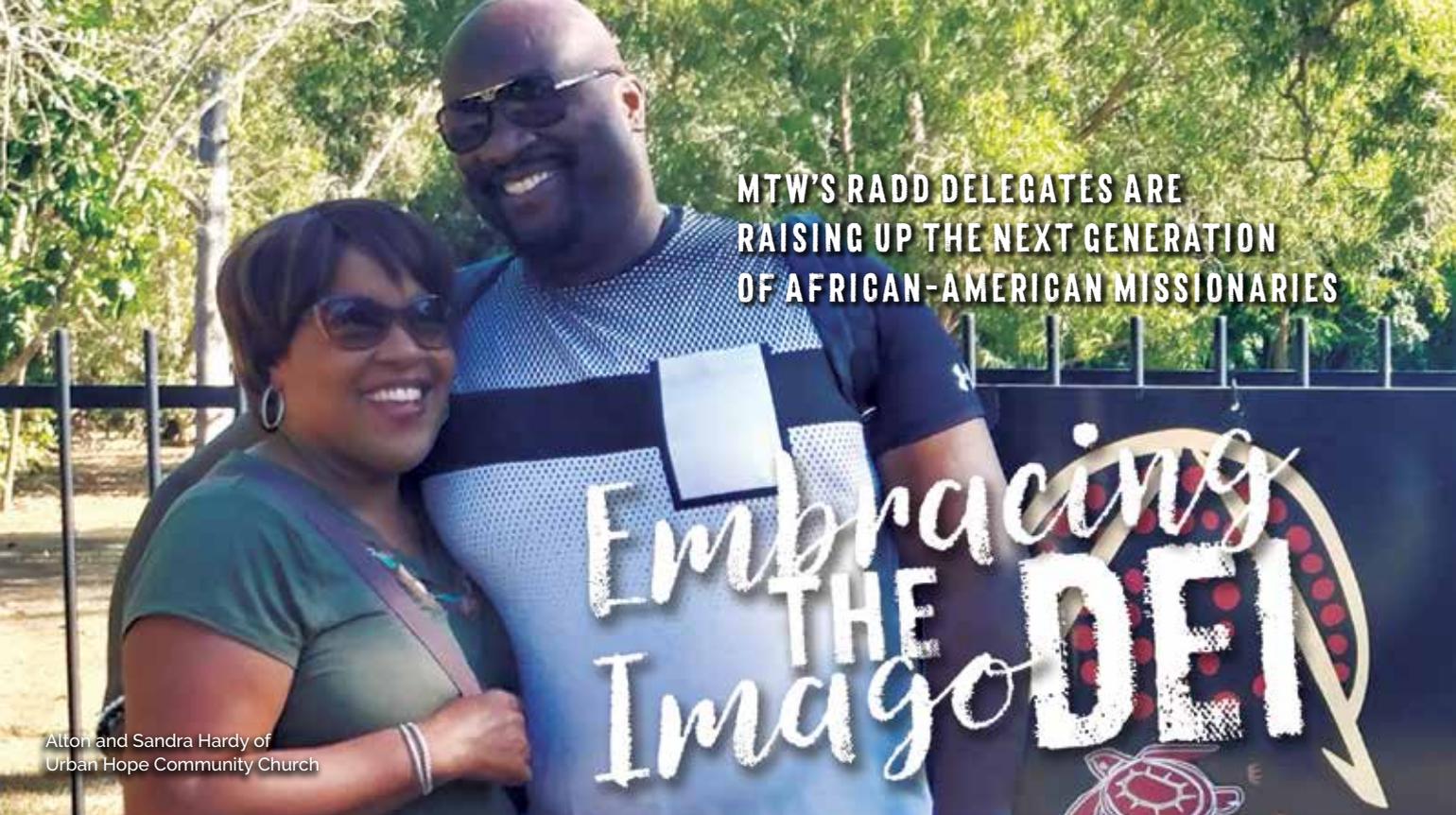


MTW'S RADD DELEGATES ARE  
RAISING UP THE NEXT GENERATION  
OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MISSIONARIES

# Embracing THE Imago DEI



Alton and Sandra Hardy of Urban Hope Community Church

## MTW'S RADD DELEGATES ARE RAISING UP THE NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MISSIONARIES

# Embracing THE Imago DEI

When it comes to living boldly for the kingdom, Alton and Sandra Hardy have never backed down. In 2012 they moved to a poor community, Fairfield, Alabama, to plant Urban Hope Community Church (PCA), where Alton is pastor. There's more than enough local need to keep them busy, but a vision trip with MTW changed their perspective forever. →

"[In Fairfield], there aren't enough police cars," said Alton. "There's robberies, shootings every night, burnt up houses.

It looks like a third-world country. ... But God's put us on this course—going to the places nobody else would go. We're going where it's hard, where it's grimy, where success is not going to come easy."

BY: ANDREW SHAUGHNESSY

Yet, though the needs of their neighborhood are great and the work at Urban Hope is far from finished, Alton continually and passionately preaches a challenge to global missions. Ministry at home and ministry abroad, in Alton's eyes, are both the calling of the Church. As members of MTW's RADD (Reformed and Diverse Delegates) initiative, the Hardys actively work to identify, raise up, and send the next generation of African-American missionaries. They're passionate about sending a diverse missionary force, better reflecting the image of God and harnessing the unique gifts of diverse missionaries to bring the good news of grace to the ends of the earth.

But they didn't always think this way.

### NOT ON THE RADAR

Though both were raised in the church, neither Alton nor Sandra grew up hearing about missions or being encouraged to go. "I would hear churches that were predominantly white talk about taking their kids to Costa Rica or different places that none of us were going," Sandra said. "It was a big deal for us to go out of state, let alone outside the country. Missions wasn't presented. It wasn't on our radar. The opportunity wasn't something for us to even consider."

But the African-American church has a rich history of missionary activity. One of America's very first missionaries was George Liele, an African-American emancipated slave who planted churches in Georgia before serving as a missionary to Jamaica. The PCA's first African-American missionary, Joan Nabors, served with WPM (now MTW) in Kenya beginning in 1982. Very few have followed. It still remains that fewer than 1 percent of all U.S. missionaries are African American.

One of the biggest challenges, according to Alton, is having access to financial support. Many faithful African-American churches are just trying to survive and thrive in their own communities. Plus, in places like Fairfield, where the Hardys serve, clear and present needs in a church's context often overshadow the global need for the gospel.

**ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES, ACCORDING TO ALTON, IS HAVING ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT. MANY FAITHFUL AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES ARE JUST TRYING TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE IN THEIR OWN COMMUNITIES.**

As a result, "The call to global missions has not been the conversation theologically from the pulpit or in our Bible studies [in the African-American church]," Alton said. "It has not come practically."

### A CHANGED PERSPECTIVE

The turning point for the Hardys came in 2017, when Barbara D. Jones, who helps lead MTW's efforts toward diversity, asked them to join MTW's first all African-American team on a vision trip to the Aboriginal people of Australia. The Hardys were in their 50s, with decades of ministry experience under their belts. It was the first time either one had ever been asked to go on a mission trip.

At first, Alton was reluctant. After all, he was a busy church planter working among the urban poor. He didn't have the time or the resources, and there was so much work to do right there in Alabama. They didn't even have passports! Somebody else needed to go. But Barbara was persistent and, in the end, Alton and Sandra went to Australia.

The trip was life-changing.

"As soon as we got over there among the Aboriginals we realized that because of the pigmentation of our skin, because of our story as African Americans, we have a voice," Alton said.

For many of Australia's Aboriginal people—as with countless other people groups across the globe—Christianity is inextricably bound up with colonialism and a history of Western oppression.



Alton took his first-ever mission trip last year to serve the Aboriginal people of Australia.

When white missionaries show up today, they carry with them the crippling burden of that history. African-American missionaries are not only free from that baggage, but because of their own experience of oppression, they are relatable.

"I think we've got to put our strategic spiritual hats on here," Alton said. "Indigenous people are often not able to trust whites because of their historical landscape, but because of my skin tone they were able to listen to me. ... And I'm filled up with the Spirit of God. I mean, how dare I receive and not give that away?" →

“[In 2 Corinthians 1:3–5,] Paul says that the afflictions that we have gone through happened so that we can comfort you as God has comforted us,” Alton added. “It’s reciprocal. ... We’re taking our afflictions that we’ve been through as African Americans, not realizing God was so much farther ahead of us. ... Now, in this ‘Esther’ moment ... we can bring the gospel to a people group who may be writing God off because of injustice or affliction that they may be experiencing [or have experienced]. If God is sovereign, then our afflictions were not in vain.”



Bridgett Tabb (left) on a mission trip to West Africa

### EXTENDING THE CALL

By the time Alton and Sandra returned home, they were fired up to mobilize African Americans for missions, and they began to share their story with Urban Hope. Alton could feel the nations’ need for their Savior, he could taste the kingdom opportunity for African Americans on mission, and that gospel-centered call poured out from the pulpit every week.

When an opportunity came up for a short-term trip to West Africa with MTW, the Hardys encouraged a young woman from their congregation named Bridgett Tabb to go. Bridgett had never traveled outside the United States, let alone to a different continent, but the Hardys’ excitement was contagious and the Spirit was already at work.

“The Great Commission was so heavy on my heart,” Bridgett said. “The first word is ‘Go.’ ‘Go and make disciples of all nations.’”

When Bridgett recalls her trip, she describes the vibrant colors of the African clothing, the searing heat of the equatorial sun, the beauty and harmony of creation, and the games she played with the little girls from the local communities. But most of all, she describes the call—that inexplicable, magnetic urge to stay, to pray, to serve in a land far from her home, to share the love of her Redeemer. She felt a stronger sort of gravity, a weight—but it felt right. It felt good.

“I don’t want to speak too fast,” she said, “but this feels like home.”

Now, she is preparing to return to West Africa next summer for a two-month internship—one bold step closer to long-term missionary service.

**“WE NEED MORE PEOPLE LIKE BRIDGETT TO PULL UP ROOTS, GO AS A SOJOURNER, AND TAKE THAT GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD.”**

### BETTER REFLECTING THE IMAGO DEI

“I’m so thankful for what the Lord is doing in the PCA community in particular right now,” said Bridgett. “People of color have been invited to the table and we want to take it a step further, not only being invited, but being welcomed.

As for Alton and Sandra, they continue advocating for RADD. “Our black brothers and sisters need to hear the call,” said Alton. “We need more people like Bridgett to pull up roots, go as a sojourner, and take that good news of the gospel to the world. ... I pray and hope that in 25 years we would have people from every tongue and tribe and socioeconomic background on our mission fields, all working together for the kingdom of God. I want that to become normal, not just for the sake of crossing some racial diversity threshold ... but diversity that is glued together by nothing but the sheer power of the gospel of electing grace.”

Interested in serving in global missions? Visit [mtw.org/explore](http://mtw.org/explore) to search opportunities, or email [go@mtw.org](mailto:go@mtw.org).

# 1%

**What would happen if every PCA church pledged an additional 1% of its members to missions?**

If God prompted every PCA church to do this, we could send more than 2,800 workers across the globe!

Pray that God would bring your church’s members forward to be part of the 1%. We are ready to help with questions and guide next steps.

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FROM THE COORDINATOR



Dr. Lloyd Kim

## Diverse Missionaries Expand Our Witness

It should come as no surprise that a missions agency would be interested in issues related to diversity. A big part of our job is to help train missionaries to grow in cultural competencies to reach the different peoples of the world. However, I have been asked why we are putting so much emphasis on diversity. Are we trying to be diverse for diversity’s sake? Are we simply following the world? The simple answer is no. We are motivated by different reasons in our desire to see our mission reflect the diversity of the Church.

First, we believe the beauty of the kingdom of God is expressed in people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, washed and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, worshipping our God (Rev. 7:9). The more diverse our mission, the better we reflect God’s kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

Second, we believe that a powerful apologetic to the universal nature of our faith is expressed in the diversity of our community. In our diversity we communicate that Christianity is not the religion of a single nation or race, but is for all people. And, as we minister in places where there is ethnic conflict and hostility, we’re able to bring hope of reconciliation and peace as we model unity in diversity through the gospel.

Finally, we’re aware of the demographic shift in our country toward greater diversity and anticipate the same in our churches. Our call to pray for and mobilize an additional 1 percent of the members of the PCA includes our brothers and sisters of all ethnicities. Therefore, we seek to serve well our whole denomination in all its diversity.

The PCA’s Ad Interim Committee on Racial and Ethnic Reconciliation report expresses well our heart at MTW: *“Theologically, our goal is not to seek diversity as an end in itself because this would be too small an endeavor relative to God’s mission. Rather the great end of this pursuit is doxology through diversity. Our goal should be to glorify our Savior by cultivating a cross-cultural community that maintains a cross-cultural witness to the grace and glory of God. When rightly considered, the Christian life and community should be a symphonic expression of the ‘breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ’ (Eph. 3:18).”*

Join with us in praying that God would raise up an additional 1 percent of the PCA, of all ethnicities, so that we can better reflect every tribe, tongue, and nation in the kingdom of God.

*Lloyd Kim*

# FROM PRISON CELL TO SEMINARY

Vladimir Tuzov's call to church planting did not follow the path of our typical seminary student. His journey started in a prison cell in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Vlad grew up in the 1990s, a frantic and difficult time for Ukraine, when everything people took for granted was being turned on its head. Soviet holidays left the calendar and new ones appeared. Streets were renamed, school curriculums were completely renovated, statues were taken down and replaced, the government was in turmoil, and even a new currency was introduced—twice.

It was out with the old, in with the new, on a scale seldom seen in history. For Americans, it would be as if, within a single year, the Statue of Liberty was torn down, Labor Day was replaced with Robert Frost Day (then moved to June), and we started using Monopoly money for our currency. That may sound absurd, but it's not far from what Eastern Europe went through in the early '90s.

With enormous change can come enormous chaos, and that was certainly true for Ukraine. Growing up in this uncertain atmosphere, Vlad was introduced to drugs, which were

prevalent, and there was little police presence to deter it. He began to use, and soon fell into a life of crime. To support his habit, he stole, and as the habit grew, so did the severity of his crimes—and the depth of his despair. He thought he would never escape this vicious cycle.

## A DESPERATE PRAYER

One day, when he was at his lowest point, Vlad had a dream that put the fear of God in him. He woke up scared and prayed. A few months later, he was arrested. This was not his

*Sitting in his holding cell, Vlad prayed, telling God that if he got out, he would give his life in ministry to Him.*

first arrest, but this time it was for a serious enough offense that he knew he was in big trouble and would be incarcerated for a long time. Sitting in his holding cell, Vlad prayed, telling God that if he got out, he would give his life in ministry to Him.

Because of a police error, he was released the next day. He knew what he had to do and went straight to a rehab center. He had tried programs in the past, and they had failed, but this time he felt he had a different purpose for them. While

there, he had a relapse in which, he says, “the drugs had no effect on me.” He continued in his treatment.

During these months in rehab, Vlad became a believer through one of the pastors from Church of the Big City, a church planted in a partnership between MTW and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ukraine (EPCU). He then made good on his promise to give his life to God. As he got to know our pastor and our church, he came to understand that God was calling him here to serve Him in the EPCU, the denomination that MTW helped to start and with which they still partner.

## A REFORMATIONAL CALLING

Over time, Vlad met a lovely Christian woman named Marina at our church, and they were married. Now, years later, Vlad has become an elder in the church. His call to ministry continued and last year he entered the Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine that MTW started in Kyiv, where he's doing well in his studies. He is in a church planter/seminary program that provides him a stipend to be able to study in the seminary while he prepares to begin a church plant himself.

Much of our work with Mission to the World in Ukraine involves training, supporting, and cheering on future Ukrainian church planters. These men sacrifice much to start new churches and serve the communities to which God has called them. It is not a path taken by many, nor is it one which offers much praise from their peers, or financial stability for their families. Often it is the choice that cuts against friends, family, and culture, yet these men

are dedicated to the gospel and the kingdom of God, and so they press on.

As Vlad and I talk about his call and his future, I am struck by the route that God used to call him into ministry. I marvel at the people and ministries along the way that helped him on the road from jail to seminary, and how God has been faithful at each of those steps. From our perspective, Vlad made good on the promise to “serve God” that he made while he was in jail. But in a larger kingdom



perspective, we understand that God made good on His promise to call and enable Vlad to serve Him. May we see people from the perspective of what God can do in their lives. [📍](#)

Jonathan Eide leads the MTW church-planting team in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Help support the Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine (ERSU) and future Ukrainian pastors at [mtw.org/projects \(#95995\)](https://mtw.org/projects/#95995)

BY: JONATHAN EIDE



Barbara H. Wright (left) with MTW's Barbara D. Jones

# DIVERSITY & CALLING

## Q&A WITH BARBARA H. WRIGHT

Missionary Barbara H. Wright recently finished raising support and left her home state of Florida to serve with MTW in Manchester, England, where she will be discipling women. Barbara D. Jones, who helps lead MTW's efforts toward diversity, recently sat down with her to talk about her call and her perspective as a woman of color.

**Q** You are the first African American to serve with MTW in a very long time. How does that make you feel?

**A** Well, it humbles me and it makes me grateful that I was willing to answer God's call. It also makes me sad because there's so much more potential out there. So I'm trusting that the Lord will open the door and there will be a flood of people who are coming forth as the result of the call to missions.

**Q** What are some of the challenges that African Americans might face if they want to become a cross-cultural missionary?

**A** The challenge is to be aware of the prejudices but live above them. Prejudice will always be around, so we need to be able to recognize it, acknowledge it, and prayerfully move beyond it. There will be people who will try to be a stumbling block in your life. Just go around them. There will be people who will be cheerleaders and encouragers,

and a relationship with those people will enhance your journey. What my heritage brings to the table is as valuable as anyone else's but I need to be willing to verbalize it. I can't be intimidated by the fact that I look different from somebody else.

I remember as a teenager my father was almost killed by the KKK. That was a part of our life. We were survivors, and as a survivor you have to have a thick skin. You cannot allow someone else to manipulate you such that you are not hearing what God is calling you to do. God has a purpose for everybody's life. So for African Americans, for Asians, for Hispanics—yes there will be prejudice, but we cannot cave in because of other peoples' prejudices. We need to know who we are in Christ and move forward.

**Q** The reality is that many people of color in our denomination will struggle with finding financial support. How would you challenge or encourage that audience?

**A** If God is calling you, not only will He equip you, He will bring others alongside to provide for you. Perhaps you will have to go outside of your local church, but if you've got something that God has called you to, then you need to push forward. Just do it. Push forward, and He will provide.

**Q** What is your ministry in Manchester?

**A** I'll be discipling the women of City Church Manchester.

They have about 150 members and 47 nationalities represented. So it's multiculturally diverse. That's one of the reasons that God has me here. As far as I can see, there is nobody over 45 in the congregation and I am happy to be an older woman to these women as we all grow in the knowledge of the Lord.

**Q** Was that something you were doing when you were in the U.S.?

**A** Yes. When I was in Tallahassee, I taught a women's Sunday school class and was the teaching leader of Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) for 26 years. Then I was asked to teach state legislative leaders' spouses during the legislative sessions. Tallahassee is the capital of Florida, so these leaders would come and meet for three months and once a week I would have a Bible study with their wives. I did that [with about 70 spouses] for around seven years.

When I could see that I was surrounded by nothing but believers, I asked the Lord to give me an opportunity to engage with believers and nonbelievers, and He gave me a job at Big Bend Hospice. So I worked in the foundation office and, with time, I started doing a Bible study during lunch with a few of the staff people.

Then I said to the Lord, "You know Lord, I have been a teacher in Washington, D.C. (that was my Jerusalem), and then a teacher of women in Miami (that was my Judea), and a teacher in Tallahassee (that was my Samaria). I have been fulfilling the Great Commission. Now I want to go to the farthest parts of the world." So I prayed about it,

and one thing led to another. I knew that MTW was the sending agency for the PCA so I went down that track and the Lord opened doors and here I am.

**Q** You are a mature woman who has lived life and gained a lot of wisdom through your experiences. But how would you encourage younger people of color if they're sensing a call to missions?

**A** Seize the opportunity to serve on a short-term mission with MTW. If you feel the Lord is calling you, test it out and then make a decision based on your exposure.

We can talk all we want about having a world vision as we comfortably sit in the pew, but until you go out into the world you really are narrow-minded as to what the world is like. There's so much diversity, so much culture. I gain so much just by meeting other people and partaking in what their cultures have to offer. I see the fabric of the world through different eyes now. I see people in different ways. I delight in the new foods that I'm eating, the new ways I hear people speak, the way they pronounce words. It's God's tapestry of people in the world. When I go out to the marketplace here, there are all sorts of people there. And I think, "These people need to know Christ, and God has placed them here, and God has placed me here. What role will I have when I intersect with these peoples' lives?"

So I would encourage them—African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Caucasians, whatever—go for it. Explore the world so you can appreciate God even better. 

Help send people of color who have limited access to financial resources within their church communities. Give to MTW's Diversifi Initiative at [mtw.org/diversifi](http://mtw.org/diversifi).

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Barbara H. Wright (left) with some of her new friends in Manchester, England



From village to city and city to village, MTW missionaries in Cambodia are building on each other's work—and God is transforming lives.

Pisey Cheum teaching Sunday school in her home village

# A VIRTUOUS CYCLE OF MISSIONS

When MTW missionaries Luke and Sokha Smith moved to the village of Angk'jeay in rural Cambodia in 2011, it wasn't long before they set up an

English language program. Reach-

ing local students is a major focus of their ministry—a key outreach in their larger church-planting work—and in Cambodia, English is in high demand.

BY: ANDREW SHAUGHNESSY

## A CHANCE TO BREAK A VICIOUS CYCLE

The Smiths met Pisey Cheum during that first year. She was in 10th grade at the time, and eager to learn. She started attending their evening English classes after school, soaking in the knowledge and hearing the gospel. Before long, she started coming to church, and soon became a Christian. Just before her senior year of high school, Pisey's mother came to Luke and Sokha and asked if they could somehow help put her daughter through college.

"We told her we would think about it," Luke said. "But that put an idea in our heads."

In those early years, many of Angk'jeay's female students would drop out of school, forced by their parents or economic circumstances to go work in clothing factories and send money back home to the village.

"We really wanted them to have a way to get a better education and get out of the cycle of poverty," said Luke, "to really be able to support not only themselves and their family, but to be able to support the church financially in the future—helping make the Cambodian church more self-sustainable."

The Smiths' answer? Help send the village girls to college.

By the time Pisey graduated high school, Luke and Sokha had picked out a group of four students, including Pisey, to begin the new program, funded initially by the Ambassadors Program and then through an MTW

"A lot of the students want to learn English," Luke explained. "If you go to college here, even if your professor teaches in Khmer, a lot of your textbooks would be in English. ... And you would also need to know some English to get many of the higher paying jobs."

Three days a week, the Smiths work through the ABCs, phonics, reading, and English conversation. There's an evangelistic component as well: Luke and Sokha teach stories from the Bible, work through the Shorter Catechism in Khmer, and lead the students in singing Christian Cambodian hymns. They're equipping these young men and women with valuable language skills, but they're also helping them gain biblical literacy, learn basic theological truths, and come to know Jesus.

Cambodia fundraising project. The four stayed in the village for another year, helping with church outreach, studying the Bible and being disciplined by the Smiths, learning computer skills, practicing English, and preparing for college. The next year, Pisey set off for the big city of Phnom Penh to study English education—but she wouldn't be alone.

## FROM VILLAGE TO CITY

The majority of the MTW Cambodia team serves in Phnom Penh, church planting and partnering with local Christian leaders to bolster the Cambodian Church. Wanting Pisey to continue being disciplined and growing in her faith, the Smiths connected her with Khmer Christian Church, one of MTW's partner churches in Phnom Penh, where MTW Cambodia team leader Paul Lee and his wife, Susan, work.

to a village a couple of hours away where Khmer Christian had planted a church. While the pastor and older church members focused on evangelizing the adults, Pisey and others taught Sunday school for the village children. She and the other students from Angk'jeay also worked out a rotation system with the Smiths, and every four weeks one of them would come back home to teach children's Sunday school there.

## FOLLOWING THE CALL

This past spring, Pisey passed her final examinations at Norton University in Phnom Penh, earning her bachelor's degree in English education. Shortly after, she got her first job as a teacher's aide at Logos International Christian School in Phnom Penh—a school MTW missionary kids often attend.

"I will follow Jesus and do what He wants me to do," said Pisey. "I will teach Sunday school, join the mission, and help with everything that I can."

Pisey is the first to graduate, but there are still six students from the Smiths' village studying in Phnom Penh. All six are plugged into one of MTW's partner churches in the city and are actively involved in ministry. One of the six is Pisey's younger sister, now in her second year of college.

For Pisey and the other students, their journeys of faith began in the village with Luke and Sokha. When they moved to the city, MTW missionaries were right there, walking alongside them and discipling them as they grew. Now, starting with Pisey, these same students are graduating, breaking free of the cycle of poverty, and serving the Cambodian Church in even bigger ways.

"Now I feel called to ministry," Pisey said. "I want to be involved with every part of serving God." [📍](#)

Interested in serving? We have opportunities in Cambodia and around the world. Visit [mtw.org/engage](http://mtw.org/engage).

*In those early years, many of Angk'jeay's female students would drop out of school, forced to work in clothing factories and send money back home to the village.*

Because Cambodian universities don't have student housing, the church had set up a dorm ministry, providing affordable, safe places for students to live. For the next four years, Pisey lived in the dorms and studied hard. All the while she continued to be disciplined by MTW missionaries and actively work in ministry with the church in Phnom Penh. Every time a missions outreach or church event happened, Pisey was there.

## FROM CITY TO VILLAGE

Every Sunday after the worship service at Khmer Christian Church, Pisey and the rest of the congregation would go



## From Smallest to Largest

PCA CHURCHES OVERCOME DOUBTS TO EMBRACE A COMMITMENT TO SEND 1%

Means of Grace, a PCA church plant in Denver, Colorado, has around 30 members, making it the smallest church plant in the Rocky Mountain Presbytery. Village Seven Presbyterian Church in Colorado Springs has more than 1,600 members, the biggest in the presbytery. When MTW challenged PCA churches to pray that an additional 1 percent of their congregations would be called to long-term, cross-cultural missions, both churches struggled with the idea.



**DAVID CHOI**  
PASTOR, MEANS OF GRACE  
CHURCH PLANT,  
DENVER, CO

There are plenty of established churches who could really commit to the 1% Challenge. We're small. We're still trying to survive. What difference could we make?

As a church planter, this question plagued my mind. I recognize now that it's a shortsighted way of thinking. I had similar questions when I decided to plant a church in Denver; yet God providentially got the ball rolling, put people in my life to spread the news to, and changed my heart in the process.

The road hasn't been smooth and there have been many failures along the way, but in retrospect, my biggest failure was putting God in a box. Realizing that God is immensely greater than my own expectations helped me take the plunge into church planting. With the same mindset, I am urging our members to commit to the 1% Challenge. [👉](#)



**PAGE CLARK**  
DIRECTOR OF MOBILIZATION,  
VILLAGE 7 PRESBYTERIAN,  
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

When MTW first announced the 1% Challenge, our initial reaction was, "There's no way we can send 16 more missionaries!" We considered the number of people, time, financial resources, and energy that would be necessary if we really did send out 1 percent of our congregation for missions. We were overwhelmed, and in many ways we still are. When we planted churches in the past and a group of our people went out with the new church, we felt the loss—but each time God has provided.

His faithfulness to us as a congregation in the past led us to take up this challenge. For us, the 1% Challenge starts with a lot of prayer: prayer with our missions leadership and in our monthly missions prayer calendar. We also plan to involve our entire congregation through an emphasis at our yearly missions conferences, and look forward to identifying and encouraging those interested in missions. [👉](#)

Has your church responded to the 1% Challenge yet? Learn more and record your commitment at [mtw.org/areyou1](http://mtw.org/areyou1).



## A Change of Heart in Ukraine

A SUMMER INTERNSHIP REVEALS A SURPRISE CALL TO MISSIONS

I had somewhat successfully suppressed my call to serve God cross-culturally. However, as a teacher, on school breaks I found myself praying about and researching opportunities to serve other cultures.

I had participated in trips that spanned a week, but was burdened by a desire to pursue longer-term service. Last year, I perused the MTW website for opportunities and to my delight, I discovered a two-month summer internship with a focus on ministry and missionary service—in Ukraine.

What did I know about Ukraine? I knew that Ukraine is near Russia and that it's cold. "Cold" and I aren't great friends. I also assumed that there probably weren't too many people walking around in my shade of brown. After briefly navigating that thought process, I found myself emailing the team leader in L'viv to obtain more information about the internship. I was ecstatic about what God would teach me in L'viv. Upon my arrival, I was overwhelmed by the beautiful architecture, people, and language. As interns, we learned about the culture and the specific needs of the people of Ukraine. It truly burdened my heart to know that the number of evangelical Christians there was fewer than 4 percent. I thought, "There are not enough workers here, or in Europe in general."

One of our big outreach projects was to help serve Ukrainian university students at a weeklong summer camp in the Carpathian Mountains. That week was one of the most challenging and beautiful weeks of my time in Ukraine. It was at this camp that the Lord revealed a passion in my heart to serve university students through teaching English. I enjoyed my students so deeply. I didn't want to leave them. On the bus ride home, I reflected on my experience as the Ukrainian landscape transitioned from

rolling hills to bustling city life in L'viv. I felt this intense rush in my heart as it beat harder and faster. While watching elderly women tending their fields and passing signs in Cyrillic script, I thought to myself, "I want to stay here."



Lauren and her teammates used art projects to communicate the gospel

BY: LAUREN STOVALL



Lauren, MTW intern to Ukraine

I want to be a part of this culture. I want to learn the language and walk alongside students as they learn the gospel and discover who they are in Christ."

It was on this bus ride that the Lord revealed to me a desire to be replanted in Ukraine, a place I never in a million years would have imagined myself living or even desiring to live. With each passing day, I am more convinced that my heart's desire is to serve in Ukraine. [👉](#)

*Editor's note: Lauren has begun the application process to serve longer term with MTW. Pray that the Lord will guide her and bless others through her.*

Serve with MTW on a summer internship! Visit [mtw.org/interns](http://mtw.org/interns).

## Picture Yourself on a Vision Trip in 2019

What's coming in 2019? Vision trips! In 2019 we will be leading a variety of global vision trips for those who want to see MTW's work firsthand. Whether the trip serves as a first step toward becoming



ing a missionary, or an opportunity to be an advocate for missions at your church, we hope you'll join us! Locations for 2019 vision trips include Japan, Middle East, West Africa, Central Asia, Madagascar, France, Peru, Germany, the Holy Land, and Costa Rica. Visit [mtw.org/visiontrips](http://mtw.org/visiontrips) to learn more.

## What's New With MTW Regional Hubs?

MTW is launching four regional "hubs" to bring resources and training closer to you. One goal of the hubs is to mobilize new missionaries by engaging with missions leaders and equipping local PCA churches to lead their congregation toward a vision for global missions. The hubs will also hold training events and serve as a resource to those who are interested in serving with MTW.

MTW West Coast and MTW Midwest hubs are in full swing. MTW West Coast hosted its first missions conference, Witness, last spring and is gearing up for

its second annual Witness conference April 26–27, 2019. (Learn more about the MTW West Coast hub and the conference at [mtw.org/WestCoast](http://mtw.org/WestCoast).)

MTW Midwest, based in St. Louis, Missouri, is hosting a Missions Exploration event at the end of October (email [midwest@mtw.org](mailto:midwest@mtw.org) for details). With the recent hire of two mobilizers, they hope to better resource PCA missions leaders and churches in their 14-state region.

MTW Southwest and MTW Northeast will be the next hubs to launch. A core group of PCA missions leaders has formed in the Southwest, and another core group is coming together in the Northeast, with the expectation of hiring a hub director for each region soon.

## How Do I Know If God Is Calling Me to Serve in Missions?

If you're exploring this question, we invite you to join us February 8–9, 2019, in our Atlanta office for *Link*. *Link* is an interactive two-day event for those who want to understand more about missionary life with MTW. During this time you'll hear about ministry opportunities around the world, discuss common obstacles to pursuing missions, and interact with MTW staff and missionaries to discern more about your role in cross-cultural missions. Learn more at [mtw.org/link](http://mtw.org/link).



## Has Your Church Accepted the 1% Challenge?

MTW has been challenging PCA churches to commit to praying that God would raise up an additional 1 percent of its members to global missions. The goal is that with an increase in missionaries serving globally, the world will see a measurable impact in the number of churches being planted and lives being transformed by the gospel.

We've been encouraged by the number of churches that are responding with excitement and anticipation to this challenge! So far 78 churches have committed to pray, and this number is growing weekly. Curious to see if your church accepted the 1% Challenge? Visit [mtw.org/areyou1](http://mtw.org/areyou1) for a list of churches who have committed to join with us in this God-sized vision.



**Make Your Summer Count.**  
Join a 2019 MTW Internship Team!  
[mtw.org/interns](http://mtw.org/interns) | email: [go@mtw.org](mailto:go@mtw.org)

**diversifi**

**Diversifi—staying true to our colors.**  
Sending more diverse missionaries would better reflect the image of God—*imago Dei*—but could it also help build more effective ministry? *We think so.*

[mtw.org/serve](http://mtw.org/serve)

**mtw** Donate to support our efforts to send more diverse missionaries. [mtw.org/diversifi](http://mtw.org/diversifi)

**diversifi** REVELATION 7:9–10  
*imago Dei*

## I WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN WHAT GOD IS DOING AROUND THE WORLD.

I have a question about:

- Going on a missions trip
- Becoming a missionary (1 month+)
- Giving to an MTW missionary or project
- How my church can get involved in missions
- Global Disaster Response training
- Medical missions
- Estate & gift design
- Participating in a Business As Mission trip

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Cover photo: Bridgett Tabb (far left), two national partners (names withheld) and Barbara D. Jones on a mission trip to West Africa



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FROM  
PRISON CELL  
TO SEMINARY



DIVERSITY  
AND CALLING



A VIRTUOUS  
CYCLE OF  
MISSIONS