

Statement Delivered on August 26, 2009 at a Press Conference at the Federal Courthouse, 333 Constitution Ave, Washington, D.C.

I'm Harriett Jane Olson, Deputy General Secretary of the Women's Division of The United Methodist Church. I am here today to speak up for children, something that United Methodist Women have done for 140 years, because we believe that God loves all of these children. I am also here to support CoMed's petition asking that the Department of Health and Human Services be directed to protect children too.

Vaccine manufacturers and the US government have responded to the 1999 recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the US Public Health Service by removing Thimerosal from pediatric vaccinations, however, it remains in the **flu** vaccines of **four out of five manufacturers**.

Flu vaccines are increasingly recommended to pregnant women and young children, without disclosure that some vaccines contain mercury and without disclosure that vaccines are available that are not formulated with this toxic material.

Thimerosal is not the active ingredient in any of the vaccines—it is not medically necessary for their effectiveness. Thimerosal is almost 50% mercury, and the material safety data sheet of one manufacturer notes, among other warnings:

- Exposure to mercury in utero and in children may cause mild to severe mental retardation and mild to severe motor coordination impairment.

Why would we expose any fetus or any child during critical phases of brain development to a toxic substance, which has no medical benefit?

Only if the dosage is proven to be safe should this be permitted, and even then a duty to warn should be observed. Unfortunately, there are multiple avenues of mercury exposure. While our old fever thermometers are being replaced by digital models without mercury, certain fish accumulate excess amounts of mercury in addition to workplace and environmental exposures from air, water and waste discharges.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's "Tox FAQ" for Mercury notes that "mercury in the mother's body passes to the fetus and may accumulate there. It can also pass to a nursing infant through breast milk." The fact that mercury remains in the body for a long time makes it impossible to know what cumulative dose the fetus or young child is experiencing and whether or not there is a safe additional dose at any level. We should not be adding to it through our vaccination programs.

Though manufacturers and the FDA characterize the amount of Thimerosal in vaccines as "trace," the numbers show that the amounts in flu vaccines would exceed the suggested safe level for oral exposure unless a person weighs hundreds of pounds.

The Tox FAQs document advises families: "Keep all mercury-containing medicines away from children."

We agree. We ask HHS to do just that.