

Sojourners in God's mission

Transforming the world together

Barbara Chalfant

I don't know, but let's find out together."
It's a phrase I have used for years at teacher training sessions.

Having spent time over the years supporting mission trips and participating in discussions with congregations making difficult decisions about where and how to engage in mission, I have come to understand that this simple statement has traction.

"I don't know." We used to step into mission settings knowing just what we could do, how to help and what skills were needed to "fix" the situation. Now we step forward into mission being clear that we do not know all. We listen, walk alongside, serve and accompany one another.

"Let's find out." We try new things, meet new people, learn to think and act in new and challenging ways. We are willing to



Rosaline Maria

fail ... and fail miserably. Only when we try new ways of being and working together do we ultimately find the sweet spot where God meets us and graces our effort with joyful fellowship and peaceful resolution.

"Together." We are called to be in community, in partnerships, in authentic relationships that center on the love of Christ and God's reforming action in the world. We do our best work when we are invited into relationships and bring our best and our worst ... our wholly authentic selves to the party. That means we often start a new partnership with coffee and conversation among people who are not like us at all, and we do more listening than speaking, more learning than teaching and more praying than physical action.

With the support of Presbyterian World Mission, we continue to learn how to engage in mission, locally and globally. Isn't that the great goal of every educator, to birth the drive for lifelong education?

Barbara Chalfant is associate presbyter for mission at the Presbytery of West Virginia. She leads mission involvement efforts for older adults, hunger action, peacemaking, social justice and disaster assistance/prevention.

Singing mission's song to another generation

There's always been a drive in my family to make a difference in the world. After my grandparents returned to the U.S. from mission in China, they started Meals on Wheels in Baltimore, where Grandpa was a physician. By the time Grandpa died, they'd opened three kitchens, and after his death Grandma opened 13 more.

That same focus on making a difference continues in my life, though my goal is not to be the soloist, the leader receiving accolades. Instead, I would

much rather be sitting in the back pew, looking up and seeing the adults I used to know as kids being the leaders and heart-song of the church. I don't care if anyone remembers what I did as an educator as long as the lives of others reflect that they've consistently heard and learned the music of God's love from me and others.

These days we don't have to be first or take the credit. We don't have to be the center of attention—we are co-singers in God's choir.