



Dr. Paul Kooistra

TEACHING A THEOLOGY THAT SURVIVES

If it were not for the fact that the TV program *Survivor* featured the island nation of Vanuatu most Americans would never even have heard of the place. When I stepped off the plane onto the lush tropical island of Santos, I began to wonder if I had not made a mistake. I was told that malaria was prevalent, that drinking water was rain water, and electricity was not available out in the villages. So why was I in Vanuatu? The reason I was in this South Pacific nation highlights a quiet but growing aspect of Mission to the World's ministry. It is the foundational importance of theological education in the task of church planting.

Consider the history of the Christian church in Vanuatu. Amazingly it is a Presbyterian Church birthed in the 19th century by Scottish Presbyterian missionary John G. Paton.

When Paton and his young wife first set foot on the island of Tanna in the year 1858, they were acutely aware that the natives he hoped to evangelize might eat them for supper. (Missionaries who had preceded him had in fact been devoured

before sunset on the day of their arrival.) Paton wrote that, "His spirit, like leaven, was at work! A new lifestyle supplanted old hostilities. Thefts, quarrels, crimes, were settled now, not by club law but by fine or bonds or lash as agreed upon by chiefs and their people. Everything was rapidly and surely becoming 'new' under the influence of the leaven of Jesus. Huts and plantations were safe ... heathen worship was gradually extinguished; and though no one was compelled to come to church, every person in Aniwa, without exception, became before long an avowed worshiper of Jehovah."

Why then would Mission to the World begin mission work in Vanuatu in 2004? It would seem the work is done. But what the church in this land lacks is solid theological education. Since the days of Paton a great deal of liberalism has crept into the church as they have sent their ministers to Fiji for training. Even more alarming is the fact that cults are growing both within villages and even Christian churches. One island has many villagers who worship a mysterious World

War II G.I. named John Frum. He is said to live within the island's volcano, and will return some day with many "goodies." There are even churches that have Mormon pastors.

I relate this story to you so you will be able to see how important theological education is to the planting of churches around the world. Reformed theology builds churches that are God-centered rather than man-centered, and covenantal theology grounds believers in the Scriptures so they are able to withstand the attacks of unbelief. This emphasis on sound theological education is a strength that the PCA brings to the mission world.

What does it gain us if we plant churches that are initially full, only to find them dwindle because the teaching is biblically weak and doctrine glorifies man rather than God?

Paul D. Kooistra



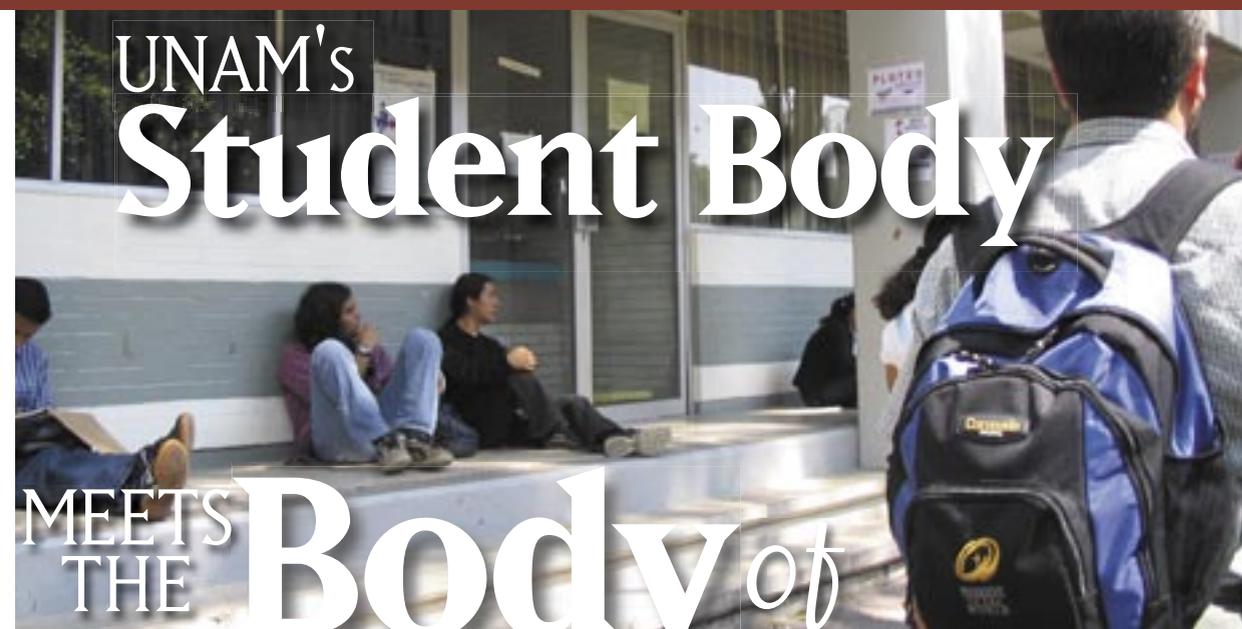
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CHRIST

MTW and RUF Team Up in Mexico City



By Susan Fikse

Imagine arriving at the largest university in the world and facing a campus of 270,000 college students. Your job is to introduce them to Christ, disciple them, pastor them, and integrate them into the local church. A little intimidating? Overwhelming? Yet that is Peter Dishman's assignment. And he is steadfast.

The National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), which has the largest student population on the planet in the largest metropolitan area in the Western Hemisphere—Mexico City—is Peter's new home. He arrived a year ago as the first ordained minister to enter

the mission field under a new affiliation agreement between Mission to the World (MTW) and Reformed University Ministries (RUM). His charge is to lay the groundwork for the first international chapter of Reformed University Fellowship (RUF). Despite the colossal task ahead of

him, Peter unassumingly reports, "I'm just catching up with what God is already doing."

Catching Up on Campus

Peter started "catching up" by meeting with several different constituencies—professors and students on campus and

members of churches in the three synods, seven presbyteries, and 105 churches of the National Presbyterian Church (NPC) in Mexico City. He's convinced God is orchestrating connections with those who are ripe to respond to the gospel. >

He illustrates how seemingly random intersections are leading to meaningful relationships by sharing a "chance" encounter: A woman overheard Peter and another student speaking English as they walked through the campus this fall. Anxious to practice her English, she accompanied them to the English Club meeting Peter holds each week as a way to connect with students. Like many of her peers, this student expressed a sense of emptiness despite a supportive family, material possessions, and a privileged position in society. She responded eagerly to the words of hope and encouragement she found in

the Bible and is now a regular participant in the weekly meetings.

"Our central focus is pastoring the students God gives us," says Peter. "We want to shepherd covenant kids and reach others who need Christ." Like students in the U.S., Mexican students struggle with authentic questions, and Peter is encouraged by the openness he's encountered. "From traditional to modern to postmodern, we encounter the same worldview questions played out on a different stage," said Peter.

But Peter knows that campus ministry is not an end in itself. "The church is in the

center, supported by campus ministry," he explains. "I want to give students a taste of what is in the church." That's why Peter's ministry is integrally connected with the local church. Since 1993, MTW has partnered with the NPC of Mexico, and Peter is working in conjunction with local congregations, especially Iglesia Presbiteriana Berith (Covenant Presbyterian Church).

Andy Coburn, international university director for MTW, sees students' future role in the church as part of the strategic nature of university ministry. "Students in college are wrestling with vocational questions. This is the opportune

time to engage them," he says. "We want to see them come to Christ in such a way that they see the kingdom, not just their personal walk with Christ. By integrating university ministry with the local church, we teach them that whatever their vocation, they also have a role in Christ's Church."

"RUF is not about perpetuating a campus ministry, but about enriching the Church," says Rod Mays, coordinator of RUM. "When these students graduate, they will be ready to serve because they have been instilled with a love for the Church." This goal of enriching the Church is the cord that weaves RUM and MTW together

in international university ministry.

Renewing the Church

"There is a dire need for grace-based, Christ-centered leaders in Mexico," explains Joe Harrell, who serves with MTW's Mexico City team. Currently, a mere 800 trained pastors serve the 3,500 churches and mission churches in the NPC denomination. Joe works with one pastor who alone shepherds 18 churches in an indigenous area of the country. "It's kind of like the old way of circuit riding," Joe quips. But he's quick to describe what MTW is doing to change this challenging scenario.

The Mexico training team is developing a curriculum of theological education focused on "knowing, being, doing," integrating the component of hands-on ministry in the local church. "Theological education is the bridge between the campus and the Church," explains Joe. Designed for pastors and church leaders, the curriculum will be used with selected RUF student leaders as well, preparing them for a life of walking with Christ, whether they are sitting in the pew or standing in the pulpit.

"God has set the table for success with the long history of the Mexican denomination and the relationship we enjoy with the churches," says Joe. As the ministry blossoms at UNAM, he hopes to see the seeds of RUF planted in other strategic



PHOTOS BY PETER DISHMAN

campuses across Mexico. "The most under-served demographic in the country is the increasing number of college-educated people. What we really need is trained pastors who are able to work with these educated people in the urban centers of Mexico—the campus is the best place to identify these emerging leaders."

Moving Outward

With RUF's philosophy of "fixed theology, flexible methodology," Rod Mays believes this new partnership between RUM and MTW will work anywhere. "We can go to any demographic and adapt our ministry to the culture without compromising our theological foundations," he says. "This ministry is encouraging to us because it's a partnership of two PCA agencies, and we're not just *talking* about doing ministry, we're actually *doing* ministry."

"The size of the university makes the task much more daunting at UNAM than what we encounter in the States," admits Rod. "Our goal for any campus is to take the maximum amount of truth to the maximum number of people."

As RUF tackles the largest university in the world, it's already looking ahead to the next formidable challenge—ministering in one of the most diverse universities in the world, outside of London. The assignment will be intimidating. It will be overwhelming. But, like Peter Dishman, the next international RUF pastor will surely be steadfast. ■

For more information visit Peter Dishman's blog at www.rufmexico.org.



Bulgarian Bibles

By Ashley Levy

While traveling in the Soviet Union in 1985, Craig Sheppard found his bilingual New Testament to be one of his most effective evangelism tools. With columns of English and Russian side by side, it allowed him to share the gospel even across the language barrier.

"That led me to believe that such bilingual Bibles could be a valuable ministry tool," said Craig. In 2001, as an MTW missionary in Bulgaria, Craig conceived the idea of publishing a Bulgarian-English Bible. On Christmas Eve 2005, the first Bible rolled off the presses, the result of more than three years of difficult work.

"We anticipate that this will be a fast-selling book," said Craig. Twenty-five percent of the initial print run of 1,000 had been sold before the first Bible was produced.

A Bible with Many Applications

The Bible is the first of its kind to be made available in Bulgaria. "We are seeing more and more potential uses," said Craig.

The Bible will be an invaluable evangelism tool for missionaries and will also aid in their study of Bulgarian. A new church plant in Sofia, which has a Sunday evening English service,

has already purchased 30 of the Bibles to use as their pew Bibles.

Additionally, many Bulgarians are interested in learning English, and teaching English is a component of the MTW ministry there. The bilingual Bible, with the two languages side by side, will be an excellent textbook for such English classes. Theology students, who are required to demonstrate English proficiency in order to graduate, will be able to use the Bible to study language as well as Scripture. And Bulgarian pastors will be able to use the bilingual Bible to study and prepare for sermons—a refreshing change, as most of the commentaries and Bible studies available to them are in English but not Bulgarian.

Creating a Lasting Work

In 2001, Craig made the first mock-up of the Bulgarian/English Bible. Then he secured copyrights for the English and Bulgarian translations and began work on all the details of such a project. The publication team, coordinated by MTW missionary Stephanie Glass, had to decide how big the Bible should be, what kind of paper to print it on, how to bind it, and how to lay out the pages. Every step of the way, they had to keep cost in mind.

They wanted to create a high-quality product without making it too expensive for buyers.

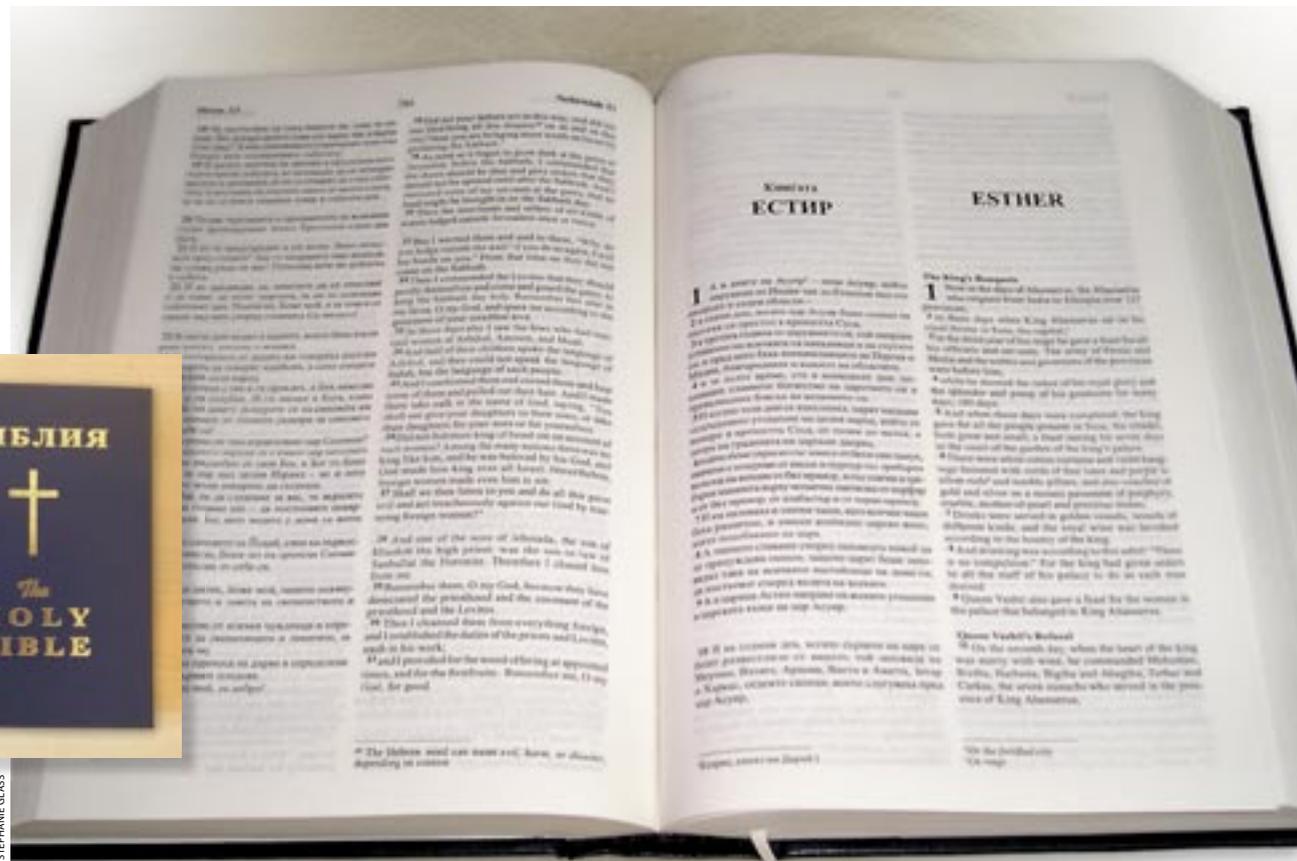
"We wanted to create a Bible that would last many years, through a lot of use," said Craig. "If we erred, we wanted it to be on the side of quality."

Though publishing the work was a long and tedious process, it was also rewarding. Proofreaders had to read through the Scriptures multiple times to check for errors that spell-check might have missed. One Bulgarian proofreader, Julia Maximova, said she was blessed by having time each day to focus so closely on Scripture, reading parts of it for the first time in her life.

The finished Bible will cost about \$40 in the U.S. and the equivalent of \$20 in Bulgaria.

"Please pray for quality control in the final printing stage, and that this Bible would be used to get people into the Word," said Craig. "That's what we desire, that Bulgaria would be a country of people who love God's Word." ❏

For more information, email bibles@mtwbg.com.



STEPHANIE GLASS

MTW's StreetChild Mission International will receive the PCA's Women in the Church (WIC) Love Gift for 2006.

"The StreetChild ministry is a worthy recipient," said Jane Patete, coordinator of women's ministries for the PCA. "We hope to raise strong funding for 'the least of these,' and to join hands with MTW to help break the cycle of generational sin through the power of God's grace."

Being WIC's Love Gift recipient means StreetChild will gain broad exposure throughout the PCA in 2006. Churches and individuals may request a variety of free materials from WIC explaining StreetChild's purpose and goals. These tools include "The Lost Children" video or DVD, booklets on the ministry, bulletin inserts, and "gift houses" children can use for collecting funds.

"The funding we will receive from WIC will help increase awareness among PCA churches about our ministry and our needs for support, prayer, and volunteers," said Tom Stewart, director of StreetChild Mission International. "We're thankful for this opportunity to make StreetChild more widely known."

Benefits MTW's StreetChild MINISTRY

By Melissa Morgan

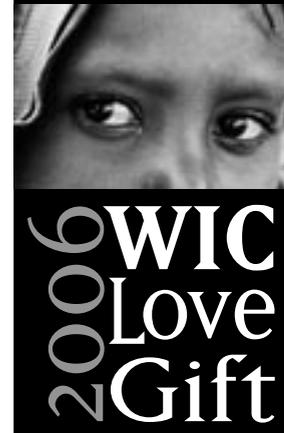
WIC promotes the project through its chapters in churches and presbyteries, and individuals and churches are encouraged to give to the Love Gift throughout the year. Since 1974, WIC has annually designated a PCA ministry, agency, or committee to receive its Love Gift. "We work in tandem with committees and agencies to choose projects that serve their needs and allow PCA women to be part of meeting that need," said Jane.

Since MTW began its StreetChild ministry in 2000, hundreds of children have received physical and spiritual aid through its feeding programs, drop-in facilities, schools, and children's homes. StreetChild currently operates programs in three cities—Manila, Philippines; Nairobi, Kenya; and Acapulco, Mexico—and is in the process of starting projects in Mexico City, Mexico; Bangalore, India, and La Ceiba, Honduras.

"There are about 150 million street children living in the poorer countries of the world," said Tom. "StreetChild seeks to care for every physical and spiritual need of the homeless children God entrusts to us. Our goal is to glorify Him who is Father to the fatherless."

The 2006 WIC Love Gift will help StreetChild open and expand ministries in Mexico and India by providing capital and operational funding. "I am encouraging individual churches to show the video or DVD to their congregations with a booklet for each person or family," said Tom. ❏

For more information on the WIC Love Gift, or to request materials, visit www.pacep.org/lovegift or call (800) 283-1357.



What in the world is HMA?



Missionaries on and off the field

By Dave Veldhorst



Dave Veldhorst and his wife, Jan, are missionaries with Mission to the World in Thailand. Below is Dave's account of their recent Home Ministry Assignment (HMA) in the States.

We had just arrived back in the U.S. after five years of work in Thailand. I remember one of the first conversations.

"Hi, my name is Dave. Our family is with MTW, and we are back on HMA for this coming year."

Blank stare. I could see the other man searching for what in the world MTW and HMA stood for. "Sorry, we are with Mission to the World and we are in the U.S. for one year on furlough."

"Furlough, is that like a year of vacation and rest?" he said.

What exactly is a furlough or HMA and why have we enjoyed ours?

Home Ministry Assignment (HMA), or furlough, has been a regular fixture of missionary life throughout the years. HMA is an opportunity for missionaries to return to their home country for a season of physical and spiritual rest, visitation of supporting churches and individuals, renewing friendships, and additional

support raising. Basically, missionaries are encouraged to spend at least one year in their home country of support for every four years on the field.

So what has made our HMA a time of enjoyment and growth rather than a necessary evil to endure?

First, we have seen our need for spiritual renewal. The mission field is a battlefield. There are various ways to disguise or avoid the reality that as a Christian ambassador you are taking some spiritual hits on the field. But time away from the foreign context and time involved in the Christian community promotes being honest about the wounds inflicted, and gives the opportunity for healing.

Second, we have seen the importance of visiting churches. We have needed to hear again from the elderly woman in an Iowa church who prays for our family and our team daily. We have needed the outside perspective from a PCA elder

asking about our strategy for church planting and whether we have considered other methods. We have been blessed to hear pastors remind their congregation, and us, of the importance of missions and persevering in missions.

Finally, it has been good to get away from the ministry on the field for a year. Time away allows for honesty before God in admitting that the ministry is not built nor is it dependent completely upon us. Christ will build His Church and He will do so in His time and His manner and under the unique circumstances of having teams constantly changing in their dynamics.

We thank God for the wisdom and counsel of our international director and those at Mission to the World who have been used by God to remind us of our need for our HMA. We feel refreshed and ready to return. ■

news briefs

MTW Staff Update

As MTW's new director of field operations, **Bill Goodman** will be responsible for oversight of each of MTW's five international ministry divisions as well as its short-term program. He brings rich experience to this position with 25 years on the field as a missionary in Mexico and more recently as the first director of MTW's Global Training and Development Department. Bill's commitment to ongoing training and leadership development for both field and office staff is essential to advancing MTW's goal of promoting church-planting movements.

Jud Lamos has accepted the position of international director of Enterprise for Christian-Muslim Relations. Together with his family, he has served in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia for 10 years.

"At a time when 'culture clashes' are escalating out of control, it should be our desire to see the love of Christ bridge cultural differences and bring enemies of the gospel together in fellowship," said Jud. "Enterprise for Christian-Muslim Relations seeks to build platforms for dialogue where this kind of love can be expressed and modeled."



Call to Prayer for India's Outcasts

Some 250 million people in India are denied their basic human rights and dignity. Oppressed and downtrodden, the Dalits [outcasts] are experiencing increasing atrocities.

On October 28, 2006, Christians throughout the world are being called upon to participate in a global day of prayer for the Dalits, among whom there has been a significant turning to Christ and away from Hinduism. Under Hinduism they and their children were without hope. This day of prayer is a day of solidarity with them and prayer for them.

For three days prior to the October day of prayer, many will attend *Transform World: India 2006* in India. During this conference some 250 Indian believers and 250 Western missionaries, including MTW workers, will meet together to consider how to advance the gospel in India.

You are invited to form your own Global Day of Prayer for the Dalits in your school or church so that we stand together as one body under God for those who are under persecution.

Partnership Foundations Training

Mission to the World recently hosted its inaugural "Partnership Foundations Training" program. This new training joins a number of other classes taught by MTW's Global Training and Development (GTD) Department.

"The best thing about the Partnership Foundations training is that it brings all the constituents to the table and aligns their focus," said Jeff Marlowe of GTD. Jeff also serves as area director for Enterprise. "We saw realistic and clear expectations from each side really come through."

The Partnership Foundations training helps each partnership's three entities—MTW workers, PCA partner churches, and national representatives—come together to understand expectations, work together as a team, designate roles, and draft objectives and measures for future work. This is critical, as the full partnership team typically meets only once or twice a year.

"We're trying to create a sense of partnership with churches here in the States," said Jeff. "We'd like to develop partnerships with every field we have."

Monterrey Theological Institute Opens

In the hopes of reaching northeast Mexico with the gospel, MTW missionaries are working with the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico to start the Monterrey Theological Institute for Church Planting. The Institute will offer seminary classes, classes for lay leaders, and mentoring relationships for church planters.

"Having this Institute in place will make a tremendous difference in the work there," said Al Couch, a ruling elder from Pinewood Presbyterian Church in Middleburg, Fla., who has led dozens of vision and missions trips to the area. "We must offer solid theological education to better train pastors as they share the gospel of the Lord Jesus."

The Institute's first seminar took place in February, with 75 participants traveling from as far as six hours away. The Institute's first official class will begin shortly, with a dozen nationals receiving training from Jorge Aleman, a national who recently completed his studies at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte.

"Our goal is to plant 54 churches by 2025, and we've planted 12 to date," said Al. "We have a unique opportunity to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the 40 million people in northeast Mexico. And the Monterrey Theological Institute for Church Planting is the best way to do that."



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For ages 50 and up

Paul D. Kooistra, Coordinator of Mission to the World and Dan Iverson, team leader and church planter of MTW's team in Chiba, Japan will be the keynote speakers. There will be testimonies from people who have served in MTW's Second Career program, seminars, and opportunities for cross-cultural experiences.

Sign Up Now!

CONFERENCE COSTS: The registration fee is \$45.00 per person.

The fee is not refundable and does NOT include meals and accommodations. Meal cost is \$72.00 per person for the entire conference. Individual meals may be purchased for those not staying overnight if notice of intention is given on the registration form. Room costs are for the entire conference. All motel rooms have a private bath, air conditioning, and linens.

The conference begins with dinner Monday night and ends after breakfast on Friday morning.

For more online registration form and more details, visit:
www.ridgehaven.org/rhprimetime.html



GOD'S GRACE

■ MTW Works Through a West African National to Reach Muslims

By Carter Davis

In a part of the world where Christians make up a tiny percentage of the population, God's grace abounds.

Although on the surface, misfortune might not seem like an ideal opportunity for ministry, it often imparts the virtues of God's grace—a lesson that a converted Christian in West Africa learned firsthand.

"Mamadou had a close Christian friend who experienced a tragic moral failing," said Frank, MTW's regional director over Africa. "This helped Mamadou understand that, while God is disappointed when

we sin, His grace is bigger than our sin. We don't have to be afraid of stepping out on faith."

This incident, Frank said, strengthened the ties between Mamadou and the MTW team and also allowed for a tough lesson on God's grace that provided one of those difficult, but crucial, ministry opportunities. As an indirect result, Mamadou has become a respected Christian leader in a predominantly Muslim country in which Christianity is a nearly invisible minority.

"One of our main goals [as workers in this region]," Frank said, "is to equip leaders and give them

the resources to mentor others. We want to turn the materials over to the national leaders, allowing us to be focused regionally rather than locally. Having a leader like Mamadou has enabled us to move closer to that goal."

Converting non-believers to evangelical Christianity in a country that is nearly 95 percent Muslim (and nearly four percent Roman Catholic) is a daunting task, but Mamadou is eager to continue the work. He shares his background and ministry goals in the following interview, translated by an MTW worker.

How did you become a Christian?

I was born in a Muslim family ... [and], like my entire family, I practiced Islam. But at a young age, I started asking questions like, "Can I be pure? Can I be accepted by God?" I was troubled by these questions, so I started practicing Islam more. To help me gain some answers, I went to see [the spiritual man] of the village. But after three hours of discussion, he did not give me any solutions. I left discouraged.

There was a Christian who lived about 50 kilometers from our village. He told me he had prayed for me for a long time. At that point, he shared the gospel with me. The Christian and I had long and heated discussions. I was continually angry at [him], but I started to notice that he was never angry at me. At one point, he gave me a Bible. I took it out of respect. I read it only when I had nothing else to do. But each time I read it, I became convinced that what my Christian friend was saying was right.

After two years, I became a Christian. My friends withdrew from me. However, my Christian friend was always there for me. He was faithful and became a mentor to me. I spent more and more time reading the Bible and I grew in my faith.

What does the typical West African church look like?

For us, the place of worship is very important. Otherwise, if it is in a house or other casual venue, then it's like we're just playing at religion. So we are quick to find a place or build something to be the church. In addition, the leader must be well trained. However, because the churches cannot support the pastor, he often needs a field to farm in order to feed his family. There is always a lack of revenue for the pastors, so pastors often need to be bi-vocational.

Has persecution played a role in the lives of Christians in your area?

Because of persecution, we, as Christians, have become much closer to one another. There is solidarity among us because we are in such a minority.

A new Christian must always expect persecution here. When evangelizing someone, you must have a good relationship with the person before he is converted. You may end up being his or her only friend.

What are the greatest needs of the church in West Africa?

Training is the biggest need. By training I mean theological training

and training on how to plant churches or lead the church. The other great need is reading material and books for ongoing training. We have so little documentation in French.

Leadership and management training for the pastors and leaders of the church is a big need. Both leaders and members need leadership training. My vision is to have pastors and elders who are well trained in theology and leadership. If not, the churches won't last.

How should we pray for you and the West African church?

Pray for me in my role as leader and director of the work here. Pray also for me because I need to be ministered to and receive the Word. Pray for my wife and my kids and their upbringing.

Pray for the church in West Africa to be able to be self-financing eventually. Pray for the school we have started and also for the church to help people get jobs. Pray also for us to reach out to other major ethnic groups. Finally, pray for Reformed doctrine to take hold in West Africa. ■

For more information contact Debbi Beers at dbeers@mtw.org.





New and Improved MTW.org

By Ashley Levy

If you've visited www.mtw.org recently, you may have noticed some changes. And if you haven't, it's time to check it out. Recent updates have made the site more user-friendly and interactive.

"The front page should include the most important, newest stuff and be a doorway directly to information," said Dennis Swinehart, MTW's webmaster. "We're moving from a static, brochure-type site to something that is fully interactive, and that process has only just started."

Dennis joined MTW last spring to work on several major technological initiatives. One of his main projects has been to revamp the Web site to make information more accessible and interactive. In the past, the two most-used pages on the site were the site map and the search feature—an indication that users were having trouble finding what they needed.

Here's an overview of the changes already in place:

"Search for a missionary" feature

Visitors can now click on the "search for a missionary" icon on the right-hand side of the screen and directly access a list of MTW missionaries and their fields. The list can be sorted by name or region, and offers the option of emailing the missionaries or viewing their prayer cards.

Missionaries in sensitive areas are not included on this list. Eventually, Dennis hopes to allow Web site users to donate funds to a specific missionary directly from this screen.

Window to the World

Also accessed from the right-hand side of the front page, "Window to the World" is an online version of a diagnostic tool that helps churches evaluate their missions ministry's strengths and weaknesses. Pastors,

elders, and mission committee members will benefit from completing the diagnostic online and saving their results to revisit later or share with other church members. After finishing the evaluation, users can access additional resources to help improve their church's areas of weakness.

View From the Field

This area of the site contains personal perspectives, original resources, and stories from missionaries on the field. For example, one missionary has written a manual on training national pastors to help their congregations minister to those affected by HIV/AIDS. In "View From the Field," that document is made available to others. This area will also include links to specific stories on missionary blogs or Web sites. Dennis expects this to be a popular destination point for members who are active in missions and want to get a closer look at missionaries' day-to-day lives on the field. The content will be updated and changed regularly.

Upcoming Events and Short-Term Opportunities

To date, the most popular information on the MTW Web site has been short-term trip opportunities and disaster recovery project information. Now, that information is on the home page. Opportunities from different parts of the world are highlighted and rotated, so users can learn about areas they may not have heard about or considered visiting in the past.



Time Zone and Region Map

Wondering what time it is in Thailand when you're eating lunch at your desk? Check out the time zone map, which highlights the different areas of the world where MTW missionaries are at work. This feature also provides information about church-planting work in those regions.

MTW Print and Electronic Resources

MTW's print and electronic resources—including collateral materials, videos, missions conference planning info, and request forms—have been organized into categories, and many are available for instant download. Also, MTW publications such as *Network* can be viewed online.

These changes are only the beginning. Dennis' ultimate goal is to fully integrate MTW's Web site with its master database of missionaries and donors. This would allow users to view their donation information and find specific information about projects they would like to participate in.

Future changes will provide deeper functionality, allowing the site to not only provide information, but also present that information in a captivating and useful way. Such changes might include access to travel, weather, and cultural information about a country or region; the ability to search short-term trips by skills needed as well as geographic area; and positioning mtw.org as the distribution and destination point for all things related to PCA missions.

"If you've been to the site before and think you've seen it all, come back!" said Dennis. "Come back often." ■

Visit www.mtw.org to view the features outlined in this article.

The Road to Hope

By Susan Fikse

The Displaced Peoples of Colombia Hear the Gospel

Guerrillas invade a village in search of food and necessities to fuel their combatants. The local population is forced to host them; if not, they are shot. The next day, the paramilitary troops arrive, accusing the villagers of supporting the guerrillas. They shoot a few villagers in public and chase away the population in order to exploit the local resources of minerals, coca, or logging.

With the world spotlight focused on Iraq and Afghanistan in recent years, the reality of this typical, horrifying scenario in rural Colombia remains hidden. Yet, with 26,000 homicides a year, Colombia is undisputedly the most dangerous place in the world. The primary victims of this violence—women and children—flee the destruction of their countryside homes for the crowded, poverty-stricken cities in search of a road to hope.

Rafael Enrique Leal and the Presbyterian church he serves in northern Colombia are the first step on that road to hope for a fortunate few of these desperate Colombians.

"There are millions of these displaced people, known as 'desplazados,'" said Bill Yarbrough, MTW's international director for Latin America. "They comprise a whole demographic group in this area of the country. But under Leal's leadership, area churches are responding to the urgent needs of the desplazados with the love of Christ."

Historic Conversions

Bill recently witnessed seven members of the Chimila Indian tribe, including the tribe's leader, being baptized in the presence of area pastors. The Chimila are not only desplazados, but indigenous to Colombia, and have no indigenous church and perhaps have had no true conversions until recently. "This is not something I get to participate in every day," remarked Bill. "Bible translators have worked with this group for 20 years to give them the Scriptures. These are historic moments as members of this tribe are baptized."

For more information contact Bill Yarbrough at byarbrough@mtw.org, or visit his blog at www.xanga.com/pelicanmountain.

Now, the tribe's new location—the Santa Marta area—is the site of a growing Reformed church involving MTW workers. The church's unique ministry to displaced children in the region connected them with this group. There is now a core band of believers in place eager to plant a church within the tribe.

"We're just now starting to see fruit," said Bill. "But these baptisms show that the door is open to the gospel. People here want to grow in their faith and have a church of their own."

Training Future Leaders

These new believers desire training as well. Bill recently conducted a church-planting conference in Colombia for area pastors and church leaders. Several of the Chimila converts attended the conference.

"We really try to emphasize how to live out the gospel," said Bill. "That includes linking a theology of grace with doing justice and mercy—community renewal, advocating for the displaced, and reconciliation."

Today, thanks to the prayers and work of Rafael Enrique Leal and the churches of northern Colombia, the Chimila Indians and many other desplazados are walking the road to hope. Despite living in one of the most dangerous countries on Earth, those touched by the mercy of Colombian Christians have new security in Christ.

"The Lord has worked through these new believers," says Bill. "He is planting a new church among the displaced in their midst." ■



Pre-Field Training

PREPARING MISSIONARIES FOR THE FIELD

By Melissa Morgan

An Asian couple from Southern California found their recent MTW Pre-Field Training experience to be humbling, but helpful.

"Though we fumbled with dysfunctional public phones and pouted over unmercifully rigid train schedules, we soon realized how fitting it was to place us in a situation where almost everything—language, time zone, transportation, electricity, the metric system—was different. We had to learn how to do all the basic things all over again, exactly what all missionaries have to do."

This couple, along with 17 other individuals, participated in MTW's bi-annual Pre-Field Training (PFT) course this fall. The four-week training, which covered language acquisition, culture and team building, contextualization (training on how to enter another culture), and church planting, gave these newly-accepted missionaries some basic information to be able to land on the field and begin functioning immediately.

"There's a direct correlation between understanding culture and success on the field," said Jeff Marlowe, who serves with MTW's training arm, Global Training and Development (GTD). "Our goals for missionaries completing PFT are increasing their self-knowledge and awareness, establishing realistic expectations, and helping them realize that this is just the beginning of the learning process. We also look for people who have sought out cross-cultural relationships in their lives in the States."

Though MTW has provided pre-field training for decades (and has trained through its in-house GTD program since 2000), this most recent training marked the first time that PFT participants included people from a cross-cultural background. Five of the 19 participants were Korean-Americans, and their perspective enhanced the training for everyone, according to Jeff.

"They were able to share their own experiences about adapting to American culture, and what it's like living in a constant state between two cultures," said Jeff. "They really grasped it. It added a richness to the training that we've never had before."

They also shared the "1.5" concept. As second-generation Korean-Americans, they are considered 1.5 because they move easily in both Korean and American cultures, whereas their parents (first-generation immigrants) are 1.0, and later generations will be 2.0—fully Americanized.

Culture Shock is Universal

"A large part of PFT is helping missionaries learn to deal with culture shock and adaptation, because they will all experience it," said Jeff.

In MTW's summer Pre-Field Training in New York City, one missionary shared her struggle.

"I knew better than to expect the Plaza Hotel, but this wasn't quite what I had in mind," she said, explaining having to vacuum a hotel mattress that was thoroughly coated with crumbs, dustballs, and other unidentifiable bits of grime. But conviction quickly overrode disgust, as she sensed God saying, "I thought you were willing to do anything, go anywhere so that people could hear about Me." Chastened, this missionary resumed her vacuuming with a new sense of gratitude for how much God had given her.

"Cultural training is so important because it helps people identify handles they can come back to," said Jeff. Sharing these "cultural measures" is crucial to the missionaries' understanding of the area of the world they will be living in. These measures include things such as the difference between individual and collective cultures (individual happiness being more important than the collective good, for example),

risk-taking behavior versus non risk-taking behavior, and career success cultures versus quality-of-life cultures.

"The U.S. is clearly a career success culture, while most of the countries in the world share a quality-of-life culture," said Jeff. "As Americans, we're generally nonchalant, informal, and touchy, whereas many other cultures are the opposite."

Real-Life Cross-Cultural Training

A key component of Pre-Field Training is offering missionaries the chance to interact with the specific culture they will be living in on the field. To that end, MTW matches up the missionaries with ethnic churches for the four-week PFT experience.

"Representatives from each field team come and give information on the worldview from the area each missionary is going to," said Jeff. "And then the missionaries spend time

with a local ethnic church that corresponds with their field."

So missionaries going to Latin America were matched up with a Spanish-speaking church, while Enterprise (for Christian-Muslim Relations) workers worshiped and worked with a French-Arabic church.

"We try to tailor training for where each of our missionaries is headed," said Jeff. "We also teach a theology of the city—how God loves cities, how they are the centers of culture, and often immigrants from all over the world relocate to cities."

Two Latin America-bound missionaries at the fall Pre-Field Training in Europe were matched with a Spanish-speaking church in the city.

"We practiced our speaking and comprehension as we worshiped, observed, and were loved by the believers at this multi-cultural church, which included immigrants from Peru, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Bolivia," said one missionary.

"We were surprised not to hear the usual prayer requests for health and material needs. Instead, we heard praise, adoration, and kingdom petitions. It's a message I'll take with me into future ministry—that God is building His church and I've done nothing to earn my place in being part of it, but that's the beauty and mystery of it." ■

Newly-accepted missionaries travel all over the city for Pre-Field Training.



MTW Helps Host

EUROPEAN INTELLIGENT DESIGN CONFERENCE

By Becky Chaplin and Sarah Ingram

Nearly 10 years ago, PCA member Dr. Charles Thaxton looked out his metro train window toward Prague's Congress Center and had a thought. Why not use the massive conference hall built during the Communist era to declare the work of creation to the people of Central Europe? There, on that train ride, Charles and his wife set the goal of reintroducing the scientific theory of "intelligent design" to Europe at Prague's Congress Center in the hopes of sharing Christ with Czechs and Europeans who have long been taught atheism.

The decade-long dream became a reality on Oct. 22, 2005, as the Congress Center reverberated with a reasoned discussion of intelligent design—the scientific theory that blind chemical processes and neo-Darwinian views of natural selection cannot account for the complexity and diversity of the universe. More than 700 scientists and lay people from 18 countries gathered to engage in the conference,

entitled *Darwin & Design: A Challenge for 21st Century Science*.

Mission to the World's Czech Republic team assisted with publicity and registration. "Evolution has long been an undisputed fact in Czech schools, where Czech Christians struggle with accepting creation," said Carl and Becky Chaplin, MTW missionaries to Prague. "This conference helped them to see scientifically, not just religiously, the inconclusive support for evolution and the evidence supporting intelligent design."

MTW's participation in the conference also was strategic, as a way of teaching a Christian life and worldview, and ultimately desiring to see people come to Christ. "It's not just the science," said Carl. "It's the God behind the science that we want to share."

Dr. Thomas Johnson, one of the organizing members of the MTW provisional presbytery associated with the Reformed Church in the Czech Republic, and an ordained PCA minister,

assisted with organizing the conference. As director of the Komensky Institute of Prague and professor at Charles University, Thomas was interviewed by local media for the event. "I assisted with the conference because the relationship among faith, natural science, and philosophy needs to be renegotiated in Western culture," said Thomas. "And our speakers should be part of this process."

Participating speakers included American scientists Stephen Meyer and Jonathan Wells, French mathematician David Berlinski, and Oxford mathematician John Lennox. European news media, ranging from the U.K.'s BBC to the *Prague Post*, denounced the conference's "theological pseudo-science" and "science in sheep's clothing" in newspapers and on television.

But some attendees did not agree. One well-known Czech scientist stated, "I have a lot to consider. Do you know what this could mean if this theory was true?"

On the final day of the conference, a young man sitting in the front raised his hand impatiently and asked the panel of scientists a probing question: "This is an intelligent design conference. So my question is, what is the design and who is the intelligence?" That was precisely the sort of question Charles had hoped to leave on the minds of Europe's youth in the building where the Party faithful once gathered. It is hoped that similar future events will lend more voices the opportunity to seek answers. **N**

For more information on intelligent design theory in Europe, visit www.darwinanddesign.org.



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Paul Kooistra
Coordinator

Marty Davis
Editor

Melissa Morgan
Managing Editor

Beth Beaver
Graphic Design/Production

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Editorial offices:

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(678) 823-0004
www.mtw.org

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MTW
1600 North Brown Road
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

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