



Melissa Engle/MCC



## Proclaim Jubilee A NEW BEGINNING

by Mary Stata

**T**he collapse of the global economy and subsequent recession has profoundly impacted the global South. Decreased foreign direct investment, shrinking national budgets, and rising costs of living have pushed 119 million more people into extreme poverty since 2008. Women and children are the most vulnerable to this financial downturn. Furthermore, economic insecurity all too often leads to civic unrest and is a threat to stability.

In light of this financial crisis, the Washington Office selected four policy issues to highlight over the next year through our “Abundant Life: Economic Justice for All” campaign.

This issue of the *Memo* investigates the impact that debt to international financial institutions (IFIs) has had on impoverished countries. From Haiti to Afghanistan to Bolivia to Uganda, people all around the world have been severely affected by the burden of debt incurred and carried by their governments.

Debt repayment consumes the scarce resources of impoverished governments from vital health and education services. Countries such as Eritrea and Nepal need to invest their limited budgets in programs that will strengthen infrastructure and lead to economic empowerment and a better standard of living, rather than paying millions of dollars in interest. This

misallocation of government funds has led to a proliferation of poverty for the world’s most economically disenfranchised.

Advocates for debt relief have enjoyed considerable success. In 2005, the U.S. Congress cancelled debt for the most severely indebted countries, and the International Monetary Fund has overseen complete debt forgiveness initiatives in many nations.

Despite this success, much work remains. The current financial crisis has forced some countries into new debt with IFIs. Others still struggle under the burden of interest rates and debts incurred decades ago. Further, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank still employ policies that tie detrimental conditions to loans.

Debt cancellation is fundamentally about restoring right and just relationships between impoverished and wealthy countries. Indeed, debt is just one component hampering global economic development. The fight against HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, gender inequality, unjust trade regulations, and illiteracy are but a few of the challenges facing developing countries.

However, debt cancellation is a step forward in promoting economic justice around the world. Join us in proclaiming Jubilee, a new beginning for all. ✪

“Must we starve our children to pay our debts?”

—Julius Nyerere,  
former president of Tanzania

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Melissa Engler/MCC

# Drop the Debt, Create a New Beginning

*In Boricha, Ethiopia, MCC partners with the Meserete Kristos Relief and Development Association on food security projects. Woyitu Yisak, a participant in a food-for-work program, stands here with enset plants which she grows behind her home. Ethiopia received debt relief in 2004.*

by Theo Sittler

**T**he financial crisis and the ensuing global recession are affecting more people in every part of the world than ever before. Almost everyone in the United States is somehow connected to this crisis. Many of our friends, family and neighbors have lost their jobs, homes and life savings.

As the United States struggles in its efforts toward recovery, impoverished countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa are hit even harder due to economic threats that have lasted for decades. One of these threats, the debt crisis, has crippled the economies of poor countries. Debt payments prevent precious resources from being invested in essential services for the poor. Much like the current economic crisis, the international debt crisis has brought about suffering for poor people due to the decisions and policies of governments and financial institutions.

In the 1970s, U.S. and European banks were flush with *petrodollars* (money received by oil exporters which is then deposited into Western

banks). To gain more wealth, these banks convinced developing nations to borrow large sums of money with low interest rates. These loans were given with little accountability, so the funds were often used for ineffective development projects or by corrupt government officials for personal gain. The Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines, for example, siphoned off more than \$5 billion to banks in Switzerland. Creditors continued lending, despite knowledge of such activity.

In the early 1980s, the global economy began sliding into recession and interest rates began to rise. Developing nations were hit especially hard because most of the loans were borrowed at variable rates, set about 1 percent above the U.S. rate. In 1981 the U.S. rate peaked at 21.5 percent and the debt of poor countries ballooned out of control. In 1982, Mexico's finance minister announced that they could no longer make debt payments; 40 other nations soon followed suit. If these nations would have defaulted on their

loans, U.S. banks such as Citibank, Chase Manhattan and others could have fallen into bankruptcy.

To prevent bankruptcies of Western banks, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank stepped in to restructure and reschedule loan payments, which included additional loans to repay old ones. The IMF also forced these countries into so-called Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP). Structural adjustment includes cuts in government social spending and the privatization of essential services such as health care, as well as trade liberalization and a reorientation of the economy for export, with cuts in support for local agriculture. These programs have had a devastating impact on the poor and have driven countries into deeper levels of poverty. Dr. Adabayo Adedeji of the African Centre for Development Strategy in Nigeria and a former Under Secretary General of the United Nations says, "Debt is tearing down schools, clinics and hospitals and

**It would cost only 40 cents per U.S. resident to cancel the debt owed to the U.S. by 24 additional impoverished countries.**

the effects are no less devastating than war.”

Since the mid 1990s, due to organized efforts by economic justice advocates, some countries have seen debt relief. In 1996, the IMF and the World Bank began the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which yielded billions of dollars in debt cancellation in 1999. The HIPC program, however, also came with strings attached in the form of structural adjustment programs. Still, a major victory was achieved in 2005 when the G8 (eight of the world’s wealthiest countries) agreed to provide complete debt relief for 18 additional countries that were part of the HIPC initiative.

Today, many other countries continue to suffer from the heavy burden of debt and its impact on their economies. The Jubilee USA Network, of which MCC is a member, states that the poorest countries spend about \$100 million every day in debt payments. These countries, many of which are in sub-Saharan Africa, could better use this money to support domestic programs. According to Jubilee USA, “every day, 30,000 children die of easily preventable diseases due to malnutrition and lack of adequate medical care. The Jubilee vision that we find in Scripture calls us to challenge this horrible reality.” Cancellation of unjust debt and reform of lending

is one important way to challenge this “horrible reality.”

More than 60 countries suffer from a heavy debt burden and will not reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) without further cancellation. The MDGs are a strategy by the United Nations to cut poverty in half by 2015.

The Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending and Expanded Debt Cancellation calls for expanded debt cancellation without harmful economic policy conditions. It also calls for more responsible and transparent lending by creditors to avoid a new debt crisis and to move us toward a more just global economic system. The bill was passed by the House of Representatives in 2007 but failed to pass in the Senate.

At the time of writing this article, the Jubilee Act has not been reintroduced but is expected to be soon. Passing the Jubilee Act will be an important step toward economic wholeness while costing little. According to Jubilee USA, it would cost only 40 cents per U.S. resident to cancel the debt owed to the U.S. by 24 additional impoverished countries and less than one additional

dollar to cancel the debts owed by these countries to the World Bank and the IMF.

Debt cancellation can help poor countries create a new beginning in a time of economic turmoil and uncertainty. This is a way toward abundant life for all. ✨



Matthew Lester/MCC

### **Haiti’s Debts are Cancelled!**

On June 30, Haiti reached completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. This means that \$1.2 billion in external debt owed to bilateral and multilateral lenders such as the IMF, World Bank and the U.S. government was cancelled. This is great news for a country that has suffered under the heavy burden of debt to international creditors.

It comes at a critical time, as Haiti suffered a series of humanitarian crises in 2008 and endured the devastating impact of four hurricanes. Sharp increases in food and energy prices have also led to an escalation of hunger among the poorest sectors of the population.

MCC, along with groups like Jubilee USA, has campaigned for the cancellation of Haiti’s debt. We rejoice that Haiti will now be able use the freed-up funds to support its own people.

*Farm tilapia at a research station in rural Bangladesh. Bangladesh has significant external debt and could better use the monies for food, health and education.*

# Proclaim Jubilee:

## Worship Resources and Reflections

by Ken Nafziger

*This fall, the MCC Washington Office invites congregations to “Proclaim Jubilee: A new beginning.” The suggested Sunday for prayer, reflection and action is October 25.*

**S**cripture mandates a year of Jubilee and renewal, which includes cancellation of debts. As the world continues to face the worst financial crisis in decades, debt relief for poor countries can help create a new beginning.

In the beginning, there was a seventh day. And God rested. And then there was to be rest for the land, and social justice for the poor *and* for animals:

For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.

And then, Sabbath rest takes one enormous step, outlined as a year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25. A brief list of Jubilee’s mandates:

- freedom for all inhabitants of the land
- returning home to one’s land and family
- no sowing or reaping
- surrendering of claims to the land
- no money loaned, no food sold for profit
- forgiveness of debts
- supporting one’s kin in difficulty as one supports the resident foreigner, and
- slaves ransomed and freed.

And then Jesus, by his words and work, made ‘jubilee’ synonymous with Gospel, as signaled when he stood in the synagogue and read the words of the prophet Isaiah (Luke 4):

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

*Tree seedlings in an MCC-supported greenhouse in Desarmes, Haiti.*

Many biblical scholars, including John Howard Yoder in *The Politics of Jesus*, say that Luke’s Gospel is a Jubilee Gospel, containing the Magnificat, the story of Jesus reading from Isaiah, and a host of accounts and parables not included in the other Gospels that expand the legal definitions of ‘jubilee.’

This October Sunday provides opportunity to re-visit this biblical principle in light of both the worldwide context of nations with crushing indebtedness *and* Jesus’ model as jubilee incarnate.

### Suggestions for preparation for the worship leaders/preachers

- Re-read the Gospel of Luke through the lens of Luke 4:16–21.
- See the excellent worship resources available at Jubilee-USA’s website, [jubileeusa.org](http://jubileeusa.org).
- See the list of more than 40 countries that fall into the International Monetary Fund’s category of heavily indebted nations at [imf.org](http://imf.org). A similar source of information is the World Bank’s web site at [worldbank.org](http://worldbank.org).
- Read about Haiti’s recent (June 2009) debt cancellation at [jubileeusa.org](http://jubileeusa.org).
- Look for Jubilee/gospel signs and stories within your self, your church, your community; celebrate a few of those as well!
- Supply your congregation, Sunday School classes, small groups, or individuals with the addresses of senators and representatives from your state who are in positions of influence on this issue.



Melissa Engler/MCC

## Suggestions for Bible readings

- Nehemiah 8, 1-3, 5-6, 8-10
- Psalm 19
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
- Luke 4:14-21

## Suggestions for songs

*Hymnal: A Worship Book (HWB):*

- 90 For the fruit of all creation
- 174 Bless'd be the God of Israel
- 184 Hark! the glad sound
- 362 Help us to help each other, Lord
- 367 For the healing of the nations
- 383 God, whose giving knows no ending

*Sing the Journey (STJ):*

- 2 Hamba nathi/Come walk with us
- 4 You've got a place at the welcome table
- 16 Praise with joy the world's Creator

*Sing the Story (STS):*

- 4 Rejoice, rejoice, the Savior comes
- 95 Jesus has done so much for me

Consider also other songs in your congregation's repertoire on God's infinite gift to us, our need to be attentive to the world around us, and our need to give freely of ourselves.

## Suggestions about the preaching time

- Luke offers endless challenges for any individual or congregation. Choose one! See also the excellent worship resources from JubileeUSA.
- Avoid using too many facts and figures; make Jubilee personal.
- Engage the congregation in conversation, to imagine themselves in the situation of another. For example, what might you or I hear, had we been there to hear Jesus read from Isaiah? What might we hear now if Jesus showed up here, or in a country in overwhelming debt, and read to us from Isaiah?
- Ask for brief stories (five minutes or less) from people who have emigrated from or worked in a heavily indebted country.



Edwin Demming/MCC

*A woman in Haiti. On June 30 Haiti's debt reached the "completion point" in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries program, meaning that its \$1.2 billion in external debt has now been cancelled.*

## Suggestions for the prayer time

- Intercessory prayer could be the major element of the service. Praying intelligently for such a complex issue needs more than calling out the name of a country. For example, a short song, such as HWB 358, STJ 32 or 57 could surround longer spoken prayers offered by someone who has lived in the global South, people of differing ages or cultures, or people who are our neighbors.
- Prayers should be rich with thanksgivings for the promise of Jubilee, in this world as well as the next.
- Many prayers in STJ and STS can be used (or adapted) to this particular worship theme.

*We and they* find ourselves sisters and brothers when we pray together in Menno Simons' words:

Lord Jesus,  
blind I am, do thou enlighten me;  
naked I am, do thou clothe me;  
wounded, do thou heal me;  
dead, do thou quicken me.  
I know of no night,  
no physician,  
no life, except thee. AMEN [HWB 700]

Additional worship resources available at [washington.mcc.org/life](http://washington.mcc.org/life).

*Ken Nafziger is professor of music at Eastern Mennonite University.*

# AFRICA AND THE LEGACY OF “Illegitimate Debt”



Matthew Lester/MCC

by Bruce Campbell-Janz

*“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)*

These two verses from 2 Corinthians remind us of the plight of millions across the African continent who face many trials in their lives due to a double jeopardy of the worst sort. First, bad governments have accumulated massive external debt. Secondly, international financial institutions (IFIs) hold these millions of people responsible for the “illegitimate debts” that have enriched corrupt leaders while providing scant positive impact on their lives.

IFI policies put a priority on repaying these debts over and above primary needs of many countries. In some African countries, debt repayment annually exceeds health and education budgets. Millions who have suffered at the hands of self-enriching governments—often supported by northern governments for commercial or ideological reasons—are now victimized by carrying the burden of illegitimate debt.

The most shocking reality to highlight is that “[Africa] subsidizes the

wealthy economies of the world through a net transfer of wealth in the form of payments for illegitimate debts. More money flows out of Africa each year in the form of debt service payments, than goes into Africa in the

*Alphonsine Ntunzwenimana works on math exercises at the Hope School in Mutaho, Burundi.*

form of aid.” (“Conspiracy against Africa,” *Walrus* magazine, Nov. 2006). Our image of international aid is turned on its head with the net funds transfer being *from* Africa and not *to* Africa.

While real debt relief has been achieved by some countries, many more are stuck and facing double jeopardy because they’re perceived to be unable to adopt a “clear debt sustainability framework.” More positively, sub-Saharan Africa recently acquired a third seat on the executive board of the World Bank which will lead to a strengthened voice for Africa in these discussions.

Afflicted. Perplexed. Persecuted. Struck down. Images of the many faceted burdens of Africa’s legacy of “illegitimate debt.” However, 2 Corinthians 4:16 reminds us that “we do not lose heart” as people of faith because we know that we have a promise of peace, justice, and life in abundance from our Creator. And we, as kingdom workers, must continue to struggle for lives of dignity for our sisters and brothers in Africa.

*Bruce Campbell-Janz is MCC’s Area Director for Africa.*

## Stop Vulture Funds

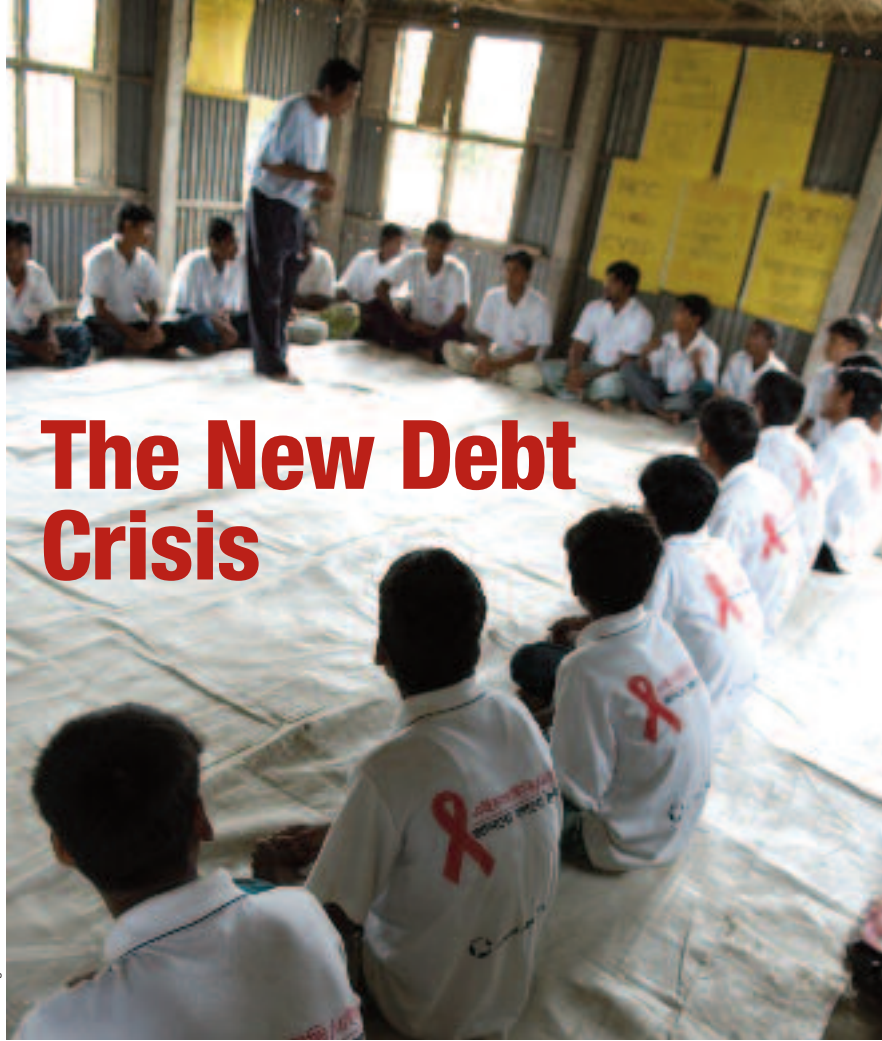


Vital progress in debt relief is being threatened by the activity of vulture funds, which exploit the most impoverished countries at the expense of their citizens and countries like the United States that support international debt cancellation.

A vulture fund is a company that seeks to make profit by buying up debt in default on the secondary market for pennies on the dollar, then trying to recover up to ten times the purchase price, often by suing impoverished countries in U.S. or European courts. These funds are often based in offshore tax havens, such as the Cayman Islands. These tactics can lead to judgments and awards against poor country governments that make it more difficult to meet the basic human needs of their citizens.

Congress should pass the Stop VULTURE Funds Act (H.R. 2932), which would outlaw profiteering by vulture funds on debts held by countries eligible for debt relief. Additional information can be found at [jubileeusa.org/vulturefunds](http://jubileeusa.org/vulturefunds).

*Source: Jubilee USA Network*



# The New Debt Crisis

by Meara Dietrick

**T**he current economic crisis is primarily a result of irresponsible lending in the United States and Europe, yet the repercussions have spread to developing countries across the globe. Many countries in the global South have found it difficult to finance the present crisis, as demand for their exports has decreased, credit markets have all but dried up, and money sent home by foreign workers has slowed.

Low-income countries that have already received debt relief through the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, like Zambia, are finding themselves in danger of reaching unsustainable debt levels again with the drop in export prices. Other countries did not meet eligibility criteria for debt relief despite high levels of debt and poverty, such as Bangladesh, and are now listed by the World Bank as extremely vulnerable to the global financial crisis.

In an effort to respond to the economic crisis, the G20, a group composed of the world's 20 largest economies, committed in April to increase funds for the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Although civil society groups have repeatedly warned that the structural adjustment policies promoted by the IMF have made countries more vulnerable to the economic crisis, the G20 selected the IMF to help developing countries through the financial crisis—without requiring significant reforms of the institution.

With the funds promised by the G20, the IMF recently announced plans to assist low income countries through the economic crisis. These efforts, however, do not go far enough. While the institution expects to provide

*An MCC-supported HIV/AIDS education session with teenage boys in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is considered extremely vulnerable to the global financial crisis, making it less able to respond to the health and education needs of its citizens.*

up to \$17 billion from now through 2014 for low-income countries in the form of concessional loans (which have lower interest rates and longer repayment periods), it is not certain that the IMF will even receive the contributions necessary to reach that amount.

The conditions attached to the loans mean that low-income countries will not have the flexibility to respond to the financial crisis in a way that best meets the needs of their citizens. Unlike developed countries that are trying to stem the crisis by stimulating the economy, low-income countries will be forced to increase interest rates and reduce public spending, thus negatively affecting the poor. Furthermore, this assistance is to be offered in the form of loans rather than grants. For countries like Zambia and Bangladesh, the accumulation of even more debt could lead to serious problems in the future.

Low-income countries urgently need financial assistance to weather the economic crisis without becoming more indebted. Efforts are needed to attain debt relief for more countries, eliminate interest charges for a much longer period of time on concessional loans, and provide grants without harmful conditions for countries that are vulnerable to reaching unsustainable levels of debt. The developing world should not be further indebted for an economic crisis it did not cause. ✪

*Meara Dietrick is a graduate student at American University and Wesley Theological Seminary. She was an intern in the MCC Washington Office during the summer of 2009.*

**The developing world should not be further indebted for an economic crisis it did not cause.**



Brandon Thiessen/MCC

# Helping Vulnerable Communities Adapt to Climate Change

by Daniel Foxvog

**A**s a result of global climate change, many nations, especially in the global South, are facing severe humanitarian crises. Although these nations are the most vulnerable to climate change, they are the least responsible for its origin—it is primarily developed nations that are to blame for the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change.

Climate change is already leading to an increase in floods, droughts, famine, natural disasters, and the spread of disease. Countries burdened with heavy national debt and lacking financial resources are the least able to effectively address these problems.

Adaptation assistance is an effort to aid those impacted by climate change. It involves a diverse range of projects, including protection of local eco-systems and water access. Some adaptation projects assist small-scale farms and promote forms of agriculture that are drought-resistant and ecologically sustainable, so that food security and biodiversity can be protected. Disaster risk prevention programs are needed to minimize damage in areas that are threatened by severe weather patterns. Strengthening community health programs, especially preventive care, is also critical in reducing the climate-caused spread of tropical and water-borne diseases.

MCC's projects in local development, agricultural assistance, community health, disaster relief, and women's rights will continue to be

impacted by climate change. Climate change and energy policies have contributed to the global food crisis, seriously impacting MCC's efforts to support food security.

In 2008, MCC appealed for \$1 million in contributions to provide emergency food aid in Ethiopia, where droughts and rising food prices have led to widespread shortages. MCC is currently working with local partners on adaptation projects, including the installation of drought-resistant irrigation systems in Kenya and the restoration of flood-damaged farmland in India.

Per capita, the United States is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. As such, the U.S. has a moral responsibility to reduce emissions and correct the harm that it is causing. The U.S. can be a significant force for reform through its spending and through the example it sets.

The Senate will be taking up climate change legislation this fall. The MCC Washington Office has drafted the following set of policy principles to guide its advocacy on adaptation assistance:

- commit to assisting nations impacted by climate change;

- include adaptation assistance to developing nations as part of a larger effort to address climate change;
- target assistance toward the most vulnerable populations, including women, children, and indigenous people;
- give adequate funding to ensure assistance programs are successful;
- allow flexibility and include diverse types of assistance programs; incorporate local voices in program planning and implementation;
- strengthen international partnerships; and
- include adaptation in the broader development framework.

The climate change crisis will create the most suffering for those who already feel the most need. As partners with the poor, we must encourage our government to act responsibly and craft policies that are both compassionate and just. ✨

*Daniel Foxvog is a student at Goshen College and was an intern in the MCC Washington Office during the summer of 2009.*

## Your support is needed

Food nourishes our souls as well as our bodies. Many small farmers struggle to provide for their families while people in wealthy countries often worry about eating too much.

MCC's food projects are even more critical now as vulnerable communities face the effects of climate change. Your donation helps MCC share food, a gift from God. Mail your contribution to MCC, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501 or give online at [mcc.org/donate](http://mcc.org/donate).

## Washington Memo Blog

Visit the Washington Memo Blog to stay informed about Washington Office activities, publications, events, action alerts and news regarding the issues we cover. Here are some excerpts from recent blog posts:



Melissa Engle/MCC

### MCC Sends Letter to Clinton Regarding DRC

August 4, 2009

“Today, Mennonite Central Committee sent a letter to Secretary of State Clinton in anticipation of her travel to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Here is an excerpt:

As you are well aware, the DRC and the surrounding region have endured a cycle of violence resulting in the death and displacement of many Congolese. We applaud your attention to the horrifying level of violence against women and girls in the east—a level of brutality which adds another element of desperation to an already alarming humanitarian situation.

This conflict is indeed a complex one that requires a comprehensive approach to ensure a sustainable peace. In our view the fundamental problem is the long-term lack of effective governance within Congo, which has led to a deeply-entrenched culture of impunity . . .”

### Civilian Deaths Continue to Increase in Afghanistan July 31, 2009

“A newly released UN report notes that civilian deaths in Afghanistan continue to increase. According to a BBC article highlighting the report, the number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan ‘so far this year has risen by 24 percent compared with the same period last year.’ During the first six months of this year ‘[m]ore than 1,000 people were killed.’

More needs to be done to reduce the number of Afghan civilians killed. The high number of civilian deaths only increases the level of insecurity and does little to ‘win the hearts and minds’ of the Afghan people.”

## Website Resource Highlights

The MCC Washington Office website provides information about the office, action alerts, upcoming events, and resources on domestic and international issues. Recent highlights include:



**“Abundant Life: Economic Justice for All”** These Washington Office webpages includes additional resources on international debt relief. The Abundant Life campaign is a year-long campaign that focuses on health care, international debt relief, U.S. housing and fair trade. To find background information, prayer and worship resources, action alerts, and outside resources, or to sign up your congregation, visit [washington.mcc.org/life/](http://washington.mcc.org/life/).



### “U.S.-Mexico Border Fence”

The Washington Office website has several new pages focusing on the U.S.-Mexico border fence. Go to [washington.mcc.org/issues/environment/border/](http://washington.mcc.org/issues/environment/border/) to find background information, faith resources, action alerts, and links to articles and other websites which provide useful analysis of the impact of this fence on local communities and ecosystems.

**Need a speaker for your congregation?** Visit [washington.mcc.org/resources/speaking/](http://washington.mcc.org/resources/speaking/) for a list of topics on which MCC Washington staff are available to speak. This fall John Filson, recently returned from an MCC term in Iraq, is also available to speak in congregations. Contact us at [mccwash@mcc.org](mailto:mccwash@mcc.org) or (202) 544-6564 if interested.



The Advocates' Corner highlights current advocacy work by Anabaptist congregations. Please let us know what your congregation is doing, so that we can include it in a future issue.

## STORIES OF CONGREGATIONAL ADVOCACY

### And many were healed: Health care for all

**Shalom Mennonite (North Newton, Kan.)** hosted a learning/listening session on health care reform on August 8, 2009. They used MCC Washington's Abundant Life resources, as well as the DVD *Health, Money and Fear* (available at [ourailinghealthcare.com](http://ourailinghealthcare.com)). "Our presentation went very well to a group of 35," said Marilyn Wolgemuth. "The information you sent me was shared with the group and it was well received. Our Health and Wellness Task Force continues to go forward in an attempt to inform our congregations of their options."

At **Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship (New York)**, the theme of the worship service on August 16 was "Health Care for All." Pastor Sylvia Shirk Charles used the *Washington Memo* resources for her sermon prep (including the additional sermon ideas online), as well as the sample letter. Everyone was offered a letter to sign that would be sent to their senators and a discussion circle was held after the service. The discussion group began by sharing their experiences of health care in places where they lived—including Honduras, New Jersey, and Canada. The discussion not only helped to spur discussion about health care in general, but also helped to inform the congregation's decision about joining the Corinthian Plan. According to Pastor Shirk Charles, "People in our congregation are interested in these economic justice concerns and they want to see the church speak to current issues."

## SAMPLE LETTER ON DEBT RELIEF

Dear [Member of Congress]

Debt costs lives. In the world's most impoverished countries, resources are diverted away from citizens' basic needs—shelter, education, health care—and used to pay debt service to rich countries and institutions.

Even after the life-saving debt relief provided to date, the poorest countries still send \$100 million every day out to our government and international institutions in debt payments. Meanwhile, 30,000 children die every day of easily preventable diseases.

The Jubilee Act will help. It calls for expanded debt cancellation without harmful economic policy conditions to help all the poor countries that need it to reach the Millennium Development Goals. It also urges responsible lending in the future to avoid a new debt crisis and policies to create a more just global economic system.

It would cost only 40 cents per U.S. resident to cancel the debt owed to the U.S. by 24 impoverished countries. Our pocket change can make global systemic change!

Sincerely,

Name and address

*For a more detailed letter, visit [washingtonmemo.org/newsletter/fall09](http://washingtonmemo.org/newsletter/fall09).*

### Cluster Bomb Postcards Sent

Evelyn Kreider and Ethel Umble of **College Mennonite Church (Goshen, Ind.)** recently hosted two events to raise awareness about cluster bombs. Kreider, 94, and Umble set up a table with cluster bomb resources outside of a Ten Thousand Villages shop. Despite sporadic rain, they managed to get 141 individuals to sign postcards urging their senator to co-sponsor S. 416, The Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act. Kreider and Umble also provided the same resources after their church service, where 260 postcards were signed. Visit [mcc.org/clusterbombs](http://mcc.org/clusterbombs) to learn more about these weapons and how you can advocate against them.

### Win a Trip to DC: High School Essay Contest

The MCC Washington Office is inviting submissions for our 11th annual high school essay contest. This year's grand prize is a trip to Washington, DC, including a visit to the winner's congressional office. Students can choose to write on either international debt relief or U.S. housing, and all essays must be submitted by December 18. See [washington.mcc.org](http://washington.mcc.org) for more information.

## Proclaim Jubilee: A new beginning

Join the MCC Washington Office this fall to pray, reflect, and act for economic justice for those burdened by debt. The suggested Sunday for action and reflection is October 25.

- **Sunday, October 25, 2009** Proclaim Jubilee: A new beginning

Join us as we continue our campaign for economic justice with the following Sundays focusing on U.S. housing and trade policy:

- **Sunday, January 31, 2010** Secure dwelling places: A home for everyone
- **Sunday, April 25, 2010** Let justice roll down: Trade for the common good

Worship and advocacy resources for each Sunday available at [washington.mcc.org/life](http://washington.mcc.org/life) or by contacting us at [mccwash@mcc.org](mailto:mccwash@mcc.org) or 202-544-6564.

Together we can be part of God's vision of abundant life for all.

abundant  
life  
economic  
justice for all

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES



### International Debt Relief: A Tool to Fight Global Poverty

October 24, 2009  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

You are invited to join Jubilee USA Network for a day of inspiring speakers, educational workshops, and advocacy training sessions on international debt relief as a tool to fight global poverty. The conference will feature a leading African civil society advocate along with national and local experts and advocates on global hunger and poverty issues. For more information, visit [jubileeusa.org](http://jubileeusa.org)



### Ecumenical Advocacy Days

*A Place to Call Home: Immigrants, Refugees, and Displaced Peoples*

March 19–22, 2010  
Washington, D.C.

*And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'*  
—Luke 9:58

Jesus had no place to lay his head. Neither do tens of millions of migrants, refugees and displaced persons. Be a part of an action weekend addressing this global injustice. Join hundreds of faith-based advocates in taking action on U.S. legislation that will welcome immigrants, protect refugees, and prevent displacement. For more information about Ecumenical Advocacy Days, please visit [advocacydays.org](http://advocacydays.org).

## IMPORTANT ADDRESSES

Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3121  
[senate.gov](http://senate.gov)

Representative \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121  
[house.gov](http://house.gov)

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500  
(202) 456-1111  
[president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

MCC U.S. Washington Office  
920 Pennsylvania Ave. SE  
Washington, DC 20003  
(202) 544-6564  
[mccwash@mcc.org](mailto:mccwash@mcc.org)  
[washington.mcc.org](http://washington.mcc.org)  
[washingtonmemo.org](http://washingtonmemo.org)

## SIGN UP!

Sign up for our e-mail action alert lists by going to [washington.mcc.org](http://washington.mcc.org) or by contacting [mccwash@mcc.org](mailto:mccwash@mcc.org).

## UPCOMING DATES

### October 24

Conference on Debt Relief  
Oklahoma City

### October 25

Proclaim Jubilee: A New Beginning  
Suggested Sunday for action and reflection

### December 18

High school essay contest deadline

### March 19–22

Ecumenical Advocacy Days  
Washington, DC

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All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.



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## Proclaim Jubilee

“The world’s poorest countries spend about \$100 million every day in debt payments.

[Meanwhile] every day, 30,000 children die of easily preventable diseases due to malnutrition and lack of adequate medical care. The Jubilee vision that we find in Scripture calls us to challenge this horrible reality. . . .”

*Read more inside.*