

September 18, 2008 **Christian renewal in Nepal**

PCUSA WORLDWIDE is a monthly e-mail newsletter about the international mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). You are invited to share this newsletter with others interested in the world mission of the church, such as newsletter editors, mission committees and Christian educators. Free subscriptions are available at <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/list.htm>. Submit story ideas to [patrick.cole@pcusa.org](mailto:patrick.cole@pcusa.org).

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **"AN EXCITING TIME FOR THE CHURCH IN NEPAL "**  
*The church is growing and playing a role in forums working for reconciliation*
- **MISSION CONSULTATION ON WATER SET FOR NOVEMBER**  
*Access, treatment, health and sanitation will be topics of discussion*
- **PDA RESPONDS TO HURRICANES**  
*Presbyterians are aiding recovery from Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike*
- **ABOUT RUSSIA AND GEORGIA . . .**  
*PC(USA) mission workers write from Moscow*
- **UPDATE FROM KENYA**  
*"The impact of just this past year's students is already being felt"*
- **INVITATION TO A CHURCHWIDE FAST**  
*Presbyterians asked to respond to the global food crisis*
- **AND BRIEFLY . . .**  
Pray for Christians in India, AIDS Awareness Sunday, upcoming network meetings, new book by Tommy Brown, Olympic impressions, Simon Park back in Korea

**"AN EXCITING TIME FOR THE CHURCH IN NEPAL "**

*The church is growing and playing a role in forums working for reconciliation*

The events of the last two years are quite amazing. Two years ago, through mainly peaceful demonstrations, the people overthrew the king, who had illegally taken over the government. (An analogy would be Queen Elizabeth's throwing out Prime Minister Brown and taking over the executive powers of the government.)

This April an election was held for a Constituent Assembly to run the country for two years while the Assembly writes the new constitution. The first action of that Assembly was to declare a republic, i.e., to banish the monarchy. This is pretty amazing considering that the king is traditionally thought of a reincarnation of a Hindu god.

It is an exciting time for the church in Nepal. Before 1990 it was illegal for a Nepali to be Christian. Many of the older Nepali pastors have spent months to years in prison for converting their countrymen. After 1990, although Nepalis were allowed to be Christian, Nepal was a Hindu kingdom, and Christian organizations, including churches, could not register. Now Nepal has been declared a secular country.

The church is growing and becoming more active in greater Nepali society. Christian leaders are playing a national role in inter-religious forums working for peace, reconciliation, and social justice. We are working with Christian leaders, helping them to understand how to work with others to forgive. After ten years of civil war, there have been many atrocities; some are still going on.

The war may (we pray) be over, but forgiveness and reconciliation have only begun, and the unique Christian perspective is for healing at this time.

In Rupendehi, one of the clusters where we work, our peace-building team (led by Joe Campbell, who has had many years of experience in Northern Ireland) has been building the capacity of the District Christian Society of Churches to act as the mediator between a Hindu and a Muslim community—one community now living as refugees, having been driven out by the other. Dialogue is happening, relationships are being built.

Leaders from the three communities were to come to a meeting to share what their respective scriptures say about forgiveness. They expected about 20 people. Two hundred people showed up, as did the riot police. But the police were not needed, and all left the meeting knowing more about each other's faith.—Beverley Booth, Kathmandu, Nepal

To read more: [http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/boothb/boothb\\_0807.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/boothb/boothb_0807.htm)

### **MISSION CONSULTATION ON WATER SET FOR NOVEMBER**

*Access, treatment, health and sanitation will be topics of discussion*

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will hold the denomination's first Mission Consultation on Water Nov. 13-15 at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Sacramento, Calif.

The event will bring together representatives of Presbyterian-affiliated organization and mission groups engaged in water projects.

The program will include plenary presentations on the broad scope of water issues as well as panel discussions on specific topics including water access, treatment, health and sanitation.

The registration fee is \$100, which includes two lunches, two dinners and refreshments.

For more information and registration information, visit <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/get-involved/water.htm>

### **PDA RESPONDS TO HURRICANES**

*Presbyterians are aiding recovery from Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike*

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is aiding survivors in the United States and the Caribbean who have experienced loss because of recent hurricanes.

Updates and opportunities for contributing to the recovery effort are available at <http://www.pcusa.org/pda/response/usa/gustav-index.htm>. An online news source of the Synod of the Sun, [pnnews.org](http://www.pnnews.org), is carrying updates available at <http://sun.pnnews.org/view/article/4484>

According to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance's partner, Christian Aid, the storms that have hit Haiti are resulting in what is possibly "lasting damage to Haiti's rice bowl." In Haiti 2.3 million people are at moderate to acute risk of food insecurity, and damage to agricultural production is critical.

Nicaragua-based mission worker Carlos Cardenas has traveled to Haiti to assess the situation in that country. A major portion of his assignment is disaster assistance and those duties take him throughout Central America and the Caribbean. He is traveling in Haiti with Mark Hare, a mission worker who facilitates agricultural projects sponsored by the Farmer's Movement of Papaye.

"Many of the root causes of the poverty in Haiti-weak government, inadequate communication, lack of roads and other infrastructure, virtually non-existent social services-have always kept Haiti, and other countries with similar conditions, open to the full effects of disasters such as this," Mark says. "These same conditions now make it difficult and in some cases impossible for a quick response to those who need help the most."

In Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital city, mission worker Sharyn Babe reports that at the Episcopal University, where she teaches, a couple of walls were blown down and that falling trees had damaged a new construction project. "With sky-rocketing costs for construction material, that work is now on hold," she says.

While Port-au-Prince escaped major damage from flooding, Sharyn notes that other areas around the country were devastated by high water.

In Cuba an estimated 350,000 homes have been severely damaged and 30,000 have been completely destroyed, according to ACT (Action by Churches Together). Restrictions by the United States government keep U.S. citizens from directly aiding Cuba, says Tricia Lloyd-Sidle, the PC(USA)'s regional liaison for the Caribbean. PDA, however, is able to forward financial aid to Cuba via ACT.

Tricia is urging Presbyterians to ask the U.S. government to suspend the economic embargo with Cuba and restrictions on travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens so that relief efforts can be facilitated. For more information, visit [www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org).

To read more about the work of these mission workers, visit <http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections>

#### **ABOUT RUSSIA AND GEORGIA . . .**

*PC(USA) mission workers write from Moscow*

We have not felt any of the tensions in Moscow. Life there goes on as normal. We are, though, deeply concerned about the peoples affected by the violence. There has been great destruction in South Ossetia, and thousands of refugees have fled, many into Russia. Margarita Nelyubova, director of the Russian Round Table, has been busy organizing relief efforts. It was her hope that they would be able to assist the Georgian Orthodox Church in their efforts as well, as they have always been partners. People are suffering and the church seeks to respond to the need, wherever it is, regardless of borders and nationality.

A very powerful statement was issued by the Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists, which can be read at <http://baptist.org.ru/news/english/1315/>. This statement, "We Extend the Hand of Friendship," poignantly expresses what many of us have struggled with in the face of media coverage and challenges to us as the Body of Christ.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has set up a fund for relief in the Caucasus. See <http://www.pcusa.org/pda/response/europe/russiangeorgianconflict-index.htm> and give to DR000089.

We ask for your prayers for all those caught in the conflict between Georgia and Russia. There are thousands of refugees, and winter is coming.-Alan and Ellen Smith, Russia

### **UPDATE FROM KENYA**

*"The impact of just this past year's students is already being felt"*

In January of this year Kenya disintegrated into chaos. From where we stay, we could smell the burning tires and teargas, and as TV news was blacked out, hundreds of thousands of Kenyans were being displaced all over the country, while many others were brutally killed. Now, nine months later, the majority of Kenyans and Kenyan residents are moving on with "life as usual," almost as though nothing had happened.

But not quite. Inflation is over 30 percent (mostly related to food items and fuel), and though many of the displaced have been resettled, too many fear to return home, yet have nowhere else to go. Construction around Nairobi has resumed, traffic jams are back, and hawkers on the streets are peddling everything from tomatoes to exercise equipment.

Ahead, however, within the next few months, severe drought and famine is expected, due both to the disruption of farming in January and February and too little rainfall since. For my students, quite a few are struggling to come up with fees for courses, since many local sponsors (families, churches, and communities) have had too much loss.

At NIST (Nairobi International School of Theology), where I teach and head the Department of Leadership Studies, why are we growing master's programs, when food is scarce and people are struggling to survive? We are convinced that the cause of failure during and after the 2007 Kenyan elections, and the hope for anything better in the future, lies in the leadership.

As I watch our June 2008 graduates go out, several are returning to Ethiopia, a few to Democratic Republic of Congo, many will stay in Kenya. One has already written a book, three others have already assumed teaching positions, while several have designed and are beginning to implement training programs. The impact of just this past year's students is already being felt. There is hope.—Marta Bennett, Kenya

Read Marta's letter at [http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/bennettm/bennettm\\_0808](http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/bennettm/bennettm_0808)

Read how an African ecumenical group helped bring peace to Kenya:  
<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08634.htm>

### **INVITATION TO A CHURCHWIDE FAST**

*Presbyterians asked to respond to the global food crisis*

PC(USA) congregations are invited to engage in a monthly churchwide fast to discern faithful responses to the global food crisis. More than 845 million people go hungry every day and as many as 100 million more risk starvation.

Beginning in October, Presbyterians are encouraged to fast monthly, beginning on Friday evening and breaking the fast with Communion on Sunday morning. Those who are physically unable to fast may eat simple meals. The yearlong cycle will end Oct. 16, 2009, on World Food Day.

Fast materials are available at [www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis/](http://www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis/). Prayers for communal or individual use are provided for the 40-hour fasts. Each month the site will offer fresh analysis on an aspect of the food crisis, such as global warming, flawed trade agreements, lack of access to food or loss of inherited seeds to grow indigenous crops, a Biblical study, liturgy for corporate worship, and reflections on spiritual practice by a recognized author and/or teacher,

Church partners from heavily-hit nations like Congo, Sudan, Haiti and India will tell their stories and provide us data about the food crisis from their particular context.

#### **AND BRIEFLY . . .**

• **PRAY FOR CHRISTIANS IN INDIA.** Violence in the eastern India state of Orissa broke out on Aug. 23, when gunmen killed a Hindu leader. Police have blamed the crime on Maoist rebels, but Hindu extremists have retaliated by attacking Christian neighborhoods, including the burning to the ground of the Church of North India's hostel at Sunapanga, leaving 40 underprivileged boys, many of them orphans, shelterless. The boys and the hostel's staff are apparently camped out in the nearby forests. Four of the six CNI churches in Orissa have been destroyed. Christians have been burned alive, women have been raped, and Christian priests subjected to torture. Many villagers are now hiding in the forests to save their lives. Read more:

<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08621.htm>

• October 12 is **PRESBYTERIAN HIV/AIDS AWARENESS SUNDAY.** Every day approximately 1,800 children under the age of 15 are infected with HIV/AIDS. This crucial situation puts many questions in front of faith communities. Read about a conference this summer entitled "Reclaiming the Rights of Children Affected and Living with HIV/AIDS in Asia" in a letter from Brett and Shelly Faucett at

[http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/faucettb/faucettb\\_0808.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/faucettb/faucettb_0808.htm). Visit

[http://www.pcusa.org/aids-international/awareness\\_sunday.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/aids-international/awareness_sunday.htm) for worship resources.

• **MISSION NETWORK** meetings:

China Mission Network, Sept. 27-28, 2008, Louisville

Correction: The Russia Mission Network meeting, Oct. 2-4, will be held in Columbus, Georgia (not Columbia, S.C.)

Coming up in November:

Guatemala Network, Nov. 3-6, Camp Monte Si6n-Amatitlan, Guatemala

Egypt Mission Network, Nov. 5-7, Louisville

Peru Network, Nov. 6-8, St. Charles, Mo.

Haiti/HSC Mission Network, Nov. 12-14, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Israel/Palestine Mission Network, Nov. 28-29, Chicago, Ill.

For more information contact the related area office. See <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide>.

- Judy Chang, mission worker in Hong Kong, writes after the **OLYMPICS**: I thank God for this wonderful opportunity for **CHINA** to show hospitality to the whole world. The Olympics have changed the country for good. May China continue to use these blessings wisely to bring peace, prosperity, and human dignity to all its people and every land. Read Judy's full letter at [http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/chanj/chanj\\_0808.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/chanj/chanj_0808.htm)

- **A NEW BOOK BY "TOMMY" BROWN**, *How Koreans are Reverting the West*, focuses on Korean missions abroad. How have Korean Christians from a small divided country become the largest sender of missionaries? Copies can be purchased directly from the author at a special price of \$10: G. Thompson Brown, 2218 Springhouse Circle, Stone Mountain, GA 30087.

- After six months as interim coordinator of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) in Louisville, **SIMON PARK** is back in South Korea. He writes: "I am grateful for the opportunity to have served the church in a different role, but am also grateful for the freedom to return to my field assignment."  
[http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/parks/parks\\_0807.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/parks/parks_0807.htm)

- **PAST ISSUES** of the PCUSA WORLDWIDE newsletter are available in PDF format from <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/newsletter.htm>