



BELIEVERS IN SLOVAKIA



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS



WALK IN MY SHOES

Loving the Despised

"Gypsies" Find Acceptance Among Slovak Believers

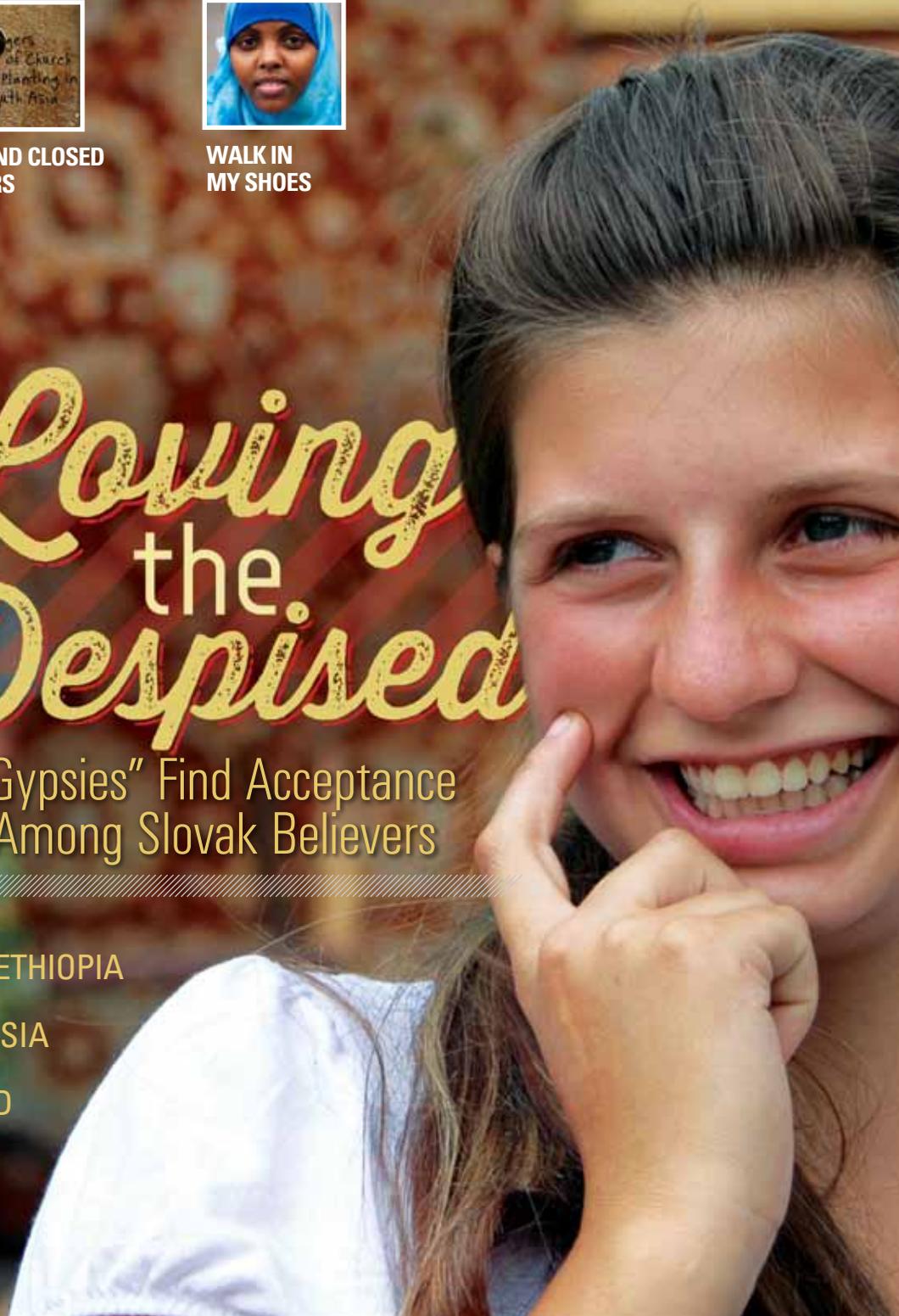


HEALING MERCIES FOR ETHIOPIA

A VISION FOR SOUTH ASIA

GOD IN A MESSY WORLD

SINKING IN JAPAN



Loving the Despised

“Gypsies” Find Acceptance Among Slovak Believers

Katka knows the heartache of looking into a hungry child’s eyes without a morsel to offer. The one room she shares with her husband and nine other family members would challenge even the poorest Americans. Job opportunities, education, and indoor plumbing are distant, unfulfilled dreams. The end of the month can bring evenings without dinner or the warmth of a fire. On one of those cold and barren evenings, Katka, having little food left, received an unexpected gift of a bag of potatoes. Despite her dire circumstances, Katka divided the potatoes and shared her gift, prompting tearful thanks from another desperate mother.

Knowing that God is creating this kindness and generosity in the midst of economic need draws Kathy Lesondak to the Roma community she visits regularly from her home in Kosice, Slovakia. Kathy’s husband, John, is the leader of [MTW’s Slovakia team](#), whose central focus is church planting in Kosice. As the church plant overcomes racial divides to minister in Christ’s name, God has demonstrated the power of the gospel among both Slovak and Roma.

A Persecuted People

The Roma—often known as Gypsies—are despised throughout Europe and commonly viewed as dirty and uneducated thieves. This traditionally nomadic people group lives in a cycle of poverty that is perpetuated in part by persecution within their own countries. Throughout Europe the Romani have seen their homes demolished, been subject to harassment, and in the not too distant past, even endured coerced sterilization of women.

When Kathy and John Lesondak first moved to Kosice in 2010 from Trnava (where they worked since 1997 planting a church), they learned of a ministry to the Roma community in Vitkovce,

a village outside of Kosice. “The first time we visited Vitkovce, we took off our rings and watches,” remembered Kathy. “We really didn’t know what to expect.” What they discovered were six believing families who, in spite of their economic poverty, were hospitable, generous, and hungry to grow in their understanding of the Word of God.

“We grew in love for the Roma people,” Kathy said. “We wanted to help them, but aimed to address their needs without patronizing or creating dependency.”

“We grew in love for the Roma people,” Kathy said. “We wanted to help them, but aimed to address their needs without patronizing or creating dependency. We recognized the image of God in these people and their ability to ‘do’ for themselves.” So, as the team in Kosice addressed the spiritual needs of the Roma through preaching and training of the men, they also brainstormed ideas for addressing a whole way of life that anchored the Roma in physical need.

Practical Progress

“The Roma receive a stipend from the government,” explained Kathy, “but they had no idea how to stretch that money to provide for their needs. We taught them how to budget and save,



Roma women & children with Kathy Lesondak

so that they could avoid the loan sharks who took advantage of their desperation.” Kathy and other team members taught Roma families how to buy and eat differently, both to save money and improve their health. Once a month they gathered at a host home and prepared a menu that would feed 12 people for \$4.50. Believers invited their neighbors to hear a testimony and share the meal. “It was so fun to see changes start to happen in different families,” Kathy recounted. “One family was able to reduce their oil consumption from seven liters a month to two liters a month. The wife was thrilled that her husband lost weight and was so much stronger!”

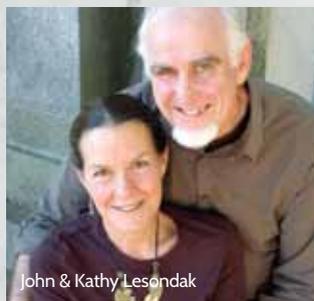


Roma children eagerly greet their visitors

Another initiative that will change the trajectory of many Roma children’s lives is a preschool. “Many Roma only know the basics of the Slovak language,” explained Kathy. “So when children start school, they are quickly categorized as mentally handicapped merely because they can’t communicate.” However, non-Roma villagers would not agree to allow the Roma use of a facility for the preschool in spite of the team’s willingness to purchase it for them. Instead, the Roma meet in homes and call their preschool a “mother’s club” to avoid further discrimination. →

Margite, a Roma woman, looks out her window

BY: SUSAN FIKSE



John & Kathy Lesondak

Loving, continued

Surmounting Hurdles

The hurdles of racism and persecution continue to plague the Roma even as they embrace faith in Christ, according to John Lesondak. However, the power of the gospel propels the Slovak church in Kosice to overcome prejudices and reach out to the Roma in Vitkovce. "Believing Slovak nationals are taking more and more leadership of the ministry to the Roma, falling in

love with these people whom others in their country hate," John observed. "Slovaks are reaching out and standing with the Roma at the risk of being labeled part of the problem themselves." John and Kathy realize that their job is almost finished as Slovak nationals assume leadership of the ministry among the Roma. "That's what we really want to see—nationals owning the work is the real goal, but we are experiencing withdrawal pains," admitted John. Letting go of relationships with people they love, like Katka, is difficult. "It is so rewarding—they love us so much and are so hungry to learn and honor God," said Kathy.

Yet, Kathy acknowledges that it was God who opened doors to ministry with the Roma and He will continue to lead as He did in those first visits to Vitkovce. "I found potatoes on sale at the market, so I bought them," she recounted. "I had no idea that gift was perfect timing for hungry families. It's fun to see God do this. You feel pulled along and just try to keep up with what He's doing!"

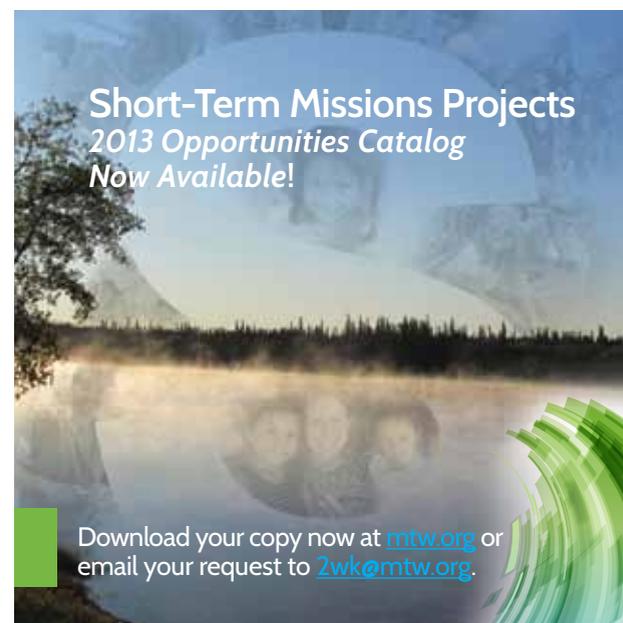
To support the Slovakia Roma ministry, visit donations.mtw.org/donate/. Designate for: Slovakia Roma Community Project - 94972. To donate to John and Kathy Lesondak, designate - 14310.



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FROM THE COORDINATOR



Dr. Paul Kooistra

God in a Messy World

This past Christmas season, for me, was a reminder that nothing is needed more around the world than the gospel. As our family gathered together, we found ourselves praying for the families whose lives were shattered by the killing of so many first graders in Newtown, Conn. We commented on how God had blessed us with good health, but we also mourned with a dear sister whose husband died after a fall and we grieved with one of our own missionaries in Eastern Europe whose wife also died in a fall.

I can't remember a Christmas when the joy was blunted by as much human sorrow. My first reaction was, "Why does it have to be this way?" Yet, the more I thought about it, the more it seemed that this is what the birth of Christ was really all about.

Christ came into this messy world to be born in a dirty stable because things are not pretty. Life is messy. I was talking to a colleague about one of the sad events we were facing, and he said, "*I don't know how people deal with these kinds of losses when they don't know God and have no hope.*" Paul writes, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13, KJV).

After the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School, you could not help but notice how quickly people turned to God, the Church, and prayer. There is a reason for that. There are no real answers from a human perspective. The tragedy was too big for humans to deal with on their own.

That is the real message of Christmas. God came into this world so we can have the hope of eternal life. None of us escapes the sadness and messiness of this world, but we don't have to face it alone. By faith in Christ we can live as those who are experiencing the fullness of life in Christ. This is what the angels were announcing when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests" (Luke 2:14, NIV 1984).

And now, as we look forward to Easter, we are reminded that God has a plan for redeeming what is broken. Christ came once, but He is coming again, and when He does He will come with power and authority to fix His broken, messy Creation. Let us face this broken world with faith in Christ, and invite others to find the eternal and abundant life He came to give. 

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Mission to the World

Spiritual Multiplication: Slovak Style

They came to faith through MTW's ministry.
Now they're reaching their peers with the gospel.

Profile: Hana

Profile: Marek

I have spent much of my life in the church, but it has only been a few years since I began to explore into a relationship with Christ. I was familiar with Him, but I didn't know Him.

BY MAREK TOMAŠOVIČ

WITH CARTER DAVIS

I have lived the majority of my life as an atheist. I was brought up as an atheist and never really met a Christian with a good heart and very good intellect at the same time.

BY: HANA HLUCHA

WITH KATIE WEAVER



Hana Hlucha

In addition, Christians I saw around me were really bad examples. However, while in high school, I started going regularly to The Building, which was an MTW ministry in my town, Trnava. The Building had a non-threatening tearoom for people to come and rest and chat with friends. I met several nice Christians there.

I then left Trnava to go to university in Bratislava where I became deeply invested in my studies of physics. One day I started to email John Lesondak, one of the MTW missionaries I had met. I had a simple question, but it turned into an almost nine-year correspondence in which we discussed the Bible, God, and the world. John was the right person for me to talk with. He is a wise thinker, very understanding, and very friendly.

I earned my degree with a specialty in theoretical physics, and decided to continue my studies at the University of Vienna while working at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. I kept writing to John, preparing my emails on the train during my hour commute. I got some answers to my questions and slowly went from being an atheist to an agnostic. As a physicist I continued to wonder about the origin of physical laws and order in the universe.

One day John sent me *The Reason for God* by Tim Keller and I pored through it with great intensity, while also keeping up my difficult Ph.D. studies. However, I began suffering from exhaustion, which spiraled into depression. My depression became deeper still because of improper treatment by doctors. I lost hope and tried twice to take my own life. For some period I was in and out of hospitals.

I started to think that if God was real, He would help me out of my troubles. I also needed something to hold on, but not blindly. I decided to join an online Christian forum where I posed my honest questions. Thanks to my emails with John and the forum I gained an intellectual basis for my faith. I also was asking God for recovery and He slowly healed me from depression.

In April 2012 I defended my thesis on supersymmetry and was awarded a Ph.D. Several months later, I finally felt God's presence. It was like being flooded with great love. I started to see purpose in things, even my own suffering. I had always needed God to kick me and He indeed did.

Now I wish to help the world. John and I have written a book based on our correspondence, *Speaking with Christians: Written by Life*, which we hope to publish this year. I also would like to be an apostle to scientists.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Lesondak, John
To: Hlucha, Hana
Subject: Grateful
Date: Tuesday, May 29, 2012

John,

You see that my soul (or whatever is inside me) longs for a deeper understanding of the world. It's my nature.

What we learn is designed to reveal something about the One who created it (His nature, power, character ... etc.)

And therefore I really like discussions about the world, God, and so on.

To be inquisitive is what we are designed for ... we want to ask questions.

I am grateful for a friendship with you. - Hana

Hana, I too am grateful for our friendship. - John Lesondak

For more information about MTW's work in Slovakia, visit mtw.org/locations. To learn about missions opportunities in Slovakia, email go@mtw.org.

The country I call home—Slovakia—is steeped in Catholicism, and I spent a large part of my time growing up in it. I was even an altar boy, and I thought I was serious about my faith, but the truth is that I had no relationship with God.

Nearly seven years ago, during high school, I was invited to a summer English camp by an American named Andrew, whom I'd met when he visited my English class at school. He was an MTW intern with the camp, and I accepted his invite, as did several of my friends.

After English camp they held a Christian camp a few days later, and I was having fun so I stayed. Afterward, I came back to my town and found out that many of the friends I had made were meeting every Sunday for church—at MTW's "The Building"—and I wanted to spend time with them, so I became involved. Soon, I was going everywhere and participating in everything.

The next summer I attended both camps again. This time, though, something clicked. I had been going to the MTW church plant that whole year, so I understood the mechanics of Christianity, but I needed that "click" moment to happen. There wasn't a radical change, but this time there was heart in it. I was doing many of the same things but now it was real. I was finally getting to know my heavenly Father.

Almost immediately, I was convicted with the idea of becoming a pastor, so I got involved in ministry to see if this was something God wanted for me. Ever since then, the idea of me going to a seminary and becoming a pastor had become so strong that by the end of high school, I couldn't imagine continuing on in computer science—a long-time passion of mine.

I became involved in an MTW-led youth outreach and later became a youth group leader. I was on staff with the English camp, led small groups, and mentored youth as well. I'm currently responsible for all youth activities in our church—outreach, youth groups, youth retreats, summer camps, vision and planning of

the ministry, leading a team—and I preach every other month on Sunday.

As I approach the end of seminary, I'm planning on obtaining a master's degree with the ultimate goal of becoming a pastor. While pursuing my studies, I want to spend at least four years working in a secular environment



Marek talks about Slovakia at mtw.org/news



Marek Tomašovič

so I'm not just the guy who studied things but who lived them.

I'm immensely grateful to MTW—particularly Miriam Grady, whom

I consider as my spiritual "mom," and Kris Lundgaard, who has taught me so much about theology—for the teams that they've sent over here and the support they've given to the church in Slovakia. It's exciting for me to be part of the group that takes the reins from MTW as we bring the Word of God to our own people.

Want to hear more from Marek? Watch Marek in this [six-minute video](#) as he explains the spiritual climate in Slovakia and how MTW is making a difference there. Find the video at mtw.org/news. To learn about missions opportunities in Slovakia, email go@mtw.org.



Photos courtesy of World Relief

Covenant College senior Anna Wiersema had all of the tools lined up for a successful missions experience last spring—a love for all things cross-cultural, previous missions experience, fluency in not one but two foreign languages, and a particular affinity for the people group she planned to serve.



Anna Wiersema (center, front) with refugee women and other Walk in My Shoes participants

So she was surprised when the challenges of that trip began to gnaw away at her competencies and securities, revealing a desperate dependence on God that unnerved her. Several days into the trip, after unexpected logistical obstacles and losing many of her possessions, “I was at the end of my mental and physical resources,” said Anna. “I just wanted to crawl into a hole and disengage.”

BY: MELISSA KELLEY

Humbled, she began to accept that she could not function in her own strength in this new place. “The real strength and power of missions comes from God,” she said, “I realized that this experience would be difficult and challenging, but that God would provide.”

Welcoming the Stranger Among Us

The short-term MTW trip that Anna experienced is designed to provide missionaries with cross-cultural training and challenge them to serve the disenfranchised in their communities when they return home.

“Walk in My Shoes” is a U.S.-based short-term missions opportunity offered by MTW in partnership with World Relief, a non-profit focused on equipping the Church to reach refugees. It replicates some of the same frustrating and confusing circumstances refugees face when moving to the U.S. to help missionaries understand what life as a refugee is like. Participants also spend portions of their week providing practical help like setting up a new apartment for refugees, picking them up from the airport, or helping them grocery shop.

“These are the most vulnerable in our society, and there’s something you can do,” said Beth Rhodes, volunteer coordinator with Atlanta’s branch of World Relief. Some 50,000 refugees enter the U.S. each year. They all share the struggle of rebuilding their lives in a foreign culture, learning a new language, finding a job, and conducting everyday transactions.

John Giri spent 20 years in a refugee camp in Nepal before arriving in the U.S. three years ago. The 27-year-old native of



John Giri

“NOT KNOWING THE SYSTEMS, THE WAY OF LIFE WAS VERY HARD ... WE HAD A DIFFERENT DREAM ABOUT THE U.S., THAT LIFE WOULD BE EASY.”

Bhutan had been trained as a teacher while living in a tented hut shared with seven others. Still, he was unprepared for the rigors of modern American life when he and his wife moved to Clarkston, Ga., in 2009.

“Not knowing the systems, the way of life was very hard,” said John, who now works full time at World Relief. “We had a different dream about the U.S., that life would be easy.” He juggles three jobs, and the manual labor of his manufacturing work is a far cry from his job as a tutor in the refugee camp. Still, he and his wife are glad for the opportunity to use his work as a platform to help other refugees just entering the U.S.



“So many people we greet want to know how we are blessed, how to live in this new place,” said John. “We tell them to believe in Christ. He can solve all problems.”

Walk in My Shoes

Anna Wiersema can attest to the power of Christ to solve all struggles. After floundering early in the week of her [Walk in My Shoes](#) experience, she began to settle in and was able to use her foreign language skills to befriend and aid those she was serving. It also made her more aware of needs in her own community. After returning home last spring, she began teaching English to a family of Iraqi refugees in Chattanooga, Tenn.

That’s exactly the kind of response that [Walk in My Shoes](#) seeks to elicit, says Bobbi Jo, MTW project administrator. “It changes people’s perspective. If they see someone wearing a turban, that’s no longer just a stranger. They see needs they didn’t see before.”

To learn more about Walk in My Shoes, or to register for a future [Walk in My Shoes](#) trip, contact 2wk@mtw.org

Reaching Refugees: World Relief

Q&A with Joshua Sieweke, World Relief-Atlanta Office Director



Joshua Sieweke

Q. Why is it important to educate the church about ministry to refugees?

A. Many people don’t know about refugees, and if they don’t know they can’t respond. So many people are coming to our backyard to start new lives.

Q. Who is the ideal candidate to serve refugees?

A. You don’t have to be an expert to love someone, to love a refugee. Anyone born and raised in America is well equipped to love and serve refugees. It’s easy to make a difference in their lives.

Q. How does U.S.-based ministry to refugees fit in with the Great Commission?

A. Our ability to communicate the gospel in their context, in their countries of origin, would take much more time and be much more challenging [than serving them here]. As churches really engage and disciple immigrants and refugees here, we’re very encouraged that they will see that influence reach back to the countries they left.

Andy Warren is the MTW team leader for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. For more information about short- and long-term missions opportunities in Ethiopia, email go@mtw.org.

Healing Mercies for Ethiopia

It had been almost 25 years since I saw a child with severe malnutrition.

In fact, it was during the Ethiopia famine in the mid '80s. These kids have orange hair, stick-thin arms and legs, and swollen bellies. They often don't survive without careful management. You can't just hand them a cup of milk and porridge.

During a recent clinic with a visiting medical team in our new community of Suki, we found one small girl, severely malnourished. We had chosen to work in Suki because it has one of the most marginalized groups and some of the sickest and poorest people in the country. Still, this little girl was extreme even for children in this community. She looked like the famine poster child. We sent her to the hospital and after a few days plus about \$40 for all her care, she was well enough to return home.

House Calls

When the little girl got out of the hospital, Danny, our project manager, and I did a follow-up visit. We found the mother, who was abandoned by her husband for another woman, living in one room of a mud and tin building, which is pretty typical for Suki. Also typical in most Ethiopian homes are icons or a poster of Mary if they are Orthodox Christians, or a poster of Mecca and some Koranic verses if they are Muslim.

BY: ANDY WARREN

And even the very poorest people have furniture in their houses. By contrast, this mother had almost nothing: two mattresses in one corner on the mud floor, a busted up cabinet, and nothing on the walls. The baby sat on the floor eating a potato.

Building trust with people here takes time, so digging out the real story and facts is often hard. As Danny quizzed the mother about herself, he received vague answers. The little girl was clearly stronger, but still not getting enough nutrition. Danny and I agreed this needed follow up.

New Community, New Hope

We're thankful that the extreme condition of this little girl is not representative of Ethiopia or Addis Ababa. The health and well-being of Ethiopians in general is improving. One of the reasons that we're able to expand our work to Suki is because

we've seen huge improvements in our other communities. More than half of the families we have worked with now support themselves. More than 300 people with AIDS have gone from being destitute, and in most cases dying, to being healthy and working to support themselves and their families.

Please pray for us as we expand our ministry into Suki. One of the things we will do as we start is a child health and nutrition survey. Pray for wisdom and creativity in how to go about this. With God's help, we hope to bring His healing mercies and the gospel to this new community. [📍](#)



Missionary Linda Swallow and a national staff member speak with an Ethiopian woman



Sinking In Japan It's Humbling to Be So Needy

Missionaries [Jeremy and Gina Sink](#) recently went from itinerating in the U.S. to living full-time in Japan. [Jeremy](#) gives us a glimpse into the challenge many missionaries face when they first arrive on the field.

Humble Beginnings

Several weeks this past fall were very humbling for Gina and me. We'd gone from living in a place where we were mostly competent and self-sufficient to one where we were functionally illiterate, unable to communicate basic ideas, and as a result very needy.

One night I decided to fire up one of the kerosene heaters used to warm the house during the winter. I went to the gas station, bought some kerosene (an adventure in itself), and then topped off the tank in the heater. The heater itself is more complex than its U.S. counterparts with buttons and digital readouts all over the front. Of course, each button is clearly labeled ... in Japanese! I finally did get the heater to light, and it warmed the house nicely. However, I'm not sure which combination of things actually resulted in ignition, so I had to start from scratch the next morning!

Everything in our lives, especially those first few months, has been like lighting that kerosene heater. The buttons on the microwave oven and the washing machine are all written in Japanese—as is the owner's manual for our Toyota van and the labels on everything in the grocery store. It seems like we've needed help with almost everything!

Help in Weakness

So, through this transition, the Holy Spirit has been giving us a better view of our weakness. At the same time, He's been mercifully providing for our daily needs through His Church here. Our teammates and the Japanese Christians at Nisshin Christ Church have been so helpful and patient with us. I'm pretty sure that someone from our team spent time with us every day that first month. We feel humbled and grateful for their constant help.

The Japanese Christians at Nisshin Church also received us warmly. Within 48 hours of our arrival, one of the church ladies knocked on our door to take Gina to the grocery store and teach her how to cook a Japanese-style meal. Another lady took us to city hall and then helped us open bank accounts. Someone else spent their whole Saturday translating for us at the cell phone store, and a team of three ladies have taken turns meeting with us each week to tutor us in Japanese. I could go on, but you get the idea.

BY: JEREMY SINK



The church here is very (very) small, but God has people who've welcomed us with lavish generosity. They're able to do that because they've experienced the lavish, welcoming love of God through Christ Jesus. He received them when they were aliens and strangers because of their sin, and now they're showing a similar welcome to us. It's a marvelous picture of God's grace drawn around our newfound weakness.

I wish I could tell you that we became independent again after a few weeks, but that's not reality. We'll need a lot of help (and prayer!) for a long time. And in the process, God will get glory as He continues to show Himself strong through our weakness. Thank you for praying to that end! [📍](#)

You can follow the Sinks on their blog, www.grace4japan.com. To make an online donation to the Sinks, go to donations.mtw.org/donate and designate Sink - 17143.



VIEW FROM THE CHURCH

A Vision of Southeast Asia

How Visiting Three Countries in 11 Days Redefined Our Church's Strategic Approach to Missions

My wife and I met on a missions trip in 1992 and we have been blessed to serve together on short-term teams in South America, Central Asia, and South Asia. She serves as missions coordinator at our local church near Philadelphia. While our involvement in missions has been rewarding and encouraging, we have often

BY: CONRAD REED

observed that the interface between the local church and missionaries on the field does not reach its potential, leading to a sense of disconnectedness instead of shared mission. At times, we have even felt guilty that our engagement with missionaries doesn't extend beyond reading their newsletters and writing checks.



When our church was invited to join the Southeast Asia Partnership, a strategic partnership of churches with a specific heart for Southeast Asia, we took this as a leading from God to develop more intimate relationships with missionaries on the field and to increase awareness of and excitement for missions in our church.

A Broader Perspective

Through this partnership I went on a vision trip with MTW. I'd participated in short-term missions trips before, which were typically task-oriented and in one location. By contrast, the vision trip provided a broader perspective on how God is working in an entire country or region, which challenged me to consider how to more strategically take part in God's work.

Our team visited three countries in 11 days and we were excited by the varied ways God is working in each country. In two of the countries, we met with local denominational leaders and were privileged to hear the vision these leaders had for their nation. We witnessed very different needs in the third country,

a nation where there was a more developed local church and established MTW missionaries serving on the field. It was encouraging to consider that a church in the U.S. could help bring these visions to reality—that the growth of the kingdom can benefit through a broader, more strategic approach.

Strengthening Relationships

The vision trip enabled us to build relationships with MTW missionaries and leadership, and with like-minded churches in the Southeast Asia Partnership. We gained greater insight into how God is leading in each of the countries we visited and how our church could contribute to transform lives through the gospel.

I returned with three distinct but complementary thoughts: I was excited and challenged by God's work in Southeast Asia; I was motivated for greater involvement in the partnership; and I was encouraged by the implications for my church and its members.

A vision trip helps lay the groundwork for ongoing engagement with the field that continues to build even after the vision trip is over. I'm thankful to have been a part of this trip, which represents just one brief chapter in the unfolding story of how God is working in Southeast Asia. [📖](#)

Conrad Reed is a physician and is involved in missions at Eternal Life Ministries, a Korean Presbyterian Church in Horsham, Penn.

If you are a pastor or church missions leader and would like more information about an upcoming [vision trip to Belgium](#) in September, please contact our Church Resourcing Department at cr@mtw.org.

BY: DAVID *

Behind Closed Doors

the dangers of Church planting in South Asia

David is an MTW missionary serving in South Asia. Please pray for ongoing protection for David, his family, and the church he leads. Pray also that Jesus will make Himself known to unbelievers in this restricted-access country.

Sunday evenings are always a scramble for our family. We stuff toys, shoes, and drying clothes into closets and drawers to make room for the church we host in our home. One Sunday as members trickled in, there was a knock on the door. Two police officers greeted me and said, "We want you to come upstairs to answer a few questions for us." My heart stopped.

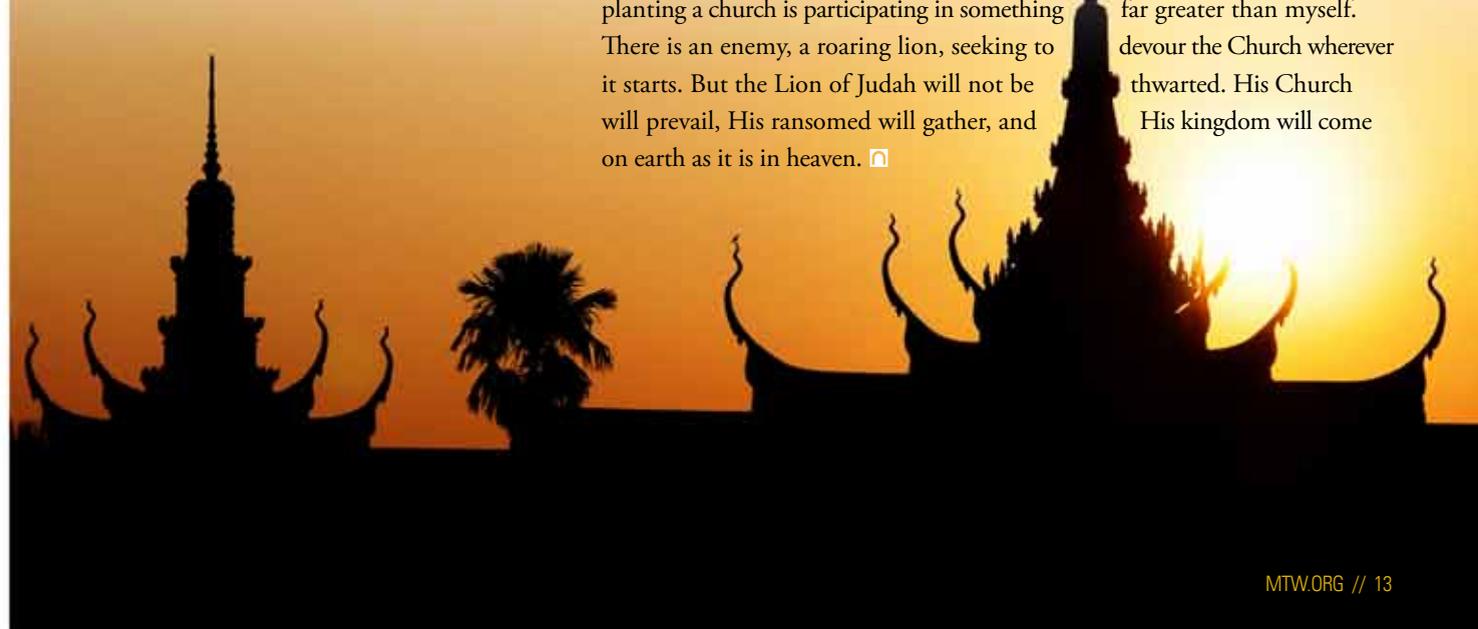
Our work here in South Asia is highly illegal. To be found church planting is nearly certain grounds for eviction from the country—or even worse for residents of the country who can't leave. So as I climbed the stairs to the terrace with the police, while members continued to arrive down below, prayers raced under my breath.

One officer said, "I see you're having a party downstairs so we won't keep you long." Our local police station was taking a "census" to keep tabs on residents in its jurisdiction. They wanted to know everything about my family, my work, and me. After examining my business card, apartment lease, and visa, they were content to go. I breathed a sigh of relief and thanksgiving.

That night 40 of us squished together on couches and folding chairs to worship, pray, and study the Gospel of John together. An Iranian Muslim, a Nigerian Roman Catholic, and an Indian Hindu joined us. Our two Japanese agnostic friends couldn't make it because of work. (That was disappointing because the previous week they brought a bottle of vodka for the snack table.)

Close calls with police and the unbelievers in our midst remind me that planting a church is participating in something far greater than myself. There is an enemy, a roaring lion, seeking to devour the Church wherever it starts. But the Lion of Judah will not be thwarted. His Church will prevail, His ransomed will gather, and His kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. [📖](#)

* Last name withheld





news briefs >>

2013 PCA Global Missions Conference: The Spirit Moves

This fall MTW and Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) will co-sponsor the [2013 PCA Global Missions Conference](#), to be held November 8-10 in Greenville, S.C. The theme of this year's conference is "The Spirit Moves."



College students, missionaries, church leaders, and laypeople are invited to gather together to learn how the Spirit is moving around the globe and to share in the excitement of God's work.

And the Spirit is indeed moving. New church growth is exploding across South Asia. The church in Africa is expanding by nearly 250,000 every week. National believers around the world are taking leadership in reaching their own communities with the gospel. In so many areas around the world, God is doing something historic.

The [2013 Global Missions Conference](#) will bring together Reformed University Ministries (RUM) National Coordinator Rod Mays and MTW Coordinator Paul Kooistra as plenary speakers, as well as Ravi Zacharias of RZIM Ministries and Giotis Kantartzis, pastor of First Greek Evangelical Church in Athens, Greece. Worship during the conference will be led by Kevin Twit of Indelible Grace.

Break out sessions will cover a range of topics relevant to participants' interests. Whether a seasoned missions pastor, a missionary, or a

student just beginning to explore missions, the conference seeks to address needs for each specific audience.

A [Mercy Ministry Pre-Conference](#), led by Philip Langford of International Justice Mission (IJM), will begin Thursday evening, November 7. Sessions will help churches learn how to be the hands and feet of the gospel.

Registration for the 2013 Global Missions Conference is open. To register, or for more information on the conference, visit www.mtw.org/gmc.

Global Disaster Response Training Equips Volunteers

Mission to the World (MTW) will hold its week-long [Global Disaster Response \(GDR\) Training](#) April 30-May 5, 2013 at Gospel Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Valencia, Penn.

The training equips volunteers to be able to respond rapidly to an international disaster. Having a pool of trained volunteers allows MTW to quickly form response teams and enter disaster areas within days of a catastrophic event.

About 50 percent of the training takes place in the classroom, and 50 percent in the field. After a few days in the classroom, participants enter the more demanding, hands-on part of the training—living and sleeping outdoors in a mock disaster scenario. "We train people to dig latrines, prepare food, purify water," said Tom Felmley, the senior consulting engineer/logistic coordinator who has helped run MTW's Global Disaster Response Training since its inception 12 years ago. "During training we have people walking around with babes in arms in need of help. We have medical emergency scenarios. Our volunteers sleep in tents for two nights. It's challenging."

The intensive training is different from that of many other relief organizations because MTW disaster

response units are self-sustaining and mobile, allowing teams to live among the refugees where they can most effectively meet emergency needs.

While response teams often include medical professionals, engineers, and trained counselors, MTW's greatest need is for lay people willing to serve in whatever capacity is most needed, according to the coordinator of ministry operations and training for [Global Disaster Response](#), Christina Davies. "We need people to help keep things running," Davies said. "We also need volunteers to serve as counselors. That's one of our biggest areas of ministry right now, comforting people at their greatest time of need."

MTW has trained more than 220 responders, about 120 of whom are actively ready. But more trained volunteers are needed. "It's amazingly rewarding to be able to help people at the most vulnerable point in their lives," said Felmley. "We're bringing a cup of water in Jesus' name."



Training participants role-playing a disaster scenario.

For more information on [Global Disaster Response Training](#), email response@mtw.org or visit mtw.org.

How will this year's tax law changes affect your tax and estate planning?

Mission to the World's Estate and Gift Design Department can serve you through our no-cost and no-obligation estate design service. We can help you design a complete estate plan including IRA charitable rollovers and donor-advised funds.



"...Their materials were professional ... service was excellent." – MTW Partner Doug Haskew

For more info, contact estategift@mtw.org or **678-823-0004 x2291**



Global Disaster Response Training
April 30-May 5, 2013. Valencia, PA.
www.mtw.org

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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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- How my church can get involved in missions
- Global Disaster Response Training
- Medical Missions
- Estate & Gift Design
- ONEChild Sponsorship
- Participation in a Business as Mission trip
- The 2013 Global Missions Conference

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