

Unfinished

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Mari Akasaka Hicks

1947-2012

Missionary to Japan



God's glory revealed

Exploring the wonder and the mystery of God's healing grace



Cover photo: Mary Hicks, treasured friend and missionary, passed away during the production of this issue.

Join us in The Mission

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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—Revelation 21: 4, ESV*



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He is the Lord who heals us

Telling personal—and sometimes perplexing—stories of healing, President Dick McClain offers companionship for those on the quest to resolve when and why God does and does not heal.



“My memories don’t go back any farther than when God healed my mom,” writes President Dick McClain. His mother had been diagnosed with a life-threatening disease while she and her husband, Dale, and children were serving as missionaries in India.

I can hardly recall a time in my life when I was not aware of God’s power to heal. Let me explain.

Shortly before my third birthday, my mother contracted endocarditis. Mom’s disease was nearly always fatal in those days, even in the States. We were living in India where my folks served as missionaries. To complicate matters further, Mom was pregnant when she contracted the disease. The doctors said there was little hope for Mom apart from a miracle, and even less hope that the baby would survive.

Urgent appeals for prayer went around the world via telegrams. God answered and healed my mother. The baby she was carrying was my kid brother, Doug. He turned 60 just a few weeks ago.

Our family had to return to the States

because of the ordeal. Mom was told she could never live overseas again. Five years later, when our mission asked them to consider service in Hong Kong, Mom went for a battery of tests. Two weeks later she was cleared to return to Asia. There was no evidence of injury to her heart.

Mom turned 88 on April 6. She’s a living testimony to God’s healing power. What God did for her and for my brother became part of our family’s story. My memories don’t go back any farther than when God healed my mom.

I had my own experience of healing when I was about eight years old. That was about the time Mom was cleared to live overseas. There was only one problem. To get to Hong Kong, we had to first drive to California, and I suffered from extreme motion sickness. I walked most places in

our town rather than riding in a car, because I could hardly ride around the block without getting car sick. It would be a very long trek from Indiana to California!

So one night during my bedtime prayers, I mentioned my problem to Jesus and asked Him to take away my car sickness. As God is my witness, from that night until now I have never once gotten car sick. Jesus answered the simple prayer of a child. I’m not sure if I “had faith” that He would heal me or not. I just asked Him to do it, and He did.

Prayers of little faith

So I’ve always believed in healing, and have never been surprised when healing has come in response to prayer. That said, by the time I became a pastor, I’d been through seminary and had lived a couple

more decades. My simple faith had had to come to terms with the reality that not everyone who was prayed for was healed.

I remember one morning in my first church when a young father presented his six-year-old son for healing prayer. This little boy had been born with crooked feet. He’d had to wear corrective shoes as long as he had been walking. We had only recently begun praying for the sick during the Sunday morning services. I had been alerted several days earlier that his dad planned to bring him for prayer the next Sunday. I was okay with praying for headaches and backaches and the flu and so forth, but I was terrified about praying for crooked feet. That was serious stuff, and I was quite sure I wasn’t up to it.

But there he was with his dad on Sunday morning in front of the whole congregation. I was trapped. So I had to pray for him. I mumbled some feeble words, knowing full well that nothing was going to happen. The next day his parents took him to the doctor who, upon examining the boy, said they should go buy some regular shoes because his feet were straight.

Prayers of great faith

I wish it had always worked out that way. Several years later, a young mother in another church I served went to the doctor to have a mole removed and a couple days later learned that she had a very advanced case of melanoma. Her cancer progressed rapidly, in spite of scores—probably hundreds—of people praying for her. One day I felt strongly impressed to gather a few of our prayer warriors and go to her home to anoint her with oil and pray for her healing. We did just that, experiencing a profound sense of God’s presence as we prayed over her. I went away from her home absolutely convinced that God was going to perform a miracle and heal her. My faith had never been stronger.

One week later, I preached her funeral.

I didn’t know what I should say to her

mother and father when I greeted them after the graveside service. But I didn’t have to say anything, because her mother spoke first. She thanked me for coming to pray for her daughter, and told me that God had answered our prayers. I wanted to say, “Aren’t you forgetting that we just buried your daughter?” But again, she beat me to the punch. “Before you prayed over her, Sara (that’s not her real name) was terribly afraid. But from the moment you prayed for her, God gave her amazing peace. She was peaceful and free from fear right up to the moment she died. Now she is with Jesus, and she is no longer ill. Thank you for coming to pray for her. God answered your prayer!”

I must have missed the day in my “Life and Work of a Minister” class in seminary when we role-played this kind of exchange. I was at a loss for words. But I was grateful that God had helped Sara’s mother understand what was really going on.

So I prayed for a boy with crooked feet because I had to. I had zero faith that anything would happen. And God healed him. And I prayed for Sara, who desperately needed a miracle, and was absolutely sure that God was going to heal her. And He did, but not at all the way I had hoped. He healed her by receiving her into His own presence.

Join the conversation

Writing about healing was much easier 40 years ago before I became a pastor and had to come to grips with the fact that sometimes healings occur and sometimes they don’t. Today, I don’t have any answers regarding the mystery of healing—at least not any that you’ve not already thought of. I do know that we are called to pray for the sick and to anoint them with oil. And so I’ve done that a lot of times. My predecessor in this office, Phil Granger, was just hours from death when we anointed and prayed over him. And God healed him. My dear friend, Greg Burgner, whose

precious wife is the editor of *Unfinished*, showed every evidence of irreversible brain injury six weeks after a car accident that could have easily killed him. In response to the prayers of hundreds of people, God healed him. My friend and colleague, Denny Brown, has, in recent months, experienced God’s healing touch after he was diagnosed with cancer.

But at the same time, one of our young missionaries, David Potts, passed away very suddenly on the field several years ago and was buried in Kazakhstan, the country to which God had called him. In addition, Joel Duggins, one of my dearest friends and our former field leader in Kazakhstan, went to be with the Lord just months before he was scheduled to plant a new church—an international congregation—in the metro Atlanta area. (See article on page 14.) And on March 22, 2012, our beloved Mari Akasaka Hicks, a veteran missionary who had served more than three decades in Japan, finally succumbed to the cancer she had so valiantly battled for more than a year. I preached at the service celebrating of her life on March 28. (See article on page 10.)

This issue of *Unfinished* deals with the matter of healing. As you’ll see, we’ve not attempted to solve the mystery or answer all the questions. Rather, we simply want to invite you into a conversation about a subject that at one time or another touches all of our lives.

The fact is that around the world today, thousands of people are coming to faith in response to having personally experienced Jesus’ healing power. For that we praise God!

I will continue to pray for healing, because the Word tells us to and because I know Jesus to be a Healer. And while I don’t have answers for all the questions, I do know this: God is good and God is faithful, even when I don’t understand. ✠

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

My help comes from the Lord

Stories of divine rescue

As we consider the mystery of healing, we give God glory for the miracles experienced by those in our Mission Society community. Here, we present a few recent testimonies, praying they may serve to strengthen your faith as you cry out to God on behalf of those who suffer.

God shoulders our burdens: Rheumatoid arthritis is healed
Even when nothing seems to be happening, something is happening. In her remarkable testimony, Becky Neel, of The Mission Society's Global Resource Team, tells of the gift she received in her decade-long wait for rescue from rheumatoid arthritis.

I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and a mild form of lupus in 1998. The disease came on me almost overnight, and it came with a vengeance. It took the doctors a while to figure out exactly what was wrong, and I imagined all sorts of diagnoses. Even with so many praying for me, I feared that I was going to be diagnosed with a terminal disease; I did not want my children and grandchildren to grow up without my being able to see all that they would become.

On the day I was to go to the doctor to get the final diagnosis, my son called and I shared my anxiety and fear. He actually laughed and said, "Oh my goodness, my mom *is* human." He told me that I was and had been a wonderful mom and grandmother, but that that was not my first job. He reminded me that my first and foremost task was to continue telling people about the Jesus

I had introduced him to and that he did not feel that God had finished with me. Immediately, the fear that had consumed me for weeks vanished, and I was filled with that wonderful peace that passes understanding.

During the next 10 years, I was prayed for by some of the most incredible prayer warriors I have ever known—and nothing seemed to happen. There was not even a little relief from the pain. However, during this time I believe I received one of the greatest gifts God could have given me—peace.

I never asked God, "Why me?" or got frustrated. I knew how much He loved me, and I was truly okay with the disease. This was, I thought, just how my life would be.

In July of 2008, Doug and I went to visit some friends who work at the International House of Prayer (IHOP), a 24/7 prayer and worship ministry in Kansas City, Missouri. I did not know it at the time, but my friend had made an appointment for me in IHOP's healing room.

In the healing room, I was anointed with oil and prayed for by my friend and another gentleman, Richard. They prayed for

"I thanked them and started to leave. At this point, I felt no relief. I still had terrible pain in my neck, back, and hands. Richard shook my hand and then said, "Oh wait! The Lord has something to say to you."

me for a few minutes. I thanked them and started to leave. At this point, I felt no relief. I still had terrible pain in my neck, back, and hands. Richard shook my hand and then said, "Oh wait! The Lord has something to say to you."

The Lord said that it was time to let Him not only fix me, but also all those problems and hurts of those I loved so much and was concerned about. All He wanted from me was to crawl into His arms and enjoy Him enjoying and delighting in me. I walked out of that room completely pain free and healed from RA, and also healed from thinking that I was the great "fixer."

I enjoyed ministering all over the world and traveling with Doug for two years completely pain free. Then, in July of 2010, I stepped out of a car and my back completely went out. I could not walk or move and was in a great deal of pain.

This time, my healing came about through a very invasive surgery with a very slow recuperation. The doctors had to break my back to heal it. I wore a large brace that prevented me from being able to bend, twist, or pick up anything heavier than a

book. I went from traveling 20-25 days each month to sitting and resting all day, every day.

In both of these circumstances—having RA for 10 years and a broken back for eight months—God spoke to me in the waiting. He was healing me in His time and His way.

So whether you are in the waiting (waiting for God to do His work); or if you are in the telling (telling your story of that work and how it has changed your life and hopefully the lives of all who hear), fall into God's arms and rest in that grace. †



Doug and Becky Neel serve on the Global Resource Team of The Mission Society. Doug serves as the director for Agrimissions, a ministry that uses agriculture

to empower indigenous people. Becky serves as the administrative assistant for Agrimissions. Additionally, she employs her gifts and talents in children's ministries and wellness, nutrition, and fitness.

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
From where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord
Who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber. ...
The Lord is your keeper.

—Psalm 121 (NRSV)



God hears our prayers: Breast cancer is healed

Charles and Rachel Martin minister in a Central Asian country. After being on the field for only six months, Rachel was diagnosed with breast cancer. Treatment required sacrifice she never expected, but God gave back in unimaginable abundance because, Rachel reports, God hears and answers prayers.*

“I was in Thailand at a language conference when I felt a lump in my left breast. When we asked the attendees of the conference for recommendations for a doctor, we learned that we were literally minutes from one of the best hospitals in all of Asia,” Rachel remembers.

She went to the hospital and the doctors confirmed her need for a biopsy. She read Psalm 46 while she waited, then had a biopsy the next day. The doctor said it wasn’t cancerous, but they would have the lab results in several weeks.

Rachel didn’t hear from the doctors for weeks. She emailed them for the results and received the shocking results that she did indeed have cancer. “We sent out emails to our prayer supporters for healing and for discernment about where to receive

treatment. Right away, 400 groups of people began praying. We decided to meet with the Asian missionaries in Beijing for our biannual Regional Gathering. There I received much prayer and support from our Mission Society family. They prayed fervently for my healing. We then flew to Atlanta for treatment at Emory, where we had one of the best cancer doctors in America.”

“I ended up having a double mastectomy and was in great pain in the middle of the night. I prayed, ‘God help me. I am weak, but you are strong.’ A few minutes later the pain subsided! The next day, I was able to share the scripture with the doctor about not worrying, but trusting in our Lord during this time. (Proverbs 3:24)

“During one of the chemo sessions, I had an allergic reaction. I stopped breathing and turned red. Charles quickly got the nurse, and I was given Benadryl. Before the next chemo session, I was really frightened. I came to the office for devotions and mentioned this to the staff. Dick McClain prayed for me

and said, ‘Jesus, like you calmed the storm with the disciples by saying, “Peace, be still,” calm Rachel.’ The fear subsided that very moment. The next two chemo sessions were uneventful.

“One of the most discouraging parts of this journey for Charles was when I had a hysterectomy. We did not have any children of our own, but the doctors felt that a hysterectomy would minimize the chances of the cancer returning. Only three months later, God gave us two daughters and, a year later, three more daughters. (The Martins are the foster parents for five teenage girls from their country of service.) God gives the childless woman a happy home of children. (Psalm 113:9)

“Among the biggest things I learned from cancer is that Ephesians 3 is true. God’s love for us is high, wide, and deep!

“Among the biggest things I learned from cancer is that Ephesians 3 is true. God’s love for us is high, wide, and deep! I never felt His love so deeply as the day after my mastectomy”

I never felt His love so deeply as the day after my mastectomy when I couldn’t raise my hands higher than my wounds. God provided a mother-in-law to give us a comfortable home, a coffee cup sitting next to the coffee pot, a cereal bowl and cereal on the counter so I could reach them. I was eating breakfast that day and read Ephesians 3. God had provided me everything

I needed. Healing—physically and spiritually. He loves me that much!

“My cancer was among the easiest bouts of breast cancer that I’ve heard of. It has not returned, and I did remarkably well with the treatments. I attribute that to a God who heard the prayers of the saints and answered those prayers.” ✠

Charles and Rachel Martin minister in a Central Asian country where Christianity is not widely embraced. They coordinate an outreach to children from disadvantaged families who struggle with issues of alcoholism and poverty. The ministry provides a safe place, a warm meal, and a loving hug to children at risk. They also run an English Club which targets young adults and least reached people. The English Club offers tutoring in English, and the students discuss topics of interest, such as faith, with the Martins.*

“Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.’”

—Deuteronomy 1:29-31, NIV

God fights for us: Lupus pain is subsided

Days following a diagnosis can be riddled with fear. In her amazing story, Reed Hoppe testifies how God met her at her point of greatest need.

It started soon after my son was born—a migrating pain that coursed through my body, causing pain in my wrists, shoulders, and knees. As a mother of two small children who rarely gets to sit down or sleep through the night, I dismissed the symptoms for a long time and pushed through the pain. After 18 months, I knew something was wrong.

The pain now encompassed more of my joints and had become a daily part of my life. Sometimes slight pain, sometimes excruciating, its results were starting to debilitate me. Lifting my now 18-month-old onto the changing table or into the high chair was no small feat. Eight doctors and a lot of blood tests later, my mystery disease still remained unnamed. My fear level continued to rise as I heard one possible diagnosis after another and tried to discern what that particular disease would mean for my life.

It was in the midst of a stream of doctor’s appointments and tests that I began to rally people to pray. And that changed my prayers regarding the matter. I began to pray for the Holy Spirit. Others began to pray for my healing. My pain virtually disappeared overnight. The pain that had run rampant through my body for so many months almost completely disappeared. And I thought I had been healed.

I already had an appointment with one more rheumatologist, so I decided to keep it even though my pain was basically gone. I was still curious as to what had been happening to me. Three months had gone by, and I was still mostly pain free. This new doctor listened to my symptoms, took some more blood, and I went on my way, thinking all was well.

And then he called to tell me that I had been diagnosed with lupus.

The medicine used to treat lupus compromises your already-compromised immune system, leaving you vulnerable to every bug out there. I spent several weeks very ill, unable to care for my one- and three-year-olds, and terrified that this was going to be the rest of my life. Fear completely overwhelmed me.

A few weeks after the diagnosis, still very ill, I dragged myself

to church. It was Palm Sunday. My church had a healing service that day, which I hadn’t known about, and which is pretty unusual for my church. At the end of the service, the congregation flocked to the altar for prayer. There were lines down the aisles. The Holy Spirit was in our church and ministered to my broken heart.

That afternoon, as I processed the events of the morning, God gave me a verse. It was Deuteronomy 1:29-31. “Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place’” (NIV).

For the first time in years, I experienced true peace. The God of the universe said He was fighting for me. Three days later, I felt better than I had felt in the 21-month journey this had become. That health has continued.

I still know plenty of people who need healing. And I still have lupus. The blood tests prove it. But my pain is a mere fraction of what it used to be. And Jesus is fighting for me—the blood test levels are lower; progress against the disease is evident.

When and who God chooses to heal remains a complete mystery to me. We all have plenty of stories of people who were healed, and others who lost the fight. Things are still not as they should be in this world.

What I have learned is that Jesus still heals. And prayer is essential to the ministry of healing.

God does fight for us. And, in the end, He always wins. ✠



Reed Haigler Hoppe is The Mission Society’s associate communications director and is an ordained deacon in the Alabama-West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church.



God redirects us: Epstein Barr Virus is cured

Fifteen-year-old Caylor Gongwer grew up serving with her parents in Ghana, West Africa. In 2011, her life was intercepted by a strange illness. "It's amazing how, in only one year, the journey of your life can take a big detour," she writes. God used her time of illness to refocus her life.

In 2011, I battled a very strange illness. The ensuing 10 months were, for me, a war zone. Adding to the spiritual warfare here in Ghana, I could definitely feel the gnawing presence of Satan trying to distract me from what I knew was right. But the Lord overcomes all evil and can take painful situations and turn them into something beautiful, which is what He did.

It all started in early November 2010, when one day I came home from track and field practice and collapsed on the floor in my parents' office, too tired to stand. I didn't think much of it at the time. In the coming days I tried to pursue my studies but, unfortunately, I soon had to stop attending school altogether. All I could do was rest. Even thinking made me tired. Blood tests were done, but somehow we couldn't find out what was wrong. Even when I was finally diagnosed with Reactivated Epstein Barr Virus (EBV) a few months after I became sick, I didn't feel joy because there was no cure except rest.

I would be in the house for weeks without going outside. I couldn't even attend church. What started as exhaustion became my normal condition. Whatever hope I had of recovering began to fade away. Thankfully, I was able to experience many "God moments" while enduring this 10-month race and, by the grace of God, I was able to keep a positive attitude for the most part.

All I can say is that even though it was not easy to understand at the time, God was working wonders inside of me from day one.

I developed a new understanding of my Heavenly Father who gives us gifts of all kinds. These include the gifts of laughter, happiness, joy in expressing our love for God, the gift of being able to spend time with special people. Romans 8:17 (NLT) says, "And since we are His children, we will share His treasures—for

everything God gives to His Son, Christ, is ours too. But if we are to share His glory, we must also share His suffering." I had no idea how much this verse, along with many others, would impact my life, giving me a clearer view through the heartache and questions I had.

After several months, there came a breakthrough—a new diagnosis. The way it all came about was truly another "God moment." As it turns out, I was not just battling one infection, but two. From previous reports we had learned that the Epstein Barr Virus was not circulating in my blood anymore. And yet I was still exhausted all the time. During a visit to South Africa, we encountered people who led us to information concerning alternative causes for my sickness.

In South Africa, more blood work was done. A bacteria called Mycoplasma was found, which also causes walking pneumonia and which, we now believe, actually reactivated the EBV. By the grace of God, there was an antibiotic for it. If the Lord hadn't opened the doors of opportunity to meet people in South Africa who could provide us with alternative causes, I would be, without a doubt, still sick right now.

God works within you in hard times and is always with you. Even if I were given the chance to choose whether or not to be sick for this time in my life, I wouldn't turn it down for anything. God has spent this time nurturing me spiritually, mentally, and now physically, as I begin to build up my strength.

Words cannot express how grateful I am that God gave me this time to be in His rest and to spend more time with my parents. Hebrews 4:10-11 (NIV) says, "For anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience." I read that verse for the first time not too long ago, and what really stood out was the part about disobedience. Once I read that, I realized that God had used my sickness to help keep me from drifting away from Him. Even though God doesn't want to see us suffer, He knows that through our suffering we can grow in our faith.

While I had been in school, I had felt myself being drawn

"I have been transformed by Christ in a big way. Sometimes you just have to say out loud that God is my strength, because I have none on my own."

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

—Jeremiah 29:11, NIV

away from God and not doing anything about it. I wasn't living for Him. I had begun to have the mindset that if I did or said a certain thing, more people would want to be around me. In God's agenda, that was not supposed to happen. Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) says, "For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" I believe that this is true for everyone. Some people learn how to trust in God's plan for them the hard way and others the easy way.

I hope that my testimony can be like a light in the darkness and that it can offer hope for someone in need, for I have been transformed by Christ in a big way. Sometimes you just have to say out loud that God is my strength, because I have none on my own. And when we surrender all our trust and strength wholeheartedly to God, anything is possible—anything at all. †



Caylor Gongwer and her parents, Cameron and Anne, have served as missionaries to Ghana, West Africa since March 1998. Dr. Cameron Gongwer served as the first full-time doctor and medical superintendent

of the Ankaase Methodist Faith Healing Hospital. Anne coordinated the development of the Ankaase Literacy Program, which led to the establishment of the Reading Town Library. Caylor grew up being the only "white kid" in an African village, homeschooling, having fun with her friends and helping Anne raise funds for the library along with other projects.

God provides: A newborn is rescued

In a strange land, they would give birth to their firstborn. They might have felt vulnerable and scared, particularly when complications arose. But the miracle happened through a special intercessor. In 2011, missionaries to Thailand, Chris and Dora Barbee welcomed into their lives their first child, Natalie. Since Roi Et is a relatively remote region, Chris and Dora traveled to Bangkok to have Natalie there.

Dora happened to choose a Christian OB/GYN in Bangkok, Dr. Cleopandh. At her appointments, Dr. Cleopandh would always tell Dora, "God will help you in delivery." Natalie's delivery had a lot of complications, and her heart rate dropped to dangerous levels. Chris and Dora recall that Dr. Cleopandh kept leaving the room when Natalie's heart rate would drop, but they did not know why.

After Natalie was born, they found she had the umbilical cord wrapped around her neck three times. Dr. Cleopandh later told Chris and Dora that she had left the room to pray. She knew Natalie was in danger and was asking God to help her.

"I think it is amazing that God not only blessed us with a healthy baby, but He provided a Christian doctor, in a land where Christians are very uncommon, to help us pray!" said Dora.

In addition to serving as an OB/GYN, Dr. Cleopandh runs a home for abandoned children. She currently cares for 44 children and supports the ministry with her own income. You can read more about her work at www.chaiyaprukchildrenhome.com. †



Chris and Dora Barbee have served in Roi Et, Thailand since January 2010. They teach English classes, music classes, and disciple Thai youth in their relationships with Jesus.

She finished well

The Mission Society mourns the loss of long-time missionary and friend, Mari Hicks.



Neal and Mari Hicks have ministered in Japan for 31 years.

As we were at work on this issue of *Unfinished*, examining the wonder and mystery of God's healing grace, our dear friend and long-time missionary Mari Hicks went home to be with Jesus on March 21, 2012, after a long battle with cancer.

For 31 years (22 of which were with The Mission Society), she and her husband, Neal, have ministered in Japan, Mari's homeland. There, they have been involved in pastoral ministry, homeless outreach, evangelism, prayer summits, and the International VIP Club, which is a ministry to Japanese businesspeople.

Before meeting Neal, Mari—a native of Hiroshima, Japan—attended college in Tokyo and danced professionally as a ballerina with the Tokyo Ballet Company, the Royal Academy of Ballet in British Columbia, and the San Francisco Ballet Company.

In 1971, while Neal was stationed with the U.S. Air Force on the island of Okino in the East China Sea, he and Mari met and were married later that year. Through the witness of Mari's father, a well-known Methodist pastor in Japan, Neal came to know Christ and quickly thereafter sensed the call to ministry.

From that point onward, with the exception of several years in the States for schooling and preparation, Neal and Mari ministered in Japan.

"Places like Japan are not going to be transformed overnight,"



Mari with sons, Neal Hideo and Philip

comments President Dick McClain. "It will be the faithful service of people like Mari who gave decade after decade of her life to sharing the good news of Jesus with her beloved Japanese people that will ultimately carry the day."

McClain, who delivered Mari's eulogy on March 28, recounts: "A precious brother from Japan flew all the way to Michigan just to share a personal word regarding the role that Mari and Neal had played in his life and the life of his family. He testified that his grandmother, his mother, he and his wife, and his children were all in the church and following Jesus because of the sustained enduring faithful witness of Mari and Neal.

"...As I think about Mari Hicks, she stands out as a shining example of a person who responded affirmatively to Jesus' invitation to 'follow Him,' who after that never looked back, and as a consequence, of whom we are able to say today, she fought the good fight; she finished the race, and she kept the faith."

Mari is survived by her husband, Neal, and two sons, Neal Hideo and Phillip. Personal gifts can be sent to Neal Hicks, c/o First United Methodist Church, 600 S. Main Street, Eaton Rapids, Michigan 48827.

Thank you for your prayers for the Hicks family in the coming days.

"Mari Hicks oozed the gracefulness of being a woman. She moved as if she were gliding. Once she and Neal shared that she had been a ballerina, it made complete sense ... She adored Neal. One year I happened to be staying with them in Tokyo on Valentine's day. He bought her chocolate and told her something corny about her being even sweeter than the chocolate, and she blushed at his love and kind words. She glowed with praise of her son's accomplishments and lifted them up in prayer to know Jesus more. The Lord used her as an encouraging friend to speak words of truth and love to me when I was hurt and misunderstood. She made me fall in love with Japan simply because she was part of it. Whenever I think of Mari I will always think, 'That's who I want to be like when I grow up.'"

—Sue, missionary to Russia

"The phrase that comes to mind when I think of Mari Hicks is 'Steel Magnolia.' Though she was as beautiful and delicate as a porcelain doll, there was a strength and resiliency to her that you might not expect just looking at her ... Her life has been such a testimony to me—particularly as she fought this last battle with such grace and courage. ...It's hard to imagine this world without her, but I love the thought of her dancing before her Lord. Well done, good and faithful servant!"

—Ari Morsella, former missionary to Russia, executive assistant and coordinator of training

"I will always remember Mari Hicks as a lady who 'had it all together.' She was articulate, beautiful, and deeply committed to Jesus, and she kept Neal and the rest of the family organized and always pointed in the right direction. Mari translated for me a number of times when I spoke in churches in Japan, and she always wanted to review my notes so that she would not just be translating the words. I always felt she was on the 'same page' with me when I shared. The world is a better place because Mari has been among us, and she will be greatly missed."

—Frank Decker, vice president for member care and development

"Gatherings of their church fellowship would light up as Mari's smile filled the room. The faces of Tokyo's homeless would also light up as she served them a warm plate of food. I am one of those who experienced her gift of hospitality. Many I'm sure know the love of Jesus because of her warmth and generosity."

—Steve Wilson, director of missional communities

God knows our needs: Unborn baby is healed

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick," the scriptures tell us. After seasons of mourning and derailed hope, this long-awaited miracle brought healing in abundance.

The parents of six children, Martin and Tracy Reeves were anticipating the arrival of another daughter, Jubilee Faith. Tracy had miscarried three times during the course of several years, so she and Martin were thrilled when they learned she was pregnant again. An ultrasound, though, revealed that the baby had a hole in her heart.

Within a week of learning of their baby's condition, Martin traveled to Huancayo for missionary training of nationals. While praying with the men in his training group, he had a vision that he needed to get home and place his hands on Tracy for their new baby, Jubilee. After the group prayer, when the men said, "Amen," the leader of the team said to Martin, "I just had this vision of you placing your hands on your wife's stomach, and I saw this light passing through her back and just bursting forth through the womb!"

When Martin arrived home, he placed his hands on Tracy's stomach, just as in his vision, and they prayed for the healing of baby Jubilee. Within days, after reviewing a new ultrasound, the doctor told Tracy and Martin, "I can't find the hole here; it's not there! This never happens in the womb. Sometimes after birth, the hole will close by itself, but I've never seen this happen in the womb!" Martin told the doctor, "We serve an awesome and powerful God, a God who is still active and interested in us, and He knows our desires and our needs."

God used the birth of healthy Jubilee Faith to heal the hearts of Martin and Tracy and their six other children. "Because of the miscarriages, our youngest children remembered the hospital only as a place where babies went to heaven," says Tracy. "Jubilee Faith's birth helped heal all of our wounds."

Martin tells, "Our oldest son held Jubilee Faith in his arms, and just began to cry, saying, 'Wow, what a tremendous blessing.' She is our precious miracle from God." ✠



Martin and Tracy Reeves have served with The Mission Society in Trujillo, Peru since 2004. Martin is an elder in The New Mexico Annual Conference of the United

Methodist Church. The Reeves' vision is to train and disciple Peruvian nationals, equipping and empowering them for ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up. They are also actively involved in the ministries of several local Methodist churches through teaching, preaching, and participating in youth and children's ministries.



God grants us peace: Stage-four ovarian cancer disappears

After having served for a decade in this Central Asian country, Jill sped off from the village and people she had come to love, like a gangster in getaway car. This was not how she dreamed she would leave what had become her home. But she needed to go away now, possibly to die.

Just days earlier, she had celebrated Thanksgiving with friends from her village. Among them, she remembers, were “former residents of our little village (with some of their family members), former drunks, beggars, liars, and thieves who had each been touched by the love of Jesus through one or more of the members of our little church. All were graduates of our sister church’s drug and alcohol rehab program. All were now serving the Lord in various capacities and positions.

“These people had gathered to share their testimonies and to thank the church for the part it had played in literally saving their lives. It was a wonderful celebration of God’s mercy and love.”

Once the service was over, everyone gathered in offices across the street, where Jill and her friends had prepared a real American Thanksgiving feast with turkeys and all their trimmings. “The food was accompanied by much laughter as well as serious conversations. At one point I stood back simply to observe all the fun. My heart was overflowing with joy. There were surely tears on my cheeks, as I watched all these people who I had come to know so well and love so dearly, each one an example of a changed life, each one representing an amazing story of God’s forgiveness and love. It was the best Thanksgiving celebration I had ever been a part of—even if it were three weeks late!

“I didn’t realize that the celebration that had brought me so much joy would be my last celebration in my little village for some time to come. I didn’t realize that it had been my Christmas program and goodbye party rolled into one. I didn’t realize that within days my friend would be hastily packing for me what belongings she could cram into three cases and a trunk, and her husband would be driving me over ice covered roads to the city

to catch a plane to the States. I didn’t realize that the 36 hours in airports and planes would end immediately in a trip from the airport to an emergency room. I didn’t realize that I would celebrate Christmas in a hospital bed with a diagnosis of ovarian cancer, stage 4, that came with a realistic life expectancy of two to three years after surgery and chemotherapy. I didn’t realize what a gift it is not to know the future! Ahhh, but there is much more to the story!

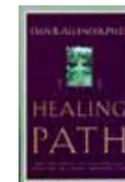
“Although I had no energy or will to send out a newsletter, word spread quickly to many churches and individuals through family and friends. I can attest once again to the amazing power of prayer, as I sensed a great peace most of the time. I felt only a deep sadness for my children and grandchildren as I faced the reality of leaving their lives so much sooner than I wanted. I also realized how blessed I was to be surrounded by an entire family of strong believers who supported me in so many ways. Though I knew it was the beginning of a long and painful journey that would probably end in death very soon, I truly had a ‘peace that passed all understanding’ that comes from God alone.

I climbed onto that operating room table with a death sentence hanging over my head, but I awoke in the recovery room to my sister grinning down at me and excitedly telling me that God had answered our prayers, and that my death sentence had been rescinded! The surgeon and everyone involved in the case were amazed. Yes, they found the huge tumor they had expected and yes, it was cancerous, but the expected additional cancerous lesions in my pelvis and abdomen were completely absent. All my tests and symptoms had indicated advanced cancer but all they found was evidence of an early stage cancer that normally has no symptoms whatsoever! They tell me it is a miracle! I am praising the God of miracles today!” †

Today, Jill (not her real name) is a testament to God’s miraculous grace. She is healed and presently serves on one of The Mission Society’s newest ministry fields.

Top 10 books on healing and healing prayer

Dr. Steve Seamands, professor of Christian Doctrine at Asbury Theological Seminary, offers his picks on this important subject.



The Healing Path, by Dan Allender

Carefully and wisely charts the often slow and strenuous journey involved in healing.



Authority to Heal, by Ken Blue

Especially helpful in addressing the key theological issues related to physical and emotional healing.



Deep Wounds, Deep Healing, by Charles Kraft

An eminently practical manual that helpfully includes the role of spiritual warfare in healing.



Let Jesus Heal Your Hidden Wounds, by Brad Long & Cindy Strickler

Outlines a simple, helpful approach stressing the role of the Holy Spirit in emotional healing.



The Power to Heal, by Francis MacNutt

A veteran practitioner shares what he has learned over the years about physical healing.



Deliverance from Evil Spirits, by Francis MacNutt

The best book on this subject that I know of.



Restoring the Christian Soul through Healing Prayer, by Leanne Payne

Profoundly addresses the three great barriers to emotional and spiritual healing.



Christian Healing: A Comprehensive Guide, by Mark Pearson

Covers a wide range of issues and is especially helpful in discussing how to establish a healing ministry in the local church.



Healing for Damaged Emotions, by David Seamands

Still the best book to introduce someone to the subject of emotional healing.



Healing Care, Healing Prayer, by Terry Wardle

A helpful, balanced guide to healing prayer ministry underscoring the role of Jesus Himself in healing our emotional wounds.

This list is taken from the website of Asbury Theological Seminary.



When I lay these questions before God I get no answer. But a rather special sort of “No answer.” It is not the locked door. It is more like a silent, certainly not uncompassionate, gaze. As though He shook His head not in refusal but waiving the question. Like, “Peace, child; you don’t understand.”

—C.S. Lewis, from *A Grief Observed*

When the healing doesn’t come

A young missionary reports from a section of the faith journey’s bleakest terrain.

By Hannah Duggins-Warf

Joel and Marylee Duggins and their children served for nine years with The Mission Society in Kazakhstan, which was then a newly established field. Hannah, the fourth of seven children, lived in this former Soviet republic from age seven to 16. Less than one year after the Duggins family relocated back to the States, Hannah’s father, Joel, died suddenly. As a senior at Houghton College in 2009, Hannah shared in a chapel service about the arid spiritual journey following her father’s death.

My name is Hannah Duggins. I am a senior Classical Guitar Performance major here at Houghton College. I would like to first share with you a little bit about my life and, in particular, an event which has been challenging and transforming my faith since it happened five years ago. I would then like to talk a little about how it has challenged my faith in hopes that many of you can identify with my experiences and perhaps take a little something away that will encourage you as you face your own hardships.

My family moved to Kazakhstan to serve as missionaries when I was seven years old. We lived there for about nine years and, at the end of my sophomore year in high school, my parents felt called to move back to the States. My dad had the vision of starting a multi-ethnic church in the metro-Atlanta area that would emphasize a coming together of different cultures in worship. We got on a plane in early August 2003 and moved to Georgia.

God’s hand was evident in our move. When we landed in the Atlanta airport, we didn’t have anywhere to live, and school started in one week. A friend picked us up at the airport and, when she found out we didn’t have a place to live, offered us a house that belonged to her family in North Georgia. We could live there for free and just pay the utilities.



Hannah Duggins-Warf graduated from Houghton with a degree in classical guitar performance in 2009 and a master's in music in 2011. Hannah married Micah Warf in 2011 and they reside in Malden, Massachusetts.

During that year the four of us kids who were still at home attended American public school for the first time in our lives. It was quite the adjustment, as you can imagine. My dad spent his time visiting our supporting churches and working on a proposal for his envisioned church plant to give to the North Georgia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. In the spring of 2004, my parents also started looking for a house closer to the area in which my dad wanted to plant the church. In April, my dad finished his proposal and sent it to the conference for approval. My parents found a house they wanted to buy. Our family was really excited about moving closer to Atlanta and settling down in a more permanent situation, as well as to seeing what God had in store for us and my dad's new church in the years ahead.

It was a Tuesday afternoon toward the end of April. My dad had picked us up from school, and we were doing our homework when suddenly he had a heart attack. We called the ambulance right away.

As the medics rushed in to do CPR, I remember sitting on the floor with my two sisters and praying. I remember feeling faith bubble up inside of me. I knew that God wasn't going to let anything happen to my dad because He had called my dad to start a church in Atlanta. I knew everything was going to be alright. I comforted my sisters, then got in the car with my mom and our pastor and his wife, and we followed the ambulance to the hospital.

When we got to the hospital, we were taken to a room with couches and Kleenex. The doctor came in and told us that he was sorry. He said my dad was already dead when he got to the hospital and that there was nothing they could do for him.

Just strength

After that, there came a flood of cards, food, visitors, help, prayers, hugs, and tears. People came out of the woodwork; friends I didn't even know I had sent cards and flowers and chocolate. My mom decided to cremate him. The cremation

was to take place on Friday. I remember praying every single day that God would raise Daddy from the dead before he was cremated. But nothing ever came of that.

Slowly things more or less settled down. Practical things needed to be dealt with. My mom had a degree in New Testament and had not worked outside the home since she had gotten married. She wanted to go back to school and get certified to be an ESOL teacher. So in the fall she enrolled in a master's program.

"I remember feeling faith bubble up inside of me. I knew that God wasn't going to let anything happen to my dad because He had called my dad to start a church in Atlanta."

God was very provident in those first several months. My mom found a house we could afford. We started going to a church close to our new house. Once the pastor heard our story, he told the 2000-member congregation about it and asked them to help us in any way they could. More meals were provided to us in addition to almost every piece of furniture we needed—beds, tables, chairs, desks, bedside tables, a washer, a dryer, a microwave, a refrigerator. People my mom had never seen before would come up to her after church and press hundred-dollar bills in her hand.

In the fall we went back to school. My mom got a full-time job as a substitute teacher and started taking night classes in pursuit of a master's degree in education. She finished her master's two years ago, is now a math teacher at a middle school, and is also certified to teach ESOL. God has provided for us in so many tangible ways. And more than that, through the weeks and months to follow my father's death, I was very keenly aware of God's presence in my life. About three weeks after my dad passed away, I wrote to a friend:

[. . .] God's really giving us strength. I've never been so aware of His strength in my life as I am now. And that's just what it is: strength. There is no healing; there is no comfort, just strength, which is really all He can give us now without giving us back what He saw fit to take away.

The riddle

Isn't it curious that in times of trouble God would rather give us His strength or His providence or His peace instead of the thing which we really want—the thing that if we had, we wouldn't need so much of His strength or providence or peace? God may answer some prayers, but I think we all know that He doesn't answer every prayer. By "answer" here, I don't mean so much "respond" as to give us what we ask for (although I am not entirely convinced that our prayers always even get a response from God either).

You see, Jesus said that if we had only the faith of a mustard seed we could move mountains. But when I had faith and prayed, He refused to even raise the dead or heal the sick. God says He protects those who are His servants, and that He gives good things to those who love Him. But even though my dad had left all to follow Him, he was left with a heart that didn't work.

What are we to believe then about a God who seemingly goes back on His promises and who overlooks the lives of the very people who most faithfully serve Him, who won't always give us even good things like an earthly father, or good health, or a loving family? Upon a closer look at Scripture, I found countless examples of times that God allowed His chosen ones to suffer. In the garden Jesus asked to be delivered, and He was crucified. Stephen was chosen to serve God through a ministry to orphans and widows, and he was stoned to death.

And here we have the problem of pain. If God really is good and doesn't lie and loves us, He must just not be able to always help us. But if He is always able to help us and then just chooses not to, then He must not be good at all.

But God has to be good. If God is God at all, He is good. He loves us enough to create us and create a world for us. He loves us enough to let us choose Himself or sin.

Six months after my dad had passed away, one of the elders in our new church, who was in his 50s just like my dad, had a heart attack. He was taken to the hospital. His family prayed for him in the waiting room. And God healed him.

Up to that point, I had felt a lot of peace with God over my dad's death. I had accepted it and trusted that God still cared for and loved me and my family and all those who were grieving over my dad. But when I heard how God had healed the elder at our church, I admit that I couldn't help but be a little angry. Why is one man's life more valuable than another's? Why does God heal some and not others? Why couldn't He have chosen my dad to heal?

"Upon a closer look at Scripture, I found countless examples of times that God allowed His chosen ones to suffer."

The pain

I don't mean to be disappointing, but I don't have an answer. I've sought an answer. I spent the past five years searching for one—reading books, talking to people who are wiser than I am, hungrily listening to every preacher or speaker who talked about pain and suffering. I have heard that we live in a fallen world; that maybe my sisters and I just didn't pray hard enough; that God wanted to draw my family closer to Him; that we are perfected by our suffering. I even have wondered if I were being punished for having loved my earthy father more than my heavenly one—if God had been jealous and took Daddy away so that I would only rely on God. But none of these answers really satisfy me. Would a divine revelation from God really satisfy me at this point, though?

"In his book, *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis spends several pages on intellectual antics about the problem of pain and then finally stops.

"Why do I make room in my mind for such filth and nonsense?" he writes, "Do I hope that if feeling disguises itself as thought I shall feel less? Aren't all these notes the senseless writhings of a man who won't accept the fact that there is nothing we can do with suffering except to suffer it? Who still thinks there is some device (if only he could find it)

which will make pain not to be pain. It doesn't really matter whether you grip the arms of the dentist's chair or let your hands lie in your lap. The drill drills on."

I think that that is the answer. Pain happens. Even if we knew all the "why and how," it would still be painful. Being a Christian doesn't make pain any less painful or less devastating. Although we have hope in an eternal world where there is no mourning or crying or pain, it doesn't mean that right now our pain and hurt is any more tolerable. No matter if you have lost a father or a mother or a sibling or a friend or were abandoned or abused or just really hurt, pain is still pain. And even though we have an all-powerful God who, for whatever reason, did not prevent us from experiencing pain, we must always remember that He is also a God who dearly loves us and through Jesus Christ has lived as we live and suffered as we suffer. ☩



Scan the QR code to listen to Hannah's testimony on our website.

Shouldn't we expect a miracle?

How a visit to the Two-Thirds World changed the mind of a self-avowed "skeptic"

We read in the New Testament about Jesus' healings, but do we really expect Him to heal today? When John became a missionary intern in Ghana, West Africa, he had been struggling with faith questions for months. An experience in Africa changed him and, years later, it continues to affect his trust in the words and miracles of Jesus.

I graduated from Moody Bible Institute in 2008 and had every intention of going on to Asbury Theological Seminary to earn a Master of Divinity degree. I hoped to have earned a Doctor of Ministry degree by the time I was 30. After that, I expected to pastor churches in the States. That was my plan.

I graduated from Moody very disenchanted and wasn't sure what to do with my life. I moved back in with my parents while I struggled to figure out what was next. During that time, I became reacquainted with some high school friends. We talked a lot about scripture and life and read Francis Chan's book, *Crazy Love*. We came down to this question: What if Jesus really meant what He said?

Maybe Jesus meant what He said in Matthew 5 when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Maybe Jesus meant what He said when He said, "Blessed are you whenever people revile you and persecute you for my sake and for the gospel, for great is your reward in heaven." Maybe Jesus meant it when He said, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

As my friends and I wrestled with this, I came to the point when I had to do something. There is a quote, from E. Stanley Jones' book, *Christ of the Indian Road*, "The moment we cease to share with others where there is seemingly no return and recompense to ourselves, that moment we cease to be Christian." Jones was saying that we cannot be Christian and concentrate only on ourselves. I had gone to Bible college, and I had spent all this time doing Christian things, but I had not been thinking about the world. And so, after interacting with these ideas and after reading scripture and seeing God's call to take care of orphans and widows and their distress, I decided to do something.

I got in touch with The Mission Society and attended its intern training program. I fell in love with the way that The Mission Society does ministry. Among other things, the training emphasized that the way Jesus did ministry should inform the way that we do ministry. Jesus meant what He said.

Outside the comfort zone

In January of 2009, I hopped on a plane and flew to Ghana, West Africa. I worked in an orphanage and AIDS clinic with



Dramatic healing reports tend to cluster in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where people so desperately need miracles.

the Methodist Church Ghana. It was the most profound experience of my life. I spent time teaching English to about 15 orphan kids. I loved those kids. The missionaries who I lived with at the time connected me with a Ghanaian pastor. He was a rock star. About 74 years old, he still rode his motorcycle into the bush [remote areas] to tell people about Jesus. He took me under his wing, and he shared his life with me.

One day, we went on an evangelistic campaign in a village in the north of Ghana. The missionary I was living with and some Ghanaian pastors set up a projector and showed the *Jesus* Film.

Once the film was over, a man walked up to us and said, "I saw the movie, and I saw Jesus heal a deaf man." And we said, "Yes, Jesus heals deaf people." He said, "Well, my son has been deaf and mute since birth. Can Jesus heal him?" At this point, I just wanted to hide in the corner. All the Ghanaians were saying, "Yes, God can heal your son. Bring him by tomorrow morning, and we'll pray for him."

And so, on Saturday morning, we had a healing and deliverance service. It was fascinating, but I was totally out of my comfort zone. People started praying in many different languages and in other tongues. I stood in the back taking in all

this, but I was skeptical. I have always been a skeptic. I have my doubts about pretty much everything, but the Lord has always proved faithful.

At the end of this time, a man named Ongala was brought to the front by his father. Ongala was about 27 years old. He has been deaf and mute since birth. We started to pray.

Which is easier?

I immediately thought of the paralytic in Mark. When his friends couldn't get him to Jesus, they cut a hole in the roof and let him down through it. Jesus looked at them and said, "I say to you, 'your sins are forgiven.'" And then the Pharisees got angry and asked, "Who are you to forgive sins?" And Jesus said, "Which one is easier? Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or is it easier to say to this man, 'Take your mat and walk?'" And Jesus said, "So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, I say to you, 'Rise. Take up your mat and go home.'"

Many of these Ghanaian villagers had just had their first exposure to Jesus. So as we all prayed, my prayer was, "God, if You care whether or not these people know that You have



authority to forgive sins, You have to heal this person.”

I don't know how to pray for healing, but God showed up. After what seemed like forever, as we prayed for this man, all of a sudden he started to cry. His tongue wasn't completely loose, but he started to make noise for the first time in his life. He started saying, *Yesu*, which is the word for *Jesus* in his language. My mind was blown. I don't know why. Jesus meant what He said. And what he said was true. So why should I be surprised that He is able to heal a deaf person? He did it in the Bible a number of times.

God just really struck me that I needed to have more faith. I needed to believe in the promises of God, and I needed to believe that what God said was true, and actually live it out in a more profound way. †

John is currently considering serving with The Mission Society among least reached people. His full name cannot be printed for security reasons. The above address was delivered to a Mission Society gathering in 2011.



To hear John's complete testimony, scan the QR code.



Ongala's father (top, left) brought his 27-year-old son for healing prayer, which was led by former Mission Society missionary John Russell (top, right). "All of a sudden Ongala started to cry," remembers John. "He started to make noise for the first time in his life. ...He started saying, 'Yesu.'" Evangelism outreaches followed the healings.



With the shift in the global center of Christendom to the Two-Third's World comes a shift in dominant Christian perspectives.

Skeptics beware

Among "Enlightenment" thinkers, there is prejudice against belief in miracles. But in the Two-Third's Majority World, which is now the global center of Christendom, miracles are largely more accepted and expected than in the West. In the following brief excerpts from his recent two-volume work, *Miracles*, Dr. Craig Keener helps lay some understanding for the worldview that may influence our own future expectations of healing.

Greater expectations for miracles

"Whereas fewer than 18 percent of Christians in 1900 lived outside Europe and North America, today more than 60 percent do, and an estimated 70 percent will by 2025. As the center of world Christianity has shifted to the Global South, the dominant Christian perspectives in the world have shifted with it.... Not surprisingly, readings of Scripture in the Global South often contrast starkly with modern Western critic's readings. These readings from other social locations often shock Westerners not only because others believe the early Christian miracle narratives to be plausible but also because these readers often take these narratives as a model for their ministries.

"Thus Western scholar of global Christianity Philip Jenkins notes that, in general, Christianity in the Global South is quite interested in the 'immediate workings of the supernatural, through prophecy, visions, ecstatic utterances, and healing.' Such an approach, closer to the early Christian worldview than the modern Western culture is, appeals to many traditional non-Western cultures." (pp. 215-16)

More claims of miracles

"The majority of Catholics, Pentecostals, Anglicans, and members of most other groups of Christians now live in the Global South, that is, in the Majority World; by 2050, perhaps only 20 percent of Christians in the world will be white. This in contrast to the period

when many of the plausibility structures [what intuitively strikes us as rational] for modern critical New Testament scholarship were defined. Two-Thirds World Christians are now the majority, and expectation of healings is common among many of their churches. 'Signs and wonders' are among the most prominent factors drawing people to faith in Christ in the Majority World today, with healings and exorcisms proving particularly effective. Dramatic miracle reports tend to cluster in different regions at different times, sometimes during periods that some scholars call 'revival'...; as a general rule, however, we may say that these claims are far more common in many regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America today than in the West." (p. 226)



Craig S. Keener (Ph.D. Duke University), professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, is author of 15 books. His popular-level IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament has sold over half a million copies. The above excerpts

are taken from *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*. Keener's own sister-in-law, who is from the Congo, was raised from the dead—an example cited in this book. You can view several interviews with Keener, and with his wife, Medine, on YouTube. Here is one: <http://youtu.be/ffEsxza43II>



Our present groaning

While we await the full consummation of God's kingdom, things aren't yet as they will be. How are we to come to terms with the suffering that is still with us?

A roundtable discussion

As we 'look through a glass darkly,' how can we understand the mysteries of faith? How can we interpret the seeming randomness of healings? What unseen structures are involved in the miracles for which we pray? Is there an even wider significance for healings that we do not recognize?

During sessions of GodPod, a regular podcast of London's St. Paul Theological Centre, a panel of theologians addresses questions that have been sent in from listeners. In the following, Graham Tomlin, Jane Williams, and Mike Lloyd discuss the complex issues surrounding suffering, long-term illness, "unanswered" prayer, and the possible hidden importance of divine healing.

Graham: Someone asks: How do you hold together the tension in Christian life between the reality of suffering and illness, particularly long-term illness, with a belief in Christian healing? The person posing this question has had multiple sclerosis for the last five years and has prayed many many times for healing, and it hasn't happened yet. So what is she to do? Is she to give up on that and accept this as the cross that she is to bear, and is she is to embrace it and give thanks for it in some way? Is she is to continue praying for its removal and keep on getting disappointed (which often happens when you pray with expectation and nothing seems to take place)? Again, how do you hold together the reality of long-term illness with a belief in Christian healing? This is a question that a lot of people struggle with in Christian life.

Jane: And it's such an important question, partly because we, as the Christian community, so often do actually make life much worse for people who are suffering this kind of illness by ...making people feel that it must be, in some sense, their fault

if they're not being healed—either their fault or the fault of the pray-ers. [We make people feel] that there is something wrong if healing doesn't happen. And I would like to say as firmly as I can that it is mysterious why healing doesn't always happen, but it isn't sinful.

Mike: The other thing I want to say (and not everybody would agree with this, but I feel this very passionately), is that whatever else you do with [illness and suffering], don't make it worse by seeing it as something God has given to you, whether as punishment, or even as "this is the cross I have to bear," or "somehow this is going to be good for me or the world," or whatever. I don't think God gives people suffering. Suffering is, in itself, a destructive thing. That's what it does. It destroys. It inhibits. It constricts. It frustrates. Now a lot of people have an experience of good coming out of suffering and of their learning lessons and deepening and growing and coming closer to God, but that is, I think, always the gift of God, not the gift of suffering. Suffering, in its trajectory, is always destruction. If

The 'greatest miracle of all'

In a letter written from prison Anatoly Emmanuilovich Letivin, an old Russian Orthodox believer who had been persecuted all his life by the secret police, described the incomparable power of prayer to bring peace and to enlighten even the darkest moments of our lives:

The greatest miracle of all is prayer. I have only to turn my thoughts to God and I suddenly feel a strength which bursts into my soul, into my entire being. What is it? Psychotherapy? No, it is not psychotherapy, for where would I, an insignificant, tired old man, get this strength which renews me and saves me, lifting me above the earth? It comes from without and there is no force on earth that can even understand it.

—from *God on Mute, Engaging the Silence of Unanswered Prayer*, by Pete Greig, page 54

God comes in and changes that, then it's Him we have to thank, not the suffering.

Graham: There is a sense that [in our prayers] we're asking God to do exactly what we want, and so it's not surprising that God doesn't always answer exactly every single prayer that we utter, partly because sometimes we ask for the wrong things, partly because this is not our world to control.

Mike: Can I add: Partly because what God wants to do is opposed, both by human beings and by other dark forces.

Graham: Yes, and I think I also want to say that a God who never intervenes, who never steps in to change the natural course of events within a fallen world, would be a God who you might conclude doesn't really care about us or the world. ... Either extreme—a God who intervenes all the time whenever we ask—doesn't seem to make a lot of sense, and a God who never intervenes doesn't make any sense either.

And I suppose I can go back to the language that John's gospel uses about miracles—that they are signs. In other words, the significance is not in themselves; it's what they point to. And it seems to me that that is true in healing. The significance is not within the act of healing itself, because... ultimately prayers for healing don't get answered; every single one of us will die. So the significance of healing is what it points to. It points to the grace of God; it points to resurrection; it points to something other than itself.

Mike: [Healing] is a temporary thing.

Jane: I don't know if this is at all a fair thing to say because I am not suffering from debilitating long-term illness, but I think a person has to go on praying in the hope and expectation that God longs to heal and, at the same time, look for whatever gifts God can bring to fruition out of this situation of distortion and imperfection. I don't know what that feels like psychologically—both to expect healing and to thank God for what comes out of a situation that isn't changing.

Mike: Yes, I agree with that. I don't know, but I'm just slightly uncomfortable with the idea [expressed earlier] that God sometimes doesn't heal because that would de-value the currency (and that He doesn't want to do it too often). I think I want to say that God always wants to heal, because He wants what is good for us, and He doesn't always get His way. Like with everything else in this world, God doesn't always get His way. And the other thing I want to say is that I don't think He wants to keep the structures going, because they're fallen structures and they're destructive structures. I think He wants to heal the structures. I think He wants to create a world in which the old structures are transformed, so that they no longer have death, and struggle, and conflict built into them. And that's why I think the miracles are not exceptions. They're actually the breaking in of new structures and new rules. And this is what He wants to usher in.

Jane: And we don't actually know how prayer works. There is a completely unalienable strangeness about prayer. And again, we're always trying to turn it into something that we do and look for our results, as opposed to seeing it as a new kind of structure, a new set of rules that is beginning gradually to transform the world. I do believe that every time Christians pray, something happens. It may not be the thing that we think we're praying for, or are indeed praying for, but something inevitably will happen when two or three are gathered together. So I just think you have to go on praying under all circumstances, and keep looking for the blessing that will come, whatever it is. And it may not be the fullness that God longs to give, but it will be something. There will be something, because God is present in that prayer.

Graham: Let's go back to [Mike's] point about God's will sometimes being opposed, and there may be dark forces that are opposing the will of God and want destruction and despair and everything else. I guess that implies that part of the way

in which we engage in that conflict is through prayer, and that prayer sort of enables God to win that battle.

Mike: Yes

Jane: Absolutely.

Graham: But I think that a danger in that thinking might be that you start thinking that the more I pray, the more I'm likely to be healed. ... like the more money I put into the slot machine, the more I get out of it. ... But that doesn't always work.

Mike: I agree there is a danger there, and then I think there is also a danger in not taking into account the opposition forces. If I'm praying and it's not answered, it's not because I'm not good enough, or because God doesn't want it or doesn't love me, or whatever. [Taking into account the opposition forces] does at least add other agents into the equation, so that [my not being healed] is not all due to my lack of goodness, or lack of prayer, or whatever it might be.

Jane: Because, again, ... if our prayer is part of a wider web of what God is doing, if it's a prayer for the coming kingdom of God, in which there will be no suffering, then even if all we're doing is a very, very, very tiny victory in that struggle, even if it doesn't benefit us personally, it's important to know that it's still part of that—that that's what we're praying for. We're praying for the kingdom of God.

Graham: And that prayer is an aligning of our wills with the will of God. I can see a sense in which the more people pray and the more people's wills are aligned with the will of God, in a sense, the more freedom God has to work within a world where His will is opposed, not just by dark forces, but by ourselves, by human beings who choose to go in a very different direction.

Jane: Who choose the knowledge of the fruit of good and evil.

Graham: Fascinating discussion. We could go on about this for a long time. Obviously this question raises some very interesting theological issues, but also some very strong personal ones and pastoral ones. †

The above was excerpted from a transcript of God Pod 66 and used by permission. GodPod is a regular podcast in which theologians "get together to answer questions and discuss burning issues of God, theology, and life over an endless supply of coffee and biscuits." GodPod is available on iTunes or at <http://sptc.htb.org.uk/godpod> or at <http://sptc.htb.org.uk/resources>.



The Rev. Dr. Graham Tomlin is the Principal of St. Paul's Theological Centre and Dean of St. Mellitus College. He was for several years a member of the Theology Faculty of Oxford University, teaching on the Reformation and contemporary mission and culture, before moving to London in 2005. He is a member of the Church of England's College of Evangelists and is the author of numerous articles and several books.



The Rev. Dr. Michael Lloyd is Tutor in Theology at St. Paul's Theological Centre. In Oxford, he did his doctoral thesis on the problem of evil. He was also a member of Oxford University's Faculty of Theology. He is the author of *Cafe Theology*, which

he describes as "a romp through the whole of Christian theology," published by Alpha International.



Dr. Jane Williams teaches Christian doctrine at St. Paul's Theological Centre. She is also a visiting Lecturer in Theology at King's College London, having previously taught at Trinity College, Bristol. She is the author of several books, including

Approaching Easter and *Approaching Christmas*, and *Perfect Freedom*. She is married to Rowan, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Grateful for her witness among us

Former missionary to Ghana, Rita Mae Livingston Donner, passes away



"Rita was a nurse, and she always exhibited an extraordinary level of compassion for those whom she provided medical care," writes Frank Decker, former Ghana field leader. The nurses' quarters at the Methodist Faith Healing Hospital in Ankaase, Ghana, is named for Jim and Rita Donner, who helped serve in this remote community for many years.

The Mission Society mourns the loss of Rita Mae Livingston Donner, who went home to be with Jesus on March 9, 2012 at the age of 82. She and her husband, James, spent 20 years in their retirement doing missionary work in India and in Ghana. They served with The Mission Society for many years, first as residential missionaries in Ghana and later as volunteers. The Donners helped renovate the Ankaase Methodist Faith Healing Hospital in the village of Ankaase. Today, the hospital is a model facility and provides medical care for the more than 10,000 residents in the immediate area and for those in surrounding towns and villages. It serves as a catalyst for the transformation of lives through ministry to the physical and spiritual needs of patients.



Mission Society vice president and former Ghana field leader, the Rev. Frank Decker, recalls: "Vicki and I were serving in Ghana when the Donners came to serve the fledgling medical project in the village of Ankaase. While others their age were settling into retirement and relaxation, Jim and Rita moved to Africa and entered this new phase of their lives with great energy and excitement. Their experience and teachable demeanor greatly endeared them to their Ghanaian hosts as well as to the other missionaries. As older adults, Jim and Rita were seen as surrogate grandparents to our children and to other missionary kids on the field as well. Rita was a nurse, and she always exhibited an extraordinary level of compassion to those for whom she provided medical care, even while

working long hours. The fact that the nurses' quarters in Ankaase that Jim and Rita helped to build are named after them is a testimony to the degree to which they are missed in their adopted homeland."

Rita was survived by Jim, her husband of 60 years, five children, nine grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and many other relatives and friends.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Christ United Methodist Church Memorial Fund, 2615 West 32nd Street, Erie, PA 16506, or The Mission Society, 6234 Crooked Creek Road, Norcross, GA 30092 c/o The Mission Fund for Ankaase Hospital.

Thank you for your prayers for the Donner family in the coming days. ☩

Helping reach India's unreached

The Mission Society comes alongside India's church leaders to provide training

"There are more than 1,000 unreached people groups in the world, and many of them are in India," said Dr. Darrell Whiteman, vice president for mobilization and training and resident missiologist. Helping equip India's Church reach her nation's unreached was among the purposes of the recent International Mobilization Conferences. Hosted by The Mission Society, these events were held in India February 13-17. In addition to Whiteman, staffers the Rev. Frank Decker, vice president for member care and development, and the Rev. Michael Mozley, senior director for international mobilization, provided leadership for the conference. Mission Society missionary the Rev. Peter Pereira, who lives and serves in India, and the Rev. Dr. Denny Heiberg, lead pastor of Grace at Fort Clarke Church, a United Methodist congregation, in Gainesville, Florida, also led sessions during the conferences.

"The three key ideas we tried to impart were that God would transform the attendees' minds, capture their hearts, and compel them into action in response to God's word," said Mozley. "We want to encourage pastors and lay leaders to move from being missionary receiving to missionary sending," said Whiteman.

India's 1.2 billion residents adhere to a mix of religions. More than 80% of India's population is Hindu; 13.4% is Muslim, and 2.3% is Christian.

Ninety-six people attended the two conferences, representing 15 different denominations and non-denominational movements.

The International Mobilization Conferences teach an international version of The Mission Society's Global Outreach

seminar, which is adapted to each particular culture and context.

In addition to sessions taught by U.S. presenters, "We were given sessions on relating the gospel to Hindus and to Muslims by renowned biblical scholar and Indian church historian Dr. P. Manasseh. We taught these sessions to help participants understand how Hindus and Muslims can become followers of Jesus without having to abandon their cultural traditions and without sliding into syncretism," said Whiteman.

Decker remarked, "Many of the participants said that the conference was unlike any other they had attended. Several people shared testimonies of how their paradigms were shifting, the new perspective they had on ministry, and their increased resolve to reach others for Jesus."

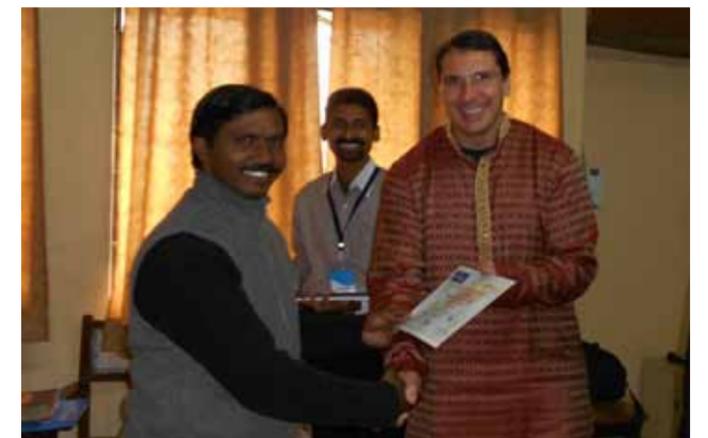
One participant, Nandi*, shared his story. He was disowned by his father, a radical Hindu, after deciding to follow Jesus. Nandi went on to earn a degree in theology and plans to be a missionary. He is currently the associate pastor of a church.

Nandi's mother came to know Christ several years before her death, but Nandi is still not allowed to reunite with his family. He was adopted by a Christian family in another state. "Nandi holds on to God's promise. 'Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close,'" said Mozley. (See Psalm 27:10, NLT.) "I find myself humbled every time I hear the stories of these precious followers of Christ who have sacrificed so much for the sake of the gospel."

Plans are being made to offer two International Mobilization Conferences in India in 2013. ☩



Photo (left to right): Dr. P. Manasseh, the Rev. Dr. Denny Heiberg, Dr. Darrell Whiteman, and the Rev. Peter Pereira



Michael Mozley heads The Mission Society's international mobilization efforts, like the conferences held this February in India.

Preparing for Haiti's future

Church leaders trained; The Mission Society plays role



The International Christian Development Mission (ICDM), with which The Mission Society collaborated, has trained more than 4,000 pastors and church leaders since its launch in 1989. January's five-day conference was attended by about 65 Haitian leaders from more than 10 denominations.

The Mission Society collaborated with ICDM to host a training event for Haitian leaders January 9-13, 2012. Held outside of Port-au-Prince, the conference included presentations by staff members the Rev. Frank Decker, vice president for member care and development; the Rev. Michael Mozley, senior director for international mobilization, and Dr. Darrell Whiteman, resident missiologist and vice president for mission mobilization. Also presenting were Guenson and Claudia Charlot, a Haitian and Jamaican couple from Cap Haitien, Haiti; and a missionary who cannot be named for security purposes.

International Christian Development Mission (ICDM), directed by the Rev. Yvan Pierre, was founded in 1989 with the vision for a better future for Haiti. Pierre, originally from Bayonnais, Haiti, recalls the conditions in his hometown when ICDM started there. "Eighty percent of the people could not read or write. The nearest school was a walk of four or five hours over rugged mountain paths—too far away for young children.

For girls, the situation was even worse, because most parents refused to send them." He proudly reports that today, more than 600 students attend the school Pierre founded in Bayonnais, and more than 300 are on the waiting list.

Pierre is combating the challenges Haiti faces through a variety of ministries. ICDM has started schools, sponsorship programs for children, literacy programs for adults, and has trained more than 4,000 pastors and church leaders. ICDM coordinates a ministry to the elderly, economic development programs, and hosts short-term mission teams and medical clinics.

The five-day conference was attended by some 65 Haitian leaders from more than 10 denominations. Sessions included the topics of gospel and culture, belief systems and the Haitian worldview, discipleship, and oral inductive Bible study through storytelling. Other sessions included integrity, stewardship, business and ethics, and cross-cultural ministry.

"We wanted to uncover why

Christianity often fails to penetrate the deeper underlying worldview of Haitians," said Dr. Darrell Whiteman. "It was an unusually powerful week with the participants identifying and understanding some critical barriers to the spread of the gospel in Haiti."

There was also a time for attendees to receive prayer from the conference leaders. The conference took place during the second anniversary of the earthquake that took 316,000 lives. Nearly half of the participants lost a family member or friend in the earthquake. Pierre's brother's house collapsed during the quake. At the time of the conference, he was living in a plywood shack; his wife was healing from a head injury she incurred after a concrete block fell on her as she escaped with their two daughters in tow. Another pastor at the conference lost his 12-year-old son in the quake.

The Mission Society has been invited back for a follow-up training event next year. †

Offering life in South Sudan

Impoverished and war-torn, the new nation of South Sudan is in a critical time. Mission Society missionaries help promote health—body, mind, and spirit.



The world's newest nation is reveling in independence, but still desperate for peace. South Sudan gained independence on July 9, 2011 after 99 percent of southern Sudanese voted to separate from Sudan. Sudan was home to Africa's longest civil war. Fighting began in 1955 when the southern army officers mutinied. There was a brief respite during a peace agreement from 1972 until 1983, but then the civil war resumed.

At least 1.5 million people died in the civil war and more than four million were displaced. Decades of fighting have left South Sudan one of the least developed countries in the world. Despite huge oil reserves in the nation, most South Sudanese live in abject poverty. Electricity and running water are scarce, and most people survive by subsistence farming.

The Mission Society recently entered a field in collaboration with The General Board of Global Ministries in the newly-formed nation of South Sudan. Drs. Lynn and Sharon Fogleman have been appointed to serve there, working jointly with The Mission Society and the East Africa Conference of The United Methodist Church.

The Foglemans are both family physicians. They spent 10 years serving as doctors at Maua Methodist Hospital in Kenya, and the past 14 years at the Red Bird Clinic in Kentucky. They plan to work with the 17 United Methodist churches in and around Yei, South Sudan, which has one of the poorest healthcare situations in the world.

The Foglemans provide public health education to promote disease prevention using the model of Community Health Evangelism (CHE). CHE educates indigenous healthcare workers who work in their own villages. They educate South Sudanese regarding healthcare and share the gospel message with the people they visit. "As we teach about the life-saving benefit of drinking clean water, we also teach about the life-saving message of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ," said Sharon.

"Our hope for ministry in South Sudan is to promote health—body, mind, and spirit—while working with village leaders at this critical time in the history of this new country."

To support the Foglemans' ministry, or any of The Mission Society's missionaries, you can make a donation at this link: themissionsociety.org/give. —by Reed Haigler Hoppe †



Veteran missionaries Drs. Lynn and Sharon Fogleman (above) are both family physicians. "We have a vision," says Sharon, "of healthy Sudanese people of many tribes and languages working together for truly healthy communities by knowing Jesus and helping to make Him known!"



Despite huge oil reserves in the nation, most South Sudanese live in abject poverty. The country of nine million people has the sixth highest rate of infant mortality and the highest maternal mortality rate in the world.

The Mission Society launches Marketplace Ministry



Lewis von Herrmann

In January 2012, The Mission Society launched a Marketplace Ministry division. Dennis E. Brown, who has served as The Mission Society's vice president for advancement since 2005, now heads this new initiative.

"Denny Brown is a former businessman himself. He has passion for developing business strategies that will empower us to take the gospel to many regions and people groups otherwise closed to evangelism," said Dick McClain, president of The Mission Society. "Denny's dedication to ministry through business relationships is a perfect match for this new and exciting ministry."

"Working in tandem with others through The Mission Society, we'll determine the best existing techniques and models to further the work of the Marketplace Ministry," Brown said. "Among our goals is to discover the most effective marketplace techniques for outreach to unreached people groups and establish a cross-culturally sensitive missions training program for business people working in international commerce."

This year's initiatives for the Marketplace Ministry include developing an advisory board and determining market-related ministries in which missionaries and nationals involved with The Mission Society are currently engaged. The Marketplace Ministry will match

business professionals with Christian nationals as mentors and provide an avenue for sharing the gospel through business opportunities otherwise unavailable through more traditional ministry channels. Additionally, the ministry aims to establish a for-profit business not connected to The Mission Society, create pathways for business professionals to utilize their expertise abroad, and develop a resource network to support business as missions.

The Mission Society has appointed Lewis H. von Herrmann as its new vice president for mission advancement, the position formerly held by Brown. Von Herrmann, a Certified Financial Planner®, has worked in charitable fundraising for 37 years for Campus Crusade for Christ, the Christian and Missionary Alliance and, most recently, in leadership with American Bible Society. His expertise includes personal support, foundation grants, planned giving, and major gift development.

"We are grateful both for Denny's launch of this new Marketplace Ministry initiative, as well as Lewis's availability to join The Mission Society as vice president for advancement," said President McClain. "We look forward to seeing the doors God will open among least reached people as more and more business professionals become even more fully engaged in missions." ☩



Denny Brown

Fifteen new missionaries are approved for mission service

Fifteen new missionaries were approved for service with The Mission Society at the conclusion of the Candidate Assessment and Orientation on March 14, 2012, bringing the number of full-time Mission Society missionaries to 234.

This group of cross-cultural workers will join other Mission Society teams in various locations. After attending The Mission Society's Orientation Training and raising their ministry support, the missionaries will then attend language school for a period of time before departing for their fields of service.

The new missionaries cannot be named for security reasons, but they plan to minister in locations including India, Ghana, Asia, and the Middle East. ☩

Do your plans bring healing?

Have you recently reviewed your will or estate plans and asked the questions: "Do these documents—and the plans they express—bring healing to those who will read them? Do they accurately reflect the testimony of the Christian life I am living?" As you read, ponder the special opportunity you have to use these plans as a way to minister to your heirs and friends.

Have you recently reviewed your will or estate plans? I've been a helping people plan their estates for more than 30 years and learned that most people either have no will (except the one provided by their state's laws), or they have an out-of-date will. If your plans fall in either of these categories, some new decisions may be in order. We know that God desires us to be good stewards and that would include giving careful attention to the distribution of our assets and other resources after we are gone.

Here are four steps that will help to ensure that you have a plan that honors the Lord and provides the Christian witness you hope to leave behind.

1. Review the beneficiaries—the "objects of your affection."

Almost always, people consider their own family and friends as the primary beneficiaries of a will. However, this may overlook those you have touched through your charitable giving. After your passing, how will your ministry to them continue unless you have included them in your plans? One way to ensure these people are not ignored is to consider charity as an equal heir, including a ministry like The Mission Society. Your giving will live on and continue to spread the message of Jesus' love. With little cost, you can amend your will and add charity as an heir.

2. Second, review the list of property you own and the title of the various financial accounts.

Many people are surprised by the change in values of their assets when their estate values are added up. Unless

your estate exceeds five million dollars, there will be no federal estate taxes; yet some states may have an estate tax on much smaller estates. Your local counsel may guide you on this issue.

If you have created joint accounts with family and friends, be aware that those accounts will not be distributed according to the will. Based on state law, those accounts will go to the surviving joint account holder who has no obligation to distribute the account to others even if your will may direct such an action. Thus, every estate—regardless of size—requires a stewardship decision about the distribution of resources to heirs.

In addition, it is also important to review the beneficiaries of any IRAs, other qualified plans, or life insurance policies. These are excellent assets to use for your charitable giving because the charity pays no income tax when it receives the benefits. Many heirs don't expect to receive benefits from the accounts anyway because they often expect the funds to have been depleted for your income needs. You don't need an attorney to change the beneficiaries; you may just contact the custodian for a new form and write in the charity's name.

3. Third, consider the priorities of how to distribute your estate.

Sometimes it may cause disharmony to distribute equal shares of your estate to every heir. Bringing unity or healing might actually entail designating variable amounts or distributing by different methods. Some heirs may consume their distribution unwisely, and it may

be advisable to establish a trust that can ensure them a lifetime income.

Also, consider tithing from your estate to the charities that you love. This would be a way to honor the Lord and could also be a witness to your heirs. Regardless of your decisions, the distribution of your estate may be a life-changing testimony to your heirs of what your real priorities were in life.

4. Seek wise counsel and then follow through.

Seek wise and qualified counsel to achieve your goals and to help with this review process. Locate a nearby attorney who will draft the will and other documents. I urge you to act promptly by setting a deadline to complete your updated plans. Prayerfully ask for guidance, because the Bible tells us "...if any of you lack wisdom, you should pray to God, who will give it to you; because God gives generously and graciously to all." (James 1:6, GNT) Delays may cause harm and disunity and that may not be the testimony you want to leave behind.

I trust these four steps will help ensure that your plans are up to date and that through your careful stewardship the Lord will be glorified. Call me at 800-478-8963 for assistance in bringing your will up to date or write me at advancement@themissionsociety.org for assistance or to ask for a brochure entitled, "Remembering The Mission Society in Your Will." ☩

Lewis von Herrmann is the vice president for mission advancement for The Mission Society.



Healing wounded hearts

Exploring the place in mission for addressing emotional and relational scars



In the Peruvian community in which missionaries Billy and Laurie Drum live, most of the 30+ elderly are abandoned and live alone. "Many can barely walk," writes Laurie (shown). "In most cases, their health is marginal as they are quite malnourished." Along with a Peruvian friend, the Drums have begun a "Breakfast Club" to minister to this community's precious, lonely hearts.

During much of the last century, one of the hot topics of mission was whether the main focus should be evangelism or social change. Fortunately, that false dichotomy has been largely put to rest in mission discussions, and people now acknowledge that mission must be holistic—addressing both the physical and spiritual conditions of humanity. However, one area that was never part of that debate was the relationship between mission and people's emotional condition.

You don't have to look too hard to recognize that, in our broken world, an increasing number of people carry deep emotional wounds from their past. Missionaries who begin work in any culture soon realize that those who come to faith in Christ bring with them emotional and relational scars. (Fortunately, there is more awareness of this in recent years,

and it is receiving attention.) New believers can be caught off guard when they find themselves facing challenges arising from past wounds or from dysfunctional relationships that have continued even "Estimates at the time were that one in four women had experienced an abortion, and multiple abortions were common. Abuse was rampant, both in childhood and within marriages."

after they have become believers. There is a risk that the missionary or local leadership is either unaware or ill-equipped to deal with these needs.

Past pains

In Central Asia we were often told about

how strong the local women are, how they shouldered many of the burdens of family during the years of Soviet rule. After having spent many hours with various local women, one of our missionaries told me, "These women are not strong; they are hurting." The stoic face they put on was not a reflection of strength, but of trying to hold up over the pain from their past. Estimates at the time were that one in four women had experienced an abortion, and multiple abortions were common. Abuse was rampant, both in childhood and within marriages. So when these women became believers, missionaries found there was the need for emotional healing.

Thankfully, there is emotional healing in Christ, but it does take time and intentionality to walk people through that. This is an important aspect of mission work that isn't usually what we see on the

Restoring the crushed in spirit

Here are a few ways your Mission Society missionaries minister to emotional wounds.

Togo

In addition to their work in training pastors, evangelists, and church leaders, Esaho and Beatrice Kipuke lead and coordinate programs that care for the elderly and orphans in their community. They also train young women and unwed mothers in home economics.

France

Andrew and Margaret Howell are involved with the French counterpart to Focus on the Family and lead small groups, conferences, seminars, and family camps.

Asia

Serving in a major city is a Mission Society missionary who is a licensed professional counselor. He offers faith in Christ and emotional counseling, and has been training other counselors to help the people in the communities cope with emotional pain, particularly in the aftermath of natural disaster.

Peru

Billy and Laurie Drum recently started a "Breakfast Club" ministry to the elderly in their community of Patarcocha, Peru. Each morning, they serve breakfast to dozens of Peruvians in their 80s and 90s who are homebound and have no one to take care of them. The ministry has not only met a physical need, but an emotional one as well. The elderly now have a community, fellowship, and hear the gospel at breakfast each morning.

Kenya

Julie Campbell served as a social worker for 23 years before becoming a missionary to Kenya. She works with Life for Children Ministries, an organization which provides food, housing, health care, education, and spiritual nourishment to children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Julie works with extended families who adopt their orphaned relatives.

headlines, but it is a critical component of longer-term discipleship.

In many parts of the world, alcoholism is a huge issue. In some cases when an alcoholic comes to the Lord, there is immediate deliverance. But often the healing is a process and, even if a person experiences immediate freedom from the addiction, the relational scars with loved ones usually continue on. Missionaries often find themselves having to address issues of rehabilitation from alcoholism as well as ministry and healing for families of alcoholics.

In East Asia, there is a large movement of people coming to Christ and forming themselves into small, home-based churches. Yet while the growth of the church is remarkable, the new pastors find themselves ill-equipped to deal with the emotional and relational issues that the

people bring with them. One may not automatically think of the need for missionaries who are mental health professionals, yet in this country, that is exactly what has been a need among these church leaders. They have been asking for training so that they are better able to minister to the emotional needs of their congregations.

Deep wounds

Such work becomes even more acute in areas that have experienced war. I recently spoke with a woman from Cambodia who, as a teenager, lost several family members during the mass killings carried out by the Khmer Rouge regime of the late 1970s. Forty years later I could tell the wounds are still deep. In some places in the world, adults have never known a time without war. As children, they saw—and were sometimes forced to participate in—

atrocities. There is a need for people who are called and equipped to help people heal from such wounds. They may well come to faith, yet the scars can hinder their growth in the Lord unless they experience the healing and forgiveness that He offers.

Healing for emotions is not always the first thing we think of when we think of Jesus' mission. Yet we know that the Lord wants us to be whole people, restored to Him and to one another. Woundedness often stands in the way of that process, so if we are to be about His mission to a hurting world, we need to be prepared to participate in the emotional and relational healing that He extends to all His children. ☩

Jim Ramsay is The Mission Society's vice president for mission ministry.



Prayer that heals

Deploying teams of trained intercessors, this South Carolina Episcopal congregation is witnessing miracle after miracle



St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina has sent several "healing prayer" short-term teams to serve cross-culturally. The first was to Ukraine in 2004. "God showed up in a powerful way," remembers Jean Corbett (shown here).

I recently had the privilege of meeting Johnnie and Jean Corbett at a Global Impact Celebration in their home church in Charleston, South Carolina. In keeping with the theme of this issue I talked with them about their ministry of healing prayer.

Stan: How would you describe healing prayer?

Johnnie: Well, I guess that could be answered in many ways. To me, healing prayer is expecting God to show up and do what He says he is going to do in the lives of people. I go back to Scripture and to when Jesus sent out the 12 and the 72. He said the kingdom of God is at hand. Then He said proclaim the kingdom of God is at hand and heal the sick, and He

went on to say cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and so forth. But the key is, each time he sent them out, He said, "Proclaim the kingdom of God and heal the sick." Even in the Great Commission, Jesus said to teach them all that I have taught you. And what did He teach them? Proclaim the kingdom God and heal the sick. We feel that that commission is as much for us today as it was for them 2000 years ago. So we have taken that to heart and have been in healing ministry for more than 30 years.

Stan: What led you to get involved in healing prayer ministry?

Johnnie: We had a young rector come St. John's Episcopal Church on St. John's Island. He believed in healing prayer, and

he started a healing service on Wednesday nights. We began to participate, and then Jean went to a conference on healing and felt God moving in her life. After talking to the rector, several things happened, and we began praying for people with various illnesses and began to see God work. Over time we got to the place where every time we would pray for someone, we expected that God would do something, and we feel that today. Sometimes He doesn't, but I still pray with that expectation.

Jean: Well, He always does something but not necessarily what and how we think He is going to do it. When we pray, something happens. It may not be physical or emotional, but spiritually something does happen. Virtually everyone

we pray with will say they felt warmth or peace or some other indication of God's presence.

Stan: Am I correct in saying that you are not only speaking of physical healing, but healing of mind and spirit and heart as well?

Jean: You are absolutely right. Most of the healing I have seen is inner healing. Many hearts have been changed; relationships have been healed, and forgiveness has taken place. He does heal physically, and some physical healing is a result of the emotional or spiritual healing.

I remember one lady at a healing conference who came to my prayer team. She was in great pain, and she said, "Please pray for my back." I had a check in my spirit. It was like the Lord said the word *forgiveness*. I wondered how I was going to ask about forgiveness given that I didn't even know this woman. But God gave me the question, which was, "Before we pray, can you tell me what is going on in your life?" She said her husband had been very badly injured on his job. He was now bedridden. She was the primary caregiver, and she was in pain because she had injured her back trying to help him move in the bed. She was angry with him for being injured and not being able to take care of the family. She was also angry with God for allowing this to happen. And she was angry with herself for being angry with her husband and God. So we just went through a series of prayer, asking for release, confessing this sin of anger, and asking for forgiveness.

After praying, I looked at her and her face looked different. I said, "We now want to pray for healing for your back." She had this broad smile and she stood up, wiggled around, and then said that when she went through all of that forgiveness, the pain left, and she had no pain whatsoever. She walked out, and we never saw her again. So that's an example of how sometimes when the heart and spirit are healed, physical healing follows.

"I think you should always incorporate healing prayer into whatever you are doing. We see it as a great evangelistic tool. We pray for people. They are healed, and then we say, 'Let us introduce you to the One who healed you. His name is Jesus.'"

Johnnie: We have seen hundreds and hundreds of physical healings. But when people are set free from the emotional jail they are in, it can seem even more miraculous sometimes than physical healing.

Stan: You have used healing prayer as a ministry component of short-term missions in another culture. Tell me a little about that.

Jean: In 2003, Ukrainian Pastor Peter Chernyavskyy visited St. Michael's and met with a number of our clergy and lay members. I had the opportunity then to tell him about our healing ministry, and he invited us to bring this healing prayer ministry to his country. So by faith,

because we couldn't find any resources or information on conducting a healing prayer ministry in a cross-cultural setting, we planned a trip for 2004. And God showed up in a powerful way. We have returned to Ukraine a number of times and have been invited to Kenya and other countries as well.

Stan: Do you see healing prayer not only as the primary reason you are on a short-term mission but as an additional component to a construction project, medical mission, VBS, etc.?

Johnnie: No matter where you go and for whatever purposes, there are always people there who are hurting. So I think you should always incorporate healing prayer into whatever you are doing. We see it as a great evangelistic tool. We pray for people. They are healed, and then we say, "Let us introduce you to the One who healed you. His name is Jesus." †



Johnnie Corbett is a retired businessman and has been a lay leader

and teacher for some 50 years. **Jean Corbett** served for 20 years as the Rector's Assistant for Pastoral Care at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, where the Corbetts are members.

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

By Richard Coleman



Mission for the faint of heart

Wondering if God’s power could flow through you? Feeling ill-equipped? Here’s a teaching to encourage you.



“I’m sorry ma’am, but I can’t pray for your healing. I heard that a healing crusade will be coming through Kampala this weekend. Perhaps you can attend. ... What? You’re in terrible pain and headed to the hospital at this very moment? Well, I honestly feel bad for you. However, my teammate and I are only 19 years old. We’re not ordained; we don’t have a healing ministry, and we’re a bit nervous about praying aloud. Besides, we’re just college students.”

Thanks be to God this conversation never happened! The scenario, however, really did happen. I was in Uganda, East Africa on my first short-term missions trip. My team of eight had been divided into four groups of two on this particular day so that we could share the gospel and demonstrate the love of Jesus in a community called Bugolobi.

My teammate, Nicole, and I eventually found ourselves speaking with a woman

who had severe chest pains. She was in agony and was headed to the hospital. Nicole and I, products of Oral Roberts University, offered to pray for the lady. While we were praying, what felt like lightning shot through my arm and my fingertips and touched the lady. Nicole and I looked at each other in astonishment and asked each other, “Did you feel that?” The lady, who only seconds before was wearing a grimace of agony, was now smiling radiantly with a look of awe on her face. She had been healed. And all three of us knew it.

At our alma mater, Nicole and I had learned and were convinced that the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwelled in us. As a matter of fact, one of my professors taught his students that we were God’s green water hoses. He told us that we should be yielded and allow the Holy Spirit to minister through our lives just as water flows through a green water

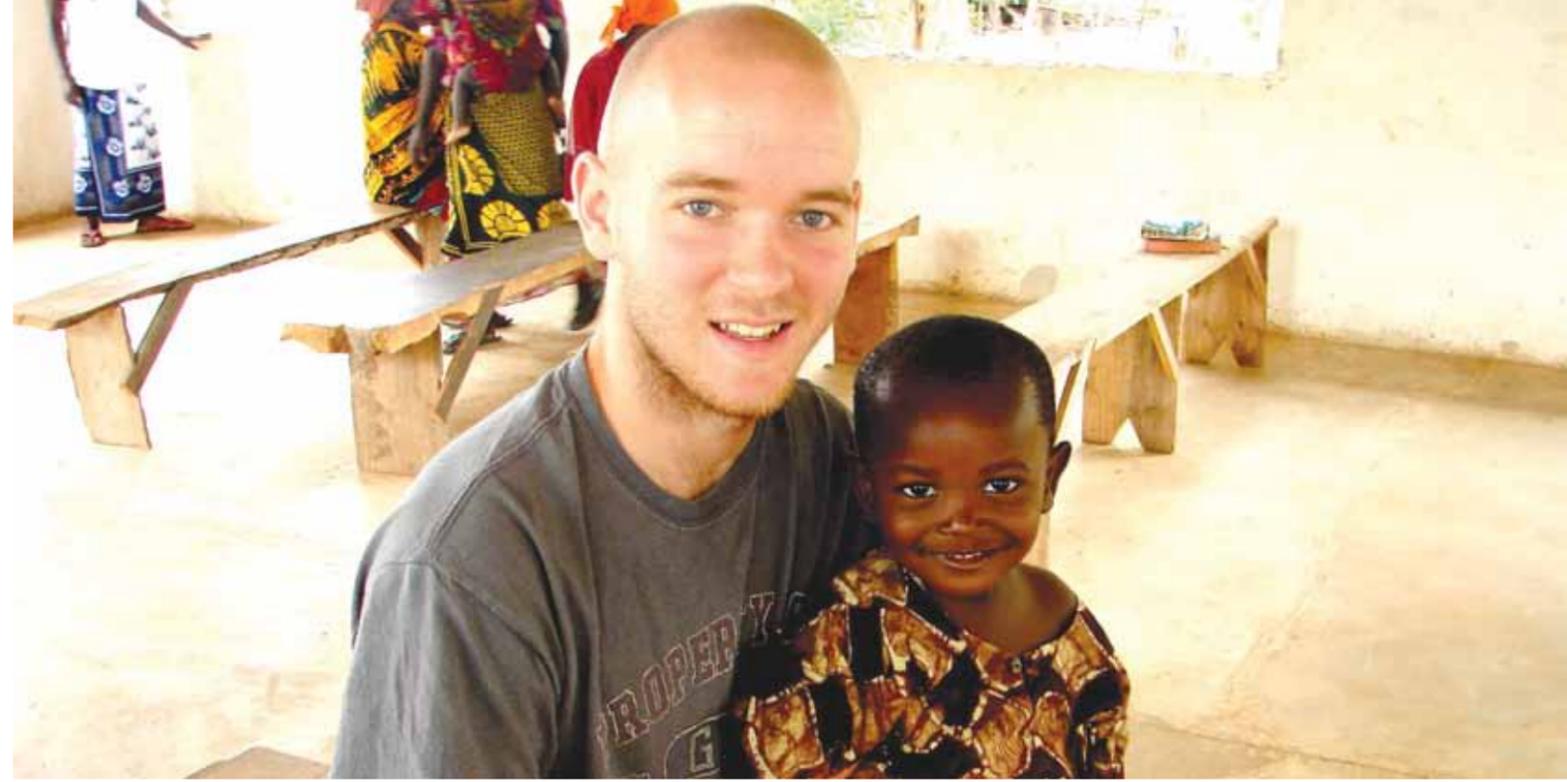
In 1998, eight Oral Roberts University students were deployed to Uganda to share the gospel. Coleman and his teammates put into practice what they had been taught. What happened was astonishing.

hose. We were to be conduits of God’s power.

ALL believers are called to join Jesus in His mission. We are ALL to serve as vehicles through which the love and healing power of God are revealed to the world. While we all won’t play the same roles, we all must be willing and available. Missions is not something we outsource, because we don’t feel competent or qualified or courageous. (Moses tried that and God quickly reminded him Who was the real source of all power.) Missions is a lifestyle that looks for any and every opportunity to make Jesus known. It is a mindset that says, “Here I am, Lord. Send me. Use me. Here. Now.”

Let the Holy Spirit flow through you! Be his green water hose today. ☩

Richard Coleman is the director of mobilization and candidacy for The Mission Society.



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.

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