

Independent Panel for Review of Child Abuse in Mission Settings

The United Methodist Church

48 Mound Street, Dayton OH 45402

Bulletin from the Independent Panel

May 2006

This is the latest bulletin from the Panel, and is distributed to all in the database that we are currently building. The **database** has been one of our key projects in 2006.

Why does the Panel need to construct a database?

The United Methodist Church, like most denominations, has kept records on its missionary personnel. However, the children of missionaries were never part of the Church's registry of missionary staff. Because the scope of our inquiry, as determined by our charge from the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) of the United Methodist Church, is to "receive allegations of child abuse, including physical and/or sexual abuse" which occurred in a mission setting, then it is crucial we reach people who were raised as children in UMC mission settings. While we build from the GBGM list of retired missionaries, we also want to reach the daughters and sons of those families. We also add those individuals who contact the Panel and offer their information, leads, or assistance.

How can we help the Panel with the database?

What would particularly help us is to receive the names of, and contact information for, persons who were children in UMC mission settings. Our scope focuses "primarily on the allegations of abuse of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire for the period 1945 – 1978," but we may examine other situations of child abuse, as well. We welcome names and contact information (address, email, phone number) so we can communicate directly with people who may have relevant information.

We continue with our **follow-up work** based on information we received from people who came to **meetings** with us and/or have contacted us. (Our meetings with **witnesses** were held in LaGuardia, outside of New York City, and in Chicago. This was to accommodate people coming from different regions of the U.S.) In 2006, we also held a working meeting, i.e. without witnesses present, in Atlanta. Much of our work is done in-between formal meetings. For example, we recently conducted a conference call with three survivors.

What does the Panel mean by “follow-up work”?

When individuals present information to us, we go to work in a variety of ways. We have contacted GBGM asking for information in its records. We have also requested archival information. We have corresponded with individuals, both in the U.S. and in other countries, who potentially could tell us more about certain incidents. (Our March, 2006, Bulletin provided more details about this.)

When will the Panel meet again?

We are scheduled to meet next in the fall, 2006. And we are prepared to receive witnesses at this meeting. If you are interested, please contact us. (Information about how to do that is provided below.)

What safeguards does the Panel offer witnesses who meet in-person?

We go to a number of lengths to make sure witnesses are comfortable when they meet with us. We invite witnesses to bring a support person, at our expense. We structure the meeting so people know what to expect in advance. E.g. we ask witnesses to prepare a written statement, and we provide a guide for how to do that. We ensure confidentiality regarding each witness. We offer the opportunity to meet with a debrief/counselor before and after the meeting.

We have experienced a transition, and want to announce that the liaison appointed by GBGM to serve the Panel and witnesses, Ms. Cecelia Long, recently submitted her resignation. We are making progress to find a replacement. However, the work of the Panel continues without interruption. We remain committed to pursuing this vital inquiry, and continue to encourage the cooperation and contributions of those who have reason to talk with us.

How do I go about contacting the Panel?

Persons who wish to convey information to the independent panel should contact Ms. Bracey by letter or email:

Lauri B. Bracey
P.O. Box 1375
Roswell, GA 30077
Telephone/fax: 770-641-0134.
Email: panelcoordinator@hotmail.com

We encourage all with relevant information to share it with us. Discovering the truth, and promoting healing and wholeness, will serve the people of Jesus Christ and the church.

Marshall L. Meadors, Jr., Bishop
Chair of the Panel

Edith Fresh, Ph.D.

James S. Evinger, M.Div.

*The contact information that was in this document when it was first published was updated in December 2006 to reflect a change in staff person.