

To the Least of These, Do Justice



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in Support of the

Millennium Declaration

Meditations Upon the
Millennium Development Goals

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Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of

the least of these

who are members of my family,
you did it to me.

(Matthew 25:40 NRSV)

What does the Lord require of you but

to **do justice,**

and to **love kindness**

and to **walk humbly** with your God?

(Micah 6:8 NRSV)

When Poverty Is No More

At the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, 189 heads of state and governments firmly committed to work together and build a safer, more prosperous and equitable world for all. They then committed to achieve by 2015 what are now known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The summit's Millennium Declaration, signed unanimously, reaffirmed commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, calling it timeless and universal in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

The Declaration recognized the need to build a world "through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon common humanity in all its diversity."

Summit participating nations defined six fundamental values essential to international relations in the twenty-first century: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility.

They identified key objectives: peace, security and disarmament; development and poverty eradication; environment; human rights, democracy and good governance; protecting the vulnerable; meeting the special needs of Africa; and strengthening the United Nations.

The MDGs translate the summit's commitment to create an environment conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty. Meeting the goals would put in place a people-centered development at the heart of global, national and local agendas.

The United Methodist Church at its 2004 General Conference resolved to call on governments worldwide to implement the Millennium Declaration, particularly the MDGs that emanated from it.

The objective is to achieve the MDGs by 2015. The target year and the aspirations to eradicate hunger and eliminate poverty build upon previous world conferences, but especially the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995.

Commitment to Justice

The poor may indeed be with us always. Poverty need not be. Our commitment to justice must become a commitment to eradicate poverty and eliminate hunger. It is a commitment that might just "make poverty history."

The MDGs are surely not enough but a step in the right direction to address the blight of poverty and hunger, and even the scourge of war. To be freed from want is to be freed from fear. People released from want and fear live in dignity. Wars and conflicts can be mitigated significantly by both democratic mechanisms and just, participatory and sustainable economic activities where people matter.

The summary of goals and challenges presented here comes from "Why Do the Millennium Development Goals Matter?" a brochure published by the U.N. Department of Public Information and the U.N. Development Programme. Read them and imagine the possibilities.

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

By 2015, reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and those who suffer from hunger. The challenge is that “today in the developing world an estimated 1.2 billion people survive on less than \$1 a day, 800 million are undernourished and 153 million children under age five are underweight. In sub-Saharan Africa half the population lives in poverty.”

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education.

By 2015, ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school. The challenge is that “an estimated 114 million children of primary age in the world are not enrolled in school, depriving one in every five children of access to even the most basic education.”

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.

Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education now (by 2005) and at all levels by 2015. The challenge is that “an estimated 63 million primary age girls are still not enrolled in school. And in only nine countries in the world are one in three or more seats in parliament held by women.”

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality.

Reduce the 1990 under-five mortality rate by two-thirds before 2015. The challenge is that “nearly 11 million children under the age of five die in the world every year – well over 1,200 every hour, most from easily preventable or treatable causes.”

MDG 5: Improve maternal health.

Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio. The challenge is that “globally, some 500,000 women die in pregnancy or childbirth each year, one every minute. Over her lifetime, a woman in sub-Saharan Africa faces a 1-in-16 chance of dying in childbirth, compared with 1-in-160 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 1-in-840 in eastern Asia. In developed countries, the risk is 1-in-2800.”

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. The challenge is that “HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa and, worldwide, the fourth killer. Sub-Saharan Africa is the most affected region, but other regions, including South Asia, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Caribbean, are experiencing rapid increases in the incidence of HIV/AIDS.”

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.

Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse the loss of environmental resources; by 2015, reduce by half the proportion of

people without sustainable access to safe drinking water; by 2020 achieve significant improvement in the lives of slum dwellers. The challenge is that “around 2.4 billion people do not have access to improved sanitation and some 1.2 billion do not have access to an improved source of water.”

MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

Rich countries are responsible for establishing equitable access to their markets and technology and for creating a favorable financial environment. Good governance and a focus on social needs and human capital are essential for developing countries to achieve the Goals within their own territories. The challenge is that “pledges to increase development assistance should be honored and progress on relieving the debt burdens of poor nations needs to be stepped up.”

Ethical and Moral Demands

The prophet Micah is instructive in what is required of us at such a time as ours.

“He has told you O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”
(Micah 6:8 NRSV)

The MDGs demonstrate how values and ideals such as justice, kindness and humility can become achievable goals and targets. The millennium campaign slogan says “2015: No Excuse.” Some countries, in both hemispheres, developed and developing, have in fact achieved or shown progress on some of these goals.

Reading and rereading a biblical text can reveal a clearer and more compelling understanding. Reading Micah 6:8 beside the eight MDGs unveils a linguistic symmetry with the Micah text in just the sequential enumeration of the goals. The first three goals correspond to the justice call; the second three to kindness; and the last two to humility.

To do justice.

Isn't this what the first three goals are—addressing extreme poverty and hunger; ensuring that boys and girls complete primary education; and promoting gender equality and empower women? The MDGs are aimed at redressing injustices that consign people to poverty and powerlessness. The MDGs help empower and build capacities of people so that they are freed from want and liberated to build sustainable communities.

To love kindness.

Isn't this what the second three goals are—reducing by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five; reducing by three quarters the ratio of women dying childbirth; stopping and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases? The MDGs point to our common vulnerabilities as peoples and communities, and vision a kind and compassionate society where the vulnerable and marginalized are freed to live with dignity secured with rights.

To walk humbly.

Isn't this what the last two goals are—ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development?

The MDGs enhance our common humanity. The call to humility is itself the call to reverence our God and Creator who reminds us of life's finitude. The last two sets of MDGs are a reminder that not only is the planet our common habitat, but injuries and assaults to the planet have repercussions that put humanity in peril.

The MDGs challenge our capacities to address the goals that are at once global in dimension yet aching to be localized so that they matter to impoverished, marginalized and vulnerable peoples and communities. They also challenge our willingness to muster courage and mobilize for action on matters that strike deeply into the core of our Christian calling to be a just and loving people. Like John Wesley, may we then "watch over one another in love?"

Mediations and Meditations

The MDGs are goals of monumental proportions, and the ethical demands upon any of us are daunting. It is in facing daunting challenges like these that divine mediation is essential to reveal what love requires and ethics demand. It is before challenges like these that the faithful are called to pray and act together.

To participate in the implementation of the MDGs requires that people of faith cultivate the inner strength to love so that we can act justly, kindly, and humbly. The gospel imperative in Matthew 25:40 compels us to address the vulnerabilities of "the least of these."

The meditations that follow are a rendering of the MDGs in ways that summon divine illumination, biblical inspiration and personal witness. We are grateful for the women and men who shared their stories of faith and action. Their meditations end with a prayer that then challenges us to move and act upon the lesson. The action suggestions are a call to corporate witness and service in lands parched dry with injustice. By our making real the MDGs these parched lands may yet be watered by God's justice and righteousness.

2005 World Summit
September 16, 2005
New York, New York

(The Rev. Liberato C. Bautista is Assistant General Secretary for United Nations and International Affairs and Main Representative to the United Nations of the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church. He is from the Philippines.)

What does the Lord require of you but to

do justice,

and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?

(Micah 6:8 NRSV)

MDG 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day, and reducing by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

MDG 2 Achieve universal primary education.

Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.

MDG 3 Promote gender equality and empower women.

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

Millennium Development Goal 1

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day, and reducing by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

But she said, 'As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son that we may eat it, and die.'" (I Kings 17:12; also read I Kings 17:8-16 NRSV)

Although globally enough food is produced to feed everyone, 840 million people are undernourished, 799 million of them in the developing world... Although hunger is also a problem in cities, seventy-five percent of the world's hungry people live in rural areas." (Agriculture in the Global Economy, Bread for the World Institute, 2003)

"SCARCITY"

I shall never forget Don and his little brother who lived in our small apartment complex. They moved in one day and we immediately noticed something unique about these two boys. They had skinny arms and legs but also big stomachs. I didn't know that their body shape was an indication that they were not eating enough. But, one day I was outside eating a sandwich when Don said, "I'm going inside and make me a sandwich, too." Don came out of his house a little later with one slice of bread rolled up in his hand, stuffing it into his mouth. "See, I have a sandwich, too," he said. I noticed that the only thing on that sandwich was sugar.

Later that day I told my mother about Don's sugar sandwich, and she asked me if I had shared my sandwich with him. I told her I hadn't. "I don't think he likes sugar sandwiches," she told me. "I believe it was all they had to eat." Maybe this was the first time I realized what being poor can do to a person. Of course I had no idea back then that Don and his brother represent a significant part of the population of this world. The statistics bear this out: 1.2 billion people live on less than \$1 per day, 800 million people go to bed hungry every day and 28,000 children die from poverty-related causes each day. These are children like Don and his brother.

I believe God wants us to act. I believe we are being invited every day to join with God in the ensuring that bloated stomachs are filled. I believe that God is calling us to join with others around the world to make sure that widows like the Biblical woman of Zarephath will never have to think about dying from hunger and malnutrition. This is why so many have worked to produce strategies like the Millennium Development Goals which invite people around the world to help eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

The story of Elijah's encounter with the widow of Zarephath and her son is often interpreted as God's plan to feed Elijah. But Elijah's visit also signaled God's concern for the poor, hungry and powerless of our world. God will not allow their suffering to go

unnoticed. But note that God addressed Zarephath's need through another person who was willing to act on behalf of God. Jesus made clear that God works this way when he declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor..."

I often wonder what happened to Don and his little brother and realize that at my tender age then, I had no clue about what I should do about a hungry child. Well that was then, but today I have no excuses. (*James E. Swanson, Sr.*)

Prayer:

My God, once I didn't know, and now that I know help me to act to eliminate these conditions not only for those who are hungry but for my salvation, as well. Amen.

Action suggestions:

Sometimes our prayers need feet and hands to be answered. Therefore, I ask that you consider doing one or more of the following:

1. For U.S. citizens, write or call members of your Congress urging them to cosponsor Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) legislation, in particular bills S.1315 and H. Con. Res. 172. Ask them to support the Millennium Campaign to make poverty history and end social injustice. Visit these sites:

www.millenniumcampaign.org

www.one.org

www.whiteband.org

2. Visit the U.N. website on the MDGs: www.un.org/millenniumgoals. Learn what peoples and governments around the world are doing to help meet the 2015 benchmark year for the achievement of the minimum target of the goals. Other perspectives on the MDGs, some critical, can be found at www.ipsnews.net and www.whiteband.org. Study them with the biblical lenses of justice, peace, compassion, equity, human rights and dignity. The World Council of Churches has excellent materials related to the MDGs at www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/advocweek-econjus.html#1. Another source of biblical and ethical insights into the MDGs is The Micah Challenge, a global campaign aimed to deepen Christian engagement with the poor, at www.micahchallenge.org. Also visit us.millenniumcampaign.org to discover ways you can make the MDGs a reality. Challenge your elected leaders to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
3. The United Methodist Church has officially endorsed the MDGs. (See the *2004 Book of Resolutions*, p. 785). Explore how your local church can partner with United Methodist churches in other nations to discover how the MDGs are or are not being pursued. Explore ways of working together to address the issues that make a just, participatory, sustainable and equitable society. A good source of information about the work of the United Methodist Church in building sustainable communities and extending humanitarian aid is the United Methodist Committee on Relief. Visit their website at gbgm-umc.org/umcor/.

(*James E. Swanson, Sr.* is the Bishop of the Holston Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church and a Director on the General Board of Church and Society.)



Millennium Development Goal 2

Achieve universal primary education.
Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.

He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and rise up and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. (Psalm 78:5-7 NRSV)

The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, 1959)

“SCHOOLING”

Many of us who grew up in the United States went through our early school grades believing boys are not supposed to be smart. Only girls got good grades. Much later, we learned that, until quite recently, girls did not have the same opportunities for education as boys. Even today, some cultures deny girls the right to an education.

The larger problem is that today more than 100 million children, both boys and girls, are not in school at all. Nations facing extreme poverty and hunger have few resources to direct to schooling. But, as Psalm 78 indicates, without education the people have no future.

Concern for education is not new. In 18th century England, leaders organized Sunday Schools to educate children in poverty. Although many historians credit Robert Rakes with beginning the Sunday School movement in 1780, there were actually many such schools by that time. One correspondent of John Wesley, Ms. Hannah Ball, began such a school at High Wycombe (between London and Oxford) in 1769. In 1770, she wrote Mr. Wesley:

The children meet twice a week, every Sunday and Monday. They are a wild little company, but seem willing to be instructed. I labour among them, earnestly desiring to promote the interest of the Church of Christ.

These early educators worked to promote the salvation of souls by teaching children to read the Bible. But reading gives a general state of empowerment. These educators also increased the well-being of all of society as children were able to lift themselves out of the widespread poverty of their time.

In building a society, free and compulsory primary education becomes the keystone that holds up the entire culture. Some believe that countries in poverty cannot afford education. Both rich and poor countries must necessarily work together. We can help to make that happen as we support the Millennium Development Goal to “achieve universal primary education.” (*Robert McClean*)

Prayer:

All praise and thanks to you, merciful God, for adopting us as your own children, for incorporating us into your holy Church, and for giving us the ability to share that inheritance with others. Amen.

Action suggestions:

1. Advocate for change in education policy. Call your members of Congress or parliament and urge them to support full funding of public education. In the United States, ask members of Congress to support the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (the DREAM Act) and the Student Adjustment Act. Both bills will provide educational opportunities to children who have grown up in the United States, have attended U.S. schools, and have worked hard to reach the American dream, yet remain undocumented. See a copy of these bills from U.S. Library of Congress website <http://www.thomas.loc.gov/> by typing either the bill number or its title. (Note: As of the date of this publication, the bills mentioned above had not yet been re-introduced in the 109th Congress.)
2. The 2004 UMC Book of Resolutions #100 The Right of All to Quality Education says: "The benefits of an education are enormous. A good education helps people gain access to better paying jobs, thus, helping reduce the number of people who live in poverty. By the same token, a good education is essential for a sustained economic growth. Education provides people with skills and empowers them to take advantage of new opportunities." Look again at your local church educational ministries in light of this resolution. Learn about public education in the United States by participating in the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) Mission Study on Public Education. Set up a study group in your local church and use "Public Education: Issues and Challenges" by Mary Grace Lyman. Additional resources can be found on the Women's Division website, gbgm-umc.org/missionstudies/PublicEducation/index.cfm. The United Methodist Seminars on National and International Affairs is also a venue to learn about the challenges of education in the U.S. and around the world. To organize a seminar in Washington, D.C., contact Susan Burton at the General Board of Church and Society: SBurton@umc-gbcs.org or call her at +1.202.488.5609. In New York City, contact Jay Godfrey at the GBGM Women's Division: jgodfrey@gbgm-umc.org or call him at +1.212.682.3633, ext. 3117.
3. Church World Service, through its Africa Initiative, has launched a program called "School Safe Zones" aimed to provide a model of what all the schools of Africa might one day become: secure environments where children can learn and play in safety; stimulating environments where teachers are well trained and have adequate materials for their classes; healthy environments where children have access to safe water and basic health care; and nurturing environments where every child will enjoy at least one nutritious meal a day. Learn about this program at www.churchworldservice.com.

(Rev. Robert McClean is a retired member of the Kansas West Annual Conference and formerly the Assistant General Secretary for United Nations Ministry of the General Board of Church and Society.)



Millennium Development Goal 3

**Promote gender equality and empower women.
Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education
preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.**

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea....and over every... thing ... upon the earth. So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27 NRSV)

Equality and advancement for women and girls spur development that benefits all. (Karin Sham Poo, Deputy Exec. Director, United Nations Children's Fund)

"EMPOWERMENT"

Parity between men and women is a matter of social justice. Although changes are taking place, women are still not accorded equal rights and responsibilities in most societies. Each of the MDGs plays a vital role toward the empowerment of women and is directly related to women's rights. One avenue to advancement for women is literacy. Literacy provides a way of opening doors to wider participation in society.

It is distressing that, while the percentage of literate women is at an all time high, the number of illiterate women—876 million—is greater than any time in the past. This is ample evidence of the continuing disparity in the education of boys and girls.

Literacy plays an important role in the lives of women because it provides greater opportunities in their communities. In a small rural community in Haiti, I witnessed the plight of a grandmother with no formal education. She was an ambitious and industrious woman who raised 10 children single-handedly, but her prospects were limited because she could not read and write. The only employment available to her was domestic work where she was usually overworked and underpaid. There was no union to regulate the workday or government agency that guaranteed a fair and living wage. She lived at the whim of her employer with the possibility of dismissal always looming should she ever complain. Through all her struggles, however, she was able to educate all of her children. Today, two are nurses and one is an entrepreneur.

Can you imagine how well she could have done given more opportunities for herself and her family? These children who had the opportunity to have wonderful careers in turn helped to teach her how to read.

When women have equal opportunities there is far greater chance of achieving the millennium development goals. Global prosperity and peace can only be achieved when all people are empowered with the ability to determine their own destiny and have access to the tools to provide for themselves and their families.

The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action constitute a powerful agenda for women's empowerment and gender equality, defines a set of strategic objectives and spells out actions to be taken by governments and civil society in the following 12 critical areas of concern: poverty, economy, power and decision-making, education,

media, health, armed conflict, environment, violence, human rights, the girl child and the institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women.

The Chinese proverb, “Give a person a fish and you feed the person for a day; teach a person to fish and that person eats forever,” is reflected in my life. Imagine that for all women! (*Sophony Lamour*)

Prayer:

O Lord, help us to do those things that you require of us – to be doers of your word and not hearers only. You require of us to do unto our neighbors that which we want others to do unto us – to treat one another justly. We will truly be your disciples if we obey your commands. Amen.

Action suggestions:

1. Join the “16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence” November 25-December 10, 2005. For information visit the [Center for Women's Global Leadership](#). For information about empowerment of women in general, visit the following:

www.ecumenicalwomenun.org

www.peacewomen.org

www.equalitynow.org

The Women’s Division of GBGM website, gbgm-umc.org/umw, contains resources about women’s empowerment.

2. Urge the U.S. government, and all governments of the world, to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW was unanimously adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on December 18, 1979, and became effective in 1981. The United States was actively involved in drafting CEDAW. President Jimmy Carter signed the convention on behalf of the United States in July 17, 1980 and sent it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in November 1980 for ratification. Since that time, the Senate has not voted on this treaty. For information, visit these sites:

www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw

www.cedaw.org/CEDAW_Book.htm

3. Devote some time to study these two official resolutions of The United Methodist Church pertaining to empowerment of women, found in the 2004 UMC Book of Resolutions: #190 Goals and Recommendations for Full Participation of Women, and #191 The Status of Women. Study these resolutions together with the Beijing Declaration and Program of Action that came out of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women which can be found at

www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm.

(Sophony Lamour staffs the Ecumenical Working Group for the United Nations of the Women’s Division of the United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries. Ms. is from Haiti).



What does the Lord require of you but to
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(Micah 6:8 NRSV)

MDG 4 Reduce child mortality.

Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.

MDG 5 Improve maternal health.

Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio.

MDG 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Millennium Development Goal 4

Reduce child mortality.

Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.

Then his sister asked her, "Shall I go and call a Hebrew woman to act as a wet-nurse?" "Please do" she answered. So the girl went and brought the baby's own mother. The princess told the woman, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So she took the baby and nursed him." (Exodus 2: 7-9 GNB)

Another child will die in the time it takes to read this sentence. And the death of that child, a child who had a name and a personality, a family and a future, is a rebuke to all humanity. It is no longer necessary. It is therefore no longer acceptable. (UNICEF 2004 State of the World's Children)

"BREASTFEEDING"

Giving birth to our two sons in Papua New Guinea (PNG) in the 1970s was an exciting time as the newly independent country began to make decisions that were for the good of the nation. One such decision was the 1977 Baby Feed Supplies Control Act which restricted the sale of baby bottles and prohibited the promotion of baby milk products. Being a firm advocate of breastfeeding, I applauded this decision, made to address increased child mortality as a result of the introduction of formula feeding. This law still exists today, and breastfeeding is almost universal. PNG has one of the lowest incidences of diarrhea among children.

If every baby were exclusively breastfed for their first six months, an estimated 1.3 million additional lives would be saved and millions more enhanced every year.

In recent years I lived in Southern Africa where breastfeeding again became an issue because of HIV virus transmission. In some poverty-stricken countries, breastfeeding is now thought to be the best method even if you are HIV positive, and should be the exclusive feeding method for a baby's first six months of life. The risk of passing the virus is less than 5%, the baby will be healthier, and even an infected baby will take longer to develop AIDS than will a formula fed baby.

So many lives are saved by such a simple, natural method of feeding babies. The valuable immune-building ingredients and antibodies are there in the mother's milk and so reduce the vulnerability to diarrhea and pneumonia. As the slogan says, "Breast is best!" (*Janice Clark and Rosemary Wass*)

Prayer:

God, our parent, source of goodness, through our actions may we work for what is best for your children. Keep us alert to the dangers your children face, especially those that we can change through our determination to consume that which promotes healthy living, and is life enhancing. Amen.

Action suggestions:

1. Learn about breastfeeding organizations in your community and invite them to come and talk to a group in your church. Support the campaigns which discourage the promotion of infant formula and invite your church to take this matter seriously. Encourage young mothers as they make decisions about how they will feed their babies. Also read Resolution #63 "Child Care and the Church" in the *2004 Book of Resolutions*. Study what it means for your church and society at large to be a caring community for children.
2. United Methodists continue to be the biggest donors from faith-based groups to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF's Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF - a kid-powered, mom-approved, and United Methodist - supported fund raising by young volunteers devoted to helping improve the lives of their most vulnerable peers around the globe. This year's Trick-or-Treating, and for the first time ever, will raise funds for UNICEF supported programs in the United States. This is in recognition of the fact that Hurricane Katrina left hundreds of thousands of school-age child evacuees without classrooms and school supplies at the start of the traditional U.S. school term. The U.S. Fund for UNICEF has begun coordinating the delivery of UNICEF "School-in-a-Box" kits to several aid partners assisting displaced populations in the U.S. To participate, visit www.unicefusa.org for information.
3. Monitor your government's compliance with and commitments to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. United Methodists in the United States must urge the U.S. government to ratify the Convention. The United States and Somalia remain the only two countries that have not ratified the Convention. For information about the Convention, visit www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm.

(Janice Clark is World Secretary and Rosemary Wass is World President of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. Both are local preachers of the British Methodist Church. As mothers they both see the Gospel imperative for the 21st Century to be bound up with working for a better world. They affirm that partnership with the United Nations is one of the routes to healing a fragmented world.)



Millennium Development Goal 5

Improve maternal health.
Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio.

Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of his cloak.
(Matthew 9:20, NRSV)

The risks that women face in bringing life into the world are not mere misfortune or unavoidable natural disadvantages but injustices?
(Hiroshima Nakajima, World Health Organization Director General 1998)

“BLEEDING”

Have you ever imagined a woman’s marriage vow “til death do us part” in the face of the dangers of childbirth? If you are living in Sub-Sahara Africa, childbirth and maternal death are far too frequently linked. Of the 529,000 women expected to die in childbirth this year alone, about 99 percent will die in that region of poverty-stricken countries. One in six African women faces the probability of dying in childbirth while in Europe it is only one in every 2,400 pregnant women.

For both mothers and babies, birthing can be the most dangerous moment in life. Every minute, a woman in the developing world dies from treatable complications of pregnancy or childbirth. And usually the technology needed to prevent those deaths is relatively cheap. It may simply mean that a care-giver monitors the weight and well-being of both mother and fetus during pregnancy. It may simply mean getting vitamins, iron and adequate nutrition to a malnourished mother. It may just mean being able to give affordable drugs to those infected with malaria. Malaria, iron-deficiency and malnutrition may in many instances contribute to the death from severe anemia of both mother and child.

While the woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ clothing was not pregnant, her hemorrhage could have slowly but surely bled her to death. Her plea to Jesus was the act of a desperate woman. But this was also the act of a woman who took matter into her own hands. A lot of women around the world have been doing that for centuries. They clean the house. They gather wood for cooking. They hike for miles nimbly balancing on treacherous terrain, children in tow, while nurturing another promise of life in their belly.

On a recent trip to Africa, I encountered a young woman named Nandi, seven months pregnant with her second child. Even in her advanced state of pregnancy, Nandi still carried the heavy responsibility of cooking, cleaning and working the family’s fields. She became increasingly worried about her baby when she began to suffer abdominal cramping and had not seen a doctor during her pregnancy. Like all women, Nandi was very concerned about the health of her unborn child but had to weigh the cost of seeing a doctor and traveling several miles to the nearest hospital against her everyday responsibility as wife and mother. That cost was to walk several miles to the nearest medical facility and pay what was equivalent to the family’s monthly income to

see a doctor. At the end of the day, the lack of resources available to women like Nandi affects not only their own health but the well-being of the entire community.

It is not that they have ceased trying. The fact is that they have been trying for so long. It is not that Nandi cares less for her unborn child than other women. The fact is that at the end of the day she may no longer have the strength – even just to tug at anyone, anybody that might pass her through the crowd. The fact is that we do not need to be a miracle worker to help. The fact is that the technological solutions are simple and relatively cheap. The problem, however, is that the vitamins, vaccines, and measuring tapes are just not available for people like Nandi. (*Betty Gittens*)

Prayer:

Compassionate God open our eyes to the suffering of your children. Help us to lift up the voices of women and children around the world whose full potential are limited due to, illness, poverty, hunger and violence. Amen.

Action suggestions:

1. Support pregnant mothers and their unborn children in impoverished countries by providing food, oral rehydration solutions, and appropriate vaccines. Check the web at gbgm-umc.org/umcor/health/motherchild.cfm.
2. UNICEF has already immunized 54.6 million women of childbearing age in a total of 33 countries against maternal and neonatal tetanus since it launched its Campaign to Save Mothers and Babies from Tetanus. Six African countries – Eritrea, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe – have been provisionally validated by the World Health Organization as having eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus. At a cost of just \$1.20 per woman, UNICEF is on the path to eliminating this killer worldwide with a safe, effective and low-cost vaccine that has been available in the developed world for more than 70 years. The immunization protects mothers for up to 10 years and their newborn babies for the first few critical months of life.



The United Methodist Church collaborates with the U.S. Fund for UNICEF (www.unicefusa.org) in the Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF program or www.umc-gbcs.org/un to find out how you can participate in successful, sustainable and cost effective ways to improve the health of mothers and babies worldwide.

3. The United Methodist Church understands itself as called by the Lord to the holistic ministry of healing: spiritual, mental, emotional and physical. Read more about this position in the 2004 Book of Resolutions #109 Health and Wholeness. Discover how your local church can make health concerns a priority and make “the greatest health for all people in all respects.”

(Ms. Betty Gittens is Executive Secretary for Research and Hospitality with the Women’s Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church. Ms. Gittens is from Barbados).



Millennium Development Goal 6

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. (Mark 1:40-41a, NIV)

Suffering anywhere concerns people everywhere. (United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan)

"TOUCH"

I stood there as a medical intern staring down on my first patient with AIDS. He had all kinds of tubes, gadgets, and monitors strewn around his emaciated body. Every once in awhile, he would cough. Thank goodness, I had a white coat, a mask, and another protective covering on my body. I was filled with so much dread that I scurried out of there like a scared cat. I was filled with hyper-phobia and cleaned my stethoscope with so much alcohol that I probably would have tilted a breathalyzer. But as I tried to make my escape, I saw from the corner of my eye a friend of my patient who threw herself on him, hugged him, and cried inconsolably at his bedside.

She seemed filled with so much longing and compassion that she forgot herself. I, however, was so focused on the consequences to myself that I forgot all about my patient. We are told that Jesus touched the leper when he was moved with compassion. Can I do no less? As I took further training in infectious diseases, I learned that the human immunodeficiency virus cannot be spread by casual contact. I now know that HIV/AIDS together with tuberculosis and malaria are three of the world's most devastating diseases.

If your church has about 100 members, in the time it takes for your pastor to preach a sermon, a number of people equal to the size of your congregation will have become infected with HIV. In some countries the infection rate is so high that one in three people - either you or the person sitting on the pew to your left or right - would be HIV positive. And if you live in one of the least developed countries, the cost of taking care of a family member who has AIDS may mean that the rest of the family will have to forego lunch and supper. All of these truths, however, may remain facts in our mind until we really see Jesus extending his hand and touching the afflicted.

There was a time when I would have avoided blues jazz like a contagion. All of that changed when, one day, I saw a disheveled man on the street playing the saxophone, with his eyes closed, head bowed, his hands rapturously engulfed in the moment. During the solitude and grandeur of those minutes, his love for the music ignited a love in me as well. Often it is only because we see how Jesus showed his love that we can be open to loving someone whom we might have otherwise not touched. (Gary Girao)

Prayer:

Lord, help me to love my neighbor just as you have loved me. Amen.

Action suggestions:

1. Support the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund Advance #982345-7 – an opportunity for United Methodists to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Annual conferences retain 25 percent of their collections for use that conference for AIDS work, locally and globally. Visit gbgm-umc.org/health/aidsafrica/help.cfm#global. Learn more about this from 2004 *Book of Resolutions* #153 “World AIDS Day Observance” and #154 “United Methodist Global AIDS Fund Distribution.” Read related news story from archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=6&mid=7682. Put a face on the staggering statistics by reading inspiring stories of actual people living with HIV/AIDS. Check out gbgm-umc.org/cam/stories.html.
2. Learn how your Annual Conference is responding to HIV/AIDS as listed in the booklet “The Global HIV/AIDS Pandemic and the United Methodist Church: 2004 Survey of Annual Conferences -- A Report of the General Board of Church and Society”. Contact Linda Bales of the Louise and Hugh Moore Population Project and Children’s Concerns of the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church (UMC) at +1.212.682.3633 or e-mail her at LBales@umc-gbcs.org. This web page has information about myths and facts on global HIV/AIDS: www.umc-gbcs.org/aids.
3. In the U.S., United Methodists can call urge members of Congress to support HR 1409, the Assistance for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005, reintroduced in the House by Congresswoman Barbara Lee and others. This bill would provide basic care and support for orphans, expand educational opportunity for orphans, bring the hope of treatment to orphans, and ensure accountability of programs for orphans. Urge that 10 percent of U.S. global AIDS funding go to programs that help orphans and vulnerable children. Call for the United States to contribute \$1.5 billion in 2006 to the international Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (www.theglobalfund.org/). Visit UM-Power at www.umc-gbcs.org for more information.

(Gary Girao is a medical doctor from the Philippines and a specialist in infectious diseases. He is also a local pastor who finished his Master of Divinity degree, summa cum laude, from The Theological School of Drew University in Madison, New Jersey.)



What does the Lord require of you but to
do justice, and to love kindness and to

walk humbly

with your God?

(Micah 6:8 NRSV)

MDG7 Ensure environmental sustainability.

Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.

MDG8 Develop a global partnership for development.

Develop a global partnership for development which is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. It includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction--nationally and internationally.

Millennium Development Goal 7

**Ensure environmental sustainability.
Reduce by half the proportion of people without
sustainable access to safe drinking water.**

Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you muddy the rest with your feet? (Ezekiel 34:18)

In developing and using water resources, priority has to be given to the satisfaction of basic needs and the safeguarding of ecosystems. (Agenda 21 on Sustainable Development)

“ENOUGH”

I grew up on the coast of Florida on a strip of ever-more-densely populated land between the Atlantic Ocean and the Everglades. We were virtually surrounded by water and yet under frequent water-use restrictions because of shortages. These shortages mostly resulted in unwashed cars, brown lawns (but not golf courses), and lower lake and pool levels.

Globally, our “blue” planet is facing much the same predicament. Although water covers roughly two-thirds of the earth’s surface, more than 80 countries – home to 40 percent of the world’s population – suffer serious water shortages. By 2025, two-thirds of our brothers and sisters around the world will be facing water stress. Unlike in my hometown, the impact of these shortages is measured not just in lifestyle inconveniences but in loss of life. Every year, two million children die because of lack of access to basic water and sanitation.

Part of this is the consequence of a natural challenge: despite the vast quantity of water on this planet, less than .01 percent is usable by humans. But the real culprits are our rampant consumption and constant despoiling of God’s creation. We have the technology and resources to provide sustainable access to safe water supplies, yet we continue to turn a blind eye to the suffering of our global neighbors and wrap ourselves up in a false cloak of invulnerability, believing that our affluence can protect us from our own unsustainable behaviors.

At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, I participated in the Global People’s March. We began in Alexandra, one of the poorest townships, where residents lived in makeshift housing without running water. We ended a few short miles away at the site of the U.N. conference in a convention center attached to a luxury shopping mall where water flowed freely in decorative fountains and pools. Those interconnected and starkly contrasting images – the result of human choices about allocating resources – left me wondering how much suffering must we witness before we proclaim “enough!” and take action to ensure that all God’s children have enough. (*John Hill*)

Prayer:

Creator God, we give thanks for your sacred gift of water. We confess that we have not been faithful stewards of your good creation and today renew our commitment to caring for the earth and all your children. Amen.

Action suggestions:

1. Place a quart container or other displacement object in your toilet tank – this could save 4 gallons of water daily and 1400 gallons each year. Eat lower on the food chain! Grain-fed animals require much more water per pound than vegetarian alternatives. (One pound of wheat requires 25 gallons of water to produce; one pound of beef requires 2500 gallons).
2. Take the opportunity to sign an ecumenical statement on water. Visit these web resources: Church World Service www.churchworldservice.org/Educ_Advo/index.html and Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA www.ncccojustice.org.
3. The United Methodist Church affirms that water is a basic human right to be shared and enjoyed by all. Learn how this right can be protected and enhanced by studying these policies in the *2004 Book of Resolutions: #7 "Environmental Justice for a Sustainable Future: Water"; #10 "Environmental Stewardship: Right to Abundant and Clean Water"; and #13 "Protection of Water."* In 2004, Women's Division's Response Magazine devoted an issue on water. Single copies (\$1.75) can be obtained from Service Center in Cincinnati, Ohio by calling 1-800-305-9857 or e-mail scorders@gbgm-umc.org.

(John S. Hill is Director for Economic and Environmental Justice at the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church based in Washington, D.C.)



Millennium Development Goal 8

Develop a global partnership for development.
Develop a global partnership for development
which is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory.
It includes a commitment to good governance,
development and poverty reduction--nationally and internationally.

This plan which God will complete...is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth with Christ as head. (Ephesians 1:9-10)

Life-centered values deeply rooted in Pacific communities with celebration, sharing and caring can be a viable alternative to economic globalization. (The Island of Hope, Fiji, August 12-16, 2001)

“PARTNERSHIP”

Today I see two great plans unfolding in our world. Under one plan, the global economy is rendering national laws and borders meaningless. Goods and services are moving around the world answering only to supply and demand. I see rules of finance and trade that regulate the markets but that work only to the benefit of the owners of capital, not for the poor and vulnerable. As such, they are unjust.

But there is another plan: God’s plan to bring everything in all creation together with Christ as head. Many Christians believe the church is called to be a partner with God engaged in bringing about the kind of development where people, especially the poor, matter more than material things.

When the Industrial Revolution was in full swing John Wesley preached to men and women who were victimized by industrialization. Wesley agitated for reforms to improve the spiritual and material welfare of people. In the footsteps of Wesley we need to hold together the evangelical and prophetic dimensions of the gospel.

I am from Fiji, a group of over 300 islands with a population of 800,000. About half are indigenous Fijians, mainly Methodists, and others are made up largely of Hindu Indian origin. In a globalized world, Fiji may seem unimportant. Many Pacific Islanders feel powerless in the face of a global economy that does not benefit the weak and vulnerable. But Fijians also realize that the sustainability of their communities and their development efforts can only be achieved through just and participatory partnerships among themselves and other stakeholders.

In God’s plan, economic relations flow from the freely given gifts of God and are shared without reserve. But we are all members of the one body. If one small nation suffers we all suffer. We belong to the one world. We have a collective accountability to one another as people created in the image of God. When the weak ones are not heard, and relegated to the margins of the global economy, discontentment rises and pretty soon they protest their situation.

In the early church, things were shared in common. This is a model of practical human community (Acts 4:32-35). We must share resources and never forget to help

those in need. Paul speaks of a rule which is far better for everyone. "Help carry one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Sharing of bread at the Lord's Supper is a sign of loving relationships and self-giving. This same sign stands against domination by unjust powers. (*Akuila Yabaki*)

Prayer:

Lord God, help us to change the world with the gospel values of neighborly love and justice in our relationships. Amen.

Action suggestions

1. Give up eating seafood one day a week in your home so as not to further deplete the marine resources of the Pacific Ocean. Find out more about U.S. military and economic activities in the Pacific islands. Write to your Congressional or Parliamentary representatives and petition them for more just relations with small island states. Visit www.ccf.org.fj for information on Fiji and Pacific issues. The Pacific Conference of Churches has additional resources at pacificforum.com/pcc/index.shtml.
2. The United Methodist Church considers the United Nations and its related bodies as the best instruments now in existence to achieve a world of justice and law (Para. 165.D of the Social Principles) and has called on all governments to fully support the United Nations in fulfilling its Charter mandates. Study the following relevant United Methodist resolutions and discuss how your local church can support the MDGs and the wider concern for multilateralism and international law: #326 "In Support of the United Nations"; #340 "In Defense of International Law and Cooperation: Cornerstone of Multilateralism," and #309 "Globalization and Its Impact on Human Dignity and Human Rights."
3. Learn about the ministry of the United Methodist Office for the United Nations. The Women's Division of GBGM is expanding its U.N. Advocacy program and will choose two UN advocates per jurisdiction by 2006. To be a UN Advocate contact Ms. Betty Gittens, Executive Secretary for Research and Hospitality, 212.682.3633, e-mail bgittens@gbgm-umc.org). Women's Division UN Advocates will work closely with the GBCS Isaiah Circle Coordinators. Isaiah Circle is an international network of United Methodists advocating for U.N. and global concerns. For more information, contact GBCS (Rev. Liberato Bautista, call 212.682.3633, e-mail Lbautista@umc-gbcs.org, or visit website at www.umc-gbcs.org/un). Letters may be sent to 777 United Nations Plaza, 11F, New York, New York 10017 USA. U.S. citizens may also contact the United Nations Assoc. of the USA (www.unausa.org). Open the section "Advocacy Agenda" to find information and action opportunities about UN reform. United Methodists outside of the US may contact the World Federation of United Nations Associations at www.wfuna.org/ to find your local United Nations Association.

(Akuila Yabaki is the Executive Director of Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) – an internationally supported civil society organization founded in 1992 to secure a democratic constitution and to strengthen institutions of accountability, human rights and multiculturalism in Fiji Islands. Akuila is a Methodist minister from Fiji who previously served as World Church Secretary for Asia and Pacific with the Methodist Church in Britain.)

