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Millennium Development Goals

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Resolution

Global Ministries Council of Theological Students Newsletter 2008-9 Global Ministries United Church of Christ/ Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

July 2009 Millennium Development Goals and Christian Mission

***Shalom* and the Millennium Development Goals**

By Ruth Richards, Andover Newton Theological School

Of the manna in the wilderness, "This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Gather as much of it as each of you needs...' The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less... they gathered as much as each of them needed." Exodus 16:16-18

"They shall sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken."
Micah 4:4

In September 2000 the Millennium Declaration was adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of state and governments in which a commitment was undertaken to respond to the world's main development challenges. It further identified eight goals known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015 that would make a dramatic improvement to the lives of the people of the developing world and promote sustainable development.

Sadly the last eight years have not seen the hoped for progress on a global scale although the Millennium Village Project have shown that enormous strides can be made with investment in the right areas. We are closer than we have ever been before to seeing the world as a whole, understanding the needs and complexities of our global society and using our skills in communication and technology to bring about change for the good for all. Dare I suggest that we are nearer than ever to seeing the world as a whole, the way God sees it?

The eight MDGs are :

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal healthcare
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development

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World-renowned economist and special advisor to the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the MDGs, Jeffrey Sachs, writes of the importance of all of us knowing as much of the truth about other societies, cultures, religions and communities as we can, to make every effort to build understanding and empathy. If we fail to meet with and give dignity to other communities we will risk creating an ever-increasing distrust that leads to enmity.

Judaism anticipates a time when the earth shall be perfected. This has two aspects, the material and the spiritual. The fullest spiritual development will take place in combination with material security; there will be peace in the lands, everyone will sit under their own vines and fig trees, and the people will know God. (Micah 4:1-7) The two cannot be separated. Vines and fig trees imply plenty, good things, more than the bare subsistence minimum. As people of faith we understand that God's desire for the world is peace, plenty, healing and wholeness or *shalom* for all peoples.

What might the goals of *shalom* look like? Surely, the MDGs and the longing for the healing of the nations are very similar. Jesus of Nazareth, a devout Jew with a passion for bringing about the kingdom of God on earth did the following. He cared for the poor and encouraged others to do the same (Mt 19:16-22). Women as well as men traveled with him and learned from him (Luke 8:1-3). He valued children immensely (Mark 9:33-37). When a woman with a menstrual disorder touched him, he welcomed and healed her (Mark 5:25-34). He healed the sick everywhere he went, restoring them to health and wholeness and by restoring them to their families and communities also made their communities whole again. He met people "in their place of deepest need" and gave a voice to the voiceless poor. That just leaves goals 7 and 8.

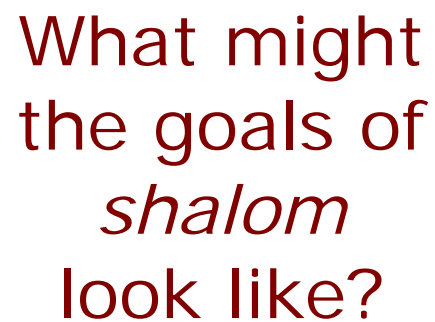
Giving alms, fasting and prayer are all traditional Lenten disciplines. When we support organizations like Global Ministries with our money or our skills we help bring the world closer to God's vision. When we fast, when by choice we eat less than usual, we are in solidarity with those who have no choice but to go hungry, as well as learning to come closer to God. When we pray we connect with God's love for all people, we ask forgiveness for our sins, give thanks for our blessings, lift up the needs of the world. We express our love for God and for our neighbor.

When we advocate for the upholding of the MDGs by demanding of our politicians that they honor the Millennium Promises we are also following the teachings of our faith as Christians in the world to bring about God's kingdom on earth.

At no other time have our understanding, the vision of our faith, and the potential for cooperation between national leaders and the chance for life-giving change been so great.

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Matthew 6:10-12

1. Jeffrey D. Sachs, *Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet*. New York: Penguin Press, 2008, 238-241.
2. United Nations Development Program: About the MDGs. <http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml>
3. Jeffrey D. Sachs. *Ibid.*, 336
4. Greenberg, Rabbi Irving. *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*, New York : Simon & Schuster, 1988, 60.



What might
the goals of
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People, Prophylactics, and the Pope

By Jack Lewis, Eden Theological Seminary

With the United Nations estimating that by 2025 ten percent of the population of Africa will be infected with HIV, it is understandable why Pope Benedict XVI's recent remarks about condoms and HIV have caused much discussion. Following Roman Catholic Church teachings, the Pope argued in a recent visit to the continent that condoms were not the answer in the fight against HIV/AIDS and went as far as to say that their availability "even aggravates the problems."

One of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations is to combat HIV/AIDS by halting and beginning to reverse its spread by 2016. Current estimates state that "every day nearly 7,500 people become infected with HIV and 5,500 die from AIDS, mostly due to lack of HIV prevention and treatment services."

While certain groups, including the Vatican, claim that condoms exacerbate the problem, evidence from the United Nations have shown that condoms, used as a part of a comprehensive strategy to combat HIV/AIDS, have produced promising results.

New infections have declined from 3 million annually in 2001, to 2.7 million in 2007. Also while the number of people living with HIV has grown, this is largely due to the greater availability of treatment. Furthermore, tracking from 1990 to 2007 has shown that with the increase of condom use, sexually active individuals have had a decrease in the number of sexual partners. In the same

period, in seven of the countries monitored by the UN, the number of women sexually active before they were fifteen decreased, while only increasing in two countries.

While the availability of condoms is not fully responsible for these statistics, their availability cannot be ignored as well. Rebecca Hodes, of the Treatment Action Campaign in South America, explains that while monogamy and fidelity are integral in the fight against HIV/AIDS,

access to condoms only improves the situation. While the Pope is correct in stating that "the only failsafe way to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS is through monogamy and fidelity," Bert Koenders, the Dutch Development Minister contends that attempts to restrict the availability of condoms only "is making matters worse."

Many mainline Protestant denominations have been at the forefront of the fight for condom accessibility as part of a larger, comprehensive approach to the prevention of HIV/AIDS." In believing that the promotion of safer sexual behavior is "a matter of life and death," churches have worked to be a part of the movement towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As part of the implementation of these goals, a recent statement from the United Church of Christ HIV and AIDS Network even encourages "condom distribution at places of worship."

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"Pope Rejects Condoms for Africa." 10 June 2005. BBC News. 27 March 2009 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4081276.stm>>.

Butt, Riazat. "Pope claims condoms could make African AIDS crisis worse." 17 March 2009. Guardian. 27 March 2009 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/mar/17/pope-africa-condoms-aids>>.

"Millennium Development Goals Report." August 2008. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 27 March 2009 <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2008/MDG_Report_2008_En.pdf>. p. 30

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"Pope's condom stance sparks row." 18 March 2009. BBC News. 27 March 2009. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7950671.stm>>.

Brekke, Greg. "UCC's health advocates press for increased condom distribution." 20 March 2009. United Church of Christ. 26 March 2009. <<http://www.ucc.org/news/uccs-health-advocates-press.html>>.

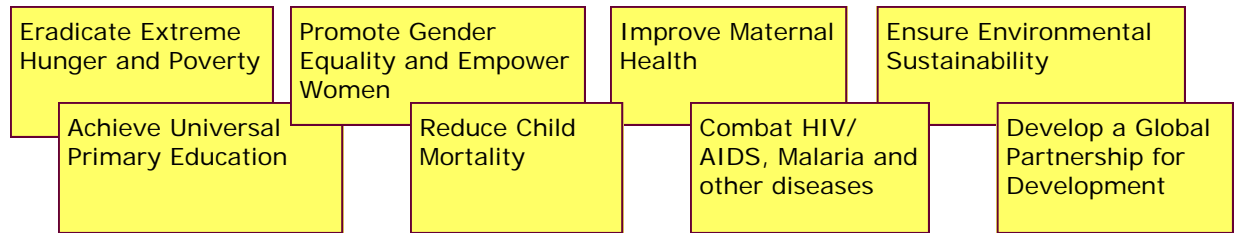
Ibid.

Ibid.

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Condom availability does not undermine the promotion of abstinence, monogamy, or fidelity, but instead works to promote that all options for the prevention of HIV/AIDS are available to people regardless of the choices they make. Condoms are not the only solution to the spread of HIV/AIDS and a radical change to the global system is needed to fight all of the causes of its spread. That being acknowledged though, we cannot be naïve and “put our heads in the sand with ‘abstinence only’ approaches” to sexual education, both in our home congregations and around the planet, and are called as Christians to work toward HIV/AIDS policies that are both life-giving and life-sustaining.



In April 2005 the Common Global Ministries Board passed a [Resolution to Recommend the Millennium Development Goals for Study and Action](#). The Church is an important [part of civil society](#) working to meet these [international targets](#) for improving lives around the world by 2015.

Globalization and Common Global Ministries

Economic globalization profoundly impacts local communities, cultures and ways of life. While increased private investment and trade may grow markets, our global partners witness the challenges globalization often poses in their communities-- wider economic disparity and exploitation. Communities of faith are called to consider what the church can do to ensure that international trade policies better serve the interests of human rights and security, justice and peace, and the dignity and integrity of creation.

Global Ministries is committed to restoring the environment and economics to the service of God. At its November 2004 meeting the Global Ministries Board engaged in a process of reflection on globalization with its international Board members and partners. This process enabled our global partnerships to provide a context for identifying ways of responding faithfully to economic globalization.

Part of the dialogue for the November meeting included inviting global partners and the mission personnel who serve with them to reflect on the impact of globalization, both positive and negative, in their region. These reports were compiled in a booklet called *Globalization: Faith and Economic Justice, Partners and Missionaries Reflect on Globalization*. This resource is available to local churches and individuals to help understand our global relationships and the implications of international trade policies and thereby to enable informed decisions as consumers, investors, citizens and people of faith.

The Global Ministries Board in November 2004 also passed a [Resolution On Globalization and Just International Relationships](#). This policy complements the 2003 UCC Pronouncement “[A Faithful Response: Calling for a More Just, Humane Direction for Economic Globalization](#)”, and together they guide Global Ministries as it engages with other advocacy groups, international ecumenical bodies and faith coalitions campaigning for just trade and more a responsible global economic system.

Resolution to Recommend the Millennium Development Goals for Study and Action

October 13, 2005

Common Global Ministries Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ

Adopted April 9, 2005

Widespread poverty remains a fundamental, debilitating condition of our global community. All 191 member states of the United Nations have pledged to meet a set of eight goals set out in a Declaration of the 2000 UN Millennium Summit that address poverty and related health and social problems like illiteracy, gender inequality, child mortality and environmental degradation. These eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are critical factors that must be met to ensure life, human rights, and the basic well-being for all creation as we move into an increasingly globalized world that risks leaving many behind.

The MDGs call for an effective "global partnership for development" that is based in securing new and better aid initiatives, more equitable trading rules and comprehensive debt relief. The goals are designed to be met by 2015, but five years on, their success will depend not only on governmental commitments but also on the support and collaboration of civil society groups. Many churches and church-related development organizations, including national and global ecumenical partners of Common Global Ministries, have endorsed the MDGs and undertaken efforts to identify and measure ways their development and advocacy programs meet these profound human needs targeted in the goals.

WHEREAS the Common Global Ministries Board has engaged in a study of globalization and matters of international economic justice, and

WHEREAS the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been endorsed by the National Council of Churches of Christ (USA) Governing Board on February 14, 2005, and

WHEREAS our partner church The United Reformed Church (UK) has endorsed the MDGs and invited our churches to join it in active campaigns to address issues of international economic justice that address poverty and related challenges to global development,

THEREFORE, let it be resolved that the Common Global Ministries Board commend the MDGs to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ for study and considered endorsement, and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Global Education and Advocacy team continue to focus on ways to advocate for international economic justice and for global partnerships that meet development goals, and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Common Global Ministries Board consider participation in appropriate ecumenical campaigns seeking ways to achieve the MDGs, notably the MakePovertyHistory/ONE campaign and the Water for Life campaign.

<http://globalministries.org/get-involved/justice-and-advocacy/global-poverty/globalization/resolution-to-recommend-the-mill.html>

Global Ministries Council of Theological Students Roster – 2008-9

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