

Nation & World



News throughout our nation and world relating to United Methodists of the Holston Conference



United Methodists use new media spots to assure Americans

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - Amid growing fears of chemical and biological terrorism, United Methodists are taking to the airwaves, urging people to pray for safety, justice and a "change in angry hearts."

In television spots to be broadcast on CNN in late October and early November, people around the world are shown in different postures and places of prayer. The spots' message closes with words of assurance: "No matter how you pray, remember, the people of

the United Methodist Church are praying with you."

Igniting Ministry:

The CNN spots will be supported by radio and television pieces, newspaper ads and public service announcements that churches or regional units of the denomination can place locally.

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks came as United Methodist Communications (UMCom) was launching the first series of television spots in a national, multi-million-dollar "Igniting Ministry" campaign. Changes were quickly made in the spots to acknowledge the horrific events in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania, but the overall theme remained: "Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors. The people of the United Methodist Church."

The CNN spots and related media pieces are being offered between the first Igniting Ministry series in September and a second series of spots planned for the Advent and Christmas season.

Since the Sept. 11 tragedy and sub-

sequent military activity in Afghanistan, the number of people searching for spiritual well-being has risen, and it will continue to rise, according to the Rev. Steve Horswill-Johnston, executive director of Igniting Ministry. "The 'hole in the soul' identified by preliminary Igniting Ministry research is widening and deepening worldwide," he said.

UMCom's governing body, meeting the last few days of September, agreed to use mass media during this time of heightened concern. "The United Methodist Church is giving to the world a pastoral message of reassurance and hope, of the strength of community and of our strong belief in the value of prayer," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, the agency's top staff executive. "God is still present with us; God has not forsaken us."

Beyond pastoral expressions, Horswill-Johnston said the commercials are "invitations to people to enter into connection with the Christian community as they seek meaning and purpose at a time of great struggle. We believe it is very appropriate to use mass media to offer this message and to extend this invitation."

He said CNN was chosen because it is the highest-profile, most-watched source of TV news, particularly during international incidents. The church's messages will reach about 33 million households, he said.

The TV and radio spots can be seen online at <http://www.ignitingministry.org/tragedy> online. ■

Directors express concern about Mission Volunteers program

STAMFORD, Conn. (UMNS) - When the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries announced its proposed budget cuts, some directors complained that the popular "Mission Volunteers" program had taken a disproportionate hit.

Several staff people were being eliminated, and the 2001 budget of \$1.36 million for Mission Volunteers was being reduced by more than half for 2002, with funding to come through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) rather than general agency funds.

In their report to the full board during the Oct. 22-25 annual meeting, Mission Volunteer directors expressed their concern "that it is impossible to maintain the quality of programs with so few dollars" and added that the proposed funding cut "will send a message to the mission volunteers that their service and commitment are not valued."

Started in 1996, the board's Mission Volunteers program coordinates the participation of United Methodist volunteers in programs and projects around the world. Specific programs include Primetimers, for adults over 50; Global Justice Volunteers, for 18- to 25-year-olds; individual volunteers, for case-by-case assignments; NOMADS, a program using recreational vehicles; the United Methodist Fellowship of Health Care Volunteers; and placement for disaster relief volunteers.

"We're talking about thousands of personnel who go to the ends of the earth at their own expense," said the Rev. William Hinson, a director from the Texas Annual Conference, during a discussion about whether and how some funding should be restored.

Supporters of Mission Volunteers wanted at least 56 percent of its 2001 budget restored for 2002. They initially suggested an additional \$209,000 not included in the budget proposal be taken from the board's mission personnel area, which was to receive a 17 percent increase in funds for 2002.

"This very minimal increase ... can help maintain some integrity in Mission Volunteers," said the Rev. Charles Boayue Jr., a director from the Detroit Conference.

But mission personnel directors protested that shifting funds would make it difficult for that area, already in debt, to do its work. Directors finally voted that

Mission Volunteers should have the restoration of 56 percent of the 2001 budget, but instructed the board's chief executive, the Rev. Randolph Nugent, to decide how to allocate the additional money from within the entire budget.

The proposed reductions in Mission Volunteers as well as other program areas of the Board of Global Ministries came as the agency attempted to balance both the 2001 and 2002 budgets. Shortfalls in expected income from investments and funding from the church at large, as well as higher costs for a larger complement of missionaries, had created a deficit situation.

In the case of **Budget Cuts:** Mission Volunteers, the World Service money that would have been allocated from the board's overall funds, along with the balance of the Innovative Mission Volunteers Fund created by directors in 1998, would be applied not to its budget, but to the agency's deficit. The total of the contribution to the deficit would be \$2.29 million.

The 2002 budget eventually adopted by board directors includes funding for Mission Volunteers from UMCOR and the Women's Division, along with the additional money to be redirected by Nugent.

The Rev. Paul Dirdak, UMCOR's chief executive, stressed that no 2001 Mission Volunteer programs have been eliminated and said that all projects with large numbers of participants will continue at 2001 rates, with a few reductions in cost for some smaller programs. Some work sharing will be done with UMCOR "where the tasks are already highly compatible."

More specifically, support will continue at 2001 levels for the five jurisdictional coordinators for Volunteers in Mission, the health care fellowship and NOMADS. Eight of the nine sites for volunteer coordination outside the United States will continue, along with the program for volunteer insurance.

Global Justice Volunteers, Primetimers, individual volunteers, and training and leadership development for conferences and partner churches will continue with some adjustments.

Dirdak noted that the reduction in the Mission Volunteers 2002 budget is similar to that of two other program areas within the board. ■