



THE MESSAGE BOARD
A Newsletter from
A. Roy Medley, General Secretary



Personal Reflections

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Why God Put Me There

"So why am I here?" I wondered. But then other doors began to open. A woman from the Olof Palme Institute sat next to me. As we chatted and we learned more about each other, I received an unexpected invitation to attend an event hosted by Women Nobel Peace Prize winners that will focus on Burma and the needs of women in Burma especially. The woman who invited me, a lawyer, speaks internationally on issues of human trafficking. She was amazed and delighted to learn of ABCUSA's involvement in the issue. Who knows what further doors will open because of this encounter? Well, that was one reason for being there.

As I sat listening to the two panels they had assembled on achieving the goals of the UN Literacy Decade (2003-2012) I became keenly aware of the absence of anyone on the panel from the religious community—especially on the second panel where the topic was partnership. I thought of the thousands of preschools, after-school tutoring programs, ESL classes and our support for strong public education through our churches and Christian Center programs. I recalled our ABC-related colleges and universities and the education systems we have founded and supported internationally. After the Haiti earthquake, the Haitian Baptists implored us to help rebuild their schools before we helped rebuild sanctuaries. Is the church committed to literacy and education? Yes.

After the second panel presentation there was a time for interaction. My hand was the third to be recognized. I thanked UNESCO for their fine work and then noted my concern that the religious community and its commitment to literacy was missing. I wasn't sure how the comment would be received.

Immediately afterwards, I was swamped by others present who thanked me for pointing out the role of the faith community in literacy education. One conversation was especially touching. The final speaker for the event was Jacob Atem. Jacob was one of the "Lost Boys of Sudan" who was resettled as a refugee in America. Perhaps you recall reading their story of escape from Southern Sudan by crossing the desert

Jacob put his arm on my shoulder and said, "I can't tell you how happy I was when you mentioned the church. It was my evangelical faith that allowed me to survive." He went on to tell how his faith had carried him through those dark days and had now led to his founding the Southern Sudan Health Care Organization. "I don't know how to praise God for delivering me, so I started this organization," he said. "Jacob," I replied, "that is exactly the kind of praise God loves." "Please keep in touch with me," he said.

It was a powerful day. When I left, I knew why God had me there that day.

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