



Women in International Mission

GLOBAL MINISTRIES

A common witness of the Division of Overseas Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Wider Church Ministries, a covenanted ministry of the United Church of Christ

... to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God



Ana Gobledale served our church in South Africa and Zimbabwe from 1984–2000. After leaving Zimbabwe unexpectedly in June 2000, she accepted the position of Local Church Relations Executive and Team Leader with Global Ministries. She can be reached at 216.736.3223 or by e-mail at <gobledaa@ucc.org>.

For more than a century, our church has been walking with the people and churches in Japan. Missionaries have served in more than fifty institutions of both higher learning and social service. In the modern Japan, a highly industrialized, affluent, and secularized society, bearing witness can be difficult. Nancy Molin currently serves Global Ministries in Japan where she lives out, through her life and work, her call to do God's justice. Hear her story in her own words, and celebrate the work of God's servant who boldly proclaims, "For all that has been, thanks. To all that shall be, Yes!"



Nancy's Journey to International Mission Work ...

As I look back on my life's journey, I can see no one turning point that meant I would become a missionary and eventually come to the Asian Rural Institute in Japan with Global Ministries. But there is a collection of many small threads that seem to converge in the life I now lead.

Witness of Injustice

Justice has always been a deeply important concept for me, and God's concern for the poorest people is the theme that has pulled me more and more into organized Christianity. Perhaps my first introduction to this theme came when I was thirteen, and my father took a job with the World Health Organization. With my family, I went to live in Guyana in South America, which had recently gained indepen-

dence from Britain. There, I learned of the big and wealthy American corporations that extract raw materials from the so-called "underdeveloped" countries and later sell them at much higher prices as manufactured goods. At age thirteen, I did not understand the complexities of dependency economics, then being hotly debated in the region. I only understood that the system was unfairly stacked against some, to the gain of others. So I committed myself to finding a fairer way.

Hearing God's Call for Justice

In college (Pitzer College, Claremont, California), I began to hear of the work of liberation theologians who were searching the scriptures for news of a realm where there is no exclusion or oppression. This is perhaps the first time I heard a theme in church that directly and vitally touched a personal concern of mine.

Called to Nepal (1983–1986, 1988–1995)

These threads led me to the United Mission of Nepal, first as an international associate with the United Church Board for World Ministries (1983–1986) and later as regularly appointed missionary (1988–1995), jointly appointed by the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These positions have been fully funded by One Great Hour of Sharing.

In Nepal, I worked in programs devoted to education and literacy for adults, especially women, who had no other chance for an education. I was able to observe for myself how learning to read gives adults a new sense of personal power and fulfillment that enables them to take on further challenges and move forward of their own accord. [ed., In 1988 Nancy completed her Masters in Education degree at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, to assist her in this work.]

I also began to study the Bible more seriously for myself. I was surprised to discover how pervasive is the theme of fair treatment for the poor. Throughout the books of the law and the prophets, we cannot read for more than a chapter without tripping over verses detailing God's concern for the marginalized, especially widows, orphans, and foreigners:

You are doomed! You make unjust laws that oppress my people. That is how you keep the poor from having their rights and from getting justice. That is how you take the property that belongs to widows and orphans. What will you do when God punishes you?—Isaiah 10:1–3

Living as I was in Nepal's traditional, agrarian society, I could observe firsthand how clearly and concretely the Bible's analysis describes the processes that cause suffering. I also discovered how the Bible describes God's remedy for this situation:

Here is my servant, whom I strengthen—the one I have chosen, with whom I am pleased. I have filled him with my spirit, and he will bring justice to every nation. He will not break off a bent reed nor put out a flickering lamp. He will bring justice to all. He will not lose hope or courage.—Isaiah 42:1–4a

Through my work with illiterate Nepali women and through my study and prayer, I was drawn deeper and deeper into the realm of this servant King.

Called to Japan: The Asian Rural Institute (ARI) (1999–present)

Global Ministries' call to work in Japan at the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) has given me the opportunity to share my skills and knowledge with people like Hemali, Miatta, and Tomoko (stories below), who are at the very cutting edge of the fight against disempowerment and oppression.

Participants at the ARI come from some of the most isolated, deprived, war-torn, and desperate places on Earth. They come motivated by a dream of service for their people—a dream to build a better life: enough food; a strong, healthy family; a supportive community; and a voice in managing their own affairs. Participants in the training course live together and create a learning community for a year of sometimes wrenching personal growth. Together, we grow our own food—the grains, vegetables, livestock, and fish that we cook and consume in our dining hall. Together, we work and, as the ARI mission statement says, “study the best ways for rural people to share and enhance resources and abilities for the common good.”

Sisters in Mission in Japan at the ARI

Hemali is an educated woman from the majority Sinhalese community of Sri Lanka. Her heart is torn by the pain of women who have suffered discrimination, warfare, sickness, and despair in her country. She is thrilled to discover in herself the ability to grow food and care for poultry, skills that she can share with others back home. She is drinking in learning experiences in the classroom, in the library, and, after hours, in long conversations in the dormitory. Hemali is determined to reach out and build community in her homeland.

Miatta, a woman of Liberia, used to work in a children's home, caring for orphans. When her country plunged into civil war, soldiers of one side or another stole all the food. She still mourns the death by hunger of the children in her care. She will return to Liberia and its fragile truce with new skills in vegetable growing, seed collection, conservation, soil conditioning, and organic fertilizer. Miatta is determined to give everyone the skills to produce food so that no one need practice violence to take food from others.

Tomoko, a Japanese Christian wife and mother, works in the research and documentation office of the ARI. She has researched the effect of gender roles in Japanese society on the development of the organic farming and marketing industry, and continues to develop her interest in gender roles by listening carefully to the experiences and stories of ARI's male and female participants. She helps everyone think more deeply about the relations of production and consumption in food issues.

Together with women in Nepal and Japan, Nancy Molin has worked to build God's realm of justice and goodness. Her reflections and experiences can help each of us look faithfully and courageously at our own lives.

(Nancy's written reflections and letters from Japan may be found at <<http://www.globalministries.org/mission/ms.htm>>.)

Questions for Reflection

1. When has God's word made you squirm? When have you read of injustice, either in the Bible or in the newspaper, and realized you participate, even indirectly, in it?
2. When were your eyes first opened to both the plight of the poor in our world and “God's concern for the poor”?
3. “to do justice . . .” (Micah 6:8). What opportunities are available to you today to help “bring justice to all”? Are you acting on these opportunities? If not, why not?

Prayer Opportunities

- Nancy Molin and her work at ARI in Japan
- Hemali, Miatta, Tomoko, and other women participating in the training program at ARI
- Women and children around the world who suffer injustice
- Those who diligently work to overcome injustice
- The other Global Ministries missionaries supported by One Great Hour of Sharing: Beth Nafziger, Barbara DeSouza, Joyce Baker, Betsey Lehman, and Martha and Nathan Knoll

If you would like to correspond with Nancy Molin, you may write to:

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Or contact the East Asia and Pacific Area Office, Global Ministries, 216.736.3229; <schurrd@ucc.org>.

Your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) support sustainable development and resettlement programs that enable self-empowerment of communities and individuals victimized by hunger, poverty, and injustice. Committed to sustainable development in agriculture, health care, and education, OGHS currently supports seven Global Mission international personnel: Nancy Molin, Japan; Barbara DeSouza, Brazil; Joyce Baker, Honduras; Betsey Lehman and Martha and Nathan Knoll, India; and Beth Nafziger, Nepal. For more information, call 216-736-3210 or visit <<http://www.ucc.org/steward/oghs/index.html>>.



In Memory

Sally Ann Bliss McCain

(May 16, 1942–July 24, 2001)

Global Ministries missionary Sally McCain died while in the United States on vacation from her ministry in Turkey. Sally was a commissioned minister and certified specialist in Christian Education in the United Church of Christ. Many of us enjoyed time with Sally during the Twenty-third General Synod in Kansas City, Missouri, where she shared stories of her ministry with women in Turkey. Several of us purchased scarves from her at General Synod that had been designed by Turkish women who had survived the 1999 earthquake. (*Ed. To read their story, see Common Lot winter 2000, "Setting More Places."*)

Sally was also a recognized authority and avid promoter of a kind of Turkish women's folk art, *igne oya*, which silently communicated the Turkish peasant woman's world through the beauty of tiny handmade flowers.

For additional information on obtaining these beautiful scarves, contact:

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