

THE TIME: POST-WORLD WAR II.

THE PLACE: YOKKAICHI, JAPAN.

THE SITUATION: A JAPANESE WIDOW AND HER THREE SURVIVING DAUGHTERS ARE ASKED TO HOUSE AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY FAMILY.

At the time, no one knew that this encounter would lead to the founding of one of the largest and most influential Presbyterian churches in Japan.

"We obviously had no idea what God had planned for our two families," said MTW's Bruce Young, son of missionary John Young. "In hindsight, however, it's difficult to fathom just how important an event our family moving in with Mrs. Ito was."

A Widow's Journey

Setsuko Ito lost nearly everything she valued before becoming a key figure in the spread of Christianity in Japan in the 20th century.

When she was just 16, Mrs. Ito wed the widower of her late sister in an arranged marriage. She did so without question, and the couple moved to Brooklyn, eventually producing five children. Later, the Ito family returned to Yokkaichi for Mr. Ito to take over the family business. But he died just a few years later from tuberculosis.

GOD'S GRAND PLAN

UNLIKELY ALLIES
HELP SPREAD THE GOSPEL IN JAPAN



The matriarch of this now-fatherless family also lost her oldest son, a Japanese soldier, in World War II and her youngest to disease—leaving Mrs. Ito and her three girls alone in a culture that strongly valued a male's influence on the family unit.

Around the same time, on Christmas Eve of 1947, Rev. John Young and his family fled communist China for the less-deadly mission fields of neighboring Japan, called by God to relocate to Yokkaichi. Despite the lack of available housing, the town's mayor secured temporary lodging for the family—the home of Setsuko Ito, who had enough space to accommodate the growing family because of the unfortunate circumstances of her life.

God Makes a Way

Soon after moving in, John Young began sharing his faith with Mrs. Ito, ultimately leading her to Christ. It was a decision that finally gave meaning to the succession of tragedies in Mrs. Ito's life and allowed her to move forward, confident that God was indeed in control.

"Not long after we moved in, my dad and Mrs. Ito started Sunday school and worship services, which met at Mrs. Ito's >

by Carter Davis



house for 15 years until a permanent facility was built," Bruce recalled. (Bruce and his wife, Susan, serve as MTW missionaries to Japan.) Thus, the Yokkaichi Presbyterian Church was born.

"It's such an incredible story of God's providence and sovereignty," said Susan. "It just takes my breath away to think about how God made a way for this work decades before these two families ever converged."

Though John Young's missionary work officially began with his move to Japan in 1947, God's work began much earlier, according to Susan. "God used Mrs. Ito's time in the U.S. to help her learn English and prepare her for working with foreigners. As missionaries, it's hugely encouraging to see that we are not sent out to work in a vacuum. Instead, God has been at work on the field way before we ever conceive of it."

Persevering Through Crisis

The Yokkaichi church faced its first crisis when John Young was called to Tokyo to train future church leaders just one year after its founding. This left the Yokkaichi church without a pastor. Separately, Bruce said, the "ingredients" for this church seemed to add up to long-term disaster—it had no permanent facility, no permanent pastor, and it met in the home of a woman who, while still socially prestigious, lived under unfortunate circumstances.

But in God's providence, Yokkaichi Presbyterian evolved into a cornerstone among evangelical Japanese churches. It currently numbers more than 200 members, a huge congregation by Japanese standards. "The current

Japan 1958—Sunday school.

pastor has written 10 books on Christian apologetics, which are among the most widely read books in Japan," Bruce said.

Another element of the church's success is the kindergarten school system the church established decades ago, which has become a model that many other churches have studied and replicated.

"The impact that this church has had is overwhelming," Bruce said. "And the timing of every little piece that had to be in place for this to happen is astounding. There is no other way, but through God, that this was possible."

An Abiding Friendship

"I doubt my father had any inkling that he was doing anything other than planting a church when we moved here in 1947," Bruce said. "And Mrs. Ito would say the same thing—that she was merely letting God use her."

The friendship between the two families has continued down to the fourth generation, with Bruce recently teaching Mrs. Ito's great-grandson in a Sunday school class.

Fittingly, as the lives and families of John Young and Setsuko Ito were so closely intertwined during the planting and expanding of the Yokkaichi Presbyterian Church, they died within just a few years of each other—Ito at age 93 seven years ago, and Young nearly a decade ago.

Clearly, had the events of both families' lives unfolded differently, this story would not have been told, a fact that is not lost on Bruce Young.

"My dad and Mrs. Ito would say that they played little or no role in this—that they merely did what they thought God wanted them to do, one small step at a time," he said. "While that is true, this story is also about the power that one seemingly insignificant choice—to befriend a stranger, for example—can have on countless lives." ■



Japan 1962—New church building.



The Young family in the early 1960s.



Three generations of the Young family with Mrs. Ito.

Mrs. Ito's Way

Takuo Hirata knew Setsuko Ito's loving touch firsthand. As Mrs. Ito's grandson, Takuo inherited a legacy of faith and compassion. "My grandmother never actually told me about love per se, but she did show me how to love others. And she gave me the decisive advice in my life. When she died, I inherited her memories—three large boxes of photo albums and letters."

Following is an excerpt from a letter to Mrs. Ito found in one of those boxes:

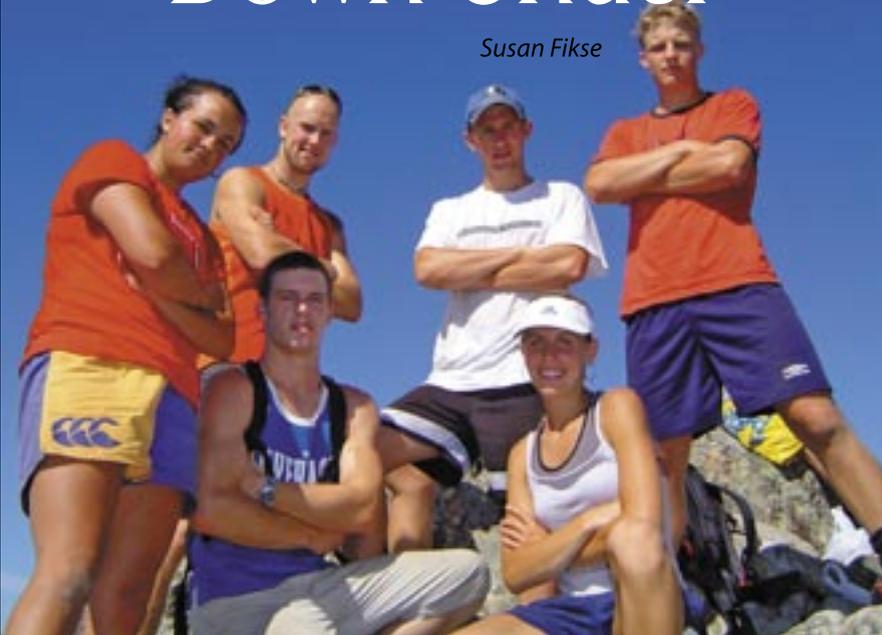
The other day I revisited Yokkaichi after 20 years of being away. I was elated to see you in good health. I had always thought that when I became an adult I would try to lead a life like yours, and now I am starting to do just that: I try to receive any visitor to my house with warm hospitality, even the old man who comes to collect the junk. On cold days I serve him hot tea, and on hot days I give him something cool to drink. . . . When I was still an impressionable young girl, two things happened in Yokkaichi that made my life rich: I came to know the Lord, and I met you. For these, I give my thanks to God.

**Japan 1987—
The Presbyterian
Church has grown to
more than
200 members.**



Church Planting "Down Under"

Susan Fikse



The land "down under"

Evokes images of coral reefs, tropical rain forests, exotic creatures, vast outback regions, and pristine beaches. This natural beauty of the Australian continent has not only shaped its tourism industry, but also its national psyche. The popular expression, "No worries, mate," reveals the attitude of many in the culture. Instead of worrying about life, Australians enjoy it. David Cunningham and the MTW team in Brisbane use this natural inclination of Australians to call them to a higher purpose—to enjoy and declare the wonders of God's grace in Christ.

David was first called to Australia in 1998 to support a fledgling university ministry at the University of Queensland in Brisbane. But he soon recognized the need for churches that would cling to the gospel of Christ and support students in their Christian growth beyond graduation. So, as the university ministry became increasingly Australian-led, David began his second term in 2002 with the mission of planting Bible-believing churches in Australia, beginning in Brisbane.

"The 12 [people] in our first launch team prayed and searched the Scriptures, asking God what He wanted for the church in Brisbane," describes David. "We were convinced that the grace of Christ should

be at the core." This focus on grace led to Christ Community Church's motto: "We live to enjoy and declare the wonders of God's grace in Christ for the good of Brisbane, Australia, and the world." Paul Taylor, MTW's international director for the Asia/Pacific region, observes that the church embodies this philosophy: "Christ Community has a strong grace orientation and a wonderful, caring community."

In addition to teaching and modeling grace, the church is infused with a sense of mission. Only two-and-a-half years old, the church will send its first long-term missionary to the field next year. "Prayer has been a huge part of developing this vision," explains David. "From the early days of the church, we prayed each week for the big picture of God's work around the world."

Australia is strategically positioned to accomplish that work, David believes. "We're in a place to engage countries that are out of reach for others—

Indonesia is right at our doorstep," he says. At a recent MTW conference in Japan, Paul introduced David to another MTW missionary who is working with unreached tribes in South Asia. Following David's visit to this work, Christ Community now supports a national missionary in the area and is sending short-term teams there as well.

David says, "This culture is about enjoyment and leisure, but for the Christian, the enjoyment of Christ is our highest joy." Through the grace of God evident in David Cunningham and the people of Christ Community Church, residents of Brisbane are meeting the creator of the beauty so evident in their country. In turn, these Australians are declaring the wonders of God's grace in Christ to those for whom an attitude of "no worries" is only a distant hope. ■



David Cunningham teaching in Australia.



University Ministry Team.

news briefs

Bulgarian Churches Reach Out to Gypsies

In Bulgaria, between five and ten percent of the country's eight million citizens are of Gypsy, or Roma, descent.

"The Roma population is the poorest of the poor in Bulgaria," said Tony Myers, a church planter with MTW who works alongside Bulgarian believers. "And there are many stereotypes associated with Gypsies. They live in segregated communities and aren't considered full citizens in this culture."

MTW has been working in the Roma culture in Bulgaria over the past five years, partnering with two particularized Roma churches—congregations in Svilengrad and the capital city of Sofia. The growing churches each draw 40 to 50 attendees weekly.

"One of the challenges of working with this population is illiteracy," said Tony. "It's hard to have people grow in Christ if they can't read the Bible."

But the Roma population's poverty may enhance their receptivity to the gospel. "People who are poor are less dependent on themselves and more open to the gospel," said Tony. "It's easier to know your need when you live day to day."

Churches Can Share Resources on MTW Web Site

Has your church developed missions resources that might benefit other churches? Are you looking for missions resources that would be helpful to your own church? It could be a marriage made in heaven, but first the two must be introduced. MTW has just the ticket—its recently created "Church-to-Church Resources" section on www.mtw.org.

Many churches don't realize they have resources to share. Sometimes the materials and ideas are simple and practical, such as missions conference ideas and know-how, or artwork for conference brochures. Other materials may be related to missions strategy and planning. All can open the door for an

interchange that extends beyond simply sharing tangible materials.

"The days of the missions agency being the sole source of information are long gone," said Scott Seaton, former missions pastor at Intown Community Church in Atlanta, now working with MTW to help with church resourcing. "One of the best ways that MTW can serve PCA churches is to be a broker of the helpful people and resources that already exist in our congregations."

Visit www.mtw.org, click on the Resources tab, and then click on "Church-to-Church" to view current materials on the Web. If you would like to make a contribution to this section, please contact info@mtw.org.

First MTW/RUF Missions Project a Success

This summer, Mission to the World and Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) collaborated on their first co-sponsored mission project.

"We've had probably 40 to 60 college students go on different missions trips with various agencies in past years," said John Stone, assistant coordinator of RUF, the PCA's campus ministry. "But we had no way to debrief them as a group and help them learn from their experience. That's why we wanted to set up a trip through MTW."

MTW provided logistic and administrative resources for the two trips—one to

Southeast Asia and another to Mexico City. Next summer's trips will include more sites. "This is the first national RUF project we've done," said Andy Coburn, MTW's international university ministry director. "We're excited to help RUF reach its goals of evangelism and missions."

RUF provided the teaching and training for the summer trips. "We needed to show [students] that missions is in our theological grid," said John. "God is working to create worshipers within every tribe, tongue, and nation. He's commanded us to go and tell the good news."

A Lemonade Stand for StreetChild

One day this past summer, Rebekah Johnson, age 11, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Alan Johnson of Old Peachtree Presbyterian Church in metro Atlanta, decided to sell lemonade to raise money for MTW's StreetChild ministry. When neighborhood friends Savana and Faisa heard about Rebekah's idea they quickly joined in. With just a little parental help, they set up a colorful lemonade stand complete with a StreetChild change house and recent newsletter photos from the "Sobre el Puente" (Over the Bridge) ministry in Acapulco, Mexico. The hot and dry summer weather obviously provided them with plenty of thirsty customers—they raised \$81.10 for StreetChild in only three hours!

Rebekah (R) and Savana selling lemonade to support the StreetChild ministry.



HOW TO



Save a Life

Michele Harold



A young patient receives treatment.

EMAN KALIDAS

When Adam and Ellen Hoover signed up for a medical mission trip to Ethiopia with Mission to the World last summer, they weren't sure what to expect. "I had a vague idea of what it would be like," recalls Adam, a second-year medical student at the Medical College of Georgia. "I expected to see desperate medical situations, especially in terms of the AIDS crisis. But at the time, my expectations were faceless."

Once in Ethiopia, it didn't take long for Adam and Ellen, a nurse, to put a

face to the needs. "As we drove through the city streets, we saw dozens of people lying on the side of the road. We thought maybe they were homeless or just sleeping. We later learned that many of those people were HIV-positive and had lost all desire or motivation to live."

Hannah Warren, a third-year medical student at East Tennessee University, also served on the trip to Ethiopia. She says that the shame and fear associated with HIV costs many people their families and their connections to the community.

"Individuals who are HIV-positive are the most vulnerable in society."

For Hannah, going to Ethiopia was going home. Hannah grew up in Africa, spending most of her life in Kenya and Ethiopia. The mission team also worked with Hannah's parents, Andy and Bev Warren, who run the HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment Project in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The project provides home-based care for people infected with HIV and their families.

"Basically, whatever they need, we try to provide," Andy explains. "Before

the introduction of the anti-viral drugs, people got really sick, really fast. The majority would die within one year. Now, with better treatment, they are living longer, and thus, the needs are more extensive."

Short-term missionaries play a crucial role in ensuring that medical treatment reaches the sick. "The medical teams are great," Andy says. "They come in and see people in clinics throughout the community. They help us further our network with local churches. And because the people here get used to seeing us, when outsiders come in and give them attention like they've never gotten before, we see great things happen."

Drs. Ted and Sharon Kuhn, who lead MTW's Medical Department, explain that the medical mission trips, especially the student trips, are not just about treating the sick. "We answer the needs of the missionaries and church planters throughout the world for medical support, but a key part of the trips for students is building up experience that they would never get in a classroom."

The students work alongside medical professionals, learning about communication, treatments, and patient care. "Students gain valuable knowledge on these mission trips that directly relates to their future practices," says Sharon. "They come away with increased insight into looking at the whole person, and they learn that not everyone is like themselves. They begin to see the need not just to hear the symptoms, to but



look deeper at what's behind them: the spiritual, emotional, financial, and cultural factors. They observe listening and compassion at work and they are able to see how much better they can care for the patient."

In addition to the medical experience, Sharon emphasizes the opportunities for spiritual growth for the team members. "They are seeing firsthand the power of God to heal, and how He is allowing them to be a part of His healing plan."

Hannah lists the fellowship and spiritual encouragement as one of the strengths of the trip. "I was really grateful for the opportunities for prayer, teaching, and discipleship among the team." Hannah was also thankful for the time to share her faith with the patients. "The evangelism was the hardest part and the best. I'm used to doing the medical care, but seeing the hopelessness of some of the patients really challenged me to talk about my faith more than I ever have before."

Ellen relates, "Through this trip I learned just how weak I am spiritually and how much I need Christ to face

everything in my life—my marriage, my career."

For several years, Adam and Ellen have been involved with Medical Campus Outreach, an interdenominational ministry that helps students grow spiritually through Bible studies, retreats, conferences, and mission trips. Dr. Clark Newton is the advisor for Medical Campus Outreach at the Medical College of Georgia. "We are active in training laborers on the medical campus to serve the lost and to be a part of furthering the kingdom of God," he said.

MTW and Medical Campus Outreach team up several times a year to arrange medical mission trips for students. Clark calls the partnership "wonderful." "MTW handles a lot of the stuff that I don't want to do, such as the logistics and contacts, and I provide the students. It's a dream in both worlds. They give me the structure and leadership and I give them the people."

Sharon and Ted stress the importance for the students to learn early in their careers how to use their gifts and talents to bring glory to God. "On the trips, they get a live example of how to incorporate their faith and their practice. Ultimately healing is not through pills, but through God's amazing grace." ■

Medical students at work.



Net-Savvy Networking: A Whole New World

Susan Fikse



"CYBERSPACE FRIENDSHIP YIELDS NEW CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION"

Sounds like a far-fetched headline in a Christian tabloid. Yet sometimes fact is stranger than fiction, especially when God weaves His handiwork. The story of how MTW became involved in launching a new Reformed denomination in South India begins with the

providential cyber-meeting of Dan Harris and Kiran Kumar.

Connecting Virtually

Missions work in India was not Dan's idea—it actually evolved from boredom. In 2002, Dan, of Spring Cypress Church in Houston, Texas, had just moved to the city. His wife was working every day, but he was retired. So Dan explored

online Christian chat rooms where his screen name was DHAR, which, unbeknownst to Dan, is a common Indian name. Suddenly, Dan was inundated with Indians who desired a Christian cyber-pal. In his newfound social life, Dan chatted online with more than 50 people, but one stood out among the rest. "He struck me as someone who was looking for a ministry," recalls Dan. In this way, God introduced Dan Harris and Kiran Kumar.

As a child in India, Kiran was inspired by the missionary stories he heard growing up on a seminary campus with his parents, who were students and then church planters. However, as he learned of the corruption of denominational leaders and witnessed a lack of moral integrity, Kiran lost his spiritual zeal. "I left home for my education," he remembers. "And I was totally away from the Lord's way." However, in

his final year of college, upon hearing a message on Ezekiel 37, he was revived by the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit started working in me," says Kiran, "leading me to attempt great things for Him."

Shortly thereafter, Kiran organized a group of pastors into CREW (Christian Revival through Education and Welfare), which sought to proclaim the gospel through charity. His hope was to build a new Indian church that would stand for truth even as existing churches were falling away from biblical values. However, lacking a formal theological education and the resources to train pastors, Kiran sought help in the logical place for someone working in the computer industry—on the Internet.

"Meeting Dan Harris was a turning point in my vision," says Kiran. "He introduced me to many books which will help us start a God-pleasing church



Paul Taylor with South Indian pastors.

and denomination." Together, Dan and Kiran published the first *Westminster Confession of Faith* in the Telugu language. From there came the PCA *Book of Church Order*, the *Trinity Hymnal*, study guides on the *Confession*, and other resources to help local pastors understand the Reformed faith.

MTW Takes the Lead

After years of study and preparation, Kiran and his CREW were ready. With 20 pastors ready to plant new churches, Dan felt it was time to bring in Mission to the World. His contact with MTW's Paul Taylor, international director for the Asia/Pacific region, came at just the right time. Two days before his diagnosis with cancer, Dan received the news that MTW would continue the work in India. Dan remembers, "When I was diagnosed, my biggest concern was for the Presbyterian Church of South India (PCSI). But God kicked me to the curb and said, 'Paul Taylor can handle it!'" Dan testifies with tears in his eyes, "I really didn't plan this—I still don't understand how it got this far. The Lord was sovereignly in charge of it all."

Today, as Dan completes his cancer treatment and builds strength, the work in South India is growing stronger as well. "After we received a positive response from God, we started our work toward beginning a new denomination," says Kiran. "Now God is mightily moving PCSI toward its purpose. I give my thanks to our Lord who is clearing the path."

MTW provided training for Indian church planters earlier this year, with seminars attended by 80 people,

including 25 pastors. And soon MTW will conduct six sets of seminars, taught by Indian Christians from other parts of the country and visiting teachers from the U.S. When they complete the classes, pastors will take an exam in order to be approved as founding pastors of the PCSI. "The seminars will help ensure that the new group all begins on the same page in belief and expectation," says Paul.

"MTW is all about church-planting movements, and this is one in the making that will start strong with approximately 20 initial church-planting works," says Paul. "As Dan says, 'If

you can find the 'Kirans,' missions is a lot more efficient.'"

Dan hopes to be part of MTW's plans to continue training pastors in other parts of India. And in March 2007, if he is well enough, Dan plans his

first trip to India to participate in the examinations of the presbyters. He'll also have another meeting with his friend Kiran—this time face-to-face. ■



Paul Taylor prays with Indian believers and (below) teaches seminars on church planting.



Christian persecution is hardly a recent development in human history. Nearly 2,000 years ago in ancient Rome, followers of Jesus who refused to denounce Him were executed. Jesus tells us that we should not be surprised by persecution since He Himself was persecuted, even to death.

Today, there are still sections of the world in which Christians face open hostility, including China, North Korea, and many Middle Eastern countries. MTW missionaries,

nationals, and new Christians living and working in South Asia have experienced this hatred firsthand in a string of events that culminated in the burning of a local church several months ago.

"In this part of the world, persecution is basically a given," said Paul Taylor, MTW's international director for the Asia/Pacific region, "but we're usually talking relatively low-grade levels, like refusing to allow the Christians access to certain resources, or refusing to allow them access to many businesses. Occasionally there are physical beatings, but those are rare."

Occasionally there are physical beatings, but those are rare."

In this particular corner of the world, there exists an official freedom of religion, but Paul said that this freedom is little more than a written document.

One afternoon in May, Zarlawm, one of MTW's local mission leaders who was with Paul, received a panicked phone call informing him that one of the churches they'd been working closely with had been set ablaze. Opponents in the village where the new church was housed had taken offense to the inroads it was making. With the accompaniment of no less than 15 police officers and at least as many soldiers, Paul visited the site where the

church ruins sat smoldering. "We needed to be there to show that we were supporting the local believers," Paul said, "but the whole situation was tense."

K.L., a national helping to lead the church planting movement in South Asia, found encouragement in this otherwise disheartening event.

"I believe that whenever the church will be persecuted there will be blessings in that area, and that will spread

His Word more effectively," said K.L.

In the wake of the church burning, K.L. said that tensions in the area have not subsided, but those responsible for the act—as well as many others in the region—have witnessed God's forgiveness firsthand.

"Those who burned down the church thought that the Christian community would file a case at the police station to arrest them," K.L. said. "But, as Christians, we did not. When they came to know that we did not file the case, they [were] very much amazed."

Blessings Through PERSECUTION

SACRIFICING TEMPORARY SAFETY FOR A LASTING PEACE

Carter Davis



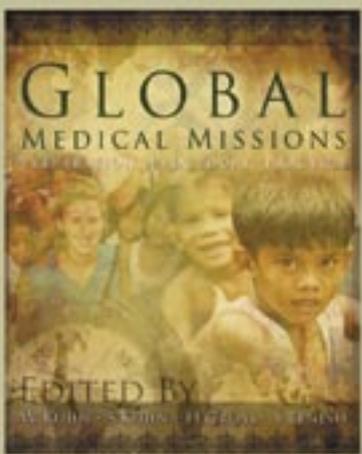
With this simple act, "the community came to know how the Christians are," K.L. said.

Although the church's congregation—which counts some 250 members—has yet to rebuild, Paul said he is optimistic for the church's future in this region.

"Christians in this part of the world truly have to count the cost of their faith," said Paul. "Because they must endure such persecution, their depth of faith is often much greater than those of us who can take our faith for granted.

"There aren't many lukewarm Christians in this part of the world." ■

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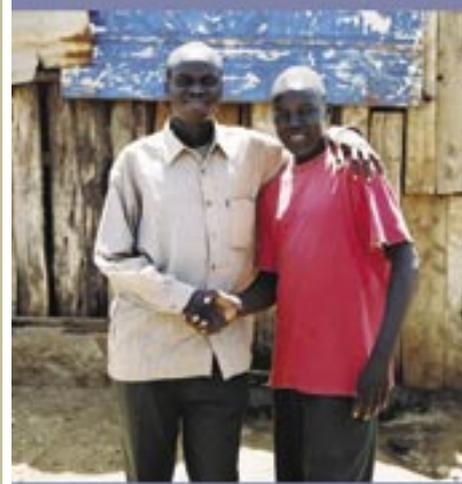


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“Inspiring” CHURCHES Toward Missions

MTW TOOLS HELP CHURCHES FOCUS THEIR MISSIONS MINISTRIES

Ashley Levy

When Victoria Barnes approached MTW for help in developing her church's missions ministry, she didn't expect to learn that they had an "inspiration" problem. But completing the MTW diagnostic tool "Window to the World" revealed two truths—that her church already had a strong vision and focus for missions ministry, but that they needed help inspiring church members to become involved.

"The consultation with MTW was definitely helpful," said Victoria, of Granada

Presbyterian Church in Miami, Fla. "It

encouraged us by helping us see that we were already doing some things right, and it provided tools to help us move forward in confidence."

Most PCA churches know they can call on MTW to help them connect with missionaries in the field, plan a short-term mission trip, or provide a speaker for a missions conference. But in recent years, many churches have expressed a desire to become more strategic in their missions giving and participation, and MTW has been working to expand its role as a resource to churches and their missions ministries.

Equipping the Local Church

"This is something we have been talking about for a long time, and it's one of our strategic priorities," said Scott Seaton, former missions pastor at Intown Community Church in Atlanta, now working with MTW to help with church resourcing. "We want to partner with churches and help connect them to the field, and that means not only asking them to support and send missionaries, but also resourcing and equipping their global missions ministries."

For Granada Presbyterian, that equipping occurred through Scott's



Scott Seaton



meeting with Victoria, her senior pastor, and members of the church's missions committee. After committee members answered the "Window to the World" questions individually, they compared results and found that as a group they consistently scored in the same area of challenge.

Scott was able to direct them to the follow-up articles outlined in "Window to the World" for help with inspiration, and presented ideas for resources and next steps. Together they tailored the conversation to their issues and developed a plan of action over the next few months.

"MTW's main focus is planting vibrant churches," said Scott. "One of the ways we do that is by equipping existing churches to expand and fulfill their mission vision."

To that end, MTW has developed diagnostic tools and resources to help churches grow their missions programs. The "Window to the World" diagnostic survey helps churches identify strengths and weaknesses in their missions ministries. The survey questions are designed to measure both missions activity (such as an organized missions committee, ministry vision, or short-term projects) and missions focus (such as the centrality of the church and partnering with nationals).

"Churches need to be active in missions, but they also need to have a goal in their

missions program," said Scott. "That's what 'Window to the World' helps with."

"The Gracious Commission"

Another recently developed resource is *The Gracious Commission*, a four-part Bible study on the motivation for mission work.

"Churches have been asking for some kind of missions curriculum for years, but we didn't have what they needed," said Scott. "Most existing resources started from a position of need or guilt. What was missing was a gospel-centered approach to missions."

The Gracious Commission starts with and is grounded in God's work of grace. The four parts can stand alone or be used in combination with any of the others. The curriculum could be used for a Sunday school series, a sermon or message, or a discussion-format class.

"The material doesn't presuppose any missions understanding, so it's easy to use and could be appropriate for a variety of settings," said Scott. "No missions background is needed."

While there are other missions agencies that provide resources for mobilizing churches, MTW's unique contribution is to link mobilization to specific missiological convictions.

"Our tools reflect our belief that church planting is biblically the best way to accomplish the Great Commission,"

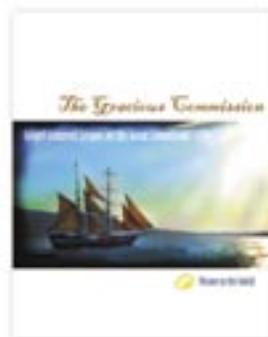
said Scott. "We want to get a conversation started, to get people thinking."

Eventually, MTW hopes to establish a system of regional representatives who have personal relationships with people at each PCA church and can help with ongoing missions ministry issues.

"What we're doing now is the tip of the iceberg compared to what we could be doing, what we'd like to be doing," said Scott. "We want to develop a coherent set of materials and processes that fit together, with 'Window to the World' as the centerpiece.

"We want to be the missions agency of choice by serving our churches in the best possible way." ■

To download "Window to the World" or *The Gracious Commission*, visit www.mtw.org and click on Resources/Books & Videos/Local Church Resources. To request printed copies of "Window to the World," email info@mtw.org or call (678) 823-0004 ext. 276.



VICTORIA BARNES



Chaos to Community

VIEW FROM THE FIELD:

HOW LIVING AS A REFUGEE
CHANGED MY LIFE

Greg Seymour

When I arrive in a country on the scene of a disaster, I am eager to see how God is going to work in the lives of the victims we minister to. And when I leave the country a few days or weeks later, I am always amazed at how God has not only worked in the hearts of the victims but in the rescuers as well.

After responding to multiple disasters with MTW over the past two years, I am convinced that God wants to use these trips to teach us important lessons about community. Living in refugee camps offers a deep sense of community I've seldom seen elsewhere, and seems to parallel some of Luke's account of the early church in Acts 2:42-47.

Luke writes that the people were continually involved in prayer, fellowship, and breaking bread together. At ground zero, the only things in abundance are chaos, trash, and wreckage. There is something about this environment that causes simple, communal things to seem marvelous. During a trip to Sri Lanka after the tsunami, we spent every day focused on relief work, devotionals, meals, and fellowship. Instead of a fridge full of tasty food, entertainment options that required solitude, and being too busy to have a quiet time, we had something different: PB & J pitas, nothing but people to interact with, and undistracted time in an environment of suffering—the gift of the refugee camp. This seems more like the abundant life.

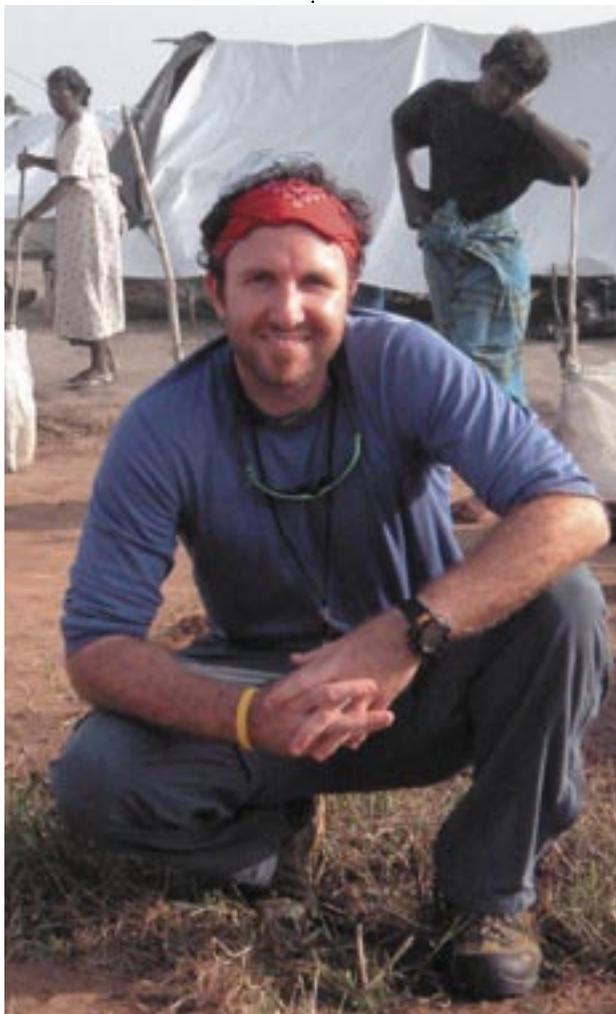
Luke also describes the phenomenon in the early church of members sharing their property. Unfortunately, this seems like a foreign concept to most Americans. Our culture gives us a different message about our "stuff"—to accumulate it, make sure nobody messes it up, and then get new stuff when the next model comes out. There is something transforming about living in an environment where all the stuff has been destroyed.

Luke writes of the sense of awe that people felt in the early church. When Christians live in authentic community in the presence of those who don't know Christ, it has an impact. I remember one national woman who served as a guide to our team. She ate with us, translated for us, and began to join our team devotions. After two weeks, she approached one of our female team members in tears, wanting to know more about Christ.

There is something transforming about living in an environment where all the stuff has been destroyed.

So, after experiencing some "Luke 2-type" community in the field, I'm hungry for more of the same at home. I want to believe that I don't have to travel across 13 time zones to get it. My wife and I have made at least one application of this by joining a church that is in our community. Simply living closer to other believers has helped curb some of the seclusion that comes out of busyness and distance. I'm thankful for the lessons I've learned as a rescuer. ■

Greg Seymour is a crisis counselor who frequently serves with MTW's Disaster Response Ministry.



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FALL 2006

Mission to the World is the mission-sending agency of the PCA, helping to fulfill the Great Commission by advancing Reformed and covenantal church-planting movements through word and deed in strategic areas worldwide.

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Network is published three times a year by Mission to the World of the Presbyterian Church in America.

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1600 North Brown Road
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Dr. Paul Kooistra

INCARNATIONAL CAR BUYING

There is an experience I dislike almost as much as having a root canal. It's buying a car. You know how it works. The back and forth counter offers—and never knowing what a fair price is for the vehicle. I just bought a car, and the salesman's name was Emmanuel. I mentioned that it was an unusual name for a car salesman, and then I asked him if he was going to live up to his name. He laughed at that, but I then said, "I know what your name means—'God with us.'"

The more I thought about the fact that I know what the Incarnation means, the more I have been made to ponder the issue. It is not enough to believe in the virgin birth and celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday. Instead of asking the salesman if he is going to live up to his name, I need to be asking myself whether or not I live each day in the reality of the Incarnation. Is my life about the living Lord or is it about myself? Do I face

each experience, including buying a car, believing that Christ is present?

The message we share with the world is that God loves the world that He created. The fact that He became part of this creation is proof positive that He is concerned with all of creation and He is restoring it to its original perfect condition. God loves the beauty of creation more than we do; all that seems so wrong will be made right. As the hymn says, "Jesus who died shall be glorified and heaven and earth be one."

The gospel is also a message for all of life. There is not one part of our human existence that is not important to God. In fact, Christ fully entered into the human condition in order to redeem all of human life. Think of the doors this opens up for evangelism. No matter what area of a person's life is open to us, we can share Christ. He is the answer and the Savior of family, work, dating, art, etc.

The Incarnation ought also to empower our worship. Christ said, "I am the living bread. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." In worship we are to be nourished by the living Christ, who is present by His Spirit with us. This is especially true of the Lord's Supper.

The reality of God with us is central to the mission activity of the church. We are commissioned by a resurrected Christ to tell others that He lives—that He is now at the right hand of the Father in heaven, that He is coming again, and that when He does He will bodily raise us from the dead. He has conquered death.

If I believe in the Incarnation, then my ministry in this world must be incarnational. Others must be able to see the reality of "God with us" in my life. I need to live up to His name.

Paul D. Kooistra



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