



Global Ministries Council of Theological Students Newsletter

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Mission Praxis

Get Involved – Get Real

By: Carla Dietz Carroll, Yale Divinity School

The purpose of the Global Ministries Council of Theological Students (CTS) is to equip diverse groups of ministerial students with the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective ministers in a global community by providing opportunities to:

*Reflect theologically on global mission

*Engage in an ecumenical model of partnership between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (DOC) and the United Church of Christ (UCC)

*Serve as a link between the Common Global Ministries Board and participating seminaries

*Learn about and advocate for global social justice concerns

*Network with other ministerial students and regional Ministries and Mission Interpreters (MMIs) and learn how to engage in mission interpretation on issues that impact the global church

*Engage in praxis-oriented education

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As a theological student, a Christian Educator and a mom. I find the concept of Global Ministry and Mission a bit large. Even with all the e-resources available at Yale University and as a teacher and children's advocate, looking at the world as a global unit is daunting. Therefore, when considering the global issues that women and children in particular, face, I set out to thinking what could the local church or school do to help in real, concrete and actionable ways?

Initially I am taking a look at the DOC/UCC website of Global Ministries(www.globalministries.org) to discern causes and activities that are pressing on us as citizens of faith and of the world. What reverberates with me (or you) as a teacher, as a student, as a mother and, (I almost forgot) as a minister in training?

1. How about getting my church (or perhaps your church) to become a Global Mission Church? Wake 'em up! All you need to start is to check out the "Be a Global Missions Church" link on the website. It is hard to miss as it has big yellow and black letters.

2. How about sponsoring a child? What church or school organization cannot relate to the needs of a child? Who cannot empathize with the feelings a child has about being hungry, unclothed and unable to go to school?

It is relatively simple to sponsor a child and is an action that a church or school group can take while getting to really know the child being sponsored. This kind of involvement can lead to a lifetime of love and connection between a church and an individual.

3. Plan a youth mission day. Go to the website for the essentials you will need to put this into place at your church. Have you ever listened to a group of teens complain, "there is nothing to do!" A Youth Mission Day is the answer. Get the Youth involved in the planning and call on their mothers, sisters, aunts and female cousins to join in. Make mission a feminist awareness activity.

4. Raise a Tent of Hope for the people in Sudan. With the purchase of a canvas tent, any local church group can participate in ways to help our brothers and sisters in Sudan. 2.5 million people in the area have fled their homes and 4 million people have died in armed conflicts in the region. Embedded within those numbers are real, individual women, children and babies that **(Continued on page 3)**

RE-IMAGINING MISSION: A New Model of Short-term Mission for Congregations

By: Donna Goodnow, Chicago Theological Seminary

As is the case with much of the world today, the face of mission and the role of the missionary are changing. Through increased technology, lightning-fast communication and ease of travel, the world has become increasingly smaller; awareness of global concerns is no longer restricted to a select few, but rather enters our living rooms nightly through broadcast, print and internet news. Yet for all of the increased awareness of the issues affecting our world, funding for mission and service work has diminished, leaving many programs without the necessary resources.

One of the reasons for the dichotomy between increased awareness of need and decreased support of mission work may be the historical role of mission, and the lack of understanding of what mission means in today's world. It is clear that, in order to more fully engage individuals and congregations in mission, a new model of short-term mission is necessary. This model must be centered on the commitment of Global Ministries to "critical presence." But what is critical presence, and how do churches engage in mission that is true to its principles?

Critical presence is defined as "meeting God's people and creation at the point of deepest need: spiritually, physically, emotionally, and/or economically..."

Critical presence is defined as "meeting God's people and creation at the point of deepest need: spiritually, physically, emotionally, and/or economically...Critical means Vital, Essential, Crucial...that which is MOST important...Presence is Companionship, Alliance...being there...in partnership."¹ It is within this focus that we find the key to successful mission initiatives – meeting the greatest needs of the people through partnership and relationships.

While many congregations utilize the "short-term mission trip" model as the basis of their outreach, too often these trips do not meet the criteria of meeting the most critical needs of the region being visited. This is often the result of following the old model of mission: going into a community and telling them what they need, rather than engaging in a partnership of understanding. This leads to an "us/them" situation, and the value of the relationship necessarily suffers as a result. What is needed is model that serves to educate, to open communication and to build relationships.

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A New Model of Short-term Mission for Congregations

This new model involves a longer-term partnership between a congregation or conference and a particular region, so that projects are not designed for “quick fixes” but rather on long-range solutions that will reduce the host region’s dependency on outside assistance. A good example of such a project would be one of the many micro-credit projects that are being undertaken in various parts of the world. These programs provide not only a source of income for someone dealing with poverty, but also a feeling of pride and independence. Many of these projects are specifically designed to provide a much needed source of income for women, who often struggle to care for a family on very limited resources.

One such program has been started by ACG (Guatemalan Cultural Action Group) in Santa Cruz del Quiché, Guatemala, a Global Ministries partner.

This program provides funds for “patio animals” such as chickens and goats, and for loans for small business ventures. Training is offered to provide technical development skills to the women for their projects. By American standards, the amounts of the loans is extremely small, usually around \$67.00 (500 Guatemalan quetzals), but the benefit to the women is immeasurable.

If congregations in the United States were to deepen this partnership with organizations such as ACG in order to provide funds and expertise where it is most needed, we would begin to see the birth of a new idea of mission: meeting people at the point of deepest need, growing in relationship and partnership. It is only by accompanying people, and not leading them, that we can begin to realize the beloved community of God.

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are in need of our immediate attention and our help. By way of this simple awareness effort, raising a tent of hope, your congregation can help ACT/Caritas, a worldwide alliance of relief agencies, to provide shelter, water, sanitation, medical care and trauma counseling to the Sudanese. “Society for Threatened Peoples expresses its deep concern at the impact of the ongoing armed

conflict in Sudan on the situation of human rights and its adverse effects on the civilian population, in particular women and children. In the oilfields of Sudan thousands of women have been killed or displaced, their villages burned to the ground. The Government of Sudan seems to regard the civilian population not as citizens but as a security risk and

potential supporters of armed resistance movements. By committing massive human rights violations the Government of Sudan ensures a safe way for oil companies to exploit the natural resources of the country.” (PeaceWomen.org is a project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, United Nations Office, 777 UN Plaza, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10017, USA) **(Continued on page 4)**

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Get Involved – Get Real

5. Global sex industry awareness

Around the world, more than 1 million children are exploited in the global commercial sex trade each year, according to the U.S. State Department. The State Department believes Cambodia is a key transit and destination point in this trade. "Trafficking for sexual exploitation also occurs within Cambodia's borders, from rural areas to the country's capital, Phnom Penh, and other secondary cities in the country," the State Department wrote in a 2006 report. "The Government of Cambodia does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so." (Dan Rivers, CNN Girl,6, embodies Cambodia's sex industry" posted January 26,2007) Get a group of women together at your church to discuss issues of sex trafficking and the global sex industry. Join funds together to support and help other women who are trapped in this sexual quagmire. Discuss these issues with a female pastor who has worked with women who are victims of sexual trafficking. There is no denying this is a difficult topic for women to face but there is no one better to reach out to our sisters than ourselves.

6. Bring One Great Hour of Sharing and Week of Compassion alive in your church. (OGHS) is the relief, refugee and development fund of the United Church of Christ. It is one of the Special Mission Offerings received by the United Church of Christ and is a part of Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM). The 2008 suggested offering date for OGHS is March 2! Week of Compassion is a parallel effort by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) so that you and your congregation can be around the world around the year. Emerging disasters and development needs require more and more resources every day. Encourage your church to make these funding efforts more than an envelope drop.

Sometimes, in the midst of all the things that students, or church workers (lay and clergy) have to handle in a day, we forget about the Pick a Sunday when your women's group stands before the congregation to explain the significance of these efforts and how they assist your church to become Globally involved. folks who are in need of assistance and care. Facing all the urgent issues in the world can be overwhelming.

My suggestion is to take a minute to reflect on Psalm 121 to remind ourselves where our help really comes from

1 I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come? 2 My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. 3 He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. 4 He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. 6 The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. 7 The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. 8 The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore. (NRSV)

We are, at best, agents of the help that God, alone, offers us. That is a wonderful, rewarding position to be in. We are not God, but we can work with God to love and help others.

Incorporating Voices from the Two-Thirds World in Education and Worship

By: Cara Gilger, Disciples Divinity House, Vanderbilt Divinity School

Incorporating the voices of women and children for the two-thirds world into the life of the congregation can be a challenge. I come from an area of the country where opportunities to travel abroad even to do mission work is a rare opportunity, rather than the cultural norm. When I return to my home region, how do I get congregations to incorporate and listen to the voices from two-thirds world in the doing and being of ministry?

As the article “Get Involved—Get Real” already shares there are many great programs available that teach and involve congregations in the work of Global Ministries. However, as student at Vanderbilt Divinity School I am always interested in how we incorporate voices from the margins not only into our programs through out the liturgical year, but also cultivate a sense of community awareness that seeks to engage the two-thirds world through worship, engagement with the scriptures, and our reflection on what it means to be church in a local and global setting.

One way to cultivate connections between local congregations and women and children in the two-thirds world is through a shared sense of stories and meaning making around worship and scripture.

When we connect to the stories and lived experiences of other people who may seem to share little commonality with our own social location there is an in-breaking of the Spirit.

Another simple way to incorporate the voices of women and children from the two-thirds world into your daily congregational culture is to use liturgies, prayers, and music from women around the world into your congregation’s worship. To find resources go to www.globalministries.com or contact your congregational or regional Ministries and Mission Interpreter for liturgies, prayers and songs written and shared by women around the world.

Connecting the children of your own community to children around the globe through art work can be creative way to engage children in thinking about Global Ministries and to connect to the stories of children in the two-thirds world. The creativity of children opens new lenses through which to see the Biblical stories and our own stories of faith.

To incorporate voices from women and children from the two-thirds world as budding pastors we ought to use stories of struggle, hope and new life from our partners around the globe in our teaching and preaching ministries.

Sharing these stories can be as simple as printing them in the church newsletter, or as involved as using stories from the two-thirds world as an illustration in preaching and teaching. In addition there are several great resources for Biblical and theological interpretation from the two-thirds world, including *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, by R.S. Sugirtharajah or *Beyond White Noise: Mission in a Multi Cultural World* by Tom Montgomery Fate available through www.chalicepress.com.

When we listen to and celebrate stories that are outside of the familiar cultural code of our congregational settings we create an opportunity for the religious imagination to be sparked as we engage more fully in the lives of women and children around the globe.

QUESTION OF THE DAY:

The other day I was reading a 1987 book by Letty Russell entitled "Household of Freedom." On page 33, Reverend Russell made this observation

"The prevailing paradigm of authority in Christian and Jewish religion is one of authority as domination? But as the feminist/liberation paradigm of authority in community begins to become the one most credible to women and men of faith, a new framework emerges that allows for multiple authorities to enrich, rather than to outrank one another."

The question of the day during this first quarter of 2008 is, do women of faith who are participating fully in Global (or even local) ministry, find that this observation is true? Are we, 21 years later, operating within a framework that allows for "multiple authorities to enrich, rather than outrank one another?"

**The Council of Theological Students would like to hear from you!
Please send us feedback on your answer to this question. Thank you.
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