

Unfinished

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Our Central American education

What our southern neighbors can teach us about missions 'done right'

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When you partner with The Mission Society, not only do you join us in The Mission to offer Christ to the world, but you join us in embracing our core values.

Our vision

The Kingdom of God advancing among all peoples bringing about redemption and reconciliation through Jesus Christ

Our mission

The Mission Society exists to mobilize and deploy the Body of Christ globally to join Jesus in His mission, especially among the least reached peoples.

Our core values

INCARNATION

The Mission Society seeks to minister to others by following the example of Jesus, who fully entered the human experience. In our cross-cultural ministry, we are committed to learning the local language, living among the people, ministering in culturally appropriate ways, demonstrating love for God and neighbor, and disciple-making among the nations.

INTEGRITY

The Mission Society desires to reflect the holiness of God in all we do. Personally and corporately we endeavor to make the character of Christ manifest in our lives and our ministry.

PASSION

We are not complacent about the One who matters supremely or the work God has given us to do; nor is our ministry prompted simply by duty, or even obedience. Our life together and our ministry are marked and motivated by passion for God and God's mission. We are passionate about Jesus, our mission, and all those involved in the journey with us.

PEOPLE

The Mission Society believes that people are of primary value. Because people matter to God, people matter to us. Our cross-cultural workers, staff, donors, volunteers, prayer partners, and those we seek to reach are of greatest worth to us. Because "relationships" and not "formulas" are our method, The Mission Society exudes an entrepreneurial culture where every member is encouraged to discern and pursue God's unique direction for his or her ministry.

PARTNERSHIP

Since it is the Kingdom of God that we are called to express and extend throughout the world, our ministry is about more than ourselves and our organization. We believe that working together enhances our witness and strengthens our ability to make disciples of all nations. The Mission Society therefore pursues partnership in ministry endeavors – with churches, nationals, Christian organizations, and individuals.

PRAYER

It is only through the power and presence of the Spirit of Christ that we can live up to the high and holy intentions embodied in these values. We acknowledge our absolute dependence on God and seek both His guidance and His strength each day. Therefore, The Mission Society is a praying community.

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—Andrew Murray



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The Gospel for everyone

The Mission Society's new mission statement embraces the whole world



“By God’s grace, more than 60 percent of our recently-approved missionary appointees will likely serve among least reached people groups. But to affirm the strategic priority of ministry among least reached is in no way to diminish the validity of continuing to share the Good News in ‘reached’ areas. ...Every person matters.”

My introduction to Central America came during the summer of 1970. With one year of marriage under our belts and the ink on our college diplomas barely dry, Pam and I, along with two other couples from Asbury College (now Asbury University), were sent on a two-month-long mission trip to Colombia, Ecuador, and Panama. During our stay in Panama, I spoke to a 7th grade Bible class at the Pan American Institute, a Methodist school in the Republic of Panama City.

I’ll never forget asking a class one day how many of them knew they would go to heaven when they died. No one raised a hand. Not one. Thinking they just hadn’t understood my English, I repeated the question. I probably said it louder

and slower. That works, doesn’t it?

Still I was met by a silence that was only broken when a girl finally raised her hand and said, “Sir, we can’t know if we will go to heaven until we die.”

“But every person also matters, because the One who leads us on mission is still the Shepherd who left the 99 safe in the fold in order to go rescue one lost sheep.”

That encounter with a young Panamanian girl shed light for me on a much bigger issue. She represented multitudes of people who have a cultural

identification with the Church and who, if asked, would say they are Christian, but who have absolutely no conception of a personal relationship with Christ, much less even the possibility of assurance of their salvation.

Reaching the “reached”

I believe creative mission work still needs to be done in areas that have technically been “reached.” In the pages that follow, you will read about several ministries in which The Mission Society is engaged in Mexico and Central America. Granted, these countries are thousands of miles removed from the “10-40 Window.” (The same could be said of much of Western Europe, where the spiritual need is even greater than in places like Nicaragua or



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Mexico.) Although not populated by "unreached people groups," these countries are still home to millions who do not know Jesus and who rarely encounter a Christ-follower who could point them to Jesus.

Perhaps it's especially important to underline the validity of mission in such areas at a time when The Mission Society has just adopted a new mission statement. That statement declares, **"The Mission Society exists to mobilize and deploy the Body of Christ globally to join Jesus in His mission, especially among the least reached peoples."**

Because of the sheer numbers of people (around two billion by most estimates) who have never heard the Good News of Jesus, focusing on "least

reached peoples" in "10-40 Window" countries is indeed a strategic priority for The Mission Society. That's what prompts the "especially" part. And by God's grace, more than 60 percent of our recently approved missionary appointees will likely serve among least reached people groups. But to affirm the strategic priority of that ministry is in no way to diminish the validity of continuing to share the Good News in "reached" areas. Why? Because even in reached areas, there are still millions and millions of people, like my young Panamanian friend, who have no idea that it's possible to know before you die whether or not you will go to heaven.

The theme of the 1999 Global Consultation on World Evangelization,

held in Pretoria, South Africa, speaks to this issue. It was, "A Church for Every People, and the Gospel for Every Person." People groups are indeed vitally important, and we must do all we can to ensure a vibrant Gospel witness among every one of them. By God's grace, we are doing that. But every person also matters, because the One who leads us on mission is still the Shepherd who left the 99 safe in the fold in order to go rescue one lost sheep.

When even one is found, the angels rejoice. So should we. ✚

The Rev. Dick McClain, is the president and CEO of The Mission Society.



Each year, well-meaning North Americans reach out to our southern, "poorer" neighbors offering help in the name of Christ. But are we helping?

When helping hurts

Unexamined charitable acts threaten the growth of the worldwide church. How can we really help a world in crisis?

by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

You turn on the evening news and see that a tsunami has devastated Indonesia, leaving millions without food, adequate clothing, or shelter. Following a commercial break, the news returns and features a story about the growing number of homeless people in your city, who are also without food, adequate clothing, or shelter. At first glance the appropriate responses to each of these crises might seem to be very similar. The people in both situations need food, clothing, and housing, and providing these things to both groups seems to be the obvious solution. But there is something nagging in us as we reflect on these two news stories. Deep down it seems like the people in these two crises are in very different situations and require different types of help.



A helpful first step in thinking about working with the poor in any context is to discern whether the situation calls for relief, rehabilitation, or development.

How should we think about these scenarios? Are there principles to guide us to the appropriate response in each case?

Pick a number between 1 and 3

A helpful first step in thinking about working with the poor in any context is to discern whether the situation calls for relief, rehabilitation, or development. In fact, the failure to distinguish among these situations is one of the most common reasons that poverty-alleviation efforts often do harm.

“Relief” can be defined as the urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a natural or man-made crisis. As pictured in the figure (page 7), when a crisis such as the Indonesian tsunami strikes, people are nearly or even completely helpless and experience plummeting economic conditions. There is a need to halt the freefall, to “stop the bleeding,” and this is what relief attempts to do. The key feature of relief is a provider-receiver dynamic in which the provider gives assistance – often material – to the receiver, who is largely incapable of helping himself at the time. The Good Samaritan’s bandaging of the helpless man who lay bleeding along the roadside is an excellent example of relief applied appropriately.

“Rehabilitation” begins as soon as the bleeding stops; it seeks to restore people and their communities to the positive elements of their precrisis conditions. The key feature of rehabilitation is a dynamic of working with the tsunami victims as they participate in their own recovery, moving from point 2 to point 3.

“Development” is a process of ongoing change that moves all the people involved – both the “helpers” and the “helped” – closer to being in right relationship with God, self, and others, and the rest of creation. In particular, as the materially poor

develop, they are better able to fulfill their calling of glorifying God by working and supporting themselves and their families with the fruits of that work. Development is not done *to* people or *for* people but *with* people. The key dynamic in development is promoting an empowering process in which all the people involved – both the “helpers” and the “helped” – become more of what God created them to be, moving beyond point 3 to levels of reconciliation that they have not experienced before.

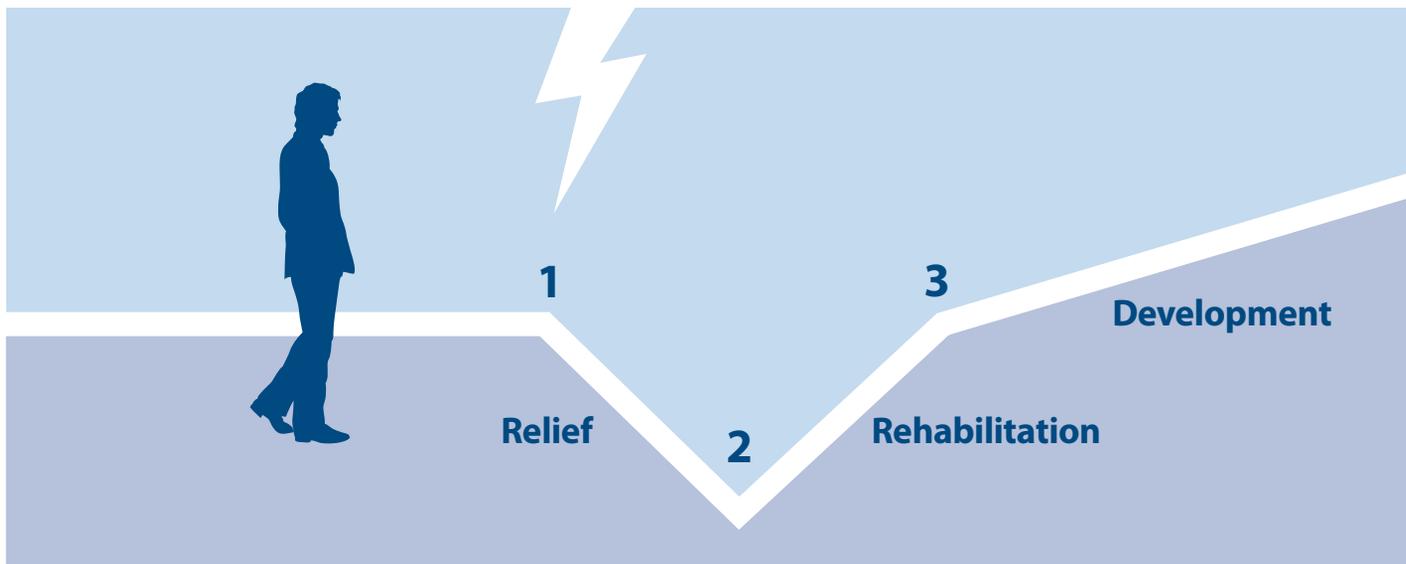
It is absolutely critical that we determine whether relief, rehabilitation, or development is the appropriate intervention. One of the biggest mistakes that the North American churches make – by far – is in applying relief in situations in which rehabilitation or development is the appropriate intervention.

Who’s #1

Many of the people coming to your church for help will state that they are in a crisis, needing emergency financial help for utility bills, rent, food, or transportation. In other words, they will state that they are at point 1 in the figure. Is relief the appropriate intervention for such a person? Maybe, but maybe not. There are several things to consider.

First, is there really a crisis at hand? If you fail to provide immediate help, will there really be serious, negative consequences? If not, then relief is not the appropriate intervention, for there is time for the person to take actions on his own behalf.

Second, to what degree was the individual personally responsible for the crisis? Of course, compassion and understanding are in order here, especially when one remembers the systemic factors that can play a role in poverty. But it is still important to consider the person’s own culpability in the situation, as allowing people to feel some of the pain



resulting from any irresponsible behavior on their part can be part of the “tough love” needed to facilitate the reconciliation of poverty alleviation. The point is not to punish the person for any mistakes or sins he has committed, but to ensure that the appropriate lessons are being learned in the situation.

Third, can the person help himself? If so, then a pure handout is almost never appropriate, as it undermines the person’s capacity to be steward of his own resources and abilities.

Fourth, to what extent has this person already been receiving relief from you or others in the past? How likely is he to be receiving such help in the future? As special as your church is, it might not be the first stop on the train! This person may be obtaining “emergency” assistance from one church or organization after another, so that your “just-this-onetime gift” might be the tenth gift the person has recently received.

My family experienced this situation two months ago when a young woman knocked on the door of our house asking for some food. We complied, but we later found out that she had received similar assistance from other members of our community for many weeks, and we still see her going door to door asking for food. When neighbors have sought to provide her with long-term solutions, she has refused such help. The loving thing to do for this woman is for the entire community to withhold further relief, to explain our reason for doing so, and to offer her wide-open arms should she choose a path of walking together with us in finding long-term solutions.

While many of these rules of thumb strikes an intuitive chord when working with the materially poor in North America, many of us ignore these principles when working with the materially poor in the Majority World. Compared to our own situation, the levels of poverty in the Majority World

seem so devastating, and the people seem so helpless. In such contexts, many of us are quick to hand out money and other forms of relief assistance in ways that we would never even consider when ministering to the poor in North America.

Who is #1? It is unlikely that you know many people in this category, for the reality is that only a small percentage of the poor in your community or around the world require relief. These would include the severely disabled; some of the elderly; very young, orphaned children; the mentally ill homeless population; and victims of a natural disaster. People in these categories are often unable to do anything to help themselves and need the handouts of relief. However, for most people, the bleeding has stopped, and they are not destitute. Acting as though they are destitute does more harm than good, both to them and to ourselves. This does not mean that we should do nothing to help those who are not destitute. It just means that rehabilitation or development – not relief – is the appropriate way of helping such people. This help could very well include providing them with financial assistance, but such assistance would be conditional upon and supportive of their being productive. (Chapters 8 and 9 of *When Helping Hurts* provide examples of interventions that do this by complementing people’s work and thrift with additional resources.)

“When Helping Hurts” (pages 5-7) and “First do no harm” (pages 8-9) were excerpted from *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself*, by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. Published by Moody Publishers, 2009. Used by permission.



"There are times when the Holy Spirit might move us to do something for the materially poor that they can do for themselves. But just remember that these situations are the exception, not the rule."

First, do no harm

Hoping to give, we sometimes rob

Poverty alleviation is more complex than it appears at first glance. However, there is a good rule of thumb that is extremely useful in cutting through a lot of the complexity: Avoid paternalism. Do not do things for people that they can do for themselves.

Memorize this. Recite it under your breath all day long. Every time you are engaged in poverty-alleviation ministry, keep this in the forefront of your mind, for it can keep you from doing all sorts of harm.

Resource Paternalism

Being from a materialistic culture, North Americans often view the solution to poverty in material terms and tend to pour financial and other material resources into situations in which the real need is for the local people to steward their own resources. In addition, legitimate local businesses can be undermined when outsiders bring in such things as free clothes or building supplies, undercutting the price that these businesses need to survive.

Spiritual Paternalism

Many of us assume that we have a lot to teach the materially poor about God and that we should be the ones preaching from the pulpit, teaching the Sunday school class, or leading the vacation Bible school. We do have much to share out of our knowledge and experiences, but oftentimes the materially poor have an

"Knowledge Paternalism occurs when we assume that we have all the best ideas about how to do things."

even deeper walk with God and have insights and experiences that they can share with us, if we would just stop talking and listen.

Knowledge Paternalism

Knowledge Paternalism occurs when we assume that we have all the best ideas about how to do things. As a result, the materially poor need us to think for them concerning the best way to plant crops, to operate their businesses, or to cure diseases. Handling knowledge is a very tricky area in poverty alleviation,

because the truth is that we often do not have knowledge that can help the materially poor. But we must recognize that the materially poor also have unique insights into their own cultural contexts and are facing circumstances that we do not understand very well.

Labor Paternalism

Labor Paternalism occurs when we do work for people that they can do for themselves. I remember going on a spring break mission trip to Mississippi while I was in college. I will never forget the sick feeling I had as I stood on a ladder painting a house while the young, able-bodied men living in the house sat on their front porch and watched. I did so much harm that day. Yes, the house got painted, but in the process I undermined these people's calling to be stewards of their own time and talents. It might have been better if I had stayed home from spring break, rather than to have gone and done harm.

Managerial Paternalism

Managerial Paternalism is perhaps the hardest nut to crack. We middle-to-



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in Mathematics from Dordt College. Specializing in Third World Development and International Economics, Brian has been a consultant to the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the United States Agency for International Development.

upper-class North Americans love to see things get done as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Relative to many other cultures, including many low-income communities in North America, we are prone to take charge, particularly when it appears that nobody else is moving fast enough. As a result, we often plan, manage, and direct initiatives in low-income communities when people in those communities could do those things well already. The structure and pace might be different, but they could do a good job themselves.

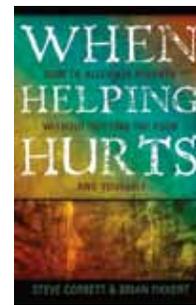
You might be asking, “Then why don’t these people, churches, or organizations take charge and manage these projects if they are so gifted?” There are lots of reasons, but here are several common ones that should give us some pause before rushing in and grabbing reins in any project.

- They do not need to take charge because they know that we will take charge if they wait long enough.
- They lack the confidence to take charge, particularly when the “superior,” middle-to-upper class North Americans are involved.

rior,” middle-to-upper class North Americans are involved.

- They, like we, have internalized the messages of centuries of colonialism, slavery, and racism: Caucasians run things and everyone else follows.
- They do not want the project to happen as much as we do. For example, they might know the project will accomplish little in their context but are afraid to tell us for fear of offending us.
- They know that by letting us run the show, it is more likely that we will bring in money and other material resources to give them.

Of course, there are exceptions to every rule! There are times when the Holy Spirit might move us to do something for the materially poor that they can do for themselves. But just remember that these situations are the exception, not the rule.



Don’t do short-term missions without this book!

When Helping Hurts is a much-needed guide for churches

involved, or planning to be involved, in missions to the poor. Watch out, though, because the suggested strategies conflict with what most churches have done for decades, strategies that unwittingly create dependency on the part of those served. This book is proof that Christ-centered and church-based poverty alleviation done well does no harm and transforms lives. Don’t let your church go on a short-term mission trip without reading chapter seven [“Doing short-term missions without doing long-term harm”].

– Craig Cole, president and CEO of Five Talents International

Building their future their way

Long-term effects of short-term mission teams can be disastrous – broken relationships, increased dependency, decreased esteem among the national people. This Nicaraguan community, however, provides a view of short-term missions that fosters dignity, builds friendships, and represents the Kingdom of God.

By Jim Ramsay

When one speaks of “missions” in Central America nowadays, what comes to most church members’ minds is short-term mission trips. For me, this has been a relatively new phenomenon. During our years of missionary service in Kazakhstan, we only received teams on three occasions. Kazakhstan is not exactly in great demand on the short-term mission circuit! So when I came on the staff of The Mission Society and began working with our missionaries in other places, I was almost overwhelmed by the numbers of short-term mission teams trekking out each year.

While I had no doubt of the transformative effect the experience might have on those who went on the trips, my missiologist mind immediately went to the hosts. During my missionary training, instructors emphasized the need for long-term commitment, for spending the first year or two in language learning, culture adaptation, and in build-

ing relationships and trust. So the phrase “short-term trip” didn’t sound compatible at all with that understanding of missions! I wondered how career missionaries were able to function in their own roles within a culture if they ended up spending large amounts of time hosting North American teams. And I wondered how local churches and communities might be impacted by the influx of outside money and by projects defined and operated from the outside by people who did not have an in-depth understanding of the culture.

It didn’t take me long to realize that these are indeed huge issues in missions today, especially in Central America. In fact, often long-term missionaries and missiologists cringe at the mention of short-term mission teams due to some of the missteps that have become common since the phenomenon took off about two decades ago. But one missionary couple I visited in Nicaragua seems to have

avoided some of the most common problems that are often associated with a place frequented by teams.

Los Playones

When I visited Ronnie and Angi Hopkins last year where they serve in Nicaragua, one of the places we went to was the village of Los Playones. I knew there had been teams working in the area, so I looked for the common signs – a church building out of character with the surroundings, a pastor paid by outside money, a pastor’s house at a higher level than the rest of the community, a lack of ownership in the community for projects done by the teams, and so forth. But what I found was different.

We actually arrived on the day a newly appointed pastor was coming in. The parsonage (that had indeed been built with assistance of teams) was no fancier than other houses. It was an empty shell, but community members started bringing in



the furnishings as a welcome to the new pastor. The whole community showed up to welcome him there – no gringos involved. Ronnie, Angi, and I were silent spectators, not even invited to speak or so much as be introduced. I knew something was different! We then visited the school that had been built with assistance from teams. Again, a modest building. The school was supported by the community, and the government paid for teachers. Some outside funds were used for a scholarship fund to enable students, selected by the local teachers, to attend higher education upon completion of school.

So I asked Ronnie and Angi to help me understand how they have managed to connect short-term teams with this village in a way that does not seem to have led to unhealthy dependency, inappropriate structures, and lack of ownership. Again, this is anecdotal, but I think it points to some principles that could inform

U.S. churches, missionaries, and receiving churches in their involvement in short-term mission trips. Here are some principles to consider:

The focus has been on long-term relationships.

The same groups from the U.S. have been involved over many years and

In effective short-term missions, the results are usually slower, less tangible, perhaps even less gratifying and exciting in the short run. But we always need to be reminded: It's not about us anyhow!

have built long-term relationships with people in the community. The young man who now teaches computer at the school was eight years old when the relationship with the short-term group was first established. He

worked hard to learn and received appropriate assistance in his local education so that he can now give back to his community.

Ronnie and Angi themselves know the people, have worked at the language, and are comfortable in the culture, so they can be an important bridge for the visiting teams.

It is very important to have someone who truly knows both cultures to play such a role. An American who speaks Spanish or a local who speaks English alone does not qualify as a person to be that bridge. That person needs to have lived and worked extensively with people in both cultures.

The teams from the U.S. are smaller, usually under 12.

They are joined by a group of trained local people and even with the local denomination's district supervisor. This smaller size and joint effort can help avoid "the



How did we get here?

A brief history of dependency in missions

“In 1820 most of the world was on equal footing in terms of basic living standards. There was no internet, cell phones, television, automobiles, or electricity. The gap between the wealthy and the poor was not extreme. But after 1820, the industrial revolution kicked in, colonialism took off, and globalization was underway. Globalization has brought us closer together around the world, but one of the unfortunate consequences of globalization today is that the economic and lifestyle gap between the rich and poor is greater than it’s ever been. And that fact contributes to the problem of dependency in mission. Dependency is a child of colonial missions, and unfortunately much of short-term mission activity today continues to perpetuate dependency.”

– Dr. Darrell Whiteman, The Mission Society’s vice president of mission preparation, teaches missionaries about the dangers of dependency. (Left: Missionary Angi Hopkins)

great white hope” attitude that can develop in short-term mission work both in the group and in the host.

Projects started small and were defined by the community.

The people of Los Playones first asked about help with a school. It started with a one-room structure with a thatched roof and now, several years later, is a building large enough to educate all grades. It didn’t happen all at once.

The bulk of construction is done by local people.

The church and school were built with local labor. The community has to come up with the land, the lumber, and bricks. This significant involvement in materials and labor not only helps with ownership, but it can also help to avoid creating structures that are not appropriate to the setting or are larger than really is needed.

Short-term team members listen.

Recently when exploring work in a new village, a team of only six came and simply spent time in the people’s homes, listening and learning. On their second trip, they attended classes on community development approaches, taught by Nicaraguans. Only then did they begin discussions of what role they might play in the longer-term relationship. The outsiders were not in the driver’s seat.

I would add to this list the importance of good mission training for those who are going. It should be much more than a two-hour orientation the weekend before, but should involve several weeks of discussions, local ministry experiences, and perhaps a course like *Perspectives**. If people cannot commit to serious preparation, we should ask if they really are the best suited for being helpful on a mission trip.

What I saw at Los Playones was quite a contrast to the horror stories

I’ve heard – like the one where the missionary was asked where they could find paint that was easily strip-pable, so that between trips the locals could remove the latest coat of paint before the next mission team showed up! In effective short-term missions, the results are usually slower, less tangible, perhaps even less gratifying and exciting in the short run. But we always need to be reminded: It’s not about us anyhow! Los Playones was a refreshing example to me of what is possible when wisdom supersedes the simple desire for an experience.✝

**Perspectives is a 15-week mission course offered in many locations around the United States by the U.S. Center for World Mission.*

Jim Ramsay, former missionary to Central Asia, is The Mission Society’s senior director of field ministry.

Do's and don'ts for short-term teams

Darrell Whiteman, Ph.D., The Mission Society's resident missiologist, offers some help for your next short-term mission trip.



Sometimes, short-term mission teams fall into a pattern of posing short-term solutions to long-term problems without asking local people what they know and are doing about the issues. To help avoid this, here are a few simple guidelines for short-term teams:

1. DO let local people determine your project.
2. DO undertake projects that are sustainable by local people.
3. DON'T create expectations that will burden future short-term mission teams in that place. Most problems of poverty and disease are long-standing and have no simple solutions, so it is better to do the little that the short-term mission can do without making promises about what will be accomplished.
4. DON'T do anything for others that they can do for themselves. This eliminates most building projects, because most cultures have been building suitable structures with local materials for countless generations. A building project should fit into a long-term plan and should be able to be done under local leadership.

For your next short-term team building project, see below.

Dependency check list

Quickly assess your next missions building project

When is it wrong for outsiders to fund local ministry? If you can answer "yes" to any of the following questions, it may well indicate a problem. If your answer is "yes" to more than one, it is a distinct possibility. If your answers to several questions are in the affirmative, it is almost certainly wrong to fund the project.

- | Yes | No | Don't
know | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are local Christian leaders generally opposed to this idea? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the outside support undermine or hinder the recipients' capacity to make their own decisions and chart their own course? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the outside support limit the recipients' ability to collaborate with other local Christian communities? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the outside support chip away at the recipients' sense of selfhood and dignity as co-laborers in the work of the gospel? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the proportion of outside support far exceed the level of support from within the region? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the recipient ministry show partiality in their stewardship of outside support? Do they favor certain ethnic groups, churches, or individuals? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the alliance implied by the outside support alienate Christians from their local community? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the recipient insist on sending money directly to an individual rather than to the overseeing body of a church or mission? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the program and the money for the program both from the outside? If the outside program were not in use, would the flow of outside money stop? |

From: Daniel Rickett, "Fine-Tuning Financing: Principles of Giving and Receiving in Missions Partnerships" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (EMQ) 38(1):28-35. January 2002. Note: This issue of EMQ is on "Missions and Money."



Reflections from the scary road

One missionary's story of learning to live with grace in an uncertain world

By Brooke Burns

The rainy season has returned early and with a vengeance. As I make my way down the “scary road” (page 16), as our family has respectfully named it, I am more cautious than usual due to the slick pavement. I know the road well, really well, as I travel it many times daily to school, to work, and to go just about anywhere outside our neighborhood. However, some days the road will be unpredictable due to the nature of the landscape: mudslides are common in the rainy season; the hairpin turn is often blocked by a car that just couldn't make the grade, large trucks that are prohibited but can't turn around and therefore become road blocks. One thing is for sure, each day there is something different to encounter as you drive the scary road. Lately, I have thought about how much I hated the road when we first moved to Costa Rica. It frightened and intimidated me, and I was often frustrated that it was the route I was forced to take each day. But today, as the rain pelts my windshield, I realize I am no longer afraid of the road—respectful, but not afraid. And I think I might even miss this road upon our move back to the States.

Surprised by discouragement

In 2006, our family arrived in Costa Rica, ready to tackle the year-long language-learning process and then to move on to Honduras where we would be working with orphan children. We had thoroughly planned for our time as missionaries, and we were sure of our call to move to Latin America to help hurting children. As our journey began, we were full of excitement and eager with anticipation of all that was ahead.

As the months that first year ticked by, it became clear that, although we had been trained in cross-cultural adaptation, there were many, many challenges and changes that happen that one cannot pre-

pare for. We were surprised by how tired and frustrated we were by the end of the day. Language learning was much harder than we had anticipated. Our “self-care” training was helpful, but sometimes we were just too tired to care for ourselves! As our plans to move to Honduras began to fall through, so did our spirits as we grew confused about our calling and our place of service. Many of the relationships we formed our first year ended in heartache as we realized many were with individuals who wanted to take advantage of the “gringos.” We were robbed, taken advantage of by taxi drivers, and lied to by landlords. We were often sick with various “bugs” as we adjusted to the

“O Most High, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you.”

—Psalm 56:2b-3, NRSV



"I spent a season – an anonymous season – traveling a lonely and unfamiliar road with no end in sight. ... Months passed. ... I began to see signposts pointing to something that I wasn't sure I wanted to drive towards – the fact that thousands of Costa Rica's children were being exploited in the highly lucrative business of sex tourism. ... Did I really want to enter into a dark, dangerous, and evil world of child trafficking?" (Left: the actual "scary road" Brooke describes.)

new climate. By the end of the first year, we were confused, tired, and uncertain of the road ahead. It looked way too unpredictable and scary.

We regrouped, found meaningful work in Costa Rica, and found a good school for our children to attend. It was decided that Costa Rica would be where we would land and where we would start our journey to serve hurting children. As my husband started ministry and our children a new school, I found myself smack dab in the middle of a very dark place. Depression. We had been warned about the proclivity for missionaries to struggle with this, but I had not anticipated it would overtake me in such a strong and insidious way. Why would God allow such a thing to happen when He knew my heart's desire was to serve Him and help others? And hadn't we been obedient to Him and His call?

I spent a season – an anonymous season – traveling a lonely and unfamiliar road with no end in sight. It felt like being in one of those tunnels that runs under mountains, where you can't see the

opening at the other end for just a little too long for comfort, but you keep driving forward, unable to turn around and hoping the end will soon come. Months passed and finally the exit was visible and light was ahead, and I began to anticipate what might lie out on the other side.

Light at last

I began to see signposts pointing to something that I wasn't sure I wanted to drive towards – the fact that thousands of Costa Rica's children were being exploited in the highly lucrative business of sex tourism. The pristine beauty of the land we had adopted only served to contrast the ugliness in the shadows where there was rape of children for profit. Did I really want to travel down this road? Did I really want to enter into a dark, dangerous, and evil world of child trafficking and exploitation?

Although I wanted to turn from it, I could not. It was clear this was the direction God wanted me to take. Even though this road has been ugly, there have been beauty and blessings as well. My life has

been changed by the people of courage with whom I have had the privilege to work. Working with those who are hurting, hungry, broken, and exploited has kept me weak and on my knees. And this place of vulnerability and inability in my own strength is scary, yet good indeed.

As I drive the last hill of the scary road on this rainy day, May 2010, I am able to give thanks to God for every thing God has allowed on our journey here in Costa Rica. Most of it has felt like the uphill part of the scary road – hard, slow, and unpredictable. But as I look ahead to our new life back in the United States, as I hunt for a home, a job, and schools for the kids, I secretly hope that the road to each of these places will be in some way... just a little scary.

Brooke and her husband, Doug, and two children, Austin and Mary Beth, have served hurting children in San José, Costa Rica for the past four years. In June 2010, they returned to their home state of Texas.



During her time in Costa Rica, Brooke Burns helped found a safe home for victims of sexual trafficking, mentored young women, and spoke to groups about the issue of modern-day slavery.

Out from the darkness

Casa Lavinia: a safe home for victims of sexual trafficking

By Reed Haigler Hoppe

During her family's years in Costa Rica, Brooke Burns helped found a safe house for victims of sexual trafficking. The home is called "Casa Lavinia," which means, "home of a girl who is loved and cared for." Casa Lavinia was designed to offer a place of refuge for young women who have been sexually exploited. While still in its development, Brooke and a local church have worked hard to create this aftercare facility to minister to these women and provide resources for a fresh start. At Casa Lavinia, Christians from the community will serve as mentors, teach trades to the girls, offer medical care, and serve as foster parents when the girls are ready to leave the home. "We don't want this home to be a long-term care facility. We want it to be a place of rescue and restoration and then have an exit strategy for each girl to send them back into

the community – whether that is a home within their family of origin or a foster home through the church," remarks Brooke.

In Costa Rica, the women and girls who are trafficked generally live in their own home, as opposed to being kidnapped and held hostage as in many other nations. Most are prostituted against their wills by neighborhood gangs or their own families.

The trafficking of persons through forced labor, bonded labor, and commercial sexual servitude affects more than 12.3 million people worldwide. More than half of those exploited are women and young girls. Costa Rica is a leading location for

sex tourism, in which foreign men travel to the country to exploit young women. In Costa Rica, the women and girls who are trafficked generally live in their own home, as opposed to being kidnapped and held hostage as in many other nations. Most are prostituted against their wills by neighborhood gangs or their own families.

After moving back to the States, Brooke continues to be involved in helping victims of sexual trafficking. She serves on the U.S. board of directors for Oasis, an organization which provides community-based solutions for survivors of human trafficking and modern-day slavery. She also speaks to churches, civic organizations, and other groups to raise awareness regarding the issue and empower others to help.



Mexico and Central America in their hearts

Meet your Mission Society missionaries serving
in these areas



COSTA RICA

Doug and Brooke Burns

Children: Austin and Mary Beth

Originally from Texas, Doug and Brooke both earned Master's degrees from Asbury

Theological Seminary in Kentucky before joining The Mission Society team. They have been serving as advocates for sexual trafficking victims in Costa Rica and throughout Latin America. Brooke helped found Casa Lavinia, a safe home and aftercare program for rescued victims of sexual trafficking. *(See page 17.)* The Burnses recently ended their term and will relocate to Texas.



Bryan and Beth Tatum

Children: Jesse, Drew & Kirsten

Bryan and Beth are preparing to serve as house parents in The Costa Rica Methodist Children's Home. The

home is located northeast of San José, Costa Rica in the town of Coronado. They are currently in language school learning Spanish, and their children are attending a Costa Rican school.



MEXICO
Florencio and María Guzman

The Guzmans minister in Monterrey, Mexico and other areas in Latin America. They are involved in evangelism,

leadership development, discipleship, and writing Bible-training curriculum. They also have a vital ministry among the poor in Monterrey.



Jon and Jeanne Herrin
Children: Jesse, Megan & Andrew

Jon, Jeanne, and their three children serve in Monterrey, Mexico. Jon serves as dean

at the John Wesley Methodist Seminary and teaches in local schools. Jeanne teaches ESL classes and home schools Megan and Andrew. Jesse will start college in August.



Ron and Bonnie Hipwell
Children: Andrew, Stephanie, and Ryan

The Hipwells and their son Ryan are currently working in Monterrey, Mexico at the John

Wesley Methodist Seminary. Ron serves as the seminary chaplain and is involved in training pastors as well as in the revival of the Methodist Church there. Bonnie serves as the student life coordinator and teaches ESL and music. They are both also actively discipling students and maintaining a ministry of hospitality.



NICARAGUA
Ed and Linda Baker

Ed and Linda Baker served in Paraguay in the rural department of San Pedro from 2002-2008. They drilled

water wells to assist the existing Methodist churches there and to assist in planting new churches. They were also responsible for the construction of a Methodist School as well as several other construction projects at new and existing churches. In October 2008, the Bakers moved to Nicaragua to continue their well-drilling ministry. They are currently drilling wells, leading a Bible study, and working with the Methodist Church in Nicaragua.



Ronnie and Angi Hopkins

Ronnie and Angi served in the Red Bird Missionary Conference before joining The Mission Society team. Ronnie was the camp manager and

Angi served as a nurse practitioner. They were active on short-term teams to Nicaragua for 10 years before moving there full-time. They work with MEFEL, a group of indigenous evangelical pastors. Ronnie and Angi work in community health and development, as well as host short-term teams for medical/dental outreaches, construction projects, and evangelism. *(See article on page 10.)*

For information about partnering with these or any Mission Society missionaries, visit our website at www.themissionsociety.org or call 1.800.478.8963. Thank you for your prayers for the people in these regions and for the workers who minister alongside them.

Mexico's Church grows as violence continues

Mexican Methodists make 'drug-violence region' a mission emphasis



Left: Closing worship service at the Conferencia Anual Oriental, a Methodist annual conferences in Mexico, which recorded a 2.3% net growth in church membership.

In Mexico, violence continues as two of the largest drug cartels fight for turf and easy access to the United States. More than 22,700 people have been killed since President Felipe Calderon declared war on the drug cartels after assuming office in December 2006. Ciudad Juarez, which is located across the border from El Paso, Texas, is one of the most violent cities in the world. More than 2,600 people were killed in 2009 in that town alone.

Six Mission Society missionaries and their children serve in Monterrey, Mexico, which has been an active field since 1987. At the time of this writing, missionaries Ron and Bonnie Hipwell had just attended their Methodist Annual Conference in Mexico. The "Conferencia Anual Oriental" includes the city of Monterrey, the third largest city in Mexico, along with most of the area which borders Texas. "The Conference Lay Leader," writes Bonne Hipwell, "reported that some of

the pastors in the conference, particularly in areas closer to the border, have received death threats and in some cases have had to move to safer places.

"But the good news," Hipwell continues, "is the church is growing. The vision of the conference continues to be to reach the lost! The bishop continues to promote Bible reading, fasting, and prayer to encourage spiritual growth of their members.

"There are 14 unreached people groups in Mexico, and five of the 32 states in Mexico have absolutely no Methodist Church presence. This was addressed at general and annual conference, and it was decided to make the state of Sinaloa, another hotbed of drug violence, a mission emphasis, and the Church is praying for God to raise up Mexican couples to serve there!

"One of the annual conferences has established its own mission-sending

agency, and the general church here has decided to use this as its official agency and funnel all people interested in missionary service through this group. The Methodist Church here is beginning to see itself not just as a receiving church but as a sending one as well!

"As far as we are concerned, we continue to work in Monterrey at the Seminario Metodista Juan Wesley training pastors and church leaders. We do our best to prepare them for their ministries, send them off every weekend to preach and teach, and pray for their safety, thanking the Lord every Tuesday when we get back together and everyone is present! We have students and their families who have been personally touched by the violence, but just like the conference in general, they are resolute to continue their ministry to reach the lost, to be the generation that changes Mexico!"



An estimated 1.3 million people are living in makeshift tent settlements; half a million are refugees. After the young girl (far left) had been stuck in rubble for two days, her leg was cut off with a machete. "They did it to save her life before the building collapsed on her," writes Lehman. "The girl is a Christian."

Haiti, five months later

by Joetta Lehman

Haitians are still seeking to recover from the January 12, 2010 earthquake (7.0) that rocked the capital city of Port-au-Prince and the surrounding area. It is reported that the quake left more than 200,000 dead and at least 300,000 injured. The United Nations estimates that 1.3 million people now live in makeshift tent settlements and half a million have become refugees. Almost every Haitian was affected somehow through this earthquake by loss of loved one, loss of limb, loss of home, loss of work, etc. Many still have never heard from family members and assume they have died. Some have lost homes. Some, especially in Cap-Haitien, have taken in other family members coming from Port-au-Prince and are trying to support them. Schools in the north are receiving children displaced from the earthquake.

In the midst of this indescribable devastation, thousands of relief workers from many countries poured into Haiti to bring hope to those who could not help themselves. Now, five months removed from that terrible day, thousands still are at work trying to bring order in the midst of chaos. Even though it is not front-page news as it was at first, the tremendous task of clean-up and rebuilding is just getting started. Plans are being made for construction of new homes and businesses. The clean-up continues.

Even though we are located in Cap-Haitien (approximately 150 miles north of Port-au-Prince), we have been responding to the needs and showing Christ's love by taking food, water, and supplies to the needy. We have transported several large trucks filled with rice, beans, sugar, water, and cooking oil, along with medical supplies to the capital city – a trip that takes seven hours one way due to the poor road conditions. This week we received another container with food for those suffering and struggling to survive after the quake.

OMS has sent medical teams. While they ministered to the physical needs of the people, our seminary students and church-plant workers ministered to their spiritual needs, and they saw between 300 and 400 people pray to receive Christ. Now we are planting a church in this area.

On February 12 -14, 2010, Haiti's President, René Prével, cancelled the annual Mardi Gras celebration and called his nation to three days of fasting and prayer. What a joy to have a day of prayer and fasting rather than the usual festivities.

We have heard from a number of sources of the tremendous movings of the Holy Spirit. Revival and healing are occurring in this island nation. One said, "Since the earthquake, the country has been spiritually transformed." People are crying out to God for forgiveness and mercy. President Prével publically called upon God to heal his country, and the prime minister wept at the prayer and fasting celebration.

In Cap-Haitien, there was another celebration on February 16, a March for Jesus. Some 50,000 people marched, carrying signs that read, "No freedom for Haiti without Jesus." God is at work in Haiti.

Why we must continue to pray

Please continue to pray for Haiti with its overwhelming needs. Please pray that through this devastation, many will continue to come to know Jesus, and the Church will be stronger than before.

Remember, it really does matter whether or not you pray! Your prayers make a difference, and we count on them.

Missionary to Haiti, *Joetta Lehman* serves jointly with The Mission Society and OMS International. *She submitted this update on June 13, 2010.*

The Mission Society's 'World Mission in the Wesleyan Spirit' Listed Among Outstanding Books in Mission Studies

Cited in Prestigious Top 15 by 'International Bulletin of Missionary Research'

World Mission in the Wesleyan Spirit, a collection of 31 essays by Wesleyan scholars, has been listed among the "Fifteen Outstanding Books of 2009 for Mission Studies" in the April 2010 issue of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*.

The book, issued as part of the American Society of Missiology Series, was commissioned by The Mission Society to commemorate its 25th anniversary. It is co-edited by missiologists Drs. Gerald Anderson, director emeritus of the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, Conn.; and Darrell Whiteman, The Mission Society's resident missiologist

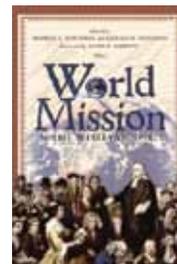
and vice president of mission personnel and preparation.

"As most books about mission are written from a Reformed or Calvinistic perspective, we are especially honored for this book to be considered among the top releases of 2009," said Whiteman. Woven through the fabric of these essays is John Wesley's concept of prevenient grace – the notion that God is at work in every people group revealing something of God's self and nature, preparing them for saving grace and eventually sanctifying grace.

Charles Van Engen of Fuller Theological Seminary describes the book as a "veritable 'Who's Who' of Wesleyan missiologists, which promises to be one of the most important books in Protestant missiology to be published during this decade."

The essays are written by "...our most outstanding missiologists, biblical and theological scholars," said Maxie Dunnam, chancellor of Asbury Theological

Seminary. Authors include prominent missions leaders and scholars. Several are Mission Society missionaries, board members and former board members.



World Mission in the Wesleyan Spirit (ISBN: 978-1-57736-424-5) is published by Providence House Publishers and retails for \$24.95. To order,

visit www.providencehouse.com, or fax order requests to 615-771-2002.

Correction

On page 3 of the last issue, we inaccurately reported some statistics. There are an estimated one billion Hindus, and 600 million Buddhists (rather than the numbers we printed). By the time we realized the error, it was too late. Please pardon our oversight!

The Mission Society commissions 22 new missionaries

The Mission Society recently commissioned one of the largest groups of new missionaries since its founding in 1984. The historic service took place on May 11, 2010 at Simpsonwood United Methodist Church in Norcross, Georgia. The Rev. Dr. Ira Gallaway, one of The Mission Society's founders and retired United Methodist Church elder, was keynote speaker.

"We continue to be humbled and honored by the women and men whom God is raising up to share the Good News cross-culturally," said Dick McClain, president of The Mission Society. "These choice servants of Christ are God's greatest gift to The Mis-

sion Society, and in turn ours to the world."

"The Mission Society rejoices that the Lord of the Harvest continues to send workers to us," said Lauren Helveston, director of pastoral care for The Mission Society, who coordinated the event that included laying hands on the new cross-cultural witnesses. The Mission Society holds two annual services to honor its newly appointed missionaries.

Fourteen of the new missionaries will minister in restricted-access locations in Africa and Asia. Others will serve in Peru, Kenya, Thailand, Namibia, the Philippines and Cambodia.



From left to right: Jamie and Holle Wollin with children Eli and Thomas; Travis and Lorna Curry; Tim and Jennifer Goshorn with children Daniel, Matthew, and Katherine; Tara Dunn; Melanie Poyer; Rebekah Scalero; Anna and Lem Egipto. Missionaries serving in restricted-access countries are not shown for security reasons.



Doug and Becky Neel, who joined the Agrimissions in 2007, now head this ministry, whose vision is to "reach the world for Christ while meeting human needs for daily bread."

'Agrimissions' celebrates 10th anniversary

Doug Neel commissioned to head this Mission Society ministry

The Mission Society's Agrimissions ministry celebrated its 10th anniversary with an event at Sand Mountain United Methodist Church in Trenton, Georgia on February 27, 2010. Agrimissions is a member of The Global Resource Team (GRT) which comprises of a group of specialists in biblical storytelling, information technology, micro-enterprise, agriculture, medicine, water specialists, business, and discipleship. Using their expertise, these specialists support Mission Society missionaries worldwide, helping current ministry projects or creating new ones. They also explore opportunities to open new fields, establish new churches, and strengthen existing churches.

Larry Williams has served as the director of the GRT since 2005. Williams also co-founded and served as the director of Agrimissions since 1998. Founded in 2000 as the first member of the Global Resource Team to help relieve hunger and poverty in communities around the world, Agrimissions is The Mission Society's extension for field missionaries that offers such ministries as nutritional and on-site agricultural training, technical assistance, and pilot projects. Agrimis-

sions helps nationals and missionaries launch and advance agricultural projects in Ecuador, Paraguay, Brazil, Peru and areas of Central Asia.

During the anniversary celebration, Doug Neel, a GRT member and associate director of Agrimissions, was commissioned to succeed Williams as the director of Agrimissions. Neel holds a degree in General Agriculture, a Master's in Range Management, and has completed some graduate coursework in World Mission and Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary. Becky Neel serves as Agrimissions' administrative assistant.

New headquarters

The Neels are based in Crockett, Texas and facilitate the ministry from there, where a new facility has just opened. The Agrimissions center includes classrooms, offices, a greenhouse, and demonstration areas. The facilities will be used for Agricultural Missions 101, a weekend introduction training for church mission teams, and for week-long courses for missionaries with no previous agricultural training. The Crockett site also will host a 10-12 week internship program, which

culminates with two weeks at Centro Agritecnico Metodista located in Yrbucua, Paraguay. The United Methodist Men of Crockett donated labor to refurbish the Agrimissions center there. Nearby agricultural producers have offered the use of their own ranches for hands-on training in fields such as animal husbandry and small scale farming.

Follow Doug Neel and the Agrimissions ministry around the globe on Twitter at www.twitter.com/agrimissions.

For more information about the Global Resource Team, visit www.themissionsociety.org/go/grtmembers.



Larry Williams is the founding director of the Global Resource Team and Agrimissions.



'We are a friendly church'

A hard examination of this easy quip



"A friendly church is not just one ensconced in a building for two or three hours each week waiting for someone to come to us."

As I visit churches around the country, I often ask the parishioners what is the distinguishing characteristic about their church. By far and away, the most common response is, "We are a friendly church." They are not alone. If you do a Google search on that specific phrase, you will get over 18,000 hits. It seems like a lot of people think they are a friendly church.

A closer look at those 18,000 Google hits reveals that if you want to experience this "friendliness," in most cases you are going to have to seek them out. Over and over again you see phrases like:

- We are a friendly church that looks forward to meeting new people. Stop by and see for yourself ...
- We are a friendly church and would love to meet you. When you do visit...
- We are a friendly church, and are always glad to welcome visitors.

- We are a friendly church, always welcoming visitors warmly. Those who choose to join us...

Now, I am all for folks being friendly when new people visit their place of worship. What we often overlook is something that we know but all too frequently forget. The church is not the building; it is the people. The Bible makes this clear as these sample verses affirm:

- Matthew 18:17, "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church..."
- Acts 5:11, "Great fear seized the whole church."
- Acts 11:22, "News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem..."
- Acts 12:5, "So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him."

Building-free church

That brings up another issue that we know but sometimes forget. The church does not cease being the church when it leaves the building. The image of the church gathered and the church scattered is a reality. In fact, the church spends much more time scattered than gathered. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that we are to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-15). Salt is most effective when used to season the unseasoned. Light is most effective when it shines and overcomes darkness. It seems to follow that the church is most effective when it is being the church among those that are not of the church. The question is, how can we best do that?

Perhaps a good place to start is by being a friendly church. Not just a friendly church ensconced in a building for two or three hours each week waiting for someone to come to us, but one that displays friendliness in all of life's encounters. A friendliness that is not limited to those that are like us, but one

On being salt and light

Ideas for being the 'friendly church' outside the church walls

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, put it this way, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

What might happen if you:

- Asked your server at the restaurant if there were something you could be praying for as you pray before your meal?
- In the course of exercising by walking in your neighborhood, prayed for the households as you walked by?
- Issued a dinner invitation to a family in your neighborhood that you don't know?
- Baked a batch of cookies and gave them to a shop owner, the postman, or others you may have occasion to meet?
- Looked for one opportunity each day to help someone in the name of Jesus?



As you walk, pray for your neighbors.

that seeks out opportunities to display friendliness to those that are most unlike us or the neediest among us. Perhaps that friendliness could even lead to building relationships. These relationships create an atmosphere of genuine respect, caring, and safety and open up opportunities for others to see and hear the gospel in a very natural way through our lives. When one looks closely at this way of being the church, it looks very much like what we see Jesus doing in his earthly ministry. The woman at the well, the lame man at the pool, the tax collector at his post, and the two blind men on the roadside are examples of Jesus encountering people in the course of their daily lives. How many people do we encounter in a typical day that present an occasion for a friendly contact that could lead to so much more?

Friendliness that seeks the 'outsider'

A story I heard recently illustrates this. A Jesus follower was in the checkout line of a store. She noticed that the cashier was wearing a head scarf and surmised the

cashier was Muslim. As she was being checked out, she looked at the cashier's nametag and asked if she would pronounce the name for her. The cashier obliged and the woman complimented her on the beauty of the name. She then

The cashier politely responded, and then the Christian lady asked if she would like to have tea some time.

The cashier said she would, and they arranged a time to meet at a coffee shop near the store.

asked what her country of origin was. The cashier politely responded, and then the Christian asked if she would like to have tea some time. The cashier said she would, and the two arranged a time to meet at a coffee shop near the store. They did indeed meet for tea and that was followed up by more such meetings. At the second

or third meeting, the Christian was told by the Muslim that she had been in the United States for nine years and that the Christian was the first American who had ever asked her a personal question. At some point the Christian suggested that they continue to meet and to make the study of the Bible and the Qur'an a part of their time together. The Muslim agreed, and that allowed multiple opportunities for the Christian to talk about her relationship with her Lord. Their whole relationship started with three friendly little questions and a willingness on the part of the Christian to be the church wherever she was.

Let us continue to be a friendly church as we gather for worship. But let us also be a friendly church the other 98 percent of the time we are scattered among people who desperately need an encounter with Jesus. †

Stan Self is The Mission Society's senior director of church ministry.



Becoming missional

Wanting to increase outreach, but no missions budget?
Here's how one church was turned around.

By Reed Haigler Hoppe

Only minutes from the Gulf of Mexico, nestled between palm trees and the sound of crashing waves, sits a church that God is using in His mission. Heritage United Methodist Church in Clearwater, Florida has been prayerfully transforming its identity from a church “involved in missions” to a “missional church.” Marsha Mullet, director of missions, talked with us about the church’s journey and what God has done at Heritage.

Major shift

The Rev. David Landers, senior pastor of Heritage United Methodist Church since 1988, always had a vision for the church to be mission-focused. Several years ago, he felt the Lord directing him to shift the structure of the church from having a mission committee among other committees, to becoming “missional.” In other words, “we would have missions/outreach at the very center of all we are and all we do,” explains Mullett.

Marsha Mullet, a church member since 1986, received a phone call from Landers saying he wanted to meet with her. In their meeting, he explained that he had been asking the Lord to direct him to the right person to fill a new position, and her name kept popping up. Would Mullet prayerfully consider becoming a senior staff member (“director of missions”) full

time, unpaid? (There was no money in the church budget to hire another staff person.) “I was stunned!” remembers Mullet. “Because of a neck injury in a car accident, I was a retired dentist! What in the world did I know about being director of missions?”

“One morning in my prayer time, as I heard the devil saying, ‘You can’t do this!’ I heard the Holy Spirit say from the other shoulder, ‘You are right! She can’t do this. That is why she has been chosen.’ I knew in that moment that I was called to take the job, exactly because I didn’t know how and couldn’t do it on my own.”

New level of outreach

Just a few weeks after Mullet began her new position, she and another church member attended The Mission Society’s *Developing a Global Outreach Plan and Conducting a Global Impact Celebration* workshops. “We were inspired and excited! We began the process by following the training manuals that came with the course,” she said.

The Mission Society helped Heritage conduct a Global Impact Celebration (GIC), which served to catapult the church’s outreach ministries to a new level. Heritage was already actively involved in its community and world through



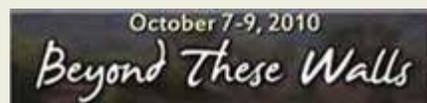
What advice do you have for other churches looking to become more involved in outreach?

“First of all, I believe the senior pastor must be firmly devoted to the idea, willing to be outspoken with the congregation on the subject, and encouraging to the mission leader(s). The next step is to form a prayer team so that everything is bathed in prayer! I highly recommend taking The Mission Society’s workshops on Developing a Global Outreach Plan and Conducting a Global Impact Celebration. But the main thing it takes is a constant dependence on the Lord!” –Marsha Mullet (Left: Heritage UMC)

various programs and financial support. However, God challenged them to a new level of outreach after the GIC.

The theme of Heritage’s GIC was “Across the Street... Around the World ...There’s an Opportunity for You in Missions!” Mullet explains that the members of Heritage already gave generously to the various mission programs with which the church was involved. However, the new focus of the church was to encourage people to become personally involved in mission. “Since the GIC, there has been a definite change in people’s perception of mission. Now there is an understanding that missions is more than writing a check; it is getting personally involved in outreach,” said Mullet. The staff’s goal is to involve the entire congregation in mission-locally, nationally, and internationally. Mullet notes, “As people become involved and tell others of their experiences, I think we will see a very different picture of our congregation by a year from now!” †

Reed Haigler Hoppe serves as an associate editor for *The Mission Society* and is an ordained deacon in the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference of *The United Methodist Church*.



The Mission Society is co-sponsoring the Beyond These Walls Missions Conference October 7-9, 2010. Hosted by McEachern United Methodist Church in Powder Springs, GA, the conference seeks to provide teaching and training to assist congregations in fulfilling their divine calling of making disciples of all the nations.

Mission Society staff members Darrell Whiteman and Stan Self will be among those leading workshops during the conference. Also, the Rev. Jorge Acevedo, board member of The Mission Society, will be a keynote speaker.

For more information and to register, visit:
www.mceachernumc.org/missionsconference.



Go the distance

Begin now preparing for your life as a cross-cultural missionary

Do you remember the *Rocky* movies? Perhaps one of the most memorable scenes in the series is when Rocky races up the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art after a long jog. When he reaches the top of the steps, he throws some jabs, practices some fancy footwork, and then jumps up and down with his fists in the air – all as if he’s having a moment of victory. He’s on top of the world, and he’s just training!

In each of the movies, Rocky has a formidable opponent for whom he must train. He jumps rope, sprints on the beach, lifts weights, spars with training partners, receives input from coaches, and visualizes his upcoming matches. Without such adequate training, Rocky will not be able to go the distance, round after round, in the lengthy bouts he is yet to face.

Get yourself ready

If Rocky, and any boxer for that matter, must ready himself for battle, how much more should a person called to cross-cultural missions ready him/herself for the task ahead? Feeling a sense of calling is a piece of cake. Visualizing yourself in a foreign land winning the masses to Christ is the easy part. The difficult question is this: What must you do to prepare yourself to go the distance?

Consider the following acronym: DEPLOY. I’m not too fond of forced acronyms, but bear with me for a moment. In order for a missionary to be prepared for the mission field, here are a few things he or she could do.

D is for debt. Debt and money-related issues keep many would-be missionaries from the field. Work hard now to get your finances in order.

E is for exercise. Honor God with your body. Be a fit vessel for the Lord to use, and don’t allow health issues – particularly preventable ones – to sidetrack you from God’s mission.

P is for prayer. Enough said!

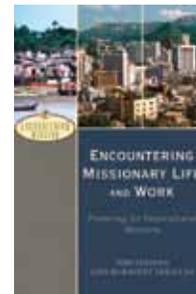
L is for learn. A missionary in training should spend time learning not only about his or her specific country but also about healthy approaches/strategies for mission.

O is for others. Be sure to work through any strained relationships that you would be leaving behind or even taking with you! Unresolved relationships issues are the cause of bitterness, strife, and unnecessary heartache.

Y stands for yoke. As the African proverb says: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Yoke yourself with like-minded believers and a solid sending agency. Missions is all about teamwork.

If you sense a calling to full-time, cross-cultural mission, you are about to face formidable opponents. Your body, your mind, your spirit will all come under attack. Will you have the fortitude to go the distance? Okay, enough reading. Get to it. Hup, hup, hup! There’s training to be done! ✚

Richard Coleman is *The Mission Society’s* director of mobilization and candidacy.



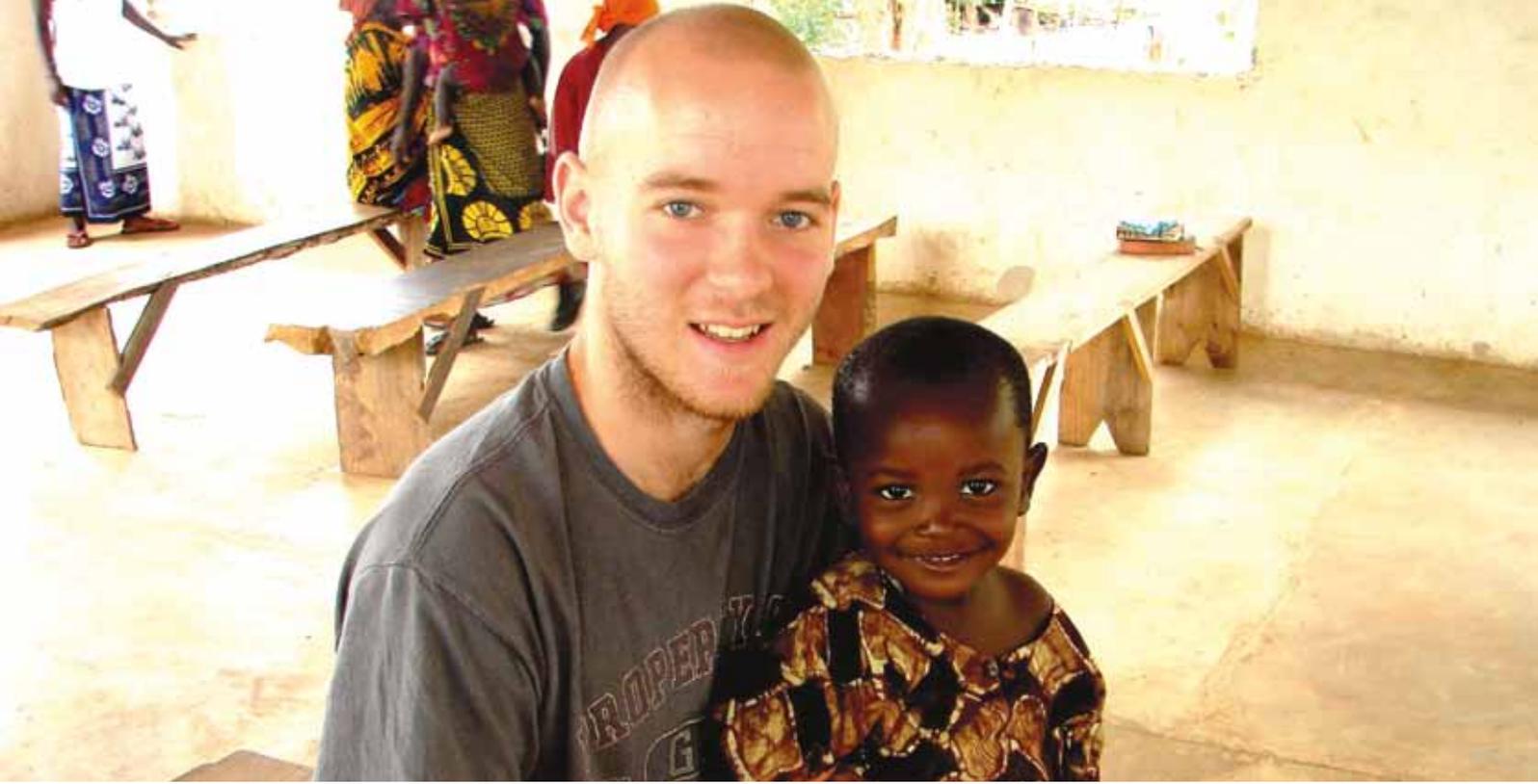
We recommend:
Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for International Ministry
by Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas.

Here’s what some mission professionals are saying: “This book is a wonderful introduction to missionary life and work, addressing most of the questions that a person might ask about a possible career in Christian missions.” –*Sherwood Lingenfelter, provost and senior vice president, Fuller Theological Seminary*

“Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas have produced a work that is sure to become a classic. . . . Others have written effectively on missionary life and work, but this text is for today’s missionary and suits the dynamic world situation that confronts us.” –*Michael Pocock, senior professor and chairman of world missions and intercultural studies, Dallas Theological Seminary*

“Blending their own rich experience in missions, a strong biblical foundation, insights from the hundreds of students they have taught, and in-depth awareness of key research studies and literature, Steffen and McKinney Douglas comprehensively explore the broad range of issues that affect missionary training and life.”

–*Steve Strauss, director, SIM USA*



Calling all young people

It's often been said that our generation is one of great passion, that we have the passion and opportunities to do things that have never been done before.

The question is, **"What will you and I do with that passion?"**

Are you interested in cross-cultural ministry? Perhaps sensing a call to missions? Filled with a passion for people and to follow Jesus wherever He may lead you? But at the same time, are you maybe not so sure where to begin or where to even get started in pursuing this calling?

Then maybe a Mission Society Internship for 1-18 months could be just the right fit for you.

Engage another culture. Learn from missionaries and national church leaders with years of experience. Make friends across borders. Live among people in their own culture. Immerse yourself in something deeper – something bigger than yourself.

Find out and experience what Jesus is already doing in the midst of other cultures all over the world. Be forever changed. Let the direction of what the Lord has for your life be shaped. Discover more of Jesus Himself.

The Mission Society Internship. Do something different. Be something different. Live something different.

Now accepting inquiries and applications for the next training event in Norcross, GA from August 30th to September 2nd. Departure for the field may follow immediately afterward. Please contact: Kate Hilderbrandt at khilderbrandt@themissionsociety.org.

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Read our blog at themissionsocietyblog.com

With the good news of Jesus, The Mission Society missionaries and their families minister in 39 nations around the world. We offer their names here. How we thank you for your prayers for them!

The Mission Society missionaries:

Michael Agwanda, Otto Arango, Ed & Linda Baker, Jose & Audrey Bañales, Chris & Dora Barbee, Jim & Angela Beise, Mark & Leslie Benton, Rose Blank, Liz Boggess, Reid & Lola Buchanan, Debra Buenting, Doug & Brooke Burns, Julie Campbell, John & Sandra Carrick, David & Carol Cosby, Gary & Tula Crumpton, Travis & Lorna Curry, Adam & Jennifer Dalenburg, Tim & Daina Datwyler, Christian & Angelica Dickson, Caren Dilts, William Draper, Billy & Laurie Drum, Tara Dunn, Lem & Anna Egipto, John & Colleen Eisenberg, Sue Fuller, Jennifer Gale, Cam & Anne Gongwer, Tim & Jennifer Goshorn, Florencio & Maria Guzman, Charles & Chris Hanak, Marshall Head, John & Katheryn

Heinz, Jill Henderson, Jon & Jeanne Herrin, Neal & Mari Hicks, Ron & Bonnie Hipwell, Ronnie & Angi Hopkins, Andrew & Margaret Howell, Arthur & Mary Alice Ivey, Charles & Mary Kay Jackson, Jonathan & Amy Killen, Esaho & Beatrice Kipuke, Clay & Deb Kirkland, Sue Kolljeski, Joetta Lehman, Rich & Kathy Lively, Kristen Matveia, Ash & Audra McEuen, Steve & Shannon Mersinger, Michael & Claire Mozley, Katie Nash, Doug & Becky Neel, Laura Newton, Graham & Sharon Nichols, Ron & Michelle Olson, Donald & Carol Paige, Peter & Esther Pereira, Len & Betsy Phillips, Martin & Tracy Reeves, Leon & Vicki Reich, Louise Reimer, John & Rosalie Rentz, Ben & Jenny Reyes, Jennifer Saunders, Michael & Jannike Seward,

Daniel & Katie Simmons, Kirk & Nicole Sims, Amanda Smith, Robert & Linda Spitaleri, Elliott & Katherine Stotler, Bryan & Beth Tatum, Ron & Belinda Tyler, Larry Williams, Jamie & Holle Wollin, Dai & Neva Wysong

In addition to those listed here, 76 missionaries serve in areas where security is an issue for Christian workers. For that reason, they remain unnamed here. Thank you for your prayers for them.

For more information about The Mission Society missionaries or fields, visit our website at www.themissionsociety.org.

May we pray for you?

Each morning at The Mission Society, we start by praying. We pray for the world. We pray for our missionaries. And we pray for you. Do you have prayer concerns that you would like to share with us? We invite you to do so. Here's how: Write your request on the response card included in this mailing and return it in the envelope provided, or

- Email us at prayerrequest@themissionsociety.org, or
- Call us at 770.446.1381 (ext. PRAY or 7729) and leave your prayer request message, or
- Write us at: Prayer, The Mission Society, 6234 Crooked Creek Road, Norcross, GA 30092

Your shared concerns will be handled with care and prayed for by our staff and visiting missionaries. Thank you for the privilege of joining you in prayer.