

For We Are GOD'S HELPERS

3435 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1035 • Los Angeles, CA 90010 • Phone: (213) 368-1870 • Fax: (213) 368-1871 • E-mail: info@laymissionhelpers.org • www.laymissionhelpers.org

Changes Strengthen LMH Organization

By Betty Risley, President, Board of Directors

Over the last year the Board of Directors engaged in a long range planning process which included organizational assessment. The Board identified the need to strengthen fund and board development in order to sustain the important and holy work of LMH. To provide appropriate attention to both development and the overseas missionaries, the Board realized this would require two separate positions. A generous donation supported this step in strengthening LMH's future.

The Executive Director's position was redefined to include responsibility for fiscal and administrative management as well as fundraising. A new position, Program Director, will focus on recruiting, training and supporting Lay Mission Helpers in the field. Janice England, former Executive Director, will move into the Program Director's position where her talents and mission experience will be better utilized.

After a rather exhaustive search conducted by two members of the Board of Directors, an extremely suitable candidate was found. We are very pleased to announce the appointment of Christine Fuller as Executive Director of the Lay Mission-Helpers Association. She previously served as Development Director of Helpline Youth Counseling. Christine joined LMH at the beginning of March. We are happy to welcome her into the LMH "family" and look forward to a long and productive association with her. ■

What's Inside:

- 2 Greeting from the New Executive Director
- 3 Rachel Sybor from Cameroon
- 4 Missionaries in Training

Why did we serve five tours as Lay Mission-Helpers?

By Bill & Jean Pawek

In 1957 we were competent secondary teachers in public schools but not satisfied with teaching. We were attempting to pursue our dreams of entering the field of nature writing and photography; our family, friends and pastor all pressured us to remain in teaching. As a last resort, we arranged a conference with the superintendent of Oakland Diocesan Catholic Schools, Fr. Mark Hurley. After he glanced at our brief resumé,



Bill & Jean Pawek to celebrate 60 years of marriage.

he said, "Excuse me!" and left the room. Returning, he handed us the Diocesan newspaper from Los Angeles and said, "Read this. You should be lay missionaries." As we read the *Tidings* article about Lay Mission-Helpers, we looked at each other and realized this was our answer.

We were assigned to Mzuzu Diocese, Nyasaland (now Malawi). Landing at Blantyre, Nyasaland we were

astounded to find that "our" Bishop, Msgr. Jean Louis Jobidon and another priest had done a dusty two day drive over gravel roads to meet us. The Bishop drove us the 330 miles north on the dirt main highway to our mission assignment. On the way, we were informed that there was a small change in our positions: the Secondary School in which we were to teach had not been built yet!

So instead of teaching biology, physics, and chemistry that we had expected, he said "You are greatly needed at St. John Bosco Teacher Training College, at Katete Mission, preparing teachers for elementary schools." We had no experience in elementary education, but we thought, if this is what God wants, we can learn.

In LMH training, one of Msgr. Brouwers tenets was that God would utilize all of our talents. Indeed, although we found

... we are not the same people that greeted a smiling, enthusiastic, even zealous, soft-spoken, insightful, and saintly Msgr. Anthony J. Brouwers in 1958.

(continued on page 2)

MISSIONS ON THE MOVE

Five Tours

(continued from page 1)

it difficult to teach British education, we learned about child development, methods of teaching reading, etc. one day ahead of our adult students. Shortly after we arrived, the principal, Fr. M. Giraud, became sick with malaria and had to go home. We took his place, and at the time it seemed like we were in way over our heads.

I became Principal and treasurer and Jean became assistant “everything.” Oh! the many nights by the kerosene lamp looking for the missing penny, only to discover we had forgotten that there are 12 pence in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound (unless it is a guinea, in which case, it is 21). The staff was mostly Malawian; I learned the hard way that to reduce the length of staff meetings from say, 6 hours down to 2 hours, I would have to spend 8 hours before the meeting listening to each staff member’s ideas in order to obtain a consensus beforehand. When we left three years later, we were much more trusting that God had things under control and we didn’t have to do it all by ourselves, plus we were a lot wiser about handling ourselves in a foreign culture.

In retrospect, my analysis is that in the first year of



Jean learns about native plants from the local people.

Secondary School where I taught physics and chemistry and Jean taught biology and health science. One of our most important “jobs” at Marymount was to be an example of a Christian married couple, especially since we stayed together even though childless.

Because we felt God could still use us in Malawi we asked to return for a third tour, and a fourth, and a fifth. In all, we served 20 years as Lay Mission-Helpers. In addition to teaching, my mission photography was being used all over the world. Jean’s botany collections brought occasional special inquiries that she enjoyed filling. Some pharmaceutical companies paid her to collect samples of pond water and earth in their quest for new medicines.

Can I sum up 20 years with Lay Mission-Helpers? It has defined our lives, we are not the same people that greeted a smiling, enthusiastic, even zealous, soft-spoken, insightful, and saintly Msgr. Anthony J. Brouwers in 1958. Nor have we gone back to our old selves in the 30 years we have been back—it was a permanent fix.

Over the past 30 years, in addition to working and retiring from different careers, we’ve been involved in numerous activities in our parish such as being lectors, Eucharistic ministers, and baptism and confirmation sponsors. Jean has been the archivist for the parish and I became the de facto official photographer. At the request of our pastor, we have helped put together two publications for our parish’s centennial – currently working on Part III. After we complete the history book, we are looking forward to another visit to Medjugorje for our 60th wedding anniversary. But who knows, if we’ve learned anything in our 81 years, it is that what God has planned for you is not necessarily what you expect! ■

Greetings!

From Christine Fuller • Executive Director LMH

I believe that landing this job is an answer to prayer. I told God that I remembered that He was my employer, and that I wanted Him to place me somewhere where I could best do His work. Two days later Lay Mission-Helpers called for an interview!

I am proud to be at the helm of Lay Mission-Helpers. I stand in awe of the commitment the Lay Mission-Helpers make to spend three years in service to the poor. The first time I met the Johnsons I was thinking they are extraordinary. As days passed, the depth of their commitment washed over me in waves and I became awestruck. To give up the comforts of home, to uproot the entire family and to answer a call to be of service in such an extraordinary manner just amazes me.

Those of you who are veteran LMH’ers, I thank you for the depth of your commitment of service. Those of you who are new to Lay Mission-Helpers as an organization, know that whether it’s providing a system to bring clean drinking water to a village, or teaching nurses, our lay missionaries are making astonishing strides for profoundly poor people all over the world. For all of you who have been faithful supporters of the organization, we are so appreciative.

We look to all of you to help us continue the mission of the organization. We cannot thrive without your world-improving gifts!

I wish I could meet each of you. Please feel free to contact me so we can at least speak on the telephone. Thank you for all your assistance on behalf of Lay Mission-Helpers.

Regards,

Christine Fuller

Transforming Each Other In Mission

By Rachel Sybor, Cameroon

At 5:45, 300 blurry eyed students shuffle into a chapel made to hold 250. Sitting with the few other on-campus teachers who come up for daily mass I notice Emmanuella and Seregiene talking through the entire homily. Then I realize — two years ago I could barely tell the boys from the girls and now I am able to tell my students apart from the back of the very shaved heads that left me so baffled before.

My two years as a teacher in Cameroon can be summed up with the word ‘familiarity.’ I hesitate to use ‘understanding’ — I will never know why you hold your elbow while you greet to show respect and I will certainly not be able to make fufu and n’jamajama for myself but I look forward to these things in my everyday

up for a hug or ask to borrow my cell phone.

Lay Mission-Helpers provides its missionaries the opportunity, not only to experience a new country, but to become part of another culture. They gave us the job, the house, the training, the plane ticket, and the support — the rest is up to us, the missionaries. We can learn how to cook on an open fire for 40 people, how to make a chair out of bamboo, 3 new versions of dodge ball, how to pray in both African dialects and Latin, an abundance of new songs, even how to plant and harvest corn. We are able to become part of hospitals, schools, offices, neighborhoods, churches and even families that we don’t naturally belong to. We are able to become people that we could never have been at home.

LMH also gives us a chance to show the rest of the world what Catholic Americans are really like. Western culture is storming into African countries. The internet, movies and music are the biggest ways my students learn about America; not exactly the mediums we want people judging our country by. As LMH

missionaries we have a chance to show people around the world that we are ordinary, that we make mistakes, that we serve God, that we miss our families, that we laugh at jokes, that we enjoy good food, that getting up early for daily mass isn’t easy for us either... that we aren’t that different from them. We also get to show our neighbors how amazing their own cultures are when we participate in events, drink the local “mimboo,”

life. Before football matches were long, boring and dusty. Now I can’t wait to join the cheering section of my students on game day and chant Chemo or Marcel’s name. Before the music in mass with its four part harmonies was enchanting but incredibly intimidating. Now I have my own song book full of lyrics. Before I was a college grad that wanted to see Africa. Now my heart swells when students call me “ma” as they slide



learn the music and simply enjoy the life style around us.

I am so grateful to LMH and its donors for this chance to reshape the little piece of the world I live in while I myself continue to transform. Often people say, “if only one person

Lay Mission-Helpers provides its missionaries the opportunity, not only to experience a new country, but to become part of another culture.

was reached, it was all worth it.” I hope that I have reached a few of my students, colleagues and neighbors; helped them grow closer to God, made America a little less imposing, shown them how proud they should be of their own culture. But I know for a fact that at least one person has been reached — me. ■





LMH Mission Statement

We are Lay Mission-Helpers, called by baptism to live our Catholic faith, to share our gifts and to learn from others, as we walk with those who are poor in our world.

Please remember LMH in your Will. For more information contact the Lay Mission-Helpers Association at (213) 368-1870 or visit our website at www.laymissionhelpers.org

NOTE: THE LEGAL NAME FOR LMH IS THE LAY MISSION-HELPERS ASSOCIATION.

Christine Fuller
Executive Director

Janice England
Program Director

LMH Board of Directors

Ms. Betty Risley
President

Mrs. Deanna Bowers
Vice President

Br. Steve Pardy, SVD
Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Elise Frederick
Secretary

Sr. Regina Fox, SSND

Mr. Denis Garvey

Sr. Eileen McKenzie, FSPA

Mr. David Sauer

Sr. Kathy Schmittgens, SSND

Mr. David Suley

Advisory Board

Msgr. Lawrence O'Leary

Episcopal Advisor

Bishop Joseph Sartoris



Lay Mission-Helpers
Association, founded in 1955
by Msgr. Anthony Brouwers

Missionaries in Training

This year we have two wonderful families in our formation program. Both families are taking time out mid-career to dedicate three years to overseas mission work. They will be commissioned on May 18th and will depart for the mission field in mid-June. We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce them to you.

Chris & Alicia Johnson and their sons Keaton & Quinn are preparing to serve in the Diocese of Kumbo,

Cameroon. Chris will serve as a visiting nurse to three health centers that are in great need of his assistance. Alicia will teach at St. Augustine's College (high school) preparing the students to be future leaders of their community. Keaton & Quinn will attend the local secondary and primary schools.

Todd & Karen Bell and their sons Patrick & Miles are members of the Mission Doctors Association. They have been assigned to the Diocese of Kabale. Todd will serve as a physician at Karoli Lwanga Hospital and Karen will serve as a tutor for children who are at the hospital for long-term care. Patrick & Miles will attend the local primary school.

While the skills they share are of great value, sharing their faith is what makes them missionaries. As Msgr. Brouwers once said, "[Lay missionaries] are not just Catholics working in mission lands. They are first of all witnesses for Christ, with thousands of critical eyes watching their every action, appraising their every word, and seeing that lay men and women can and do live the same high ideals as their clerical and religious associates." ■



The Johnson and Bell families stand ready for mission

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LOS ANGELES, CA
PERMIT #14954

3435 Wishire Boulevard, Suite 1035
Los Angeles, CA 90010-1901
www.laymissionhelpers.org

