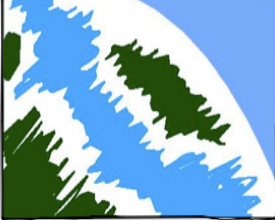


# Pacific Network for Mission Education

Global Partnerships  
for Mission, Service  
and Learning



## PNME NOTES

September 2009 Vol I. 2  
An occasional e-newsletter

Welcome to second edition of PNME's e-newsletter.

We introduce PNME's mission education trip to **Singapore and Malaysia, October 27 - November 14**. PNME board member, the Rev. David Slorpe, and his wife, Jan, served in East Malaysia after seminary. David's trip last fall back to Malaysia when PNME had first hoped to take this trip renewed earlier relationships and opens doors for those visiting now. An orientation dinner for the trip is planned for this Sunday evening, **September 20 in Alameda**. You are welcome to join us, and it is not too late to sign up for the trip. Contact me, Catherine Coleman, at [malaysia2009@pacnet4mission.org](mailto:malaysia2009@pacnet4mission.org), or 510-928-9714.

If you are in the bay area, do consider joining us the morning of **December 5<sup>th</sup>** at Sojourner Truth Presbyterian Church in Richmond for another edition of "global conversations," this one co-sponsored with San Francisco Presbyterian Women and Berkeley Presbyterian Mission Homes. **Drs. Bernie and Farsijana Adeney Risakotta** will introduce their learnings of Christian life among Muslim majority from their years of work in Indonesia. More details in the story below.

Fourteen Californians returned in late July from two weeks in **solidarity with churches in Ecuador**. Hugh Wire, our editor, apologizes for the length of this report on their experiences, but asked how else to share a feel of the richness of that experience. **Here in early October, the Rev. Freddy Guerrero**, rector of the Nazarene Seminary in Quito, hopes to meet any interested in experiencing themselves the work of evangelicals in the rapidly changing societies of the Andes. Contact Barry Smedberg in southern California <[smedbergb@earthlink.net](mailto:smedbergb@earthlink.net)>, or Harlan Stelmach in northern <[h.stelmach@comcast.net](mailto:h.stelmach@comcast.net)>, to find times to meet him.

Our next e-letter will tell **more about China**. Previews:

- PNME is planning a mission study trip to Yunnan in March to see what has been the remarkable result of mission work done in the past among China's minorities. Details will be at [www.pacnet4mission.org](http://www.pacnet4mission.org).
- PNME continues to encourage church folk, and those caring about their global citizenship whether or not in the church, and those simply wishing to know the real China to sign up to be summer volunteers in Amity's Summer English Program ([www.amityfoundation.org](http://www.amityfoundation.org)).
- Christian Leadership Exchange is helping with a unique symposium on the recent growth of the church in Hangzhou, China, October 19-21, sponsored by Christian leaders in Zhejiang province. Details at [www.cle-china.org/HangzhouSymposium09.pdf](http://www.cle-china.org/HangzhouSymposium09.pdf)
- Other opportunities to learn and serve are found through ERRChina at [errchina.com](http://errchina.com), and through the PCUSA China network, [chinanetpcusa.org](http://chinanetpcusa.org).

### Board

Harlan Stelmach, Chair  
Catherine Coleman, V-Chr  
May Chung, Secretary  
Bill Ng, Treasurer

Andrew McComb  
Stephanie Montgomery  
Russell Parkman  
Barry Smedberg  
David Slorpe  
Raymond Terry Sr.  
Edmundo Vasquez  
Hugh Wire

### Advisory Council

Chris Warner Carey  
Marilyn Chilcote  
Barbara Dean  
Glen Holman  
Patricia Penn Jones  
Leontyne Kelly  
Thom McGowan  
Roy Sano  
James Shum

PNME  
2918 Regent St. #B,  
Berkeley, CA. 94705

[pacnet4mission@gmail.com](mailto:pacnet4mission@gmail.com)  
[www.pacnet4mission.org](http://www.pacnet4mission.org)

**Catherine Coleman**

[Taffy2traveling@yahoo.com](mailto:Taffy2traveling@yahoo.com), 510-928-9714.

## Christians Dealing with Islam.

Relationships between Christianity and Islam have been a subtext in many major news stories in this first decade. PNME has been using its resources exploring how Christians show God's love in their often mystified and sometime conflicted encounters with different faiths or cultures. Over the years PNME has always tried to give Christians new angles of vision to see better the complexities of the real world.

In the summers of 2003 and 2005 PNME led an interfaith collaboration with several Bay Area religious groups to carry out two major conferences at Asilomar on peace. What do our different faith traditions offer both those inside and outside our religious traditions in our shared urgency to "Heal the World?"

Late this October PNME leaders, Rev. James Shum and Ms Catherine Coleman, will lead a group to Malaysia to learn how Christians live in an increasingly assertive Muslim culture. Early in December PNME joins two partner organizations to invite a Bay Area audience to consider together what it can mean to us that Christian and Muslim leaders in Indonesia have created programs where they share together religious study. Exposure to these different experiences of Christians dealing with Islam should expand choices of how we shape our ways as Christians in dealing with Muslim neighbors here and in distant places.

### MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE – OCTOBER 27 – NOVEMBER 14



The study trip will take participants both to West Malaysia, where Dr. Herman Shastri, General Secretary of the Malaysia Council of Churches, will host the group, and to East Malaysia, the more culturally traditional portion Malaysia, sharing with Indonesia the large tropical island of Borneo. Here Sabah Seminary (Lutheran-Presbyterian) trains leaders from several nations for south and east Asian churches. The Rev. James Shum, co-leader of this trip, taught a year ago at the seminary in Sabah, led now by a classmate from his Hong Kong seminary days. The group hopes to meet with Muslim women daring to teach other women their rights under Muslim law. Opportunities to meet with other local leaders will assist us in understanding the current struggles for change in both Christian and Muslim

communities, but also to explore the remarkable scenes of nature and culture in Malaysia.

Much more information on the PHME website [www.pacnet4mission.org](http://www.pacnet4mission.org) and from Catherine Coleman at [Malaysia2009@pacnet4mission.org](mailto:Malaysia2009@pacnet4mission.org)

### GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS II - DECEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup> – 9 AM. – 1 PM, SOJOURNER TRUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, RICHMOND CA .

Featured will be Drs. Bernie and Farsijana Adeney-Risakotta, speaking on "Christmas in Indonesia – Muslim-Christian Relations." Farsijana is director of the Institute of research and community development at Duta Wacana Christian University in Indonesia. Bernie is director of the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies at Gadjah Mada University, an international, inter-religious consortium of Muslim, Christian, and multi-religious universities in Yogyakarta, where adherents of one faith take courses from the adherents of the other. Much more on the work of this couple is at <http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/adeneyb.htm>



PNME is collaborating on this event with Berkeley Presbyterian Mission Homes and Presbyterian Women of San Francisco Presbytery. Workshops featuring mission efforts of congregations and seminaries, and reports from the Malaysia experience will be included. More information now from Bill Ng at [ngwillie@aol.com](mailto:ngwillie@aol.com) and soon from the PNME website [www.pacnet4mission.org](http://www.pacnet4mission.org).

## Solidarity with the Church in Ecuador

First reports on the service learning experience sponsored by PNME, the Nazarene Seminary, and FEINE Ecuador, July 11<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Challenges.** This encounter was two years in the planning and then the leader of the effort from the US, PNME's board chair, Harlan Stelmach, was sidelined by an operation just before the event took place.



Murillo

Leadership among Ecuadorians planning this venture had changed from the executive secretary of the Latin American Council of Churches to one of the members of a cluster of evangelical seminary leaders in Quito and FEINE, the national organization of indigenous evangelical congregations, convened by Edgar Baldeón, dean of the Nazarene seminary. In the middle of the event FEINE's charismatic leader, Marco Murillo, became temporarily incapacitated. Moreover, different expectations created by the diversity of prior experience of participants spawned tensions not fully prepared for.

**Events.** The long-planned exploration of solidarity in mission finally took place when eighty four persons spent three days in the Assembly of God seminary in Quito exploring the mission of the evangelical churches in Ecuador. Leaders in three different Ecuadorian seminaries and from FEINE had prepared studies of the history of mission and of present day evangelical life in Ecuador and named implications from their studies for mission today. Ecuadorian pastors from different evangelical streams, some indigenous and active in FEINE, came to hear and propose ways they might serve together in the future. Translation helped the Californians take part, and their comments were solicited.

For some of the fourteen from California, more important experiences were before the conference. Half of the group, faculty and students from Dominican University, spent the first week within the world of indigenous Christians, attending worship in four congregations, taking part in the swearing in ceremonies of FEINE's Marco Murillo as newly elected member of congress, and visiting grass-roots development projects, all the while finding themselves feeling deep-seated tensions of the indigenous with non-indigenous Ecuadorians. The other half, made up of members of four California congregations, worked on a rabbit project alongside students from the Nazarene Seminary and farmers in Otovalo, an hour outside Quito, built friendships and came to believe their efforts indeed might make a difference for these poor students and peasant farmers.



Registration fees paid by the Californians were set high enough to cover the preparations for the consultation, scholarship some of the Ecuadorian pastors, and all costs of the service projects. The project was supported by an additional \$10,000 to scholarship participants from the US and Ecuador.

**Outcomes. A varied experience.**



Smedberg, left, in 2008 planning this visit to Ecuador

PNME board member **Barry Smedberg** saw these events “*accomplish[ing] everything that I think PNME stands for. However,*” acknowledging the diverse backgrounds of participants, Smedberg adds, “*my experience is probably very different than the others’.*” Californians and Ecuadorians alike seem stirred deeply by the experience, though often quite differently: for some it was an experience of the marginality and power of the indigenous, for others a celebration of the energy of evangelical culture, but for most light on their path ahead.

**A student from Dominican University**, Marina Sanford – four were involved – wrote to Harlan Stelmach after her return. *Ecuador was incredible. I returned a transformed person and I can't wait to go back! My experiences provided me with abounding writing material and triggered so much personal growth*

A **pastor**, Rev. Don Ashburn of Piedmont Community Church, found vision for life as he told the congregation in a sermon just after his return.

*Now, if you'd asked me about 3 weeks ago – as a marginally sophisticated Gringo – what my opinion was of all this [the Nazarene Seminary's idea of raising rabbits and cuy to finance seminary education], I'd have said it was crazy! Ridiculous! But, you know, 3 weeks later, my eyes have opened – and now I see.*

*Because, with Lynn and Shelagh [two members of the congregation] and Adriana – one of the seminarians – I've planted rows of alfalfa in the fields.*

*With Pepe and Roberto and Luis, I've built cuy cages with my own hands. With Jose and Marina and J.T., I've cleaned up the debris from 100's of caged rabbits.*

*And you know what? I am convinced that the whole hare-brained scheme's going to work! Don't ask me how! But I believe that God's hand is involved in that project. And if that is true, then how can I **not** “just follow?”*



**Barry Smedberg** in a sermon to Central Lutheran in Van Nuys spoke of insights gained for the local mission of that urban congregation.

*One of the purposes of a mission education trip is to find out what is happening in other parts of the world with our brothers and sisters in Christ... How are our Ecuadorian partners using their unique gifts to provide the bread of life? ... The purpose [of this event] was to foster [trust in] one church, one faith, one God, to show that we are all in this together, needing to be exposed to the whole picture*

*Ecuador is experiencing a wave of evangelical revival ... In reality they are converting Catholic cultural folks and not those of faith. ... We have right here in our community many who say they are Catholic or some other denomination, but never go to church. We likewise need to reach these folks so that the body of Christ's followers can be strengthened.*

*... I attended four different churches (one Lutheran) and most had more children than adults who were very excited about life and the Lord. These church facilities were mostly small adobe structures and filled with love and joy.*

*...[The] conference of different denominations from all over Ecuador... met to talk about the future of evangelism in Ecuador and how to proceed particularly with the indigenous community. All in the spirit of cooperation and the one faith, one church, one God that Paul mentioned [in Ephesians 4... What did they say that has created this revival? Twenty different practices he felt pertinent for his congregation, beginning with “A church must be in the heart of the community with the community in its heart,” and including “God's reign is what is important, not evangelism or social justice.”*

**Two professors from Dominican University**, Arthur Scott and Mojgan Behmand, are ready with a clear recommendation for how to do it better, next time. Highlights revolved around the week their group was shown indigenous life and leadership by FEINE, including visiting three health clinics, six religious services, taking part in an indigenous-led conference on sexuality, visiting many grass-roots projects of FEINE, and becoming honored guests at the indigenous swearing in of FEINE's director, Marco Murillo, as newly elected member of the National Congress.

They were disappointed that medicines brought didn't fit the needs of clinics visited. Not professing Christians themselves they felt subject to being “missionized” in the multiple worship experiences. It was the service projects with the indigenous that had attracted them to be part of the venture. They were challenged by the generally low status accorded women in spite of



*FEINE demonstration, March 2009*

charisma demonstrated by several women they met leading educational and grass roots development. They found themselves plunged into the midst of mutual mistrust between indigenous and non-indigenous church leaders, one side feeling used, the other that their partners were unreliable. Clearly captivated by the vision and hospitality of their indigenous hosts they propose that future service learning trips *“need to be orchestrated with local indigenous leaders who have a better grasp of needs and wants.”* These projects could be one of the several led by indigenous leaders they had visited, including painting a school, assisting women’s business making jam for sale, or working in an organic/tourist project a French group is already helping with.

**The rector of the Nazarene Seminary** in Ecuador, the Rev. Freddy Guerrero, expressed himself very pleased with *“PNME’s visit and the Christian ecumenical cooperation for the kingdom of God in Ecuador”* and proposes more visits. The seminary, he said, could offer church groups from the north housing, hosting, and organizing visits with ministries in Ecuador and learning through service. He hoped PNME in turn might help link congregations in the north with his seminary students desperately needing scholarships, and with growing congregations in Ecuador welcoming partnering in their evangelism and service.

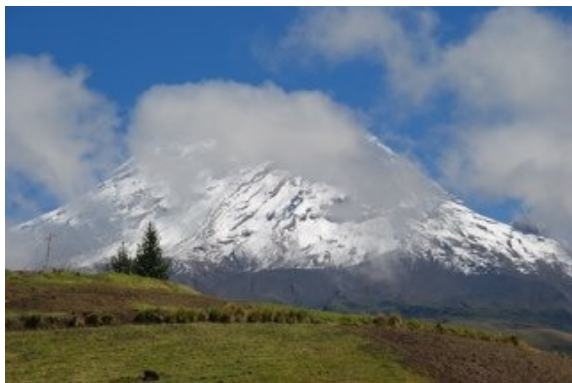
Coordinator of consultation preparations, **the Rev. Edgar Baldeón**, reported in his summary of the consultation **a call for even richer ecumenical cooperation.**

*Through the evangelical fraternity, he wrote in summarizing the feelings of the consultation, we must generate proposals for spiritual formation...*

*[We must] search for the Church’s unity within an organization that will represent all the pastors in Ecuador...*

*We must raise the professional level of our services...with genuine interest in those most in need...*

*[We must] encourage humanitarian mission,... eliminate paternalism...encourage education, keeping in mind our many cultures.*



### **Significance?**

There’s not yet been time for PNME’s board to access what has been learned about educating for mission. Participants from California are still planning meetings with each other, and the board needs to hear their considered judgments of what their experiences have meant. The Rev. Freddy Guerrero will be in California in early October, and PNME will host conversations with him for those interested about more involvement through the Nazarene Seminary in experiences of solidarity with Ecuador. FEINE hosts a world wide conference of indigenous Christians sponsored by the

World Council of Churches in October, and its leaders welcome those interested in visiting and helping. Baldeón projects follow up meetings in Quito among the pastors who had come together in that unique conference. The mission education model PNME was exploring will be tested by its fruits

**PNME’s board is grateful** to each from the north for their well-received participation, to donors whose gifts helped scholarship younger participants from the north and poor pastors from Ecuador, and to the seminary leaders and pastors of Ecuador who shared so openly their dreams and their work in serving Christ and his people.

**Edgar Baldeón closed his summary of the conference with this prayer for all.** *“We ask for Your presence in our activities, personal lives, and in the Church. For the forgiveness of our sins, divisions, indolence, scandals, ignorance, so that You may illuminate us, so that we may know You and honor Your name.”*