Cobbie appreciates the Asian proverb "To hear is to forget, to see is to remember, but to feel is to understand."

Cobbie and Dessa serve as site coordinators for the PC(USA)'s Young Adult Volunteer Program in the Philippines.

Support Cobbie and Dessa's work in the Philippines:
pcusa.org/donate/E200393

Photo by Tammy Warren



✝ *God's Mission in* **COSTA RICA**

Promoting environmental sustainability

Between the two of them, **Mark Hare and Jenny Bent** have been working with Presbyterian World Mission since 1997. Mark led agricultural training programs in Nicaragua and Haiti before he and Jenny moved to the Dominican Republic in 2012. While Mark continued serving in Haiti, commuting monthly, Jenny began partnering with the Dominican Protestant Church as it prioritized outreach to marginalized communities served by its churches, equipping them to mobilize their own resources while working for sustainable change.

In January, Mark and Jenny accepted a new call to promote environmental sustainability and community outreach alongside Latin American Biblical University (UBL), an ecumenical seminary on the eastern edge

of San Jose, Costa Rica. A critical objective will be to nurture a common vision and mutual understanding among staff, students, professors and local communities, leading to workable strategies for ecological practices and holistic food production.

Mark feels honored to be working with UBL, a seminary that recognizes the connection between theology, community and the environment. Through his work in Nicaragua, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and now Costa Rica, he has developed a deep appreciation for practical theology. "I realize how important it is to address people's spirituality as they move towards sustainable change," Mark said.

Jenny's work in Community Health Evangelism in the Dominican Republic has given her abundant opportunities to practice love through walking alongside, listening to and supporting communities as they determine what they need to do to thrive.

Support Mark and Jenny's work in Costa Rica:
pcusa.org/donate/E200356

Photo by A. Park



✝ *God's Mission in the* **MIDDLE EAST**

Educating and training leaders for ministry

The **Revs. Drs. Noah Park and Esther Shin** are part of an inspirational team of biblical studies and Christian education professors at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETCS). Founded in 1863 by Presbyterian mission personnel, ETCS has academic centers in Minya/Upper Egypt and Alexandria and has recently launched distance learning classes for Arabic speakers around the world. It is one of a handful of seminaries in the Middle East that trains future Protestant pastors.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Egypt includes eight presbyteries, several programmatic councils and approximately 400 congregations. The government of Egypt has given land to the church for the building of new

church facilities and has significantly eased the building permit process to start new churches where none exist.

"I believe God will use our graduates for rebuilding the church in the Middle Eastern countries," Noah said. "It is our joy and privilege to live among Egyptian sisters and brothers and share what we have graciously received in our lives."

Both called to ministry at young ages, Esther and Noah were involved in congregational ministry for several years before beginning service in Egypt in 2016.

"In Egypt, our graduates and graduating students are key players for vitalizing local congregations, especially those far from Cairo," Noah said. "Building up the church may seem as if it happens very gradually, but in my observation, this is how the kingdom of God grows in Egypt."

Support Noah and Esther's work in Egypt:
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