

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Mindful that our Minnesota Conference Global Partnerships Team will have its first face-to-face meeting this Saturday, I listened with great interest last week as Rev. Jeff Whitman, Missouri Mid-South Conference Minister, reported to the CUE (Chicago-United-Eden) Board on that conference's developing relationship with the Bokungu district of the Christian Disciples of Christ of the Congo. I learned from Jeff about the war in the Congo, which started more than a dozen years ago continues to this day with 45,000 people dying each month. Indeed, as the Common Global Ministries website reports: <http://globalministries.org/africa/congo-week.html>, the Congo is the most mineral resource rich country on earth AND the greatest humanitarian crisis in the world today. Nearly 6 million people have died since 1996, half of them children under 5 yrs old. The United Nations said it is the deadliest conflict in the world since World War II. I learned also about the **Cell Out**, an organized cell phone usage boycott set to take place from 12pm - 1pm on October 21st (next Wednesday) to bring awareness to this conflict over natural resources, such as the coltan in our cell phones.

Jeff's report reminded me of the **WIDENESS** of our wider church ministries, as did this email from Minnesota missionaries, Don and Maryjane Westra (Federated Church, Fergus Falls), who wrote from their new home in Zimbabwe:

Hello all,

So much to learn about the African way of life. Here is a short list so far:

- 1. Late means dead*
- 2. Gyzer means water heater. (Pronounced Geezer.)*
- 3. If you see a z in a word, it is likely a click sound.*
- 4. It takes practice to click in the middle of a word.*
- 5. Plug in rechargable appliances any chance you get. Electricity is unreliable.*
- 6. When the electricity goes off, you can cook over the fire.*
- 7. Its DARK when the electricity is off.*
- 8. You can eat a bug if it has enough salt on it.*
- 9. You can buy a locally made coffee table (a nice one!) for \$15.*
- 10. Thirteen avocados cost \$1.00*
- 11. A call from home .. priceless (and impossible)*
- 12. Babies die from lack of an oxygen tank regulator.*
- 13. One can survive without TV*
- 14. One can survive without a microwave or dishwasher.*
- 15. One can survive without hot water. (Glad it's working again however!)*
- 16. One can survive without Facebook. (Well, that's still under question, it's only been two weeks.*
- 17. There are hospitals in this world without telephones. (and without oxygen regulators.)*
- 18. There are people without food.*
- 19. One can hire full time help (gardening and housework) for \$100 per month, but not sure one can sleep well at night paying that wage.*

We are both well and happy. It's been chilly here, and we are sitting in front of a fire in our fireplace. Our cell phone service is still challenging. We can drive 2 miles one direction for one service and 2 miles the opposite direction for another server, we can't get a signal in our home or office. We are promised a

cell tower nearby soon. (Not sure the definition of soon. We tried to drive to the site of the new tower but we got 4 kms into the jungle and it was getting dark. We chickened out and turned around.)

We miss you all!

Maryjane and Don

Please keep the Westras and the Liddles (Peace UCC, Duluth, serving as missionaries in East Timor) in our thoughts and prayers. To learn more about the ministry of the Liddles, visit www.monicaliddle.com.

Then, prepare to be *educated, stimulated, and challenged* at next year's Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ where our theme will be: ***Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth***. We will welcome four staff leaders from Wider Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ: Rev. Cally Rogers-Witte, Executive Minister; Rev. Xiaoling Zhu, Area Executive for East Asia and the Pacific; Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer, Executive Minister for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns and HIV/AIDS Ministries; and Ms. Susan M. Sanders, Minister and Team Leader for Global Sharing of Resources and Administrator of One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS). Your OGHS contributions make it possible for us to respond quickly to disasters such as the recent tsunami in the South Pacific.

We hope to find a way to "connect live" with our Minnesota missionaries, and we anticipate hearing from Rev. David Lindsey, Chair of the Global Partnerships Team, who will participate in the the 10th quadrennial assembly of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), which will take place 24-30 May 2010 at Silliman University and thereafter to the 12th founding anniversary of the our partner judicatory, UCCP SEMJur to be held 31 May and 1 June 2010.

Sunday is Children's Sabbath Sunday on the UCC calendar. I hope to be with the children **and** adults at First Congregational UCC, Brainerd, where I will preach and participate in an adult education forum. Blessings on your ministries!

Karen Smith Sellers
Conference Minister