



MISSION
to the
WORLD

Network

MISSION TO THE WORLD • PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA • SUMMER 2007



GOING GLOBAL

Marty Davis

About six months after the devastating 1999 earthquake in a Middle Eastern nation, I was part of an MTW-sponsored group visiting a remote village that had suffered heavy damage. Using a combination of gestures and smiles, and the help of a villager who knew very few words of English, we managed to converse with a group of friendly women. Referring to the earthquake, I ambitiously tried to communicate that I'd seen the frightening images of destruction on American television.

Even though they'd missed some steps in between, the inhabitants of that little village were catching up on worldwide technology. In fact, the forward-thinking village mayor wanted computers and Internet access available for their young people because he knew their world would be different than his own.

Together with the ease of travel, technology is shrinking our world. What does this mean for global missions? In this issue of *Network* magazine, we'll look at the implications of this shift. >

Television? They were puzzled. Then the face of an older woman lit up, and she motioned that she understood—except that she was talking about the laptop computers that disaster response teams had brought with them to the village. She'd never seen television. She may have never seen or used a landline phone, but she was entirely familiar with the mobile variety.

Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, describes global cities as having more in common with each other than with small cities and towns in their own countries. One influential futurist refers to the earth as increasingly "flat."

A Change of Pace

The pace of change is accelerating as well. It is said that agile corporations no longer make five- and 10-year plans, but that they are constantly re-evaluating and re-focusing. Mission organizations and missionaries face many of the same pressures.

Another change is in immigration patterns. Populations in post-Christian Western Europe include more and more non-Europeans. One fifth of the population of Vienna, Austria, is composed of immigrants from Muslim countries. The same changes are happening in our own country, and news stories and congressional debates in the U.S. center around the issues of immigration, particularly illegal immigration from Mexico. What implications does this shift have for the growth of the Church?

In addition, much of the old terminology, like designating countries as "sending" or "receiving," has been turned on

its head as the center of Christianity shifts from the global north to the south—to Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular. Latinos have been described as potentially ideal missionaries to Muslim cultures. Increasing numbers of missionaries from Africa are coming to the West. One MTW missionary recently said that "in missions, we Westerners need to get used to the idea that in many respects, we enter into relationships as junior partners. It's not always easy or natural, but the reality is hard to miss."

The combination of these and other powerful forces makes us unsettled and uncomfortable. Change is like that. What will be the role of the North American church as these changes become more pronounced? And how does God want to use the contributions of the Presbyterian Church in America and Mission to the World to build His kingdom?

Our friends in that tiny Middle Eastern village had no idea of the scope of change that technology would bring, nor had their concerns been fully awakened. But in their world, just as in ours, the challenges to their status quo had already begun, and they could not turn back. ■





The 21st Century Missionary:

It's All About the Mindset

Michele Harold

With globalization swiftly reordering the world around us, the question must be asked: Is globalization affecting how we do missions? Jeff Marlowe, director of Global Training and Development for MTW, says definitely. "There is no doubt that as the global picture shifts—with more fluid borders and greater and quicker means of communication—we must evolve our approach to missions."

According to Jeff, the skills missionaries develop are part of this process. "In the past, mission work was more systematic. We focused on sending people from churches and agencies to different countries without much thought of variations in culture and community. But now, missionaries need to be able to maneuver cross-culturally and work in ambiguity."

MTW partnership member Jonathan Olsen sees value in missionaries viewing ministry as a lifestyle and not as an event. "Ministry, or service, in Jesus' name should not be a thing that Christians do, but it should be a way of life by which the followers of Christ are identified."

Both Jeff and Jonathan agree that shifting world trends require missionaries to have a greater understanding of the differences they will face on the mission field—different worldviews, mindsets, and backgrounds, even among Christians.

"In this new context, a missionary's mindset is key. It's just as important as his or her skillset," said Jeff.

A Holistic Approach

Younger missionaries serving on the field already possess many of the skills needed to effectively minister in today's world, says Jeff. "The younger people coming for training are much more

familiar with the changing world," he explains. "They've traveled more and move easily through different cultures and worldviews. They are more comfortable with a holistic approach of ministry—not separating justice and mercy issues from the gospel."

Adding to the skills individual missionaries bring with them, MTW's pre-field training offers missionaries the opportunity to gain knowledge not just from a classroom atmosphere but also from firsthand experience. Jeff emphasizes the experiential component of the training as critical to addressing globalization. "The trainees work in the communities and interact with people from various ethnic groups. This allows them to become more familiar with different cultures and the different layers within a given culture."

An MTW missionary who has served among Middle Eastern people groups, considers the practical application of pre-field training an essential element for a missionary's effectiveness. "The most important thing is for globalization to stop being a concept that we talk about, read about, or write about, and instead become a reality of daily ministry."

But even with a modern mindset and adequate skill development, missions work is always led by the Lord. "It all remains in the context of the gospel," said Jeff. "Ultimately, missions is not dependent on our training or our resources, but on the Holy Spirit and His plan for the world." ■

PINEAPPLES OF PEACE

by Carter Davis



Robbie Lathrop with national partner Luis Rivas.

been [in Nicaragua] recently on mission trips to pray about the purchase of the farm," Robbie said. "A good number of these people felt like the Lord would have them give money toward buying it, and that's basically how it happened."

Soon, the Lathrops found themselves in possession of a remote piece of property with few resources, but an infinite amount of possibilities. Within eight months, a road had been built and partially paved, a water system installed, and a picnic shelter and outdoor meeting area erected on the spit of land that is now called "Pineapples Of Peace," or *Piñas de Paz*.

"Primarily, [the farm] will be used as a pastoral training center and retreat center, but also as a working farm," Robbie said. "Our dream is for this to be self-sustaining, so that we can invest back into the community, and do things like put a roof on a local church or buy a much-needed water truck."

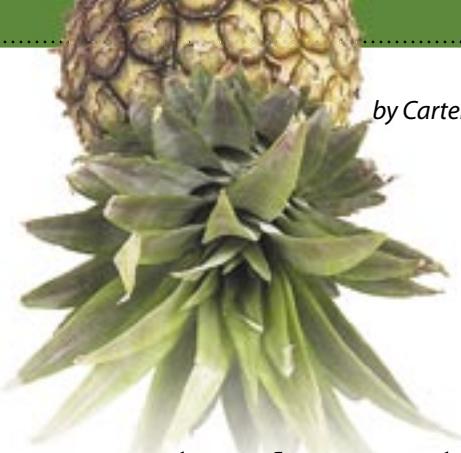
In addition to growing pineapples, the farm will soon begin producing salsa and jelly as a way to provide local jobs. "It may not be much, but in a country with 70 percent unemployment, every bit helps," said Robbie.

Last year the farm harvested more than 1,000 pounds of beans, which went to feed local families. By combining the farm with the ministry and teaching center, the Lathrops will be able to provide both economic and educational

opportunities. Perhaps more importantly, the farm will allow short-term missionaries an opportunity to meet the locals on common ground.

Eight short-teams have visited the farm so far. "They've worked on the property, hosted a medical clinic, and built a road—all for the goal of sharing the gospel with people in great need," said Robbie.

"It's so important to go out into the community and meet individuals. When people have a friend, when they have a relationship with an individual, that's when good things happen." ■



PHOTOS BY MURRAY LATHROP



Watch Turkey?

Jud Lamos

In the May 2007 issue of *Root and Branch: The Religion and Society Debate*, James Skillen wrote an article titled, "Watch Turkey!" Skillen, a graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary, is the president of the Center for Public Justice (CPJ), whose stated purpose is to equip Christians to "do justice in local, national, and international affairs."

Skillen says, "Turkey is one of the most important places in the world today in which to observe the dynamism of religions (including secularism) competing at root to shape society and government." What might prompt Skillen to make such a claim? For several decades the officially-secular/unofficially-Muslim nation of Turkey has experienced economic instability, religious and political protest, and periods of military rule.

Recent news events highlight the ongoing crisis. In March 2003, Tayyip Erdogan, a



pro-Islamic politician, was elected prime minister. While committed to European Union membership on the one hand, Erdogan has also been quietly signaling his opposition to Christian minorities in Turkey, including churches with growing numbers of converts from a Muslim background.

On April 18 of this year, five young men in Malatya murdered a German missionary and two Turkish Muslim-background converts to Christianity. So far 10 people with ultra-nationalist leanings have been arrested—all of this against the backdrop of a murdered Catholic priest in Trabazon in 2006 and the recent killing of an Armenian Christian journalist, also from Malatya, in Istanbul earlier this year.

In the aftermath, histrionic reactions were expressed inside the country by Muslims

against Christians, Christians against Muslims, pro-Europe politicians, and anti-Europe politicians, as well as by various outside groups and media organizations worldwide. Prominent Turkish newspapers called the event savagery; prominent European news agencies called the event alarming. Although not directly connected to these events, on April 29 more than one million secular sympathizers in Istanbul demonstrated against the pro-Islamic government.

The widow of the slain German missionary quoted Psalm 126:5, 6 to friends and to prayer partners: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him." She said that she was sure this would happen one day, not only in Malatya, but in all of Turkey.

Already there are reported calls to Turkish churches by people who want to distance themselves from radicalism and want to experience Christian love and grace. Pray for them and also for the Turkish pastors and the members of their churches who the PCA loves and supports. Watch Turkey? God is certainly watching Turkey. And He is sovereign. We expect great things as a result.

Jud Lamos is the international director for MTW's Enterprise for Christian-Muslim Relations.

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Mission Field to **MISSION FORCE**

Susan Fikse

Christianity is going South. We're not seeking warmer climates just to spruce up our tan. Literally, the center of the Christian world has shifted from the West to the South. Marking a critical turning point in the history of the Church, in 1980 its geographical center moved from North America and Europe to Africa, Asia, and Latin America (*The Church is Bigger Than You Think*, Patrick Johnstone). Literally and figuratively, the face of Christianity has changed, and along with it the task of missions. No longer can the West claim to be the "sending" Church and the rest of the world its mission field. Yet much of the world is more experienced in receiving missionaries than sending them. This new face of Christianity calls for a new approach to missions that combines the best the West has to offer with the emerging resources of the global South.

It's time to transform the mission field into a mission force.

Missions: Job One

Although this process is only beginning in many areas, one man is already working to turn Northern Mexico—although still an active mission field—into a mission force. Andres Garza, a Mexican national working with MTW as team leader for Northern Mexico, hopes to populate the 27 largest cities in Northern Mexico with Reformed churches. In his role alone, Garza represents a trend that MTW has already widely implemented—placing nationals in strategic ministry positions. MTW now works with 450 national church planters, easily surpassing the number of Western church planters on the field in MTW's worldwide church-planting movements.

Despite being newly planted, many of the Reformed churches in Northern

Mexico are already zealous for missions, says Andres. "We have tried in the past to develop a missionary mindset in existing churches, but we don't have a good example of this," he explains. "We want to build this mindset into the new churches from the beginning." So, many of the churches have been supporting missionaries from the day they opened their doors. But Andres and his team are not content just to see nationals working alongside missionaries in their native country. "One of the big goals of this church-planting movement is to train and send missionaries all over the world," he says.

"When new believers understand the gospel, and they understand that missions is in the DNA of the gospel, they get it and it becomes very normal," says Andres. "Now, when young people finish their studies, they are interested in becoming

missionaries. This is completely new to our National Presbyterian Church."

One of the ways MTW can support and encourage its partner Mexican denomination is by sharing its expertise in training and assessing potential missionary candidates.

Bill Yarbrough, MTW's international director for Latin America, and Andrew Lamb, Mexico's country director, are working with Andres to develop an assessment center for Mexican missionary candidates modeled after MTW's "readiness evaluation" training. With two candidates ready to begin the process, Mexico will be a testing ground for the rest of Latin America. "Along with teaching the theology of grace, infrastructure is one of the most helpful ways we can provide assistance in Latin America," says Bill. "I hope this will be the first of many assessment centers." Within two years, Andres hopes that one of his new churches will be sending one Mexican missionary to Peru and another to the United States to help plant a Hispanic church in North Carolina.

Another way Andres is building a vision for missions among the young churches of Northern Mexico is through short-term missions. For years, Bethel Presbyterian Church in Clover, S.C., has supported missions in Mexico, including sending short-term teams and helping fund Andres' and other Mexican leaders' theological education at Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) in Charlotte, N.C. Soon, Andres hopes to send a short-term missions team from Mexico to Clover to help repair a missionary house that Bethel has offered to another Mexican coming

to study at RTS. "This is great because it is at the heart of what we're about—building relationships to work together for the kingdom of God," says Andres.

Yarbrough believes that this kind of reciprocal relationship is beneficial to both Mexican and American churches.

"The PCA is enormously monocultural. For most of us, seeing the diversity of these people coming is welcome," he says.

"Churches stateside are impoverished both practically and theologically when they don't listen and learn from the perspective of others."

Blurring the Lines

Mexico is not the only mission field rapidly becoming a mission force. The lines between "mission field" and "mission force" become more blurry with each short-term trip, as teams from Australia serve in Thailand, India, and Bangladesh; teams from Japan serve in the Philippines; teams from the Philippines serve in Vietnam and Thailand; and teams from Taiwan serve in the Philippines. Paul Taylor, MTW's international director for Asia, sees this phenomenon of mission work

CARY GRANT



Andres Garza (left) and Bill Yarbrough (third from left) speak at a missions conference.

sending to mission work as essential to completing the task of world evangelization. "It's hard to get even one missionary from the U.S. overseas—with raising support and training and language school," said Paul. "We won't accomplish the task with just people from the U.S. If we can raise up people from everywhere, we can multiply the mission force."

With the changing face of Christianity, the Church has a decidedly more Southern flavor than ever before and a larger potential mission force than ever before. As the Church in the West is eclipsed by the Church of the South, the future of missions and the role of the Western Church are more open to question. But, as Bill Goodman,

MTW's director of field operations says, "We must constantly remind ourselves that missions is not about us; it is about getting on board with what God is doing to build His Church." □



A short-term missions team from Bethel PCA in Clover, S.C., in Northern Mexico with local church planters.

JORGE ALMAN



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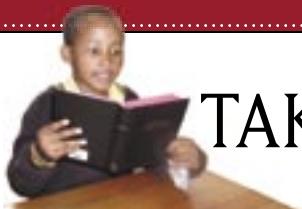
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TAKING THE GOSPEL TO SCHOOL

Michele Harold

One day missionary Barbara Wannemacher stopped at the impoverished primary school down the road from her home in Cape Town, South Africa, to drop off some donations. Stopping to speak to the principal, Barbara was surprised to feel the Lord nudging her to ask a question. "I said, 'May I teach the Bible in your school?'" she recalls. "I had never really thought about wanting to do that prior to that day."

At first, only the first-grade teacher

invited Barbara into her class. But a short time later, the behavior and attitudes of the children in that class had brightened so dramatically that

other teachers began clamoring for their students to receive the training as well.

Within one year, Barbara had been invited into all first-

through seventh-grade classes. "It turned into much more than I could handle. So I prayed to God for more volunteer teachers, and He provided."

Six years later, the Bible classes continue throughout the school, and Barbara trains a team of volunteers from the local seminary and church to meet the need. In addition, more seeds have been planted as the 1,200 students who have received Xhosa-language Bibles as part of this project carry God's Word into their homes.



Missionary's Book Circles the Globe

Michele Harold



Richard and Khai have never met. Their connection began—and continues today—over e-mail. Their story began 22 years ago, when MTW missionary Richard Ramsay, at the suggestion of his wife, wrote a discipleship book in Spanish entitled *Am I Good Enough?*

"I was a missionary in Chile and found that there was a great need for discipleship materials for new Christians," says Richard.

His Bible study workbook presents the basic doctrines of salvation in a simple way.

At first, Richard used the material only in Chile. Then it was published and distributed in other countries. "I would get letters and e-mails from people around the world who were using it to teach others about the gospel," he says. "Then I decided to put it on the Internet, and it really took off from there."

Enter Khai, a Presbyterian pastor in South Asia. "I read the book on the Internet," explains Khai. "It really helped me to understand God's grace and how God brings salvation to the lost. There are many Christians in my country who don't understand this. They believe in Christ but think they have to earn salvation."

Khai e-mailed Richard to ask permission to translate the material into his native language, and now uses it in Sunday school and with new members at his church. He plans to print 1,000 copies to distribute in other churches.

Currently assigned by MTW to work as a professor at Miami International Seminary and Universidad FLET, Richard has written several other discipleship books since his days in Chile. He remains amazed at how God is using these books around the world for His glory. "The book has been translated into four different languages," says Richard. "It's great to watch how God makes these things happen in ways we never expected."



Murat, a Turkish Christian pastoring a church in Belgium, knows the sting of immigration firsthand.

CAUGHT BETWEEN *Reaching Immigrants*

When he and his family moved to Belgium several years ago to minister to Turks there, they knew they were uniquely qualified for the task: they knew the language and culture, and they shared a Muslim background.

But Murat underestimated how much his faith would distance him from the Turks he was trying to reach. A quest to find an apartment revealed this reality—Turks would not rent to him because he was a Christian, and Belgians would not rent to him because he was a Turk. He found himself disenfranchised on both fronts.

"It's hard when you're trying to live between two cultures," said Murat, who partners with MTW in his church-planting work. "It doesn't feel good to be out of community."

Clearly, immigration is a hot-button issue worldwide, with continued illegal border crossings from Mexico into the U.S., race riots in France, and 2005's religiously charged Danish cartoon controversy. Increasing immigration patterns reflect the impact of globalization.

"The new context for missions is global," said Jud Lamos, international director for MTW's Enterprise for Christian-Muslim Relations. "Sometimes Christians relate to immigrants poorly, but it's clear that God is moving people around for a new age of church growth. This presents a phenomenal opportunity to share the gospel."

Perhaps no greater opportunity exists than in the flood of Muslims moving to



FRANKLIN BEAVER

Europe in recent years. Some estimate that as many as 25 million Muslims now make their home in Europe. For MTW, this presents a strategic opportunity.

"In all the disruptive patterns of moving, people are more open to the gospel," said Jud. "It also means that the elect are moving around."

A Diversity Lab

For this reason, MTW is making Brussels, Belgium, a hub for ministry—in effect, a "diversity lab."

MELISSA MORGAN



EN CULTURES: *with the Gospel*

Melissa Morgan

MELISSA MORGAN



"Brussels is the capital of Europe; it's the crossroads between East and West; and it's a diverse city—immigrants make up more than 50 percent of the population," said Jud.

MTW has several programs in place to capitalize on Brussels' location: many missionaries now travel there for pre-field training—including language and diversity classes; groups of Christian leaders gather there to strategize about global missions; and short-term teams converge in the city to do ministry.

MTW's work in Brussels has implications for missions worldwide. "Our work in Brussels is trying to answer the question: What does globalization mean in this microcosm?" said Jud. "And how can we work together with the Church in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America to take the gospel to the world?"

One proven method is through partnerships. "They're essential for missions in our globalized world," said Jud. "Latin and Korean churches have so many to send. One idea is to begin bringing Hispanic believers into Muslim contexts, since they share some important cultural values—like the importance of family and religion in their communities."

MTW hopes to eventually replicate the Brussels model in other global cities, capitalizing on immigration patterns just as first-century immigrants—who moved en masse from rural to urban settings—greatly impacted the spread of the gospel in that time.

Immigrants Reaching Immigrants

MTW supports several modern-day immigrants in the Brussels area. One such missionary is Ishak, an Egyptian Christian who pastors an Arabic/French-speaking church for Muslim background believers.

"It's important for us to help immigrants integrate and assimilate, to help them feel at home," said Ishak. "Our church should be ready, willing, and able to become family for a new believer. Islam is a no-return street—once you go out, you can't go back in."

Ishak's congregation spans 10 or more nationalities from North Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. One way his church reaches out to immigrants is by meeting their felt needs—for love, material needs, and education. Hosting church services in Arabic helps them feel at home as well. "They meet others in the same situation they are in, and friendships develop."

One of the biggest issues immigrants struggle with is identity. "It's a confusing thing—to not feel 100 percent at home in your parent culture or your host culture," said Ishak. "Here, in a foreign land, immigrants need a piece of paper to prove who they are. So we as a church try to help them find their identity in Christ."

Immigrants need to be seen as foreigners in our midst, says Jud Lamos. "They are terribly disenfranchised and lonely. They need a spiritual identity as well as a national identity."

Murat concurs. He tells the story of a diverse group of Christians—Turks, Kurds, Armenians, and other Europeans—sharing a meal as baffled Turkish Muslims watched on.

"Only Christ can bring together enemies like this," he told them. "That's the beauty of the gospel: Everyone knows who they are—the people of God. That means that you're the same wherever you are." □

■ TAIWAN: WORKING FROM THE Inside Out

Carter Davis



Chinese civilization—one of the world's oldest—is known for its embodiment of history and longevity, its reliance on ancient medicine, its reverence for the aged. Accordingly, it often takes missionaries—viewed as outsiders—many years to make significant inroads into the culture. But inside the walls of a nearly half-century-old college in Taiwan, an experienced missionary/professor is part of a growing team entrenched in Asian culture, helping to bring the gospel to this part of the world.

This is the story of MTW missionary Quentin Nantz and Christ's College.

Spiritual Education

Established in 1959 by independent missionary Dr. James Graham, Christ's College has long been a fixture in Taipei, Taiwan. At that time, approximately 80 percent of Taiwanese high school students were unable to pursue higher education because of a shortage of teaching institutions.

"There was certainly a need for higher education at the time in Taiwan," said Quentin Nantz, a current associate professor of English and former English Department head at Christ's College. "But [Christ's College] was unique in that there really weren't any other Christian colleges in Taiwan at that time."

The school started with a dozen students, and enrollment steadily grew to nearly 200 in the following decade. In the 1970s, Graham attended the second General Assembly of the PCA, says Quentin, seeking a successor to assume operation of the college. The duty of overseeing Christ's College soon fell to the newly-formed Mission to the World not long after the PCA's acquisition of the school. Interestingly, some of the first missionaries sent out by MTW served at Christ's College, forging a connection three decades old and growing.

"There's been a strong American missionary presence here," Quentin said, "so there's been an excellent English

program, and that has been one of the well-known strengths of the school."

With the help of MTW, Christ's College has grown markedly, swelling to 950 students in the early 1990s, before settling into its current enrollment of 600 students. (Additional colleges and universities in the area and a declining birth rate have greatly increased competition for students in recent years.)

According to Quentin, the college continues to expand its course offerings, including a ministry outreach course, which requires students to actively engage in ministry outside of the school.

"Relationships are very important [in Taiwan]," said Joe Lyle, an MTW missionary and English language instructor at Christ's College for the past 17 years. "But college students are at a unique point in their lives. Yes, relationships are important in the long haul, but I think it's interesting that with Christ's College you can get into spiritual conversations in a short period of time."

In a part of the world where authenticity and trustworthiness are highly valued but elusive qualities, Christ's College has proven itself an effective means for spreading the gospel.

The Inside Advantage

Quentin Nantz, MTW's recently-appointed country director for Taiwan, has been ministering to Chinese-speaking students for nearly two decades. Quentin worked as the head of the Christ's College English Department from 1995-2005; he served in Beijing for two years before that; he served in Wuhan, China prior to that, before earning a doctorate degree in education; and he even earned a high-school diploma from Morrison Academy, a school for missionary kids in Taiwan, where his father was a teacher in the 1970s.

"Quentin is an organizer of people," said Paul Taylor, MTW's international director for the Asia/Pacific region. "He's a good ideas man and brings people together around a plan and a vision."

It's been nearly two decades since MTW was involved in an intentional church-planting thrust in Taiwan, with the exception of a church that was developed among the Hakka-speaking people through the ministry of MTW missionary Brenda Carter.

"We have largely focused on Christ's College," said Paul. "And the result is that there are wonderful, godly people serving all across the nation. But the church in Taiwan has become more and more liberal, and as we have more and more graduates of Christ's College, it seems that now is a great time to re-engage in a significant church-planting work addressing the Mandarin-speaking, Taiwanese-speaking, and Hakka-speaking populations. Therefore, Quentin was asked to become the country director for this new work."

Quentin's new role will focus more on his administrative, organizational, and teaching talents, rather than actual church planting.

"The tactic that was tried [by the earlier MTW team] was that individual missionaries

planted individual churches," Quentin explained. "But what happens is that the churches become missionary-dependent, and it's difficult for the Taiwanese leaders to take over."

"But God has certainly been working in Taiwan these past few years," he continued. "We'd been doing our own thing at Christ's College, not really worrying about the Chinese church. But now, we feel like God is calling us in a new direction. The new vision is to work from the inside out, training and challenging Christian students at Christ's College to get involved in ministry in local Taiwanese churches and with MTW church-planting teams, and trusting that God will use them to facilitate a church-planting movement in Taiwan." ■



VIEW FROM THE FIELD:

ERIC HUBER
IN KIEV

"He grew up before him like a tender shoot, like a root out of dry ground"

ISAIAH 53:2

THE *Tender Shoot*

Eric Huber

Six of us came together once again this morning in my office. One man brought cereal, others fruit, another a small cake, and I brought some juice and hard-boiled eggs. All together it was enough for a men's fellowship breakfast, done Ukrainian style. I know that breakfast meetings are common in the States, but I can't tell you how unheard of it is here. The sheer fact that we have been doing this together for several months shows a remarkable level of commitment on the part of these brothers. It is a simple and wonderful blessing.

These men all come from the Presbyterian Church of the Holy Trinity in

Kiev, and they are all in their 20s. Each week a computer specialist, an economist, a musician, a real-estate broker, and an Irish missionary come together to grow in their love for the Lord, for each other, and for the people of this city. I believe that these men are part of the core that will carry the church forward in Ukraine for generations to come.

On a shelf in my office there is a poinsettia from several years ago. It is now a rather sad, mostly-stalk-looking plant with only green leaves. But the other day I was meeting with someone when I noticed one new, small, delicate red leaf on the top of the plant. It has probably been several years since it has had one—but there it is. I think it is a parable.

That leaf is like the church here in Ukraine. It is the mustard seed. These young men stand together against the tide and course of the world. Like my stalky poinsettia, in the midst of a bustling city, they stand together for the beauty of Christmas and Easter. They stand together so that they can seek our Lord. They are the kingdom, or at least part of it.

Over the course of this kingdom journey, there will certainly be setbacks. Some Bible studies will not last. Some English classes will fail to attract new students. But God will build His kingdom and His Church. The plant will grow. Please join me in praying for the churches here and for these men. Our desire is to trust in the Lord and pray for the gospel to produce fruit. ■

Eric Huber is an MTW missionary in Kiev, Ukraine.





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Dr. Paul Kooistra

RADICAL REPENTANCE

Reform, Ala., claims to have gotten its name from a circuit evangelist. The young preacher was so discouraged with the reception he received from the townspeople that he saddled up his horse and shouted at the top of his lungs as he rode out of town, "Reform! Reform!"

If there is any truth to this story, it was not a half-bad sermon, and it may have said all that needed to be said that day. The greatest preacher who ever walked the earth preached a not-so-different sermon, and it was not much longer. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

When we read these words of Jesus, we think they sound like a warning to shape up, or else. But they have a much more profound meaning than that. Heaven has invaded earth, and our savior has come. So why the single command to repent? Our question grows out of our truncated concept of repentance. We often relegate repentance to the act of

confession (1 John 1:9). There is no doubt that repentance includes confession, but it is far more than that. Luther, when he attempted to call the Church to change by tacking the 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, started with the first thesis—repentance as a way of life.

Repentance is living in such a way that we realize the significance of Christ's saving work on the cross. Everything has been radically changed because Christ has come. What is important has changed: The things of heaven are more important than the things of earth. What is valuable has changed: The treasure we lay up in heaven is more important than the size of our estate. Even who I am has changed: I now belong to Christ and not myself.

Do you see why repentance is a way of life? Now that Christ has come and given us a new heart, everything is different. Therefore, I am to repent—to change the way I feel, the way I think, and the way I act.

It can be helpful to ask several questions: What has changed? What needs to change? How can I change this situation because the cross of Christ is a reality? The world says I must win, but must I? Is it true that my value is dependent on what others think of me? Will I really be more satisfied the more I accomplish?

You see, repentance is a radical concept. It takes the supernatural motivation and guidance of the Holy Spirit. But it is also one of the most exciting concepts in the Bible. We usually don't associate excitement with repentance. But the heart of repentance is the reality that Christ has given us new life. We don't have to live as if we were a rat caught in a maze. We can live resurrected lives. The door to such living is repentance.

Paul D. Kooistra



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