

# The United Methodist Church

## Indiana Area

Indiana Conference

March 1, 2015

Dear Hoosier United Methodists,

As many of you are aware, the Indiana United Methodist Church has had historic relationships with The United Methodist Church in Liberia and Sierra Leone (nearly 800 UM congregations and 500 UM schools in the two countries.) For more than 30 years, Operation Classroom, Inc., Sierra Leone Health Partners and many churches, as well as individuals across our conference, have been engaged in West Africa to improve both education and health care.

In the midst of the current Ebola crisis, we have continually encouraged our Hoosier churches to provide assistance and support through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and Doctors Without Borders for their extensive knowledge in medical relief and assistance.

The medical situation is improving! The World Health Organization (WHO) says in their latest report that “The tide may have turned against the disease, however it will probably be near the end of 2015 before the outbreak is fully under control.” But economic disruption and social fracture continue to wreak havoc – to the point where hunger now becomes the most significant issue. Schools have been closed since May and many teachers (who typically only earn approximately \$100/month) have not been paid, and the staff at UM schools in both countries have become destitute, and our brothers and sisters in Christ are now going hungry. Beyond that, because of the economic disruption, even as schools reopen (the first week of February in Liberia, the third week in March in Sierra Leone), parents can no longer pay the required tuition, and teachers are now being “furloughed” (there is no such thing as a “safety net” in West Africa).

**In a nutshell, we need your help.** Won’t your church consider a special contribution to help respond to this crisis? All funds that Hoosier United Methodists in Indiana give will be put to use in West Africa in at least SOME of the following ways:

- Emergency food purchases in-country to include: those in quarantine, those in Ebola Treatment Centers at UM medical facilities, those in UM hospitals (where families must provide meals for loved ones hospitalized), and unpaid teachers from UM Schools
- Emergency shipping of donated food – Find more information at [inumc.org/beyondebolahunger](http://inumc.org/beyondebolahunger)
- Provision of sanitation supplies and materials as schools reopen
- Training of school administrators, teachers and pastors in Ebola prevention
- Stipends to assist in payment of teachers to assist in feeding their families

Be advised that these simply represent the kinds of things that need to be done. Frankly, the situation in West Africa is so complex and fluid that we are not in a position to define all that needs to be done. Thus, decisions as to the best ways to engage must be made by the aid workers closest to the situation, as well as the staff of The United Methodist Church in West Africa – all partners who have proven themselves to be knowledgeable and trustworthy.

Operation Classroom, Sierra Leone Health and Education Partners and others, are not normally in the business of relief – OC’s ministry is development. However, given the situation, **we have no choice but to assist with this crisis in any way we can.** Please encourage your church, and our people, to be generous.

May the Grace and Peace of God the Father, and of Jesus the Messiah our Lord, be with you now and always.



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Resident Bishop  
Indiana United Methodist Church



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President/CEO  
Operation Classroom, Inc.



Donald M. Griffith  
Director  
Sierra Leone Health Partners

Please send your offering for the Beyond Ebola – Hunger Response, payable to Indiana Conference UMC, and mail to INUMC, Dept. 6089, Carol Stream, IL 60122-6089. (Thank you!)

Mark the memo: *Ebola Response*



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