

## PLANTING CHURCHES:

*The Root of  
What We Do*



**Global  
Missions  
Conference**  
November 10–12, 2017  
Dallas, Texas

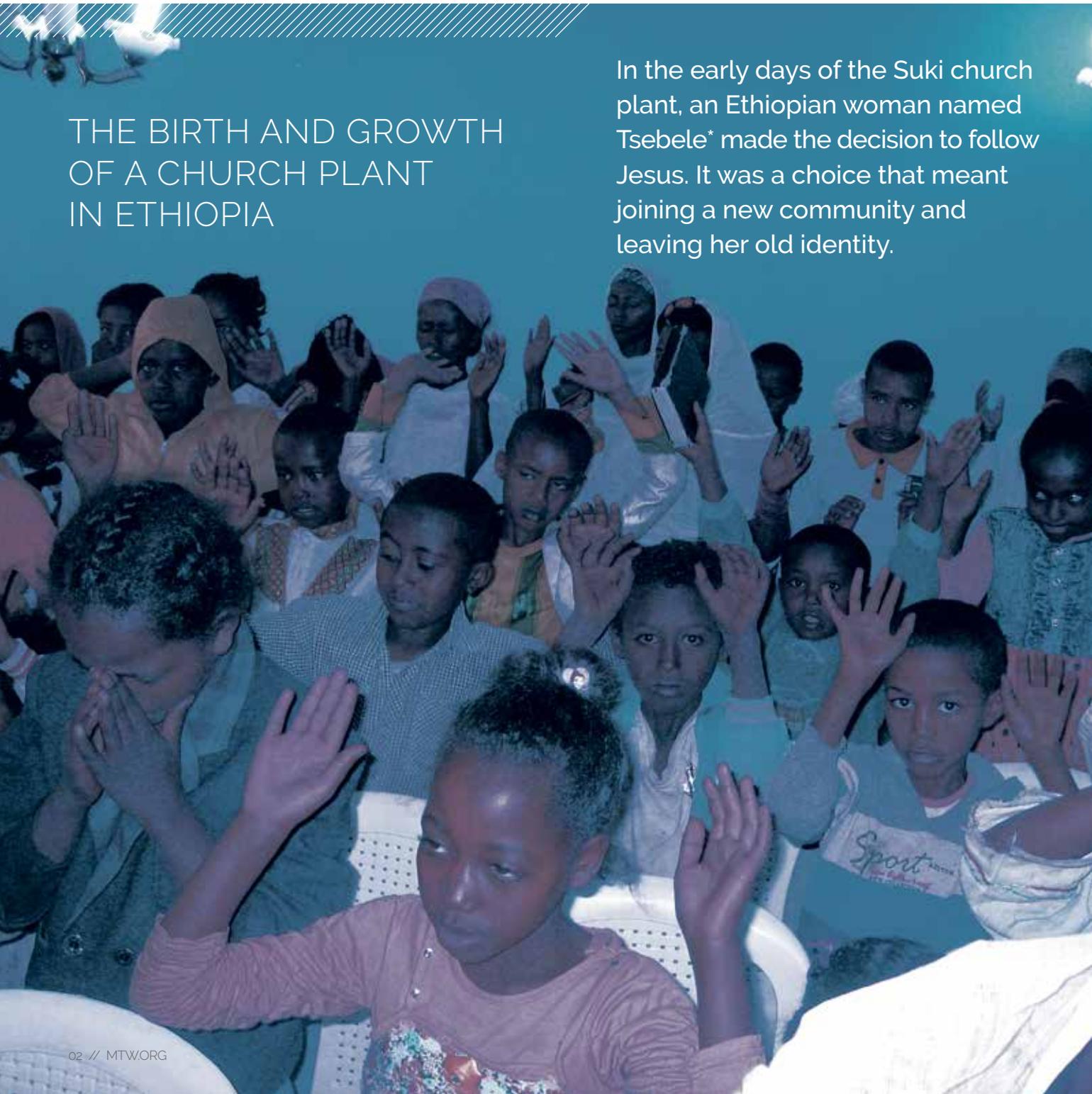


**Are you ready to GO?**  
Watch for this icon  
throughout this issue.

# A COMMON VISION

## THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF A CHURCH PLANT IN ETHIOPIA

In the early days of the Suki church plant, an Ethiopian woman named Tsebele\* made the decision to follow Jesus. It was a choice that meant joining a new community and leaving her old identity.



Communion being served at the Suki church plant



Members of the leadership team (l to r): Jason Polk, Gizaw Melese, Stephen Kennedy, Fikreselassie "Jambo" Tamire, and Fikadu Assefa

It was also a choice that would lead to years of mistreatment from her husband, and tears, sorrow, and suffering. But ultimately, it was a choice that led to grace and redemption for herself and her family. This is the story of the church that walked alongside her through adversity and became her new community.

The Suki church plant was part of a holistic vision that was started over 15 years ago by MTW Ethiopia team leader Andy Warren and his wife, Bev. Back in the early 2000s, the Warrens launched the Ethiopia ACT program in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Originally set up as a ministry to care for people afflicted by HIV/AIDS, over the years ACT has evolved and branched out to tackle broader community health issues, including tuberculosis and malnutrition.

“As people started surviving and living longer, the project went from just medical treatment to asking: ‘How do you care for the whole family?’” said MTW missionary Jason Polk, who now works alongside the Warrens. “Educational tutoring, social work, and counseling were added, and the team began helping people start income-generating activities so they could support themselves. Woven through that, for all those years, was a spiritual emphasis of sharing the gospel, praying with people, discipleship, community Bible studies, and working with local churches.”

This spiritual integration was part of ACT from the very beginning but church planting itself, despite being part of the vision, never quite got off the ground. That’s where Jason and Liz Polk came in.

### A NEW COMMUNITY, A CLEAR FOCUS

Jason and Liz joined the MTW team in Addis in 2012, just before ACT moved into a new community called Suki, a low-income, informal settlement on the southwest edge of the city. The plan for Suki was to replicate the health project with a

church-planting focus right from the beginning. Pursuing that vision, Jason and an Ethiopian man, Gizaw Melese, started visiting people in their new neighborhood, recruiting families for the health project and building trust.

“Eventually we started hosting a weekly community Bible study and inviting everyone—especially this core of relationships that we’d been able to develop through home visitations,” said Jason.

*The church would be contextualized—music accompanied by Orthodox drum, and, with a primarily illiterate congregation, an oral liturgy developed from scratch in one of the local languages.*

Jason and Gizaw partnered with several other leaders: an American missionary from another organization and two more Ethiopian men named Jambo and Fikadu. Together they developed a vision for starting a model church plant. The church would be contextualized—music accompanied by Orthodox drum, and, with a primarily illiterate congregation, an oral liturgy developed from scratch in one of the local languages. But they agreed to avoid some of the unhealthy local patterns that they saw in other church plants, many of which started well but were quickly drawn into the lure of prosperity gospel teachings. Finally, in the fall of 2013, the Suki church plant officially began.

“We added Sunday morning worship and started having people coming and professing faith as new believers,” said Jason. “A core group gathered, representing several language groups, people coming from Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and animist backgrounds. It’s been a very gradual, slow growth process since then.” →

## PEACE AND JOY AMID ADVERSITY

“Many of the people here are facing serious health and poverty issues. Some of them are struggling with addictions and broken families, and they’re in and out of unhealthy relationships,” said Jason. “But the flip side of that is that we get the opportunity to see new believers develop amazing growth in Jesus in the face of incredible adversity—experiencing joy and peace in Him that sustains them through those trials and challenges in really beautiful ways.”

Tsebele’s journey of faith was one such story.



Jason & Gizaw baptize an infant of a church member.

Soon after Tsebele started following Christ and coming regularly to the Suki church plant’s Bible studies, her husband started mistreating her—insulting her and eventually forcing her out of their bed. As a punishment for her faith, Tsebele had to sleep on the floor of her home for two years. Every week she would come to church and cry and ask for prayer, and the people would pray over her, share Scripture, and try to encourage her.

All the while, in the midst of turmoil at home, Tsebele continued to grow spiritually, and her faithful love and patient witness chipped away at her family’s hearts. Nearly three years later, her husband and daughter made professions of faith in the church and came to Christ.

“Tsebele was an incredibly beautiful testimony of Jesus in her home,” said Jason. “Even as a new believer, she demonstrated a great deal of strength and faith in ways that bore spiritual fruit. ... Seeing the secondary ripples of the gospel in her life as the result of her testimony has been really beautiful.”

## HOLISTIC VISION FOR IMPACTING COMMUNITIES

So how does the team’s community health ministry tie in with the church plant?

In addition to leading the church plant, Jason, Gizaw, and Jambo are also staff of Ethiopia ACT, responsible for the spiritual care of the beneficiaries of the community health project. They provide spiritual counseling at short-term medical clinics, do home visitations and assessments with beneficiary families, and help with support distributions. Both the community health projects and short-term medical clinics put on by the team demonstrate the gospel in action and have won the trust of the community. This trust facilitated the growth of the Suki church plant and community Bible studies.

“Often, even when you have a holistic vision, it’s easy to do one part of that vision somewhat poorly,” said Jason. “Our team would agree that there’s a primacy to the church-planting call, but at the same time we don’t devalue the physical and emotional health aspect of what we do—that has intrinsic value as part of gospel ministry. We really strive to do it all together well.”

He describes it like a Venn diagram. The church plant circle overlaps with the community health project circle at different points.

“Church planting is the foundation of everything we do,” Jason added. “Our entire Ethiopia ACT team, even those that are involved solely on the community health side, are fully committed to the vision of church planting.”

Case in point: in the next few years, the Ethiopia MTW team hopes to replicate the Suki community church plant model in a new community. They are looking for a place where a community health intervention would make a significant impact, but where there’s also a need for a church plant. Maximum impact comes from finding a community where they can address both.

It also takes shared vision, shared leadership, hard work, and humility—qualities the team has cultivated over the years. Mutual trust between team members playing to each other’s strengths helps them pursue a common mission that works best for the whole team and the whole vision. It’s that shared vision, fueled by the Spirit and the love of Jesus, which allows MTW Ethiopia to impact people like Tsebele, the whole community of Suki, and beyond. [📍](#) *\*Name has been changed*

# 1%

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FROM THE COORDINATOR



Dr. Lloyd Kim

## Creating a Healthy Church-Planting Ecosystem

Since moving to Georgia, I’ve been learning a lot about Bermuda grass and how to make it thrive. I didn’t realize that having earthworms is good for breaking up hard, compacted, clay soil; it’s better to water deep and less frequently for strong roots; a lot of sunlight is needed; and too much fertilizer will burn the grass.

My big takeaway is that it’s not just one thing that makes a lawn healthy and green, but a whole healthy ecosystem is necessary for grass to flourish.

I can’t help but see this as an analogy for church planting on the mission field. Because we are on the front lines and our focus is on conversion growth, creating an ecosystem for church planting is vital. What would be those things that make a healthy church-planting ecosystem?

- We need natural, regular evangelistic points of contact with the people we are trying to reach. It is for this reason we rejoice when evangelistic laypeople join our church-planting teams to care for the sick, minister to the poor, teach English, and disciple medical students, artists, musicians, entrepreneurs, etc. Through these discipleship relationships and acts of mercy, we are breaking up hard, compacted soil.
- We also need well-trained and seasoned pastors who can not only lead church plants, but also train and mentor others to plant churches. They need the skills and experience to go deep with this training, not only theologically, but missiologically and pastorally so that these new churches can have deep roots.
- All those who serve as missionaries need the attractive, winsome light of Christ that shows itself in repentance, graciousness, humility, teachability, and love. It is the light of the gospel shining in and through us that draws people to Jesus.
- And of course, too much fertilizer will also burn the Church. Pride and pretense have no place in church planting. Open, honest, and authentic servants are needed to create a beautiful environment for healthy, thriving, flourishing church planting on the mission field.

Though we trust that God alone is the One who gives growth, we also recognize that He chooses to use the whole body of Christ in all its diversity to work in harmony in creating healthy church-planting ecosystems. Could God be calling you to join one of these teams for kingdom growth and advancement? [📍](#)

*Lloyd Kim*



THIS IS MISSIONS

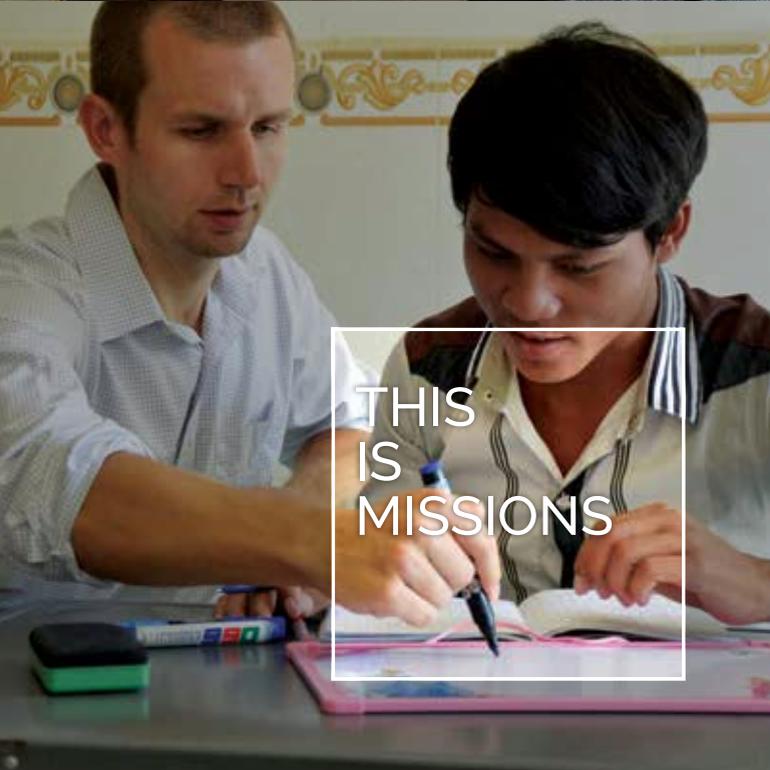


THIS IS MISSIONS



# COUNTRY CHURCH, CITY CHURCH

## HOW AN MTW CHURCH PLANT IN MIDDLE-CLASS SOUTH ASIA IS MULTIPLYING AND MAKING WAVES



THIS IS MISSIONS



FIND YOUR THIS

Sunday morning, and the congregation trickles into the little South Asian church plant— young professionals and artists, students, teachers, and lawyers.

It's small, maybe 160 on any given Sunday, but it's growing steadily—the pews filling with the denizens of a rising middle class whose growing ranks are transforming the economic and cultural landscape of their rapidly urbanizing country.

They're not the first target demographic you think of when you hear about missions in South Asia. In societies like this one where the gap between rich and poor is vast, slum dwellers and the village poor typically take the spotlight for mission work. But this rising urban middle class has spiritual needs that are just as great, and solid churches able to reach and disciple them are few.

### TARGETING INFLUENTIAL URBAN CENTERS

“Not to say that it isn't important, but there's already tons of mission work going on among the poor and in the villages,” said MTW missionary Jacob Ingram,\* who planted this church of young professionals. “As an organization, we have worked with probably 100–120 church planters who are targeting that rural, poor demographic, but hardly anyone we're working with is targeting the urban centers, which have enormous influence and potential for creating change.”

Urban areas are growing faster than rural, and in places like South Asia, reaching the rapidly-growing middle class is

strategic, and not just because they are under-exposed to the gospel. With their economic power and resources they are able to be culture influencers, and are capable of sustaining and growing the national Church themselves.

### BUILDING SELF-SUSTAINING CONGREGATIONS

“Missions work in villages is often dependent on Western money,” Jacob said. “And that's created some difficult problems in the national church. ... One of the bonuses of planting an urban, middle-class church is that it's much more capable of sustainably supporting village church-planting work, and it's a much more healthy way of doing that than having the funds come from overseas.”

*“Our church is meant to be a church-planting church, so this really excites me. It's why we exist.”*

In pursuit of the goal of creating a national church that can sustainably support village church planting, Jacob and the church plant have set up a partnership with a local seminary. Pastoral interns work with the church, and when they graduate they will go through a church-planter incubator program. The first two interns graduated this past June, and one of them will be moving to a major city within the same country to plant a church. Another young man is currently in the program. When he graduates the church hopes to work with him to plant a daughter church within their city.

“Our church is meant to be a church-planting church, so this really excites me,” said Jacob. “It's why we exist.”

*\*Name has been changed.*



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Is God calling you to serve in South Asia?  
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# THE UNEXPECTED CHURCH

## A CHURCH PLANT BEGINS WITH COLLEGIANS INSTEAD OF CONGREGANTS

These days, Harbor City Church in Sydney, Australia, is a model example of a successful church plant.

But it wasn't always this way.

"We came out here 11 years ago with a heart for missions, church planting, and college ministry," said MTW missionary and regional director for Australasia Jim Jung, who serves

in Sydney with his wife, Claudia. For the first three years, over and over Jim and Claudia would have conversations, make contacts, and gather together a core group. It would begin to look like a church was about to form—and then it would crash. Every. Time.

"That happened two or three times," said Jim. "Church planting is difficult, man."

Yet, while church-planting efforts struggled on through constant barriers and challenges, Jim had simultaneously begun to work with college students, a ministry that at first he considered secondary.

But then it took off. "Within that first year I got invited to a conference as a speaker," Jim said. "Then a few kids wanted to hang out, and I got on a couple college campuses. Then we did

a training retreat that became an annual event. It started with a couple of students and then the next year more guys came, and then more, and then more."

Toward the end of Jim and Claudia's third year, despite their best efforts, a church plant still had not formed, and Jim had grown discouraged.

*"Church planting was supposed to be our primary thing, and I just felt like a complete failure," said Jim. "I thought: 'Why am I wasting my supporters' money? Why am I wasting my time here?'"*

"Church planting was supposed to be our primary thing, and I just felt like a complete failure," said Jim. "I thought: 'Why am I wasting my supporters' money? Why am I wasting my time here?' Even though the university ministry was moving along better than I could have imagined, that was not the primary thing on my agenda."

### MINISTRY SUCCESS SYNDROME

In God's gracious providence, MTW had recently assigned a pastoral associate couple to the Australia team. Bob and Paige Eickelberg, tasked with pastoring missionaries, came out to Sydney for a visit and Jim opened up to Bob about his struggles.

"Bob had been a pastor of a small church for 20-some years in Baltimore, and he understood the challenges and oppression of 'ministry success syndrome,'" said Jim. "When I shared with him that I felt like a failure, that I would rather not waste

the support of churches and friends by failing to deliver, he patiently asked questions."

"Jim, are you walking with the Lord?" Bob asked. "Are you making efforts to reach out? Are you seeking to preach and teach and disciple people in whatever opportunities the Lord provides?"

"Yes," Jim answered.

"Then as far as God is concerned, you are a great success in His eyes, and that is all that matters," said Bob.

Bob's searching questions, his wise counsel, and above all his speaking gospel truth was an eye-opener for Jim. He knew the theory, but actually experiencing the love and approval of God in the midst of perceived failure was a life-changing, paradigm-shifting moment.

### FROM SIDE MINISTRY TO GLOBAL MOVEMENT

That moment, as it turned out, was the beginning of a sea change for the Sydney church plant. A year later the college kids who were 18 or so when Jim began his student ministry work started graduating. They asked him: "Hey, you've been teaching us on campus, but you talk about your church-planting work. Can we be a part of that?"

The Harbor City church plant ended up forming around that core group of students whom Jim had started with four years earlier. The "side ministry" had become a church. Now over 10 years later, many of that same core group of students are still a key part of the church plant and prime candidates for eldership in the next few years.

"The church has been around for about seven years, and the college ministry has been around for 11," said Jim. "And they've both been growing steadily."



Jim introduces the student leaders of the SOW ministry in Sydney.

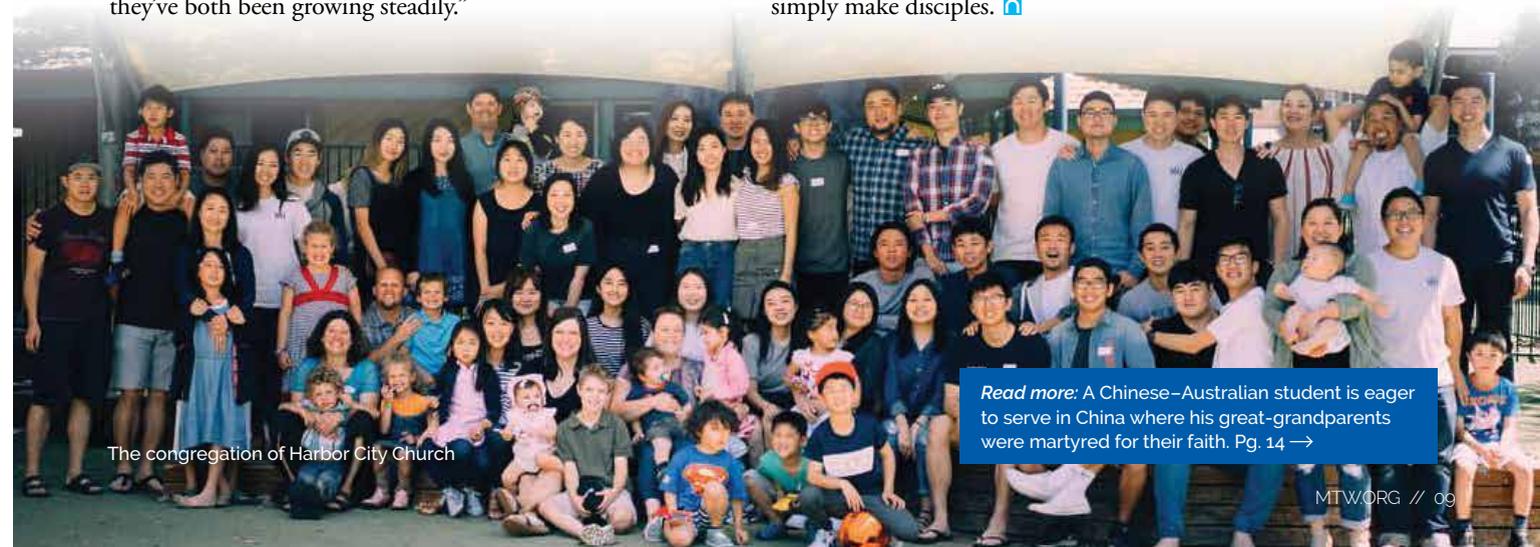
Not only does Harbor City now have a growing, thriving church body, their university ministry is on four major campuses and reaching more students than ever. The church has also started a ministry for working professionals. For the last six years, taking advantage of Sydney's position as a global hub, they have even been sending out short-term missions teams to neighboring Asian countries, forming significant partnerships and spurring on a number of singles and couples within the church to express serious interest in becoming long-term missionaries.

And the little Australian church plant is far from finished. Asked about the future, Jim mentions efforts being made to mobilize Reformed African American churches as missionaries to the Aboriginal people of Australia, his hope to eventually plant a daughter church in Sydney, and a dream to empower Australian partner churches to bring the gospel to the Pacific Islands.

Jim needed to have his eyes opened to see what God was already doing right in front of him, growing a church in His own way and in His own timing. The lesson here? Church planting can happen through many different avenues, even the unexpected ones, when we faithfully follow God's call to simply make disciples. [▶](#)



MTW missionaries Jim & Claudia Jung with daughter Eleanor



The congregation of Harbor City Church

[Read more:](#) A Chinese-Australian student is eager to serve in China where his great-grandparents were martyred for their faith. Pg. 14 →

# WHEN CHURCH PLANTING IS PERILOUS

Two MTW teams follow the call to plant churches in closed countries

: EAST ASIA

: SOUTH ASIA

It's a country with a long and bloody history of religious persecution stretching back centuries.

As recently as 30 years ago, being a Christ-follower in this East Asian country meant accepting the risk of being killed for your faith, and Christians were routinely tortured, jailed, or “disappeared” in large numbers. Though rarely martyred anymore, some Christians are still imprisoned for their faith and all live under the constant, looming threat of a crackdown.

Despite the danger and the fear, the Church is growing and thriving more than ever.

“There's an incredible, unprecedented opportunity in this country for church planting,” said MTW missionary Tom Middleton.\* “It's unlike any other country in the world, both in its challenges and its fruit.”

Tom and his team serve as facilitators, helping nationals plant churches and playing an instrumental role in developing a nationwide network of presbyteries and Reformed churches. This year, they'll be examining more than 30 men for licensure or ordination as pastors throughout East Asia, and the list of qualified church leaders keeps growing. Yet security issues and persecution are still present.

“Most of these churches start with 20 or 30 people meeting in someone's house for a Bible study,” said Tom. “But as a church gets larger they'll have to move to some larger facility, and then they have to deal with the authorities trying to resist [their] meeting.”

And there's the rub. The tremendous and exciting growth of churches also makes them more visible—and more imperiled.

“The government doesn't like to see large, well-organized groups of people, especially when they're nationwide, which is the case with both our church-planting network and our Presbyterian network,” said Tom. “Those are challenging things to maneuver.”

According to Tom, the Church has grown so large across the country that the government can't control all that's going on. Instead, they choose their targets strategically.

“They have a saying here: ‘You kill the chicken to scare the monkey,’” Tom said.

In other words, when the government decides to punish someone in a church, they make sure that everyone hears about it.

“Throughout the history of this country, missionaries have gone through an amazing amount of persecution, struggles, and difficulties, and have seen very little fruit,” Tom said. What they're seeing now is the fulfillment of their work and the answer to years of prayer.

He adds, “This is an age where Christianity really is able to change [this country] and it's because we're coming alongside and helping the local Christians, not because we're leading the charge.”  *\*Name has been changed.*

In the beautiful southern hill tracts of one South Asian country, minority tribal people groups are suffering intense persecution.

For tribal Christians, that persecution can compound exponentially as they are targeted not only for their ethnicity, but for their faith as well. Despite the government's attempts to keep outsiders out and locals in, reports of human rights violations still leak out including property seizures, arbitrary arrests, and even killings.

“It's hard for local Christian leaders to leave,” said MTW missionary Edmund North.\* “A couple guys in the denomination have either snuck across the border to a neighboring country for seminary or have had to go even further away at great cost to themselves or the church. It's really hard for them to get a solid Christian education. That's why we've come.”

*In this majority-Muslim country, advancing the cause of the Church and even reaching the people is not easy.*

Edmund and his teammate James Bradley\* came to South Asia at the invitation of a small, tribal, Presbyterian denomination of about 3,000 members. Here they are working to start a seminary to train and equip national pastors to plant and lead Reformed churches around the country. But in this majority-Muslim country, advancing the cause of the Church and even reaching the people is not easy.

Though James and Edmund initially came with a heart to live among the hill tribal people, the government has made it difficult to even visit there.

Every time James or Edmund travel to the hill tracts, they are forced to sign documents saying that they won't be involved in Christian activities—no worship services, and definitely no proselytizing. A few years back, the government made a law (ultimately scarcely-enforced) that a foreigner can't even have a conversation with someone from the tribal areas unless a police or government official is present.

While the persecution is sometimes blatant, it often takes more insidious forms—funding blocked, missionaries kicked out of the country, or churches harassed by unwarranted legal trouble.

“But nevertheless, Christianity is growing in the tribal areas,” said Edmund. “It's just amazing to see God's work there.”

Currently, the little MTW team has a preliminary church plant, with four or five families meeting in Edmund's home on Sunday nights. James is in the process of both writing and teaching a covenant theology course, which will form the foundation of the seminary. The church is small here, and struggling, but the foundation is being laid. The going is tough and slow, but it's still going.

“We're among one of the largest unreached people groups in the world and yet there are only a handful of Christian workers here,” said Edmund. “My guess is that the Western Church isn't sending people because it's hard. But if we want to reach the unreached, we have to go to the hard places. If we don't, we aren't going to get to be a part of what God is doing there.” 

*\*Names have been changed.*





## A Pastor's Perspective

HOW THE GLOBAL MISSIONS CONFERENCE SHAPED MY LIFE'S DIRECTION

In November of 2002 I attended the PCA Global Missions Conference (GMC). As a student at Covenant College, I was initially lured by the promise of two days away from the dorm and cafeteria.

At the conference, I learned about MTW's summer internships, which allow young adults to go live and serve with full-time MTW missionaries for an extended time. Through PCPC's high school ministry, I had been on several trips to Peru; so the summer internship in Cusco piqued my interest. Better still, I was able to meet with some of the MTW missionaries serving in Cusco, and by the time the weekend was over I had written a letter to my parents telling them the good news: I was not planning on coming home the next summer!

My participation in the GMC not only shaped two months of my life, but also led to indelible changes in how I think about the world, the Church, the gospel, and my own faith and dependence on Jesus Christ. It deepened my belief that while I am sinful on my own, even I can be graciously counted righteous in Jesus Christ (Romans 4:5). And it broadened my understanding that while I am insignificant on my own, I am

*My participation in the GMC not only shaped two months of my life, but also led to indelible changes in how I think about the world...*

called to world-shaping work as a witness of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). Ultimately, the truth and joy of those convictions led me to seminary, to pastoral ministry, and, in a surreal work of grace, back to PCPC where I now serve as an assistant pastor.

I am thrilled that PCPC has the privilege of welcoming and equipping a new generation of missionaries, college students, and many others to the GMC in Dallas this November. I am eager to see how God will continue using this event in my life, and in the lives of so many others in our denomination as we seek to be obedient to the Great Commission. [📍](#)

Join us Nov. 10-12 at the 2017 Global Missions Conference in Dallas! Visit [mtw.org/thisismissions](http://mtw.org/thisismissions).

Matt Fray is an assistant pastor at Park Cities Presbyterian Church in Dallas, Texas.



Matt Fray, smiling with three Peruvian children during his 2002 summer mission work in Cusco.

But God graciously redirected me toward something far better: the adventure of two months on the mission field.

Through its times of worship, helpful seminars, and relational tapestry, the GMC nourished a seed that God had planted in my heart two years earlier when John Piper preached at my home church in Dallas, Park Cities Presbyterian Church (PCPC). Following a series of powerful sermons on missions, Piper extended a "missions altar call," where he invited people in the congregation to come forward if they believed God was calling them to give a month or more of their lives to missions. I went forward that night, but was unsure how I might fulfill that calling until I attended the GMC.

BY: MATT FRAY



## "Don't You Dare Stop Having GMCs!"

HOW THE GLOBAL MISSIONS CONFERENCE HELPED MTW JAPAN GROW

After the last Global Missions Conference (GMC), some MTW leaders considered not having another one. Some asked if it was worth all the effort and money.

But our six Japan teams strongly advocated for the conference. The Japanese are the world's second largest unreached people group, and God used the 2013 GMC in specific, concrete ways to help us reach Japan with the gospel.

**First, God used the 2013 GMC to mobilize more missionaries.** Mark and Megumi Bocanegra came from seminary to attend. They're now MTW missionaries in Japan. Brett was a high school student who attended the GMC with his father. We talked at the Japan booth about our gap year internship for qualified young people after high school. Brett came and served for a year before college—a year his mom recently wrote to thank us for. Seita Sakaguchi also attended in 2013. He and his wife, Emma, later joined our Tokyo Center team and became key members in planting Grace Harbor Church. Heaven will tell the full story of how God used the GMC to call people to missions.

**God also used the GMC in the lives of our Japanese ministry partners.** We hadn't pushed for Japanese partners to attend previous GMC gatherings, but many attended in 2013. The impact was beyond our expectations. Church-planting partner Daisuke Kimura was exuberant about the conference. He told me this week that he plans to take two lay leaders from his Japan church plant to the GMC this November. Daisuke said, "The passion for God's mission at the GMC was infectious, and I want that for people in our new church." Japanese attender Haruaki Odate said, "We were encouraged to know that many Americans are praying for Japan, coming to Japan to evangelize, and supporting missionaries for the expansion of God's kingdom." We're working hard to bring even more Japanese ministry partners and lay people to the

2017 GMC because of the powerful way we believe God will use it in their lives to impart a passion for world mission.

**God also used the GMC to grow our Japan Partnership of PCA churches** committed to reaching

BY: DAN IVERSON

Japan's lost millions. Oak Mountain PCA pastor Tom Patton is the Partnership leader. Tom wrote, "The last GMC gave the Japan Partnership a venue to mobilize many new MTW



Mark and Megumi Bocanegra came to the 2013 GMC and now serve full-time in Japan.

missionaries at a time when most Japan mission groups are declining. The last GMC also enabled our Japan Partnership to continue Japanese translation projects like Tim Keller's *The Meaning of Marriage* and *Center Church*. That momentum is enabling the Japan Partnership to serve MTW Japan more and more."

We are thankful that MTW leadership listened and that MTW is hosting another GMC. We pray that the Lord of the Harvest will use this GMC to mobilize many harvest workers, supporters, and prayer partners for the sake of God's glory and kingdom advancement around the world. [📍](#)

Dan Iverson is the MTW country director for Japan.



## MAKING DISCIPLES

### Madagascar

Missionaries Bryan and Rebe McReynolds are seeing God at work among the Sakalava people in Nosy Be, Madagascar. Four married couples, all new believers, whom they sent to Antananarivo for a



two-month intensive Bible training, have returned and quickly implemented their training. Bryan and Rebe are grateful for the strong bonds that have developed among the couples. They trust each other and see themselves as "family" in Christ, which is a big thing for them because of the importance of blood family in their culture.

### Peru

Scott Dillon, missionary in Cusco, Peru, reports new and encouraging growth in his church over the last several months. The Cusco team is currently seeing an



average of one or two conversions per month in the local church plant there. The majority of the Peruvian believers in the church have only been Christians for two years or less.

### Australia

Chris\* is a Chinese-Australian student at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. Chris was born and raised in Sydney. When he joined the MTW team's Student Outreach to the World (SOW) summer missions trip to China, it was a full-circle experience in God's sovereign plan. During Mao's Communist Revolution, Chris' great-grandparents were martyred for their Christian faith. It was this persecution that prompted his grandparents' family to flee to Australia.



Chris grew up as a nominal Christian until he went to college, where getting involved with SOW has ignited his faith and passion for Christ. Chris now wants to become a long-term missionary in China where his great-grandparents sowed a costly seed that has sprouted into a missional drive in Chris' life. MTW Sydney's vision for mobilizing Australia for missions throughout the Asia-Pacific region has become a reality in Chris and many others like him.

### Thailand

On Sunday, July 16, 2017, after over a year of meeting, praying, and planning, a group of about 40 people gathered to kick off weekly worship services of Grace



Point Church of Chiang Mai, Thailand. The head pastor and Thai partner, Narin Suranaowarat, preached from 1 Kings 8 about the need to be rooted in grace, working toward the same purpose in unity, and constantly begging God for hearts that are ready to repent. The MTW Chiang Mai team is thankful for God's provision of national partners who are dedicated to the centrality of the gospel in the Scriptures, committed to seeing healthy interdependence with partner organizations, and who own a vision of seeing a movement of gospel-centered churches planted in Thailand.

### 2018 VISION TRIPS

What's coming in 2018? Vision trips! In 2018 we will be leading over 15 global vision trips for those who want to see MTW's work firsthand. Whether it's a first-step toward becoming a missionary, or an opportunity to be an advocate for missions at your church, we hope you'll join us! Locations include: Japan, France, Colombia, Bahamas, West Africa, Central Asia, England, Greece, Australia, Germany, Central Asia, Costa Rica, Thailand, Australia, and the Holy Land. Email [go@mtw.org](mailto:go@mtw.org) to learn more.

*\*last name withheld.*



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