

## **Mission in Such a Time as This**

### **Supplementary Report of the General Board of Global Ministries to the 2024 General Conference, Postponed from 2020**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Fast following the celebration in 2019 of the 200th anniversary of the oldest predecessor of the General Board of Global Ministries,<sup>1</sup> The United Methodist Church entered "a new mission age."<sup>2</sup> This new age would be marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and deep anxieties about the future of the denomination centered around long-festering disagreements about sexual preference and identity in the church's life. Global Ministries and its humanitarian assistance unit, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), were more directly engaged in COVID-19 response than in the debate over human sexuality, but the denominational troubles impacted mission and relief operation, income and expectations. A great deal of time and thought by directors and staff was required to project short- and long-term strategic plans, evaluate program priorities and adopt realistic budgets. Also in the mix were commitments to accelerate attention to creation care ministries and to work harder to eradicate racism from church and society.

We have called this season "such a time as this," borrowing a phrase from the Book of Esther that describes a period of challenge and poignancy. Our directors assigned the agency the task of evaluating our past work and our future dreams with the help of much prayer and Bible study and the guidance of five operational touchstones: 1. Sharpened focus for all programs, including program consolidations and realignments; 2. Increased accountability among staff to deliver on achievable goals; 3. Expanded collaboration within and beyond the agency; 4. Strengthened tools for and commitment to gauging and reporting impact at all levels; and 5. Enhanced communication.

Among key outcomes of this work was a revision of the agency's strategic plan, updated to include the period 2022-2024. Development of program goals and the means to monitor and evaluate them, described in the plan, were guided by the agency's Office of Monitoring and Evaluation and informed by best practices in how faith-based organizations produce durable, measurable impact.

Overall, the strategic plan identifies four missional priorities in harmony with historic United Methodist mission goals and today's commitments to justice and multiethnic participation. The four are:

- **Missionaries:** Training, commissioning, assigning, and supporting missionaries in the United States and around the world have been at the heart of mission for 200 years; today we also train and connect volunteers to serve in mission.

---

<sup>1</sup>See *Methodist Mission at 200: Serving Faithfully Amid the Tensions*. Edited by Thomas Kemper and David W. Scott. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 2020.

<sup>2</sup>From "Mission Theology statement," the General Board of Global Ministries.

- **Evangelism and Church Revitalization:** Founding and nurturing new faith communities and supporting existing congregations, which seek to increase membership and expand ministries into local communities, have historic roots and contemporary implications for Global Ministries.
- **Global Health:** Methodism's focus on health as a part of mission dates to the 19th century when missionaries expanded the options for health care in underserved communities. Even earlier, John Wesley himself was a strong proponent of the church's attention to health.
- **Humanitarian Relief and Recovery:** These ministries, which include UMCOR, seek to strengthen the ability of the church and communities to respond to disasters and provide humanitarian relief, migrant services worldwide, and improved livelihoods and food security. The intentional care of creation and advancing environmental sustainability also reduces the impact of disaster.

Representative programs under each of the priorities appear below, preceded by five mission highlights from such a time as this.

This supplementary report covers the years 2020 to mid-2023. It is a selection of the work of the agency in these years and provides a sampling of activities in an unusual period.

Global Ministries/UMCOR looks toward the 2024 General Conference and beyond with solid confidence in the sustaining grace of Jesus Christ. The challenges and opportunities of such a time as this – our new mission age – have taught us to rely on God's dependability and our capacity to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

As we look ahead, among our aspirations, we seek to sustain with strength our many missionaries and Global Mission Fellows, and we anticipate increased peace and justice ministries globally and in the U.S. We also anticipate broadening missional attention to climate and environmental matters. Additionally, we are strengthening our Mission Engagement unit to make it more visible and proactive within The United Methodist Church and interactive with Pan Methodist, ecumenical and other global partners. To further bolster our work with partners, we convened with our partners in Africa in April 2023 and with partners in the United States in August 2023, the same month as a consultation on missionary policy and practice and a consultation in Seoul with our partner the Korea Methodist Church. In separate events, our missionaries in Africa and Asia met for enrichment in April and October 2023.

United Methodists can achieve all our mission goals if, in the words of the Book of Hebrews, we "hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for God who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:23-24 NIV).

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, President, Board of Directors, Global Ministries  
Roland Fernandes, General Secretary, Global Ministries

## II. HIGHLIGHTS

### RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic complicated almost all mission work, beginning in 2020, in most cases exacerbated by the circumstances of the world's most vulnerable populations.

In response, Global Ministries and UMCOR established a rapid response grant program, "Sheltering in Love," to assist local churches, annual conferences and nonprofit organizations as they responded to the pressing needs brought on by the pandemic, such as food security, health care, job stability, and water, sanitation, and hygiene.

With donations from more than 8,000 people to the Sheltering in Love campaign and funds from Global Ministries, \$2,329,785 was awarded through 230 grants in 43 countries and 43 U.S. states and territories in support of 105 local churches, 54 episcopal areas and 52 nonprofit organizations providing care for their communities during the pandemic.

UMCOR's International Disaster Response (IDR) program provided food, hygiene and nonfood item relief assistance in many countries where the pandemic lockdown prompted food insecurity because of household-level economic insecurity. IDR also partnered with longstanding partners in India to support the response to COVID-19 in 2021, including vaccination drives, awareness campaigns, essential medical equipment and household-level relief.

Complementing these actions, Global Ministries' Global Health program engaged with partners and communities to help manage the crisis and strengthen existing work as every aspect of health in every community was affected. Activities with partners and communities included training and grants. Global Health training events focused on handwashing, mask wearing and physical distancing for staff, missionaries, churches and partners. Training also included updated information about COVID-19, its prevention and community management, as well as other approved interventions. Global Health grants were awarded for personal protective and essential medical equipment, cleaning solution and soap, handwashing stations, assistance with salaries, livelihoods, food, rent and utilities, awareness, and training in COVID-19 prevention and vaccine promotion.

The Global Health team also focused on strengthening United Methodist health facilities so that they could work with improved infrastructure, medicines, medical supplies, equipment, power and water. Global Health facilitated discussions and work with partners to understand myths, misinformation, and stigma surrounding COVID-19 and vaccines.

Among other notable responses, soon after the onset of the pandemic, Global Ministries recognized the urgency of vaccines being made available to all who needed them and devoted special attention to vaccine equity. This included joining several international declarations calling and advocating for funds to help ensure global vaccine equity. At the same time, it was clear that the purchase, export, and distribution of vaccines was a responsibility of governments and their vaccine specialist partners.

## **RESPONSE TO WAR IN UKRAINE**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 unleashed a sustained humanitarian crisis to which UMCOR continues to respond in collaboration with European United Methodists and other partners.

Assistance as of July 2023 had reached 446,000 people, including those inside Ukraine and those who have fled to surrounding countries as refugees.

Contributions to UMCOR's work in Ukraine totaled \$27.7 million between the start of the conflict and mid-2023. Partners include United Methodist churches in Ukraine and surrounding countries, as well as ecumenical and nongovernmental organizations.

UMCOR grants are responding to a range of specific needs, including:

- Transportation, food, water, clothing, medication and safe shelters for displaced families, women, children and those with disabilities;
- Protection for conflict-affected people in Ukraine and support for refugees in Hungary, Poland and Romania to prevent human trafficking and create secure shelter;
- Urgently needed medical supplies to hospitals to help doctors and nurses care for the sick and injured;
- Legal assistance, counseling and social support for those who have lost their homes, belongings and livelihoods;
- Winterization and repairs at shelters and construction on longer-term lodging for those displaced by the war;
- Repairs on homes as people return to communities impacted by months of warfare;
- Explosives removal and education about landmines throughout the country to reduce risks to those returning to their homes and communities; and
- Grants for legal assistance and housing in Poland, as well as a range of holistic programming for Ukrainians and host communities in Moldova.

In the care of refugees from Ukraine, UMCOR has worked closely with Act Alliance, Church World Service and International Orthodox Christian Charities.

For refugees and others affected by the war in Ukraine, IDR and Global Migration have continually provided supplies and material. Among specific efforts, in a partnership with OhioHealth and the Arlene Campbell Humanitarian Foundation, throughout 2022, IDR helped procure more than 70,000 pounds of medical supplies worth over \$1 million, including wound care/triage supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE), surgical kits and basic medicines. This work was conducted in coordination with the United Nations and in collaboration with the Ukrainian government. More than 50,000 pounds of these urgently needed medical supplies were delivered over the border between Poland and Ukraine. Many of these supplies went to the Ukrainian Health Ministry Heart Institute in Kyiv, the capital city, with some being distributed among other Ukrainian hospitals as needed.

## **YAMBASU AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE**

Global Ministries established the Bishop John K. Yambasu Agriculture Initiative in 2020 in honor of the bishop of Sierra Leone who lost his life in a tragic car accident outside Freetown. Bishop Yambasu believed that developing sustainable agricultural using UMC-owned land in Africa could be pivotal in creating a self-reliant African church. This sustainable agricultural program to increase food security and

improve local livelihoods for church members and their communities was launched in Sierra Leone and Mozambique.

From 2020-2022, the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative provided grants totaling \$4,226,613 in support of UMC annual conferences in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (South, Central, North Katanga and East episcopal areas), Angola (East and West), Zimbabwe, (East and West) Mozambique (South and North) and Nigeria (Central and Northeast). Overall, more than 25,000 beneficiaries were aided by the grants.

Demonstrating its immediate impact, the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative in its inaugural year provided support for food security to more than 15,000 people. Notably, 95% of the farmers supported were female. By 2021, across 12 annual conferences, the initiative had reached over 100 households per conference, promoting sustainable agribusiness and providing direct support to farmer groups engaged around the project sites.

A key milestone was reached in the fall of 2022 when the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative held a major regional training event at the Songhai Center in Benin for representative farmers and church leaders conducting Yambasu Agriculture Initiative projects. Sessions were held in three different language groups: French, Portuguese and English. Many immediately began to make changes in their agriculture practices once they returned home. The fruits of this training continue to grow. Additionally, new agricultural missionaries have been called to serve in Africa, some of which are working to help communities with Yambasu Agriculture Initiative projects.

## **AFRICA MISSION PARTNERS CONSULTATION**

The receding of the COVID-19 pandemic allowed the resumption of international mission events, and one of the first was the April 17-19, 2023, Africa Mission Partners Consultation in Maputo, Mozambique. Held immediately prior to the first meeting of the agency's directors outside of the United States, the purpose was intense listening to the mission goals and visions of United Methodists of Africa. Representatives, including bishops, came from conferences of 17 countries and even more ethnic communities. They engaged with directors and staff in worship and dialogue. Singing familiar hymns together in many languages offered a reminder of the diversity of God's people and their oneness in Christ. The consultation was a tangible expression of the call in our Statement of Mission Theology to witness what "God has done and is doing, and to learn from what God is doing in every land where disciples gather in the name of Jesus Christ."

Topics considered included evangelism, health, agriculture, humanitarian relief and missionary service in particular contexts. Representatives from Africa were particularly interested in developing new and stronger partnerships that recognize and utilize African assets, build capacity and develop leadership within African conferences. A keen desire was expressed to move the church in Africa toward greater self-sustenance based on mutual respect and accountability. As one partner expressed, "We must rethink how to be in mission in a healthy and supportive way. There are areas where we can get

expertise (from Global Ministries). However, people in our conferences are trained and have great capacity. We must rethink how we approach mission today and build interdependence."

While praising recent Global Ministries initiatives in health and agriculture, some of the African evaluation was critical of past and current mission policy and practice. Especially questioned were instances in which Global Ministries arrives with an attitude of superior knowledge, an attitude widely acknowledged to be absent in Maputo. "Someone is finally listening and asking our opinion, which hasn't happened for a long time," one bishop said. There was also appreciation for an overview of Global Ministries' work across Africa.

A sense of collaboration was strengthened by the participation of representatives from other agencies, including United Methodist Communications, the General Council on Finance and Administration, and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. New possibilities for capacity building through education were identified.

The value of the event will depend on the ways in which ideas and intentions become actions. A great amount of information was collected and must be analyzed and applied in ways that are consistent with African visions shared in Maputo.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Throughout Global Ministries' strategic planning, a focus has been to understand the impact of mission work around the world and to build learning processes so that our programs respond to the needs of local communities and ministries.

Through strategic planning and building systems for monitoring and evaluation, Global Ministries has completed more than 20 evaluations in 12 countries since 2020. These evaluations range from baseline assessments in Global Health, to impact evaluations in United States Disaster Response mission and evangelism in Africa and Asia, to process evaluations for the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative.

In addition to evaluations, Global Ministries has ongoing monitoring systems throughout the agency. Program staff and leadership set targets and report on set indicators quarterly. By incorporating monitoring and evaluation practices into the organization, Global Ministries has been able to increase accountability, stewardship and transparency in the way that we work to support our partners on the ground.

## **III. MISSIONAL PRIORITIES**

### **MISSIONARIES**

Missionaries in all categories and locations were significantly impacted in the 2020-2023 period by the COVID-19 pandemic. The disease resulted in lockdowns, restrictions on travel and the inability to obtain visas, but also opened new means of mission communications and promoted a strong sense of solidarity between missionary and community. These factors highlighted the centrality of mission to the global experience of faith in Jesus Christ.

## **Initial Impact**

Of 307 missionaries, 15 requested evacuation, and two mission volunteers were evacuated. In addition, the pandemic delayed return travel for many Global Mission Fellows (GMFs, who serve two-year terms) and missionaries who were completing their service. New missionaries were unable to reach their placements. Altogether, 91 missionaries were affected by COVID-19 travel restrictions.

As of October 2020, all 15 who had evacuated have returned to their placements. And most of the 91 persons who had their travel delayed had by then reached their destinations. However, there were 29 of the outgoing class of 2018-2020 GMF:INT (International) who remained in their placements for several months (up to a year) while COVID-19 restrictions were in place. This created significant hardship for the GMFs who had plans to pursue further study and other vocational opportunities, but it also provided an opportunity for them to continue to serve in mission in creative and flexible ways during uncertain times and changing needs.

Onboarding of the 2020 class of GMF:INT (55 young adults) was canceled due to lockdowns and travel restrictions in many countries. The overall number of missionaries declined significantly because of the above-mentioned factors. As of February 2023, with an eye on rebuilding the number of missionaries, there were 191 missionaries (including GMFs) and 12 Mission Volunteers in service. In March 2020, there were 307 missionaries and 44 mission volunteers in service.

## **Use of Technology to Enhance Mission**

One of the unseen benefits of the COVID-19 pandemic has been its promotion of the use of technology by people of all ages and all places. With restrictions on travel and in-person gatherings, virtual space became the main meeting points connecting people in mission. Utilizing this opportunity, Global Ministries quickly adapted to the situation by utilizing a virtual platform to continue in mission. A virtual itineration (#StillinMission) series was developed so that supporting churches could meet multiple missionaries in virtual space to hear their stories of mission and to continue to build relationships. Within six months of the start of the pandemic, 89 missionaries were featured in 20 episodes with more than 1,133 unique participants.

The virtual itineration episodes were continued monthly as in-person itineration visits were resumed in 2023. Missionaries and Mission Volunteer teams have found virtual mission events helpful in strengthening mission connections.

## **Training and Accompaniment**

The preparation and training of missionaries, including GMFs, was modified as the incorporation of technology permitted learning and formation to be spread over time. Orientation and training became an experiential process that included individual online learnings, live group events, and in-person training and commissioning.

## **Commissioning Missionaries**

In 2022 and 2023, mission personnel who were onboarded during the COVID-19 pandemic were commissioned in various places globally, for example in Cambodia and Mozambique. Those who were commissioned included 30 Global Missionaries and 38 Global Mission Fellows.

## **Recruitment Trends**

The sharp drop in GMF applicants during the pandemic seemed to turn around in 2023. The 121 GMF applications in 2022 had increased to 235 in 2023 but with a continuing small number from the United States compared to the international class. Partial reasons for this may include the availability of similar opportunities in the U.S., denominational conflict, a strong job market and a desire to stay closer to home. Global Missionary candidates seem more willing to commit a season of life to mission rather than their entire lives. Likewise, increasingly long-term missionaries choose to end their service for personal reasons with less than 15 years of service.

## **EVANGELISM AND CHURCH REVITALIZATION**

This broad mission priority incorporates personal, local church, connectional and ecumenical expressions of faith. "Partnership" is a key concept. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Global Ministries in 2020-2023 registered notable accomplishments in this field. Examples include:

### **New Church Partnerships – International**

In the Republic of Guinea, a partnership with the Liberia Annual Conference planted new congregations in three communities – Nzerekore, Youmou and Lolah. The first step was a series of locally developed workshops to renew existing Christian groups while discerning new measures for church growth. The latter included extension ministries such as affordable education and health care. Follow-up strategies will include the deployment of district evangelists.

In Europe, Global Ministries began supporting an Institute for Multicultural Ministry to train pastors and lay leaders to embrace cultural changes and more effectively engage in multicultural ministries as populations diversify. Immigration from other parts of the world, notably Africa and Asia, is increasing the number of multiethnic communities and churches. United Methodist and autonomous Methodist churches are experiencing a cultural shift from homogeneous to more heterogeneous congregations. A mix of cultural and spiritual factors creates new and unique challenges for leaders of such churches. Experience shows that when church leaders embrace multicultural ministry, their churches often become more dynamic and open to new ways of doing ministry.

The Argentine Evangelical Methodist Church and the Methodist Church of Uruguay in partnership with Global Ministries created a shared Missionary Circuit. The objective is church revitalization locally led and focused on children. It emerged out of consultations among local pastors, lay leaders, a Global Ministries missionary and district superintendents from the two denominations. They had a general idea



for a border region ministry and decided to emphasize ministry with children and developed small groups in eight local churches. The Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office facilitated the small groups work, developing a class meetings model that does not require curriculum. Lay leaders learn the model from local pastors and pass it on. Important elements of the experience include prayer, caregiving practices and spiritual discernment.

A partnership with the Mozambique Episcopal Area resulted in development of an online-based fundraising platform to take advantage of the growing number of members who can give online. The project also assists the conferences to embrace and incorporate technology to communicate with and serve their members virtually – using WhatsApp, Facebook or other social media platforms. Digital capacity is also valuable in Christian education, evangelization and especially in reaching young people.

### **Restored Mission Partnership**

May 2023 brought an end to more than a decade-long freeze on the distribution of United Methodist mission funds within the East Africa Episcopal Area. The impasse was triggered by audits questioning the use of certain funds in the area covering more than half a dozen countries. A series of consultations over a protracted period, involving representatives of Global Ministries, the episcopal area, and other church leaders, led to a resolution. A confidential agreement – approved by area leaders and the Global Ministries' directors – acknowledged the long-standing problems and set accounting standards and practices for the future. The parties pledged to move forward with mutual respect.

### **Multiethnic Ministries in the United States**

In 2020, the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference was awarded a \$100,000 block grant for church building repairs. Grants were also awarded to ministry partners to assist Native Americans who were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also related to Native American Ministries, in November 2023, "This Land Calls Us Home," a 12-month art exhibition focusing on Native American identity and experience in the Southeast U.S. region, opened at Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport. This long-anticipated exhibition, sponsored by Global Ministries in collaboration with the Native American Comprehensive Plan, will feature more than 60 examples of contemporary Native American art and objects. It will be installed in prominent art gallery space in the T North Concourse attracting tens of thousands of daily visitors. "This Land Calls Us Home" is an example of Global Ministries' and the broader United Methodist commitment to Native American and Indigenous peoples. In keeping with this commitment, the exhibition will promote increased public understanding about contemporary Native American identity and experience.

In the wake of the killings of African Americans George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Ahmad Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia, and Brianna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky, grants were given to the Minnesota, South Georgia, and Kentucky annual conferences to supplement their work with neighborhoods immediately impacted by the killings.

The first Annual Conference Community Developers Program Cohorts provided four conferences an opportunity to apply for a seed grant of up to \$20,000 used for activities such as congregation and community engagement, community assessments, building community partnerships and asset-based community development. Specific programs included a community computer lab, a community education center and trauma services.

Campus Insecurity Grants were awarded to small-enrollment United Methodist-affiliated institutions to assist college students with combating food and hygiene insecurity. Grants have been used to start or expand campus food pantries, provide hygiene materials for students, and assist students with laundry supplies and expenses.

Grants were also provided to several annual conferences during the beginning months of the COVID-19 pandemic for food and economic assistance to racial/ethnic communities and other populations most seriously impacted by the outbreak.

### **Mission Initiatives**

Global Ministries' mission initiatives develop a Methodist presence in countries where it did not previously exist or may require reintroduction. The vision is that of "equipping, strengthening and transforming people and communities for God's mission around the world." The agency has launched more than a dozen new or renewed mission initiatives since the early 1990s in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Central America. There are currently six mission initiatives: Cambodia, Central African Republic, Honduras, Mongolia and two mission initiatives in Southeast Asia.

Given the importance of this work and the collective experience, Global Ministries over the past three years has analyzed 12 mission initiatives to better focus the program and move it forward. The outcome is a Mission Initiative Manual that outlines strategic plans and sets consistent goals, including:

- Recommitment to a holistic approach to the start of new faith communities;
- Strengthening ties with supervising episcopal leaders as initiatives emerge;
- Continuing to grow the mission initiatives with regional United Methodist churches and other Wesleyan partners;
- Increasing Global Ministries' support of evangelism within mission initiatives; and
- Establishing strategic plans for each mission initiative, with an emphasis on local leadership and movement toward self-sustainability.

Over time, several mission initiatives have matured into units of the United Methodist system of districts and conferences or moved toward autonomy. Within the last two years, mission initiatives in Senegal and Cameroon have become districts of the Côte d'Ivoire Annual Conference. The Methodist Church of Cambodia is now a Provisional Annual Conference moving toward autonomy. All the mission initiatives are implementing strategic plans as outlined by the new manual. In Asia, the initiatives are developing Course of Study programs for pastoral training.

## **HUMANITARIAN RELIEF AND RECOVERY**

The priority on Humanitarian Relief and Recovery aims to strengthen church and community response to disasters and provide humanitarian relief locally and globally. The core of this work is accomplished through the UMCOR, which in 2020 celebrated its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It encompasses natural and human-caused disaster relief and recovery, risk-reduction programming, the needs and rights of migrants worldwide, and the improvement of livelihoods and food security. Adding to their importance for the church, the intentional care of creation and advancing environmental sustainability also reduce the impact of disaster.

Altogether, from 2020-2023, UMCOR responded to 262 humanitarian crises, including natural disasters, with 539 grants totaling \$50,871,949. These funds in turn aided 1.6 million beneficiaries in Africa (50 grantees), Asia (54 grantees), Europe and the Middle East (18 grantees), Latin America and the Caribbean (66 grantees), and the United States and U.S. territories (122 grantees). In all regions, some grantees received multiple grants.

### **International Relief**

UMCOR's IDR program provides support to households and communities outside the U.S. experiencing significant negative impacts from natural disasters and other crises.

Since 2020, IDR has awarded 245 grants totaling almost \$21 million to UMC, Methodist and nonprofit partners at all phases of the disaster cycle. This has served 363,855 individuals with direct assistance in disaster relief, recovery and preparedness.

In response to earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes and other disasters, disaster management offices established and supported by IDR have helped to mobilize quick and effective disaster response programming. For example, in 2020, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique and the Philippines, disaster management offices trained more than 1,200 volunteers in disaster management principles and best practices for disaster resilience. Since 2020, these countries have been awarded over \$4 million in 88 distinct relief, recovery and preparedness projects, with almost 100,000 beneficiaries.

IDR has also supported relief efforts in Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan to alleviate hunger brought on by a severe drought in the region. Separately, in the Bahamas, an IDR collaboration with IsraAid addressed chronic problems with saltwater contamination of freshwater water sources on Abaco and Grand Bahama. In Haiti, which suffered from another earthquake beginning on August 14, 2021, IDR provided invaluable support for the immediate response.

IDR has increasingly observed large-scale and interconnected disasters that impact multiple countries at once. This has changed the way the program staff think about disasters and necessitated enhanced coordination and the use of networks such as ACT Alliance. The increasing frequency and complexity of

disasters globally has prompted innovative intra-agency partnerships within Global Ministries, particularly with UMCOR. Examples include the agency's coordinated, multiprogram assistance in Eastern DRC in response to widespread violence and civil unrest and the provision of solar lanterns as a safe and healthy solution to kerosene in IDP camps following the February 2023 earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

## **United States Relief**

UMCOR's United States Disaster Response (USDR) program helps the church and communities in the United States and its territories prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. Events in any one year can lead to long-term, large-scale response.

Since 2020, USDR has awarded 150 grants totaling almost \$28 million to conference partners at all phases of the disaster cycle. This has served 41 UMC conferences across the U.S., enabling them to respond to disasters with relief, recovery and preparedness programming, enhancing the resilience of more than 22,000 individuals across the country.

Specific examples of USDR impact have included:

- In the Michigan Conference, support for evacuation costs after the May 2020 Great Lakes region flooding, followed later by grants for home repair and purchase of water heaters and furnaces;
- In the Alabama-West Florida Conference, deployment of disaster response teams in 2021 after hurricanes Sally and Zeta, equipped with skills learned there after previous hurricanes;
- Disaster response provided after flooding across multiple states in 2022 (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi and Pennsylvania) and assistance in Florida after hurricanes that same year;
- In Puerto Rico, emergency response after Hurricane Fiona in September 2022 affecting 50 communities, in partnership with volunteers and the organization Rebuilding Communities with Hope (REHACE), the social service agency of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico; and
- In coordination with several other programs across UMCOR and Global Ministries, deployment of mobile solar-powered generators in response to Hurricane Ian and the power substation attack in Moore County, North Carolina, in 2022.

In 2022, substantially multiplying the impact of UMCOR, USDR staff offered over 500 training hours to 1,260 individuals through 70 distinct in-person and virtual learning opportunities. Combining the impact of all trainings, over 5,000 people currently serve across the United States in Early Response Teams. USDR supports this network of trained, background checked and credentialed disaster response volunteers.

Further extending its impact, USDR continually maintains good standing and a leadership role in the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NVOAD). Additionally, in May 2023, USDR hosted a workshop with partners to highlight recent partnerships in solar programming.

## **Global Migration**

UMCOR's work in Global Migration promotes the well-being of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, with a focus on places of transition, respite and new destinations. Among partners, both of which UMCOR helped to establish, are Church World Service and National Justice for Our Neighbors, renamed in 2022 as the Immigration Law & Justice Network to accentuate its programmatic focus.

Since 2020, Global Migration has issued 123 grants worldwide totaling \$11.4 million. Included in this activity and representing a key commitment, UMCOR issued several major grants enabling Church World Service refugee resettlement affiliates and legal assistance sites administered by the Immigration Law & Justice Network to increase their service provision to asylum seekers. The support allowed an underserved population to receive resources not normally available to asylum seekers and encouraged the U.S. government to increase its support.

Additional activities of Global Migration have included Mustard Seed Migration Grants, which were approved for a range of local churches in the U.S. and, beginning in 2023, for churches outside the U.S. Funding was used by the churches to provide services, supplies or a listening ear to welcome migrants and refugees in their communities. Since inception of the Mustard Seed Migration Grant program, Global Migration has approved grants, each totaling \$2,000, for 76 churches. The impact has been transformative. Churches report marked increases in their understanding of the challenges confronting immigrants and, in turn, the most effective role the churches can play to support them. Churches have increased their own financial support and expanded their immigration ministries building on their Mustard Seed grants.

In other activity, Global Migration has provided grants of over \$8 million to The United Methodist Church and other organizations assisting refugees from Ukraine in 11 countries. Assistance has included emergency supplies, cash, legal counsel, housing, language training and resettlement case management.

Recognizing the strength of having a missionary presence to facilitate closer collaboration with partners and ongoing relationships with people in transit, Global Migration has engaged the help of missionaries placed in key areas of global migration, such as Latin America and Europe. These missionaries, known as Regional Migration Specialists, gain increased awareness of immigration policy, practice and patterns in the areas they serve, which, in turn, improves UMCOR's granting process for global migration in these key locations.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Global Ministries' Environmental Sustainability program addresses challenges facing God's creation by incorporating creation care into the mission, ministries, training, operations and administration of Global Ministries and its partners, including conferences and churches.

Among its key goals, the program continues to lead Global Ministries' commitment to just and equitable net-zero emissions by 2050. Global Ministries is among the founding members of a growing coalition of United Methodist agencies and commissions committed to achieving just and equitable net-zero emissions by 2050 across ministries, facilities, operations and investments. This means implementing

emission reduction strategies in every aspect of the agency's work, from building management, to travel policies, to programs. To support this work, Global Ministries has also joined the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations, a program that supports organizations working at the intersection of climate risk and disaster response.

Since 2020, Environmental Sustainability has helped focus attention on the role of solar power as a component of disaster response, working in partnership with UMCOR. This work recognizes that as climate change drives more frequent and intense disasters, the church must respond in ways that bring healing to communities and to all of God's creation. The agency supports projects that integrate solar energy and battery storage into disaster response, recovery and resilience, as well as migration ministries.

Solar infrastructure has become increasingly important for Global Health work. Reliable, clean energy access is essential for quality health care. By integrating solar power into health facilities, Environmental Sustainability and Global Health have supported lighting in surgical suites, refrigeration for vaccines and medication, and power for vital medical equipment. Projects have included solar arrays and batteries for hospitals and health facilities, support for mini-grid connections and solar lanterns in low-resource contexts.

For example, in Tunda, DRC, where Global Ministries helped to rebuild the region's hospital, the only such facility within a 62-mile radius, a new solar panel array provides the hospital's electricity for the water system and for lighting. Even at night, the hospital now has light, and women no longer deliver their babies in the dark. The system provides clean, renewable energy and does not rely on an intermittent or nonexistent electrical grid. The hospital is one of the first UMC facilities to receive a solar panel array system through Global Ministries' Environmental Sustainability program.

Hundreds of United Methodists throughout the United States have transformed ideas into action through environmental projects that are action-oriented, antiracist, bold and entrepreneurial. The Global Ministries EarthKeepers program now offers grants for commissioned Global Ministries EarthKeepers, and trainings are available both online and in-person. In addition, the Global Ministries Creation Care Network connects United Methodist environmental leaders globally through an interactive directory of people, events and resources. This online community helps United Methodists find collaborators and share support, whether within their communities or through common affinities.

## **GLOBAL HEALTH**

Through partnerships primarily with United Methodist health boards in sub-Saharan Africa, Global Ministries' Global Health unit has worked to strengthen the denomination's health networks at facility and community levels through grants, accompaniment and capacity building. The principal beneficiaries have continued to be the most vulnerable populations, including mothers, newborns and children, who often live farthest away from services. In September 2020, Global Ministries announced the successful culmination of the Abundant Health Initiative, launched in 2016, when the goal to reach 1 million of these children with life-saving interventions was reached.

Altogether, from 2020-2023, Global Health has worked on 270 grants totaling \$15,156,382. These funds aided 3.35 million beneficiaries in Africa (185 grants), Asia (12 grants), Latin America and the Caribbean (31 grants), and the United States and U.S. territories (41 grants).

In addition to its extensive role responding to the COVID-19 pandemic (see Response to COVID-19 above), global health programs continued to make integrated progress. For example, the Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) program has given special attention to funding the ongoing renovation of facilities and the procurement of equipment, furniture and medications not already provided by government and other partners. More facilities have wells and latrines, and, in partnership with Global Ministries' Environmental Sustainability program, more facilities also have solar power to ensure lighting and to operate equipment. Global Health responded to an increased number of cholera outbreaks, in partnership with UMCOR, and to the needs of some internally displaced communities. Undergirding these activities is the need to improve data collection for evidence-based decision making, so that gaps in services can be addressed.

The Imagine No Malaria (INM) program continued to work toward reducing the incidence of malaria in sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for more than 90% of cases worldwide. This work is a longstanding United Methodist commitment. Special initiatives included a campaign in East Angola to reach rural communities with information about the cause, prevention and treatment of the disease. Partners are now training school children to bring awareness to their peers and neighborhoods.

The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program worked toward community access to clean water and toilets through grant and capacity building. In one year alone, the WASH program provided more than 17,500 people with access to clean water and more than 3,500 people access to sanitation facilities. About 15,000 people were trained on how to treat and store water, as well as correct proper handwashing techniques.

The Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) program benefits from all three of the above programs as they impact the lives of pregnant women, mothers and young children. MNCH specifically supports prenatal, obstetric and postnatal care for mothers and primary health care for children until the age of five years. This health work focuses on UMC health facilities experiencing high morbidity and mortality rates because of isolation, poverty and limited services. At this time, Global Health and the four health boards of the DRC are responding to a measles epidemic.

Global Health and its partners are working together through these four programs toward greater resilience and sustainability for health facilities and community health services. Recognizing the importance of in-person collaborations, Global Health team members began to visit partners again in 2022. Site visits to the DRC, Burundi, Sierra Leone and Mozambique emphasized the importance of listening, understanding context, the value of face-to-face dialogue and mutuality in mission. It is with a great deal of gratitude and hope that they continue to learn and to move forward.

**Agency:** General Board of Global Ministries

**Title of Report:** "Mission in Such a Time as This," Report of the General Board of Global Ministries to the 2024 General Conference, Postponed from 2020