

# Unfinished

A publication of The Mission Society

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## Caring for the missionary's soul

Fresh ways to think about participating in God's mission

UNFINISHED

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**Cover photo:**

Ayliś and Soraya McEuen serve in ministry with their parents, Ash and Audra, and two other siblings, Kia and Todd, in Peru. To learn about

life as a "missionary kid," see page 26.

## 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

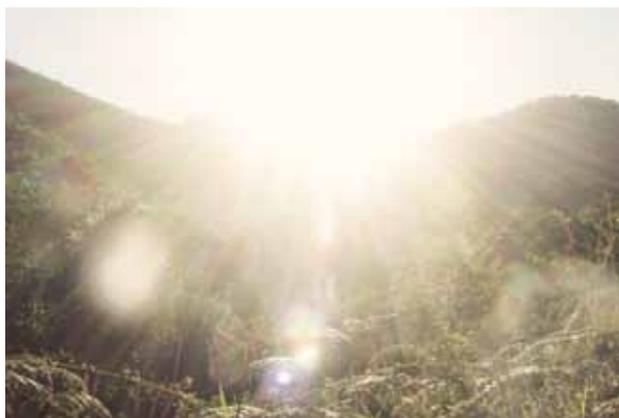
Since it is the kingdom of God that we are called to express and extend throughout the world, our ministry is about more than ourselves and our organization. We believe that working together enhances our witness and strengthens our ability to make disciples of all nations. The Mission Society therefore 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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if you have love for one another.”  
—John 13:35, NRSV*



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*Special thanks to Ayliś McEuen,  
missionary kid in Huancayo, Peru,  
for the use of her photos  
in the features of this issue.*





## What missionaries don't tell you

Doubts, struggles, and tales of the worst days don't usually make it into the newsletters. Even so, assume everything is not as idyllic as it sometimes seems. Ministers need ministering, too.



"One missionary in 20 is being lost from missionary service each year," and "lack of home support" tops the list of reasons why missionaries leave, according to researcher W.D. Taylor in *Too Valuable to Lose*. The more missionaries are cared for, the more likely they will continue in the ministry to which they have been called. This issue is about how you can help minister to missionaries.

It was the spring of 1972. Pam and I had moved to the Panama Canal Zone the previous summer after my first year of seminary in order for me to become the youth pastor at the Curundu Protestant Church, that ministered primarily to American military and Panama Canal Company families. Working in an American church with American students, we weren't exactly missionaries. But we lived in Panama, we were far from both of our homes, and lots of missionaries who served in Panama were associated with our church. So we felt like missionaries.

Very soon after arriving in Panama, we had decided to try to start our family. Eight months later, Pam was seven months pregnant.

All went well until Pam began bleeding a month into her third trimester. That put her flat on her back in Gorgas

Hospital. She was on complete bed rest and we hoped and prayed that she would be able to carry our baby to term. Her days in Gorgas soon became a week and then two weeks and then three. At one point, her doctor told me privately that we had about a 50/50 chance of the baby being born prematurely. So I prayed and prayed. I cried a lot too, although usually not when I was with Pam. My "positivity" trait remained in full swing when we were together. But I remember that in the evenings, when I would leave the hospital and drive home to our little trailer, I felt very alone. And afraid. And confused. So I prayed. And I cried. And I loved on Pam and tried to be encouraging, and I prayed some more.

The good news is that after three weeks the bleeding stopped. Pam came home, and she carried the baby to term.

On May 9, 1972, our son Josh was born.

### How God showed up

The other good news is that during that season that was so difficult for us as a young couple living overseas, we learned a lot about caring for others. Several precious people reached out to us and, in very tangible and loving ways, cared for us. There was Marie. She had become sort of a surrogate mom to Pam while we were in Panama. And Vicki, who helped Pam (and me) prepare for a natural delivery. (Incidentally, American military hospitals in 1972 weren't very big on husband coached childbirth.) And then there were Claude and Gordon, both single men who were members of our church. (Both of them ended up marrying missionary women.) They showed up at our trailer one evening and handed us an envelope.

They said they wanted to help with the hospital bills. We needed the help, so they were like messengers sent from heaven. But they didn't just give us an envelope; they gave us their hearts, love, support, and prayers.

By God's grace and with the help of people who cared for us, we made it through an incredibly difficult period. Today, as I look back on those weeks, I can recall how hard they were, and how afraid and alone I felt at times. But mostly I remember how God showed up through Marie, Vicki, Claude, and Gordon to love on us and to walk with us through those days. We made it, and they are a big part of the reason why.

If we were to write the story of our two years in Panama, it would tell of a glorious time when we saw Jesus do amazing things in the lives of scores of students. But what God did through us isn't the only story of those days. Equally important was what God did *in* us, what God taught us as He carried us through what—at the time—was the hardest season of our lives, and how He called His people to care for us in our time of need.

The pages of *Unfinished* typically tell the stories of what God is doing through our missionaries. This issue, however, is more about what God is doing in them, particularly during those difficult seasons that aren't typically chronicled in their newsletters or blogs. It's about how missionaries themselves need to be cared for and ministered to.

### Where we come in

Missionaries get tired. At times they grow discouraged or feel defeated. I'm convinced the enemy works overtime against them, with the result that they are sometimes wounded.

God never intended missionaries to be super heroes who somehow just manage to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Can you imagine Jesus turning his back on someone when they were discouraged, defeated, or when they had fallen? Never!

Missionaries—people whose vocation is all about ministering to others—also need to be ministered to. That's where you and I come in. We need to have skin in this game also, and one important way in which we can express that is through caring for the missionaries who we send.

The pages of *Unfinished* typically tell the stories of what God is doing through our missionaries. This issue, however, is more about what God is doing in them, particularly during difficult seasons. . . . It's about how missionaries themselves need to be cared for.

One of The Mission Society's core values reads, in part, "The Mission Society believes that people are of primary value. Because people matter to God, people matter to us." Because that's true, how is it expressed? What does really valuing people look like when it comes to caring for our missionaries?

In the pages that follow, you'll hear from missionaries who experienced healing and restoration because people stood with them and cared for them, especially during the hard times. And you'll get to meet some of the people on our team whose calling and passion is to minister to missionaries—people

who have opened their homes and their hearts to missionaries in ways that brought help and healing.

### Our debt of gratitude

It's dangerous to single particular people out for recognition when so many (and not just those whose job is "member care") play a part day in and day out in caring for our missionaries. Nevertheless, two people within our community deserve special recognition for the remarkable way in which they have poured their lives out in care and counsel and compassion for our missionary community. I'm speaking of Lauren and Jo Ann Helveston.

I first met the Helvestons when I stayed in their home in Kumasi, Ghana, in 1987. Years later Lauren joined our staff as director of mobilization. In 2006 he became our pastor to missionaries, assisted by Jo Ann. In the years since then, the Helvestons have become the heart and hands of Jesus to countless missionaries, some of whose stories you'll read in the pages that follow.

The Mission Society owes an extraordinary debt of gratitude to Lauren and Jo Ann, and on behalf of our entire community, I applaud and thank them. Now that their role is changing, I am grateful that they have elected to inch their way toward retirement rather than jumping in head first. So while Lauren has stepped down from his position as director of pastoral care, he and Jo Ann will continue to debrief our missionaries and work with missionaries' home teams. If you're wondering why that is such a big deal, read on. †

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

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# *Awake, MY SOUL*

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Introducing a way of speaking life  
into each other, one conversation at a time



*An excerpt from SoulTalk, by Larry Crabb*

“Life is all about knowing God,” writes Larry Crabb. “Every hard thing we endure can put us in touch with our desire for God, and every trial can strengthen that desire until it becomes the consuming passion of our life.”

“The greatest commitment I can make in my life,” continues Crabb, “is to discover my desire for God and indulge that passion with all my soul. And the greatest miracle that can happen is to have my passion stirred, ignited, and released until I actually feed on God.

“You can do that for me. And I can do it for you. ... We can learn to talk with each other in ways that arouse our passion for God until it becomes the most powerful desire in our soul.”

Crabb calls this way of talking to each other SoulTalk, which, he says, “is the only really honest language.” He describes the components of SoulTalk in his book by the same name.

Several years ago, *SoulTalk* was part of the Christmas gift sent to our worldwide family of missionaries from The Mission Society headquarters. We bring you this short compilation to offer a glimpse of how all of us, through everyday conversations, can disciple one another.

*SelfTalk* is the language we speak when we don't realize that what we really want is God.

*SoulTalk* is the language we speak when our words are formed by a passion to see another want God more than anything.

It's time for a revolution in relationships, for Christians across the world to release their passion for God and to ignite the passion in others, to speak with power into each other's lives.

But it will take some honest soul-searching. Too many of us think we're doing fine in our conversations when all we're speaking is SelfTalk.

Meister Eckhart, a wise medieval spiritual director, once said, "God is at home; it is we who have gone out for a walk." We've all left home. We're not even looking for the face of God. Second things have become first in our affections! SelfTalk is the language we speak when we don't realize that what we really want is God. We speak it more fluently, more religiously, when we think we want God but in fact want to use him to grant our wish list. SelfTalk, religious or secular, is the language of people who have left home and are trying to make a rented apartment feel like home.

It's time to return, to come home to our own soul, where God has chosen to live, and to speak from our soul to the souls of others. If we do, we will ignite a revolution.

### One man's struggle

Tim Burke is a friend of mine. After pitching in major league baseball with the New York Mets and the Minnesota Twins, he finished his all-star career with the New York Yankees. He retired early to spend more time with the five children he and Christine had adopted. *Major League Dad*, a book published by Focus on the Family, tells his remarkable story of love and sacrifice.

The rest of the story, however, is not widely known. The four older children were diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder, a condition that, in their children's case, was severe enough to require long-term institutional care. Tim and Christina were devastated. Then the youngest, a sweet little

girl born with half a left arm, suffered permanent brain damage during surgery when she was 10 months old.

Tim reeled under the pressure. His faith took a beating, his marriage entered a dark tunnel, his financial resources were nearly exhausted, and for a long time Tim woke up every morning wishing he were dead. During his separation from his wife, Christine, he was pulled over while driving intoxicated.

What battle was going on in Tim's soul? That question became personally important to me when God gave me the opportunity to meet with Tim for coffee-shop SoulTalk for two years.

### How to respond?

Imagine that you're sitting down with Tim. Your heart goes out to him as he tells his story and shares his pain and failure.

Every conversation either stimulates or dampens our desire for God.

You're not sure what to say. Everything you think to say sounds simplistic, powerless, and cliché. You feel inadequate. You want to say something that

will make a difference. You wish he were talking to Solomon.

What do you do?

Resist the urge to run!

Resist the urge to help!

Resist the urge to refer [for counseling]!

Think beneath. The life of God is in you. You long to speak that life into Tim's soul with power. But you have no idea what that means. You don't know what to say. Your natural tendency is to figure it out, to come up with the "right" words. Don't give in to that pressure. Direct your mind toward something else.

Think beneath more. You believe the life of the Spirit is within you; you believe he is moving. But where? Into what? What battle is going on in Tim's soul? That's the thing to think about and to explore with Tim.

"It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

—C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*

SoulTalk waits. It is patient. We don't set the timetable for change. That's the Spirit's work. The pressure's off. We can relax.

Move right to the center of the battle. Ask yourself the key question: What does Tim want most? To be closer to God and more like his Son? Or something else?

Ask the same question differently, again to yourself, not out loud. Is the person you're speaking with more interested in communion with God that will satisfy his soul or in cooperation from God that will improve his life and a convenient plan he can follow that will bring it about?

### Natural vs. supernatural thinking

When life is hard, the most natural thing in the world is to want relief, to want the difficulties to ease up and a few things to go our way. When life is going well, the most natural thing in the world is to want whatever's going well to continue going well. And in both cases, we'd prefer to be aware of something we can do that would increase the odds of gaining relief or keeping blessings. Dependence on another has never proved reliable. Independence, self-sufficiency, is a much better plan. That's the natural way to think.

Whether life is bumpy or smooth, the most supernatural thing we can do is to want to know God better, to value his pleasure and his purposes above everything else, and to want directions for the journey into His presence more than a plan for making life work. Of course Tim wanted his life to improve. That's not sinful or wrong. It's normal. The question is, did he want God more?

Abraham wanted his son to live, but he wanted to know God more. Mary wanted to avoid the humiliation of a pregnancy before marriage, but she wanted to surrender to God more. Jesus wanted to avoid the experience of being treated

like a sinner by his Father, but He wanted to please Him more.

Adam wanted to stay in communion with God. But he wanted what he perceived to be the advantages of control more. And with that choice, Adam brought the fiercest battle being waged, between Satan and God, into human existence.

And that's the battle, the battle of competing desires.

### The battle of competing desires

Every follower of Jesus has two sets of desires: the desire to know God and to experience intimate communion with the Trinity, and the desire to hear the specific calling of the Spirit in our life, to be so anchored in the hope of eternal joy and to be so in love with Jesus now that we endure every hardship as a privilege and as an opportunity to become more like Christ.

That's in us. It's in me. It's in you. ... But there's something else. We want this life to go well. We long to feel a certain way;

The battle begins when the desire for blessings in life become the ruling passion of our heart.

to handle tough situations in commendable fashion; to become a friendly, good, uncomplaining person; to enjoy at least a measure of success in whatever matters to us; to be noticed and wanted;

to feel personal value and worth; to experience the pleasure of good family, good friendships, good health, good income, and good ministry; to feel less stress and more peace, less emptiness and more joy.

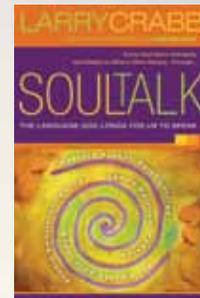
Both sets of desires are legitimate. We must understand that. Never think of yourself as unspiritual because you hurt over lost blessings and pray fervently for restored blessings. Of course you want to feel good. That's how you were designed by God.

The battle begins when the desire for blessings in life become the ruling passion of our heart. It's happened in all of us, beginning at birth. ... You want that? Good! Here's how to get it. And when you get it, you'll experience life.

Jesus taught that the core longing of our soul is the desire

"SoulTalk opens up a new dimension of communicating with others in discussing life issues. It shows how to hear, really hear, what is being felt by another person. ...The contrast between 'SoulTalk' and 'SelfTalk' is potent. ...making me realize how easily I serve myself, even in ministry, rather than focusing on what God wants and how I can truly bring glory to Him. This is a 'must read' for any Christian desiring to walk with God!"

—online reviewer



to know God, not the desire to feel loved, not the desire to experience meaning, not the desire for the pleasures of family, friends, or success, but the passion to know God as high and lifted up and to place ourselves beneath him, resting in his goodness and available for his purposes.

Call that "first-thing" desire. Call every other longing of the heart "second-thing" desires. When each desire is in place, we are spiritual people, not religious.

But that never happens, not fully, until heaven. It's always a struggle to honor our desire for knowing God as absolutely primary and to genuinely regard every other desire as secondary. The central battle in the souls of Jesus followers is the battle to keep the first-thing desire in first place and the second-thing desires in second place.

The central evil in the human soul is the natural tendency to elevate second-thing desires to first place and to pursue their satisfaction as if the well-being of our soul depended on it.

The central deception in every soul is to believe that second-thing desires belong in the first place, to be deeply convinced that the core well-being of our soul does in fact depend on their satisfaction.

And the central point of SoulTalk is to awaken and nourish the first-thing desire until the passion for God becomes consuming, the ruling passion of the soul, stronger than every other desire.

### "Religious" vs. "spiritual" impulses

As I look over the Western church, and as I look at my own heart, I hear the message of religion: Get it reasonably right, and life will go reasonably well. When I follow my religious (verses spiritual) impulses, I either feel smugly confident or angrily defeated. ...Either my life is full of wonderful bless-

ings and I believe I have the inside track on God's favor because I'm living acceptably, or things are tough and I'm mad at God because I thought I was doing pretty well and mad at myself for missing the mark.

If that kind of thinking is going on in Tim's soul, it needs to be defeated and replaced with a very different understanding of life.

Notice first that the incentive driving religion is not communion with God; it is the blessings of life. We believe Satan's lie that there really is something to be treasured above knowing God, becoming like Jesus, and abandoning ourselves to the Spirit. Enjoy whatever your experience tells you will bring the richest pleasure to your soul. That's how religion defines life.

For Tim, at one time that meant sacrificing fame and fortune to adopt five kids with dreams of celebrating happy family times around the Christmas tree and watching God restore the lives of troubled children. Had his dreams come true, Tim might be a contented religious man.

When things fell apart, he became a defeated religious man, still believing something should work to bring him life but now convinced it would never happen.

Tim is now an imperfect but growing spiritual man, for one big reason: He has rejected the devil's lie that life consists of making things work and now believes that life is all about knowing God better, no matter the cost, and moving in the challenges of life to further God's purposes, not his. †

*Dr. Larry Crabb is a well-known psychologist, author, Bible teacher, seminar speaker, and is the founder/director of New Way Ministries. The preceding was a compilation of excerpts from SoulTalk: The language God longs for us to speak, published by Thomas Nelson, 2003. Used by permission.*

# Speaking life

## *How 'coaching' is helping missionaries care for themselves and others*

"When we first arrived on the field, the title 'missionary' seemed to translate to the local people as pastor/counselor/psychologist. We had a line of people at our door who wanted and needed a listening ear, advice, and counseling on the deep issues that affected their lives," says Mission Society missionary Laurie Drum.

"It didn't take long for me to succumb to 'compassion fatigue.' I just couldn't live with the weight of not knowing what to say and how to help, yet people continued to come to the door and share their problems and tears with me. Eventually, I closed myself in and shut everyone else out in an effort to self-protect. Not a good place to be as a missionary!

"When The Mission Society offered

coaching training in 2011, Billy and I attended. This was the training that we needed! We now had the tools and skills to help others and free ourselves from the incredible burden of 'having all of the answers.'

"We each immediately began coaching people in places all around the globe via Skype and telephone. We also had coaches for ourselves, so that we could be coached and tend to our own issues and personal growth. Not only was coaching working in one-on-one situations, but it was empowering teams that we worked with to grow and move forward in positive ways.

"Coaching has become a natural part of our lives now. It is so honoring and validating of the other person

because of the huge focus on listening and empowering. It has changed relationships around us and helped others to grow and become more of what God wants for them."

The Mission Society first began a coaching program with the help of Creative Results Management in 2010. Since that time, The Mission Society has trained all of our regional leadership teams, some staff, and additional missionaries around the world.

If you are interested in being trained as a certified coach or taking coaching classes, we recommend Creative Results Management ([creativeresultsmanagement.com](http://creativeresultsmanagement.com)), or Coaching Mission International ([coachingmission.com](http://coachingmission.com)). †

## Mission Society missionaries serving through coaching:



### **Ravi & Mercy David**

Ravi and Mercy's focus is to equip and encourage people serving in various ministries, especially leaders and their families in the Asia Pacific Region. This is done through formal seminary teaching, consultancy, mentoring, counseling, intercession, and pastoral care.



### **Billy & Laurie Drum**

Billy and Laurie Drum served a five-year term in Peru and are transitioning to Spain to serve immigrant and refugee people groups from northern Africa. The Drums also serve their missionary colleagues in a member-care and leadership development capacity. Billy and Laurie are both certified teachers, trainers, Christian life and leadership coaches, and Christian counselors. They use their experience, skills, and passion for people to share the love of Christ.



### **Denny & Cindy Heiberg**

Denny and Cindy have been serving in pastoral ministry for the past 22 years within the United Methodist Church in Kentucky and Florida. Their mission is to equip and mobilize an intentional movement of disciple-making followers of Jesus throughout the global church. The Heibergs use their training in coaching as member-care consultants with The Mission Society and as they disciple Christians around the world.

# *How can we find our way?*

What happens to missionaries when  
disillusionment becomes their constant companion?



Ministry is hard. Add in: foreign location, foreign language, culture shock, homesickness, unfamiliar everything. Maybe slowly at first, then more and more, fear can come, big and suffocating. Next, without warning, waves of discouragement can crash in, followed by waves of guilt. Missionaries can begin to think: *There is no way through this. We cannot go forward, and we cannot go back to the United States. Everyone is expecting great things.*

In 2006, Lauren Helveston, veteran pastor and missionary and then-director of mission mobilization for The Mission Society, proposed a pastoral care initiative which would add to the

care being offered to Mission Society missionaries. Then in 2007, an entire member care and development division was launched, which today is staffed by six former missionaries and several outside consultants. The hope of the team members is to help the souls of the missionaries thrive. “We seek to nurture and develop our members in spiritual, physical, emotional, and relational health, enabling fruitful ministry to flow from their lives,” says the Rev. Frank Decker, who heads the division.

We asked two of our missionary couples to tell of their journeys through a wilderness of discouragement. Here are their stories.





# Trapped *in China*

For missionaries to China David and Renee,\* theirs was an impossible situation. They could think of only one last-ditch effort. As it turned out, that would change everything.

In 2004 my wife and I were burnt out, discouraged, and feeling rather hopeless about our ministry in China. We had lived there for about two-and-a-half years and were feeling overwhelmed by everything going on around us. We had so much stress in our lives from living in a foreign culture with two little children, dealing with being away from family and friends, and trying to handle conflict among the foreign mission population in our small, rural town. We were lonely, depressed, and anxiety ridden. We didn't know what to do, but we were sure we couldn't stay in our current situation.

We felt like failures—like we had failed the Lord and failed The Mission Society. We knew that we needed to leave the field and that we needed emotional help. We put off making the call to the home office, because we were so disappointed in ourselves and worried about the response we would get on

the other end of the line when conveyed that we planned to return to the States. By not reaching out for help sooner, we only made matters worse.

We finally called and talked to a membercare staff member, and his gentle response in the midst of our chaotic time was life-giving and the refreshing cup of cold water that we needed. We felt so much love and knew that we were important to The Mission Society as people—not just as workers with a task to accomplish. We were genuinely cared for. That love and care helped us to make healthy decisions for our family for the first time in a long while.

We came back to the States and went to a debriefing and renewal time with Mission Training International (MTI) in Colorado. While we were there, we saw so many missionaries from other ministries who had really struggled and fought

*We learned so much from this experience. We saw how much pain and hurt people carry around with them. Being on the mission field only magnifies these pains inside of us.*

## Ministering to the ministers

All of the team members of The Mission Society's member care and development department have experienced firsthand the challenges and joys of cross-cultural ministry, because all of them are former missionaries. Their work—to minister among the more than 200 missionaries on five different continents—can seem overwhelming. Consider how the Lord may be calling you to help minister to the missionaries you know.

with their own organizations when they wanted to return to the States. These missionaries had been beaten up by the very people from whom they needed the most love. We realized that if we had experienced that heartache in addition to the struggles we were already going through, it would have been devastating to us.

During our time back in the States, we continued to struggle as we re-entered American culture. The Mission Society never stopped encouraging us and helping us, even though we were no longer on the field. They stood with us all the way to finding the healing we needed.

We are so thankful for The Mission Society and the folks in member care who speak peace instead of devastation, who offer hope instead of condemnation, and who bring love instead of fear. We know that if it had not been for the care we received from The Mission Society, we would not be back in China now, and I doubt we would have ever returned to the field.

We learned so much from this experience. We saw how much pain and hurt people carry around with them. Being on the mission field only magnifies these pains inside of us. There are a lot of missionaries out in the world struggling to keep their heads above water. There is a need for care. The member care department at The Mission Society understands this and reaches out to meet the emotional needs of the missionaries in the field. We know firsthand that the love and support shown by those in member care is vital to being able to minister effectively.

We are excited to say that we have returned to China and are now entering our eighth year here. We are not just trying to survive anymore, but we are thriving! In our minds, one of the real strengths of The Mission Society is its commitment to the care, healing, and growth of the people The Mission Society sends to the field. We are so appreciative of this value, and we are living examples of the importance of their work. ✠

*\*Pseudonyms used for security purposes*

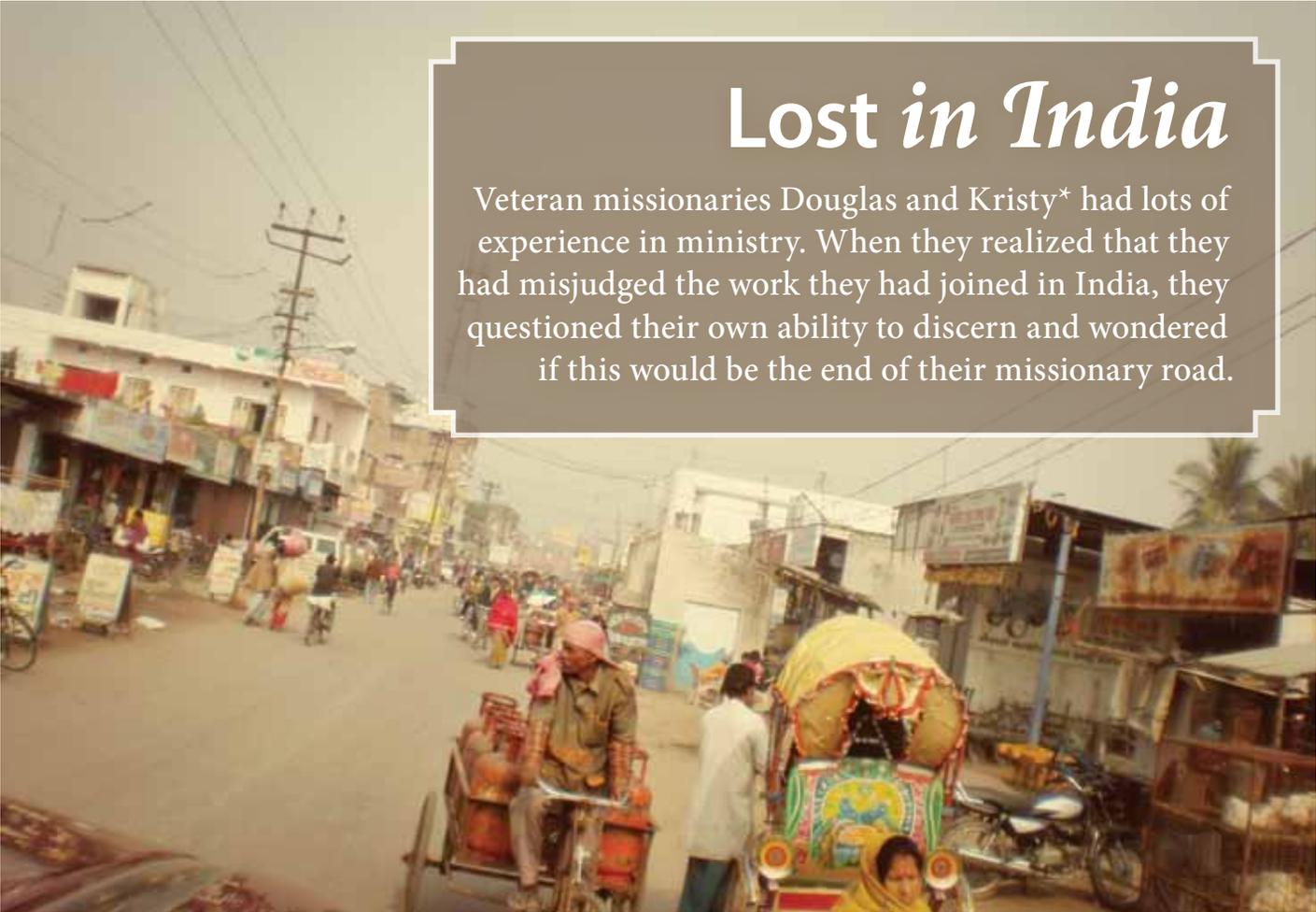


**Frank Decker** serves as The Mission Society's vice president for member care and development, and **Vicki Decker** serves as missionary kids coordinator. The Deckers served previously in Ghana, West Africa.

**Ari Morsella**, former missionary to the Russian Far East, is The Mission Society's manager of member care.

**Lauren and Jo Ann Helveston** have served 15 years on The Mission Society staff, first directing the mission mobilization department and, since 2006, directing The Mission Society's pastoral care department, which they established. In March, they began work as consultants with The Mission Society. The Helvestons are former missionaries to Ghana, West Africa.

**Shawn Ramsay**, former missionary to Kazakhstan, is assistant coordinator for missionary kids.

A photograph of a busy street in India. In the foreground, a man is riding a rickshaw. To his right, another rickshaw is being pushed by a man. The street is filled with people, shops, and utility poles. The background shows more buildings and a hazy sky.

# Lost in India

Veteran missionaries Douglas and Kristy\* had lots of experience in ministry. When they realized that they had misjudged the work they had joined in India, they questioned their own ability to discern and wondered if this would be the end of their missionary road.

In 2010, Douglas was asked to attend a conference in Hong Kong, in which attendees from around the world were challenged to complete the Great Commission in their lifetimes. The focus was particularly on least reached and unreached people groups. Douglas caught the fever.

This led to our relocation from Russia to India. We planned to partner with a ministry there dedicated to translating the Bible in audio format for people groups who had no Bible, and in many cases, had never heard the name of Jesus. In partnership with two large, well-known ministries, this ministry was doing new and unique work. The translation method used took only two years to produce the New Testament. Douglas and I were very excited about the possibilities within this ministry.

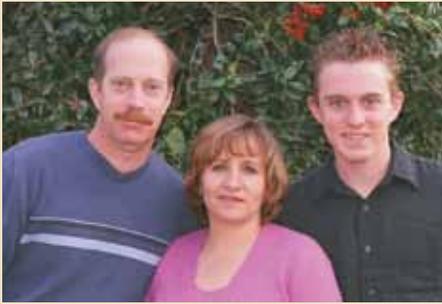
We lived in an apartment in the same building as the ministry. In fact, all of the residents served with the ministry. I fell in love with the local women, who immediately started teaching me about Indian culture. They also helped me buy material and find someone to make me locally appropriate clothing. The relationships were warm and loving. These women wanted to learn everything they could about the Christian life. I met with them daily, and Douglas and I began

attending church with them at a little local congregation across the street.

In the meantime, Douglas was learning that the ministry was not what we had been told. After weeks of confusion and broken promises, the director acknowledged problems in the organization. He agreed to use Douglas' previous extensive human resources experience and asked him to look at how to better structure the organization. This was something that got Douglas excited about the ministry again.

After a very difficult six months, we discovered that the ministry was apparently not following ethical practices in many and important areas of its functioning. Douglas and I prayed, talked to each other, and to senior staff in the ministry who affirmed it would likely not change. With heavy hearts, we made the difficult decision to return to the States. I cried over the women I now loved and had to leave.

In the crowded car on the way to the airport, a pastor with a first-year marriage told us, "I know you may be disappointed that things did not work out here for you, but you need to know that for the past six months, you have both modeled to us what a real Christian marriage looks like. Everyone talks about it. My wife and I thank you." We were not total failures!



## Grateful for member care

### Datwylers – Ecuador

When I was pastoring an indigenous church, it was difficult to obtain any counsel. Through member care, we were blessed with people who had listening ears, prayerful hearts, insightful counsel, and godly wisdom. In many ways, it was because of the care we received from them that we made it through those two years.

### Howells – France

We have experienced member care in several ways over the years. For example, when going through some difficult times with our children on the field, making a call to the Helvestons (pastoral care) was one of the first things we did. I remember well some of those phone conversations and times of prayer together, which helped us through a tough time.

### Spitaleris – Tanzania

We are so thankful for member care and the advice, care, and encouragement we get. We always look forward to sharing our hearts with the Helvestons. Their gift of being able to listen is a blessing, since we trust them so much. We always know we can call on them at any time; they go the extra mile to be available.

But we were depressed. How had we so badly misjudged the ministry before we came? Had we not listened correctly to God—or at all? We lost total confidence in our abilities to wisely discern God’s will.

Once back in the States, we decided to take a deep breath and spend time with our children and grandchildren for a couple of months. We scheduled ourselves a “debrief and renewal” session at Mission Training International (MTI) and also sought counsel from our Mission Society member care team.

We had no idea what to think or plan for the future. We had been asked, while we were still in India, to join another ministry there with people we already knew and trusted. But was that right? We were old enough to retire. Should we consider this option?

We relaxed, enjoyed our family, and prayed. Then we went to The Mission Society and spent amazing, precious time with Lauren and Jo Ann Helveston. We were prayed over, loved, listened to, encouraged and amazingly blessed! Within two days of their care, we had not only heard God, but felt Him.

We, who had been broken into pieces, had been put in a cocoon and released back into the world all in one piece.

We both felt that we knew what God would have us do, but we also knew we needed more prayer and a final confirmation. We went to the program at MTI and found it. We accepted the option to return to another area in India and work with a small American-led (but mostly national) team.

We returned to India six months after having left. We are renewed and doing exciting ministry. God is using us as He never has before! We are both fulfilled, learning, sharing, giving, and responding daily to God’s call and His nudges. He is blessing the work in amazing ways, and we sing His praises!

Member care team members can make or break workers God calls to the field. It is an essential part of any organization, and we have most sincerely benefited from ours. We pray daily that God is blessed by it as a result. ✠

*\*Pseudonyms used for security purposes*

# Top 10 ways to care for your missionaries

One of the most frequently asked questions to a missionary is: How can we help you? We surveyed several of our missionaries and asked them for some of their favorite ways that churches and friends have cared for them. Here is what they told us.

*Tallied and written by Lauren Mead*



## 10

### Visit

This isn't for everyone, but if you are able, most missionaries would welcome a friendly face out on the field. A short-term mission trip is a great way to visit and be involved in their ministry, although not all fields are the right place for short-term teams. If not on the field, schedule a visit or a large get-together when missionaries are on home leave or visiting the States.



## 9

### Invites and inclusion

Forming different relationships is a big part of feeling welcome and assimilating into a new culture, but it is also appreciated when a missionary is home. Invite missionaries out with you and your family for an outing, or invite them over for a home-cooked meal. If they have children, include them in opportunities for youth groups and retreats. One missionary wrote of friends who took them and their toddler to Disney World after months of support raising, "It turned out to be a much-needed time of retreat for our family."



8

### Shop with them

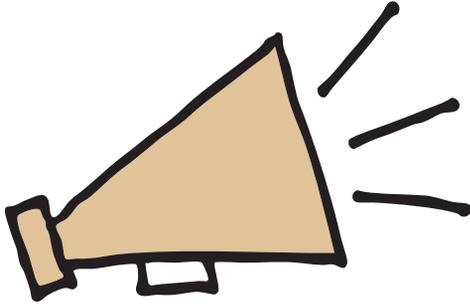
Culture shock can happen when moving into a new culture, but it can also happen when coming back home after some time on the field. Having something to wear back in the States can be a luxury. “We easily get out of style,” one missionary commented when she wrote about how a friend from home offered to buy her a new outfit. There is also the issue of home goods, silverware, appliances, furniture, and general supplies that will be needed in their new homes, whether in the States or overseas. Donations of such items are welcome.



7

### Frequent Flyer?

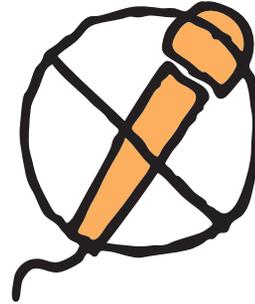
Help them visit home. Flights can be expensive. On occasion, situations arise in which a missionary needs to get back to the States quickly. It can be an emotionally taxing experience, but it can also weigh heavily on their finances. An offer to use frequent flyer miles is always appreciated. The same can be said for that beach condo or time share you might own that sits empty most of the year. What a great way to recuperate!



6

### Spread the word

Whether it is sharing the love of Christ, sharing their newsletter, or adding them to a prayer list, a missionary can never have too much support or prayer. Ask them for specific prayer requests that you can share with prayer groups and show them you followed through. One missionary wrote that a favorite way people cared for their family was “acknowledging and showing interest in our new world and responding to newsletters with excitement in all God does for us, in us, and through us.”



5

### Respect the vacation

Sometimes a visit home is for partnership development; but sometimes it’s for vacation. Please do not assume missionaries want to teach or lead a lesson. After months of being in a leadership position, it’s often nice to come home strictly for vacation. While they are vacationing, they will need your help. Support, love, and the intangibles are always needed, but it might have been a year or more since they have seen a dentist. Don’t be afraid to ask them what they need, and be respectful if privacy and alone time are desired.



4

House them

Many missionaries do not have cars or housing readily available to them when they return home. Loaning out a car or even a bedroom is a great way to show you care. If they are returning from the field permanently, opening your own home to them for a while, or helping them to find a new permanent residence can be a huge relief.



3

Skype

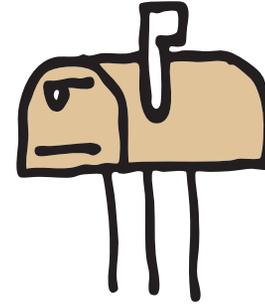
Welcome to missions in the 21st century! Check with the missionary you support and see what internet connectivity capabilities they have. Schedule to have them video chat into your small-group prayer time or Bible studies. Ask about their phone plans. Video chatting and Skype are great, but a phone call may be more realistic for some.



2

Email

It is the quickest and most efficient way to keep in touch. Important messages about bills, plans, family goings-on should be emailed. If possible, flood those inboxes with messages of love and support. Just the smallest message to say “We are praying for you” is always encouraging. Have missionaries added to their home church’s email list. They know they are being cared for, and can stay up with current happenings.



1

Snail mail

Christmas, birthdays, American holidays, “Thinking of You” cards—all are great ways to send love to your friends. Letters and cards were a top answer of all the missionaries we surveyed. Perhaps the most touching missionary input we received told of “birthday cards in the mail to our foster daughter. She was overjoyed to have 50+ cards from people she’d never met telling her joyful, encouraging words. For a former orphan, this was life changing!”



**Left:** Newly arrived in Kenya, Heidi and Gilly Griffiths tear into a care package from the First United Methodist Church in Griffin, Georgia, their hometown. **Right:** Aylis McEuen in Peru shares a photo on Instagram of an “awesome” care package.

## Top 10 items to include in a care package

When asked about care packages, one missionary couple responded, “A care package says, ‘We are thinking of you. We haven’t forgotten you. Despite miles and years, you are still a part of us, and we are still a part of you.’” Take some time to consider what you can do to show your love to a missionary.

10. **Small household items** – tools, flashlights, a good fly-swatter, umbrellas
9. **Pictures or home videos** – of family, friends, church or family get-togethers
8. **Family specific needs** – children’s clothes, children’s activity books, Advil
7. **Ministry specific needs** – crafts for children, donated clothes, workbooks and study guides, glue sticks
6. **“Culture keepers”** – *Time* magazine, Christmas and Thanksgiving decorations, birthday party supplies
5. **Gift cards** – Kindle or Amazon, bookstores, popular restaurants back home
4. **DVDs in English** – classic, comedy, animated, and adventure movies, home church services
3. **Music** – worship, nostalgic, easy listening, classical, lullabies, instrumental
2. **Books** – novels, historical fiction, spiritual encouragement
1. **Ask!** – They all miss something special to them. We received requests for everything from “good-fitting underwear” to vanilla coffee creamer, spices, and seeds for the garden



When  
*hope*  
begins  
to stir

*Missionary care  
can happen  
through listening*

What will help missionaries thrive? Former missionaries Lauren and Jo Ann Helveston, who launched The Mission Society's "pastoral care" department in 2007, have been for years exploring how simply "being heard" can propel people forward in ministry. "I remember reading, '[t]o be heard, really heard, is to be healed,'" says Lauren, who has seen ministries and ministers reinvigorated by others simply listening. Here, he and Jo Ann talk about a not-often-mentioned aspect of missionary care—the debrief—which is helping take member care to a new level.

**When you returned from your missionary service in Ghana, were you given a time of debrief?**

**Lauren:** No. We did not go out with an agency like The Mission Society. So debriefing, or even training, was not part of our experience.

**Can you tell about how debriefing became such an important part of The Mission Society's "member care" ministry?**

**Lauren:** In the beginning, we didn't have a lot of structure to debriefing. We'd have a couple of hours at the office with missionaries who had returned from the field or were on a short break. But those times were prone to interruption.

Then three of us on staff took training at Mission Training International (MTI) in Colorado, and we began to understand how valuable debriefing is. So Jo Ann and I asked to start handling debriefs. That's when we began having more structure, contacting missionaries ahead of time, and putting policies in place.

Now I send a letter to our missionaries several months before we meet. Among other things, it explains what debriefing is. Debrief, by definition, is telling a story of a most recent event. It's just people being able to tell their story and have listening ears and understanding hearts as they tell it.

Our missionaries and missionary couples are able to do so in a comfortable environment—our home—with confidentiality. We make it very clear that the debrief is not an evaluation or critique of them or their ministry; it's not a counseling session. We aren't trying to fix them or deal with traumatic issues they've faced. They talk about peaceful times, stressful times, good relationships, bad relationships, the whole gamut. We help them tell their story by organizing their thoughts ahead of time through the reflection forms (which are sent in advance). It helps that many of the missionaries we've debriefed are those with whom we've had longstanding relationships.

**What is the secret to listening well?**

**Lauren:** I think both Jo Ann and I have always been pretty good listeners. I read somewhere that, "[t]o be heard, really heard, is to be healed. To be understood, really understood, is to be freed." Extending a lot of grace and being accepting of people where they are is something that was planted in us from our earliest days in our walk with God. Part of extending grace to people is listening to them. We don't really talk a lot unless it is to ask questions.

Jo Ann is better than me at looking at someone in the eye. Keeping eye contact is a good listening skill and makes people feel that they are being listened to and cared for.

**Jo Ann:** We have a lot of patience. And also we've "been there." We've been through the cross-cultural ministry experience ourselves in Ghana. We are deeply interested in hearing what missionaries have to say about what they've experienced. I think being truly interested is important in being a good listener.

**Are people almost encountering their own story as they're telling it?**

**Jo Ann:** Yes. And in a few instances, debriefs have even changed the direction of our missionaries. Before the debrief, they thought they would be coming off the field, but the debrief experience confirmed that they would continue in cross-cultural ministry, but in a different place.

**What is the importance of debrief for the kingdom?**

**Lauren:** I think it encourages; it helps missionaries process a lot of things and have some cathartic moments. And it helps reinforce the message that we care for them as people—that they are precious, and we value them. It often encourages people to press on in ministry. It's a time for renewal, for re-focusing, and reestablishing. Then we close the time out with anointing them and praying over them, because the day has

**“Tears without an audience, without someone to hear and care, leave the wounds unhealed. But when someone listens to our groaning and stays there, we feel something change inside us. Despair seems less necessary; hope begins to stir where before there was only pain. This is called the ministry of listening.”**

—Dr. Edward Hallowell, *senior lecturer at Harvard Medical School, and director of the Center for Cognitive and Emotional Health in Concord, Massachusetts*

revealed specific things. So it becomes a great opportunity for prayer.

**Jo Ann:** We try to really bless them. Our home is open to them. We say, “There are the cups; there are the blankets; there is the extra toilet paper. Just get whatever you need, and make yourself at home.” They’re not company. They’re family. We take them out to special places to eat. We put a bowl of fruit in their room, just like in a bed and breakfast.

**You’re helping others identify their pain, but where is your pain? The member care staff is small, and there are so many missionaries.**

**Lauren:** Adequate care. The member care staff is growing, but there is just no way that a few people in the office can care for all our missionaries.

The other issue is that we can’t really know what’s going on in missionaries’ daily lives because we’re not there. When you’re a local pastor doing pastoral care, the people are close at hand. You’re interacting with them; you can see a problem through and walk with them, but we can’t do that.

**Is that partially why you’re so involved in helping form home teams (see page 23)? When it’s not possible for you to check in on a regular basis, members of the home team can do that.**

**Lauren:** Yes, the home team narrows the gap between the missionary and the local church. It is the nucleus for care. But I think we, as an agency, still need to do a lot more work in helping bring the people of the local church aboard to see themselves as the primary caregivers for the missionaries and ministers who go out from their church. When Paul went out, it was local churches that were seeking to really support him and care for him. When missionaries go from a church, we want them to see: *These people are our people; we should be the ones caring for them.* ... The more you care for and support people the greater the chances of them staying on the field long term.

**Let’s say my missionary friends are coming back to the States. What are good questions to ask them?**

**Lauren:** You would think that everyone wants to hear a missionary’s story. That’s not true. Most people want the extremely abbreviated version. Some good questions would be: Tell me about two of the greatest experiences you had. Or, what were a couple of the greatest relationships you developed? Another question would be: What are a few things that stressed you the most about living in a new culture?

**If you could tell one thing about what you’ve discovered about missionaries—what they’re dealing with, the struggles and the joys—what would you want people to know?**

**Jo Ann:** Finances. People come home on ministry leave, and they are running themselves ragged fundraising.

**Lauren:** Another thing I’ve discovered is, because of the great needs, missionaries can sometimes feel as if the kingdom’s work is all on their shoulders. They need to take Sabbath breaks, to rest, relax, and take vacations. Another issue is loneliness. Missionaries feel a separation, not only from their families and from us, but from everything.

**Jo Ann:** And we don’t try to fix it. Most of the time we can’t fix it, but we know that the Holy Spirit is able to work out all these things. †



**Lauren and Jo Ann Helveston** served as missionaries and in the local church pastorate prior to serving with The Mission Society. They hope to also develop debriefs to be used onsite (when staff members visit missionaries in their place of service), pre-deployment, as well as debriefs for MKs.



# The *joy* of true communion

The “home team” provides a nucleus of care for the missionary. But—as these team members explain—it turned out to be so much more.

In January, 2013, Nick, Heidi, their 10-year-old son, Gilly, departed for Kenya to begin their first term as career missionaries. Years earlier, they had sensed God calling them to missionary service, and after being approved as missionaries, they had gathered a “home team” around them. All Mission Society missionaries are required to have a home team. Its function is to provide ongoing prayer support and accountability for the missionaries, to communicate about their ministry, and to help in any way possible to care for them and propel their ministry forward. Like most people, the Griffiths’ home team members had never heard of the home team concept. But undeterred by the time and energy this commitment would require of them, they each said *yes*. As a result, they seemed to discover one of the greatest joys for any follower of Jesus: True community that comes from joining Jesus in His mission.

Two weeks before the Griffiths deployed to Kenya, 10 of the 15 members of the Griffiths’ home team circled up in the back of the sanctuary at Jodeco Road United Methodist Church in Stockbridge, Georgia (the Griffiths’ home church) to talk together about their experience to date as home team members. (One member joined by phone.) The following is a sampling of their conversation—which was punctuated with a lot of laughter and marked by a sense of deepest camaraderie.

*Griffiths’ home team, from far right, then counterclockwise: Robert Bliss, the Rev. Michelle Rawdin, Angela Bliss, Bill MacLauchlin, Carol MacLauchlin, Donna Rall, Cheryl McCollum, Jan Holland, Lee Holland, the Rev. Gene Sheffield, Nick Griffiths, Heidi Griffiths, Gilly Griffiths. Not shown, but present via phone: the Rev. Chris Mullis. Not present: Jeff and Jodie Gyurasics, Stan and Kathryn Partin*

Nick is a civil engineer and plans to help provide fresh drinking water via wells and water filtration systems. Heidi has a degree in health sciences and will provide wellness training and establish medical clinics for those sharing resources. They will work with African ministry partners to help eliminate water-borne diseases.



### **Pastors, has this experience of being on the home team helped to form or inform your local church ministry somehow?**

**(Rev.) Michelle:** I will speak to that. For my churches, it's been meaningful to be part of the journey, and to actually connect with people who are forsaking all here and going abroad to share the Word of Christ with others. You get emails from people who need support because they're already in the mission field. But I think it's been really good to have a *relationship* with a family who is going through the process.

### **How did you decide to say yes to serve on the home team?**

**Robert:** Before we became part of the home team, the Griffiths were looking for a house to rent after they sold their house. I'm a realtor; I deal in rentals. I started thinking. My wife and I have a house that's much too big for us (all our girls are grown and gone). So I asked my wife, "Why don't we just remodel the upstairs and let the Griffiths live there?" When the Griffiths' rental term ended, they moved in with us. And I can't say enough about what a blessing it has been. It's been just unbelievable. (Every home team member should have this experience.) Because of what we were doing, the Griffiths asked us to be on their home team.

*Next, Bill MacLauchlin told about being with the Griffiths in Disciple Bible Study when they made their decision to follow God's call to missions. As part of the home team, the MacLauchlins hosted "Pastor Simon" and his wife - with whom the Griffiths now serve in Kenya - when the couple came from Kenya to Georgia to visit. Lee and Jan Holland are former missionaries themselves. So when they were asked to join the home team, they were already familiar with some of the challenges of missionary service. They were intrigued with the idea of a home team and understood what a help that could offer a missionary.*

### **What have been some of the highlights of serving on the home team?**

**Carol:** There are several things. The first one was when they had the Griffiths' estate sale. Nick and Heidi had such a lovely home. I was there actually helping Heidi unpack all the stuff and get it ready to sell. It was just amazing to me that God had called them to give up everything here. As the day of the sale came, you could just see God opening one door after another. There was even someone who had been to Kenya as a missionary who came for the sale all the way from North Georgia. We went and picked up a trailer load of furniture from a woman who had visited a Sunday school class on the particular Sunday that the Griffiths were speaking, and their call had touched her so much that she asked neighbors to donate things to be sold in the sale. God was just so much at work and involved in this that it was amazing.

And then, when we did the Living Water Walk [an event to raise funds and awareness of Kenya's need for clean water], so many different churches came together—all for one common cause—to help the Griffiths' answer God's call.

**(Rev.) Chris:** One of my highlights has been Vacation Bible School and seeing Gilly talk to the kids. For me, as their pastor, it was miraculous to watch those kids realize that someone their age, someone just like them, is doing this—and that it's a real thing.

**Robert:** The highlight for me has been Gilly. He's been such an inspiration.

**Cheryl:** I think one of the highlights for me was when we had a prayer vigil right before the Griffiths left to go on their vision trip to Kenya. There had been a lot of work before that, with the estate sale and everything. But the evening of the prayer vigil, there was just a wonderful, peaceful realization

that this was becoming real. You could sense the Holy Spirit, and it was just joy. For our church, it was the first time that we had ever done anything like that, too, so it was a stepping out of faith for us also. It was such a blessing to be part of it.

**Bill:** We teach Jr. High Sunday school, and Gilly came and gave us a talk. Young people are so inspired by hearing another young person. It just caught fire. *(Bill told how, after that, the youth got energetically involved in the Living Water Walk.)*

### What do you love most about being connected with the Griffiths' ministry?

**Donna (Heidi's mom):** I admire the commitment and the courage that they have to do this (tears). I don't think I could ever, ever do what they've done. I just admire them, and I love them for it.

**Angela:** When Heidi and Nick were making their decisions to go into the mission field, I read a book that convicted me. It was about Africa. It was about how many people are dying every day in Africa. And at the end of the book, it was as if the Lord was saying, "Okay, what are you going to do about it?"

It was at that time that Heidi and Nick's need came to the surface, and Robert and I said to each other, "Wait a minute! There is something that we can do to help with the world's needs. With what God has blessed us with, we can take these resources and make an impact. We're not going to go to Kenya, but we're going to support the Griffiths. And they're going to offer Jesus Christ, clean water, and healthier living, and that's going to make an impact on how many people there will live and how many might know Jesus. And we can be part of that. We can say, "God, You convicted me that I had to do something about this world problem. Then you gave me the opportunity, and I stepped up." So that leads me to feeling that I'm part of what they're doing. I'm doing what God wants me to do, too. I'm walking the walk that I need to be walking.

**(Rev.) Chris:** I met Nick and Heidi on a short-term mission trip to Guatemala. So for me, one of the things that I most love about being involved with this is seeing them progress from going on a mission trip for a week, and from that, getting passionate about missions in the United States, and then from that, responding to God's call to be missionaries on a foreign mission field for a long term.

So that just thrills me, because when you're a pastor, you have to do a lot of things, and sometimes at the end of the day,

you're thinking: *This wasn't what I thought I would be doing when I signed up for this.* But then there are those other times when you get to be involved with people like the Griffiths, and you say: *Yeah, this is what it's really all about.* And I'm so thankful that God let me be a part of this kind of life-changing work. For me, these are the kinds of moments that make being a pastor worthwhile.

**(Rev.) Gene:** My story is very similar to Chris'. I remember when we did a family movie night at our church, and here came this young couple [Nick and Heidi] with a little toddler. I got to meet them then, and I've been able to watch them in their spiritual life. And like Chris said, when you're setting up all this stuff at the church, you're wondering: *Does this make any difference in anyone's life at all?* And then you see that it does sometimes. You make connections, which, to me, is what the kingdom of God is all about—it's about relationships with other people. ... We get to see how all these callings mesh together. It's just incredible how God works.

**Jan:** I have enjoyed getting to know you, Donna [Heidi's mother]. It's been a privilege to watch a mother's heart let go [of her family].

In the beginning, we didn't know what a home team could do. ... God is the One who has made every bit of this possible for each one of us.

**Robert:** Donna, you may be losing the intimacy with Nick, and Heidi, and Gilly for a while, but guess what? You have a big family here. We can rally around you.

**Gilly:** When we got back from our training in Colorado, I wrote a journal page about how God is our pillow. You can trip, and there will be a pillow right there—someone helps you up. And I started noticing that God gives all of us our pillows, and I think that the home team has been like, almost a bed. (Laughter.)

**Carol:** I think in the beginning, we didn't know what a home team was. We sure didn't know what a home team could do. Kenya seemed like a million miles away, and it seemed like so much money to raise. And we didn't even think that we could help be a part of that. So for me, it's been a learning that we couldn't, but God could. And He's the One who has made every bit of this possible for each one of us.

**(Rev.) Gene:** But it is so very much like that. We take the baby steps, and God does the rest. ✚



# *A different world*

Third culture kids speak about a life only a select population can relate to

“As the Boeing 747 sped down the runway, Erika sat inside with seat belt secure, her chin propped against a clenched fist, staring out the window until the final sights of her beloved Singapore disappeared from view.

*“How can it hurt this much to leave a country that isn’t even mine? Erika closed her eyes and settled back in the seat, too numb to cry the tears that begged to be shed. Will I ever come back?”*

“For nearly half of her 23 years, she had thought of Singapore as home. Now she knew it wasn’t—and America hadn’t felt like home since she was eight years old.

*“Isn’t there anywhere in the world I belong?” she wondered.*

“Countless people of virtually every nationality and from a great variety of backgrounds identify with Erika’s feeling of not fully belonging anywhere in the world,” write David Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, authors of *Third Culture Kids*,

from which the above paragraphs were excerpted. As defined by David Pollock, “Third Culture Kids (TCKs) are children who spend a significant period of their developmental years in a culture outside of their parents’ passport culture.”

“Third Culture Kids are raised in a neither/nor world,” say Pollock and Van Reken. “It is neither fully the world of their parents’ culture (or cultures) nor fully the world of the other culture (or cultures) in which they were raised.”

The Mission Society’s MK Care staff serve explicitly with our TCK community—our missionary kids, who number about 140. When recently, five MKs from two families—the Tatums (Costa Rica) and the McEuens (Peru) got together—we asked them about their experience as missionary kids. Here’s what Jesse and Kirsten Tatum (both 17), Kia (18), Aylís (16), and Todd (14) McEuen told us. (Drew Tatum—also 17—was absent, due to illness.)



Being a third culture kid means constantly being an outsider, but it also means being accepted in many different cultures, say teens from two missionary families who got together recently in Peru. **Top left:** Aylis McEuen, Kirsten Tatum **Bottom left:** Todd McEuen, Jesse Tatum, and Kia McEuen



### **What are some issues/challenges that you deal with as a Third Culture Kid (TCK)?**

Learning a new language (then having to live in it), constantly being an outsider, looking different, having to go through the pain of finding out who your true friends are and who just wants to use you.

### **What are some of the pluses/blessings of being a TCK?**

We're adaptable in any situation. We are accepted in many different cultures. We get lots of great opportunities to learn and travel. We are mature enough to hang out with adults, but still teen enough to have fun with our generation.

### **If you could talk to people in churches back in the States, what do you wish they understood about Third Culture Kids?**

When this question was asked, we all looked at each other and said, "Everything!" Our lives aren't vacations, even though we live in exotic places. Despite what you may think about missionaries, we're not freaks! We don't want to be treated differently. We're not perfect, and we have just as many problems as you do. We, as kids, have to endure going through lots of trainings and speak at lots (seriously, LOTS) of churches that may or may not care about us or our ministry.

There's honestly no way that people who have never lived in another culture could understand what our lives are like, but even so, all we want is to be treated like normal people.

### **Why is it important to feel supported by other MKs/ TCKs, friends, nationals, family, The Mission Society?**

It is so important to be in contact with other MKs. When we

all get together and laugh about the trials and blessings and craziness of life, it's like taking a vacation from reality. For the few days that we have with each other, we can be completely honest and know that the other MKs will understand exactly what we're talking about.

It's also really nice to feel connected with The Mission Society, because it gives us the confidence the people in charge of our safety are actually concerned about our well being. When we go to the office, it's like seeing family again.

### **In times of loneliness or trials, is it significant when you receive some encouragement from someone in the States (from your friends or church people or from The Mission Society)?**

In our first year on the field, encouragement and kind words from friends and churches in the States were common and greatly appreciated. But after that, people in the States seemed to forget about us.

It's also hard to receive notes that say things like, "Well it seems bad now, but it'll get better!" and "Just keep holding onto God's promises, and you'll be okay!" from people who have no idea. When we are going through a hard time and show it, people in the States seem to think that we've lost our faith and are spiraling down into depression or something dramatic like that. They don't seem to understand that we have bad days just like they do, and it doesn't mean the end of our ministry!

However, when we get some kind of encouragement from The Mission Society or any close friends in the States, it means a lot! Just to know that we are thought about is really great coming from people we don't get to see very often. ✝



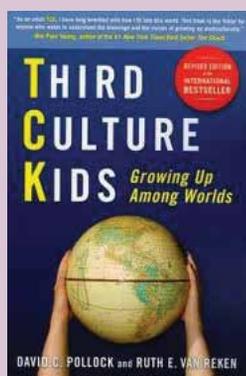
## Caring for third culture kids

The missionary kid (MK) care department of The Mission Society exists to equip, engage, and enable our missionary families around the world. Staffers Vicki Decker and Shawn Ramsay (*see page 13*) co-lead this ministry, which has a special emphasis on children and youth who serve cross-culturally.

Shawn and Vicki are both former missionaries and raised their families overseas. Vicki and husband, Frank, spent seven years in Ghana with their three children; and Shawn and husband, Jim, spent 10 years in Kazakhstan with their four children. Together, Vicki and Shawn help provide care for approximately 140 missionary kids whose ages range from birth to 22 years old.

The goal of the department is to help missionary parents rear well-adjusted, emotionally healthy children. This allows the family unit to minister more effectively. Vicki and Shawn do this through several programs:

- Equipping MKs and their parents with cultural training, education, and retreats
- Engaging MKs and their parents as they develop ongoing relationships, offer prayer support, and check in periodically with missionary families
- Enabling MKs and their parents by providing support in areas where the family is often vulnerable



### We recommend

#### *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*

By David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken

More and more children are growing up among worlds, creating a culturally rich and diverse world. *Third Culture Kids*, revised edition, examines the nature of the TCK experience and its effect on maturing, developing a sense of identity, and adjusting to one's passport country upon return.

## New manager of member care named

The Mission Society is pleased to announce that Ari Morsella has been named the new manager of member care. Ari directs and facilitates member care for The Mission Society missionaries and home office staff.

“We see ourselves in member care as intercessors, encouragers, listeners, and advocates. I get to connect with our people and want to celebrate their victories, grieve when they hurt and stand with them in their struggles. I want to hear and know their stories,” said Morsella.

Ari served as a Mission Society missionary in the Russian Far East for 14 years before joining the staff in 2009. “From my years of cross-cultural ministry, I really get what our missionaries are experiencing,” said Morsella. “I understand what it is like to enter a new culture, say goodbye to family and friends, and have your worldview expanded. And I discovered that I gained far more than I ever really gave up.” Ari moved to this new member care position in January 2013. †



Ari Morsella served for 14 years in the Russian Far East before joining the staff of The Mission Society home office.

## The Mission Society celebrates 25 years of ministry in Paraguay



Dick McClain with The Mission Society's missionary team in Paraguay

In January, The Mission Society celebrated the 25th anniversary of its ministry in Paraguay with a special event in Asunción. President Dick McClain traveled to Paraguay to speak at the anniversary gathering.

The Mission Society first began work in Paraguay in 1988. The 6th Region of the Methodist Church of Brazil invited The Mission Society to partner in their ministry to Paraguay. “It was The Mission Society’s happy privilege to support the efforts of our Brazilian sisters and brothers in Paraguay in proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, planting churches, training pastors and leaders, and initiating programs of healthcare, clean water, community development, education, and agriculture, to name just a few. We are indebted to the many women and men who have served with The Mission Society in Paraguay, and join them in celebrating what God has done in that nation,” said McClain. †

## Missionary presents paper at international missions gathering



Kirk and Nicole Sims serve with sons, Aidan and Eli, in Hamburg, Germany.

The Rev. Kirk Sims presented a paper, “A Christendom toolbox, but a Christendom tool? Mission beyond the confines of a mission agency and entrenched in migration” at the International Association of Mission Studies quadrennial meeting in Toronto. The theme of the conference was “Migration, Human Dislocation, and the Good News.” Sims is currently pursuing a Ph.D. with

the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. His research centers on the mission activities emerging from West Africa, where he and his wife, Nicole, and their sons served previously. The Simses presently serve with The Mission Society in Hamburg, Germany. There, Nicole—also a United Methodist elder—pastors an international church of migrants in Hamburg. †



By Lewis von Herrmann

Announcing the gospel of Christ to the world is important to you. Your investment in God's work in the world can stretch on into the future.

# Investing in eternity

Care for missions beyond your lifetime

Through your partnership with The Mission Society, you not only proclaim the gospel of Jesus to the world, but you also testify to your loved ones about your commitment to the Lord's work. Did you know that, by dedicating only a few minutes of your time, you can arrange to continue your partnership with The Mission Society even after death? I have often been asked about how to create a "bequest to charity" (a gift after death) without a lot of expense or without needing legal counsel.

We are providing creative planning ideas here that may help you in this vital step to honor your values and extend your care for missions beyond your lifetime. Nevertheless, we urge our friends to seek the counsel of an attorney when dealing with legal issues.

## Update your life insurance beneficiary

The first good stewardship idea is to update the beneficiary of your life insurance policy. If you have sufficient cash and liquid assets to cover final arrangements, you may consider changing the beneficiary of your life insurance policy to be "The Mission Society of Norcross, Georgia." If you have a spouse as the primary beneficiary, you may name The Mission Society as the secondary beneficiary. In either case, The Mission Society can be named to receive the entire proceeds

of the policy or to receive a percentage of the proceeds. Ask your insurance company for a "Change of Beneficiary" form. Then return a completed and signed copy to the company and request a confirmation in writing.

## Update beneficiary of your IRA

A second inexpensive idea is to update the beneficiary designation of your IRA (or other qualified plan such as a TDA, 401(k), 403(b), commercial annuity, etc.). Most beneficiaries are individuals, so they must pay income taxes on the benefits. On the other hand, a charity that receives the benefits does not pay income taxes on the gift.

Gifts from these qualified plans may be a better choice than providing a bequest through a person's Last Will and Testament, not only to avoid income taxes but also to avoid any lengthy probate. So these plans are an ideal way to give by naming "The Mission Society of Norcross, Georgia" as the primary or secondary beneficiary. Contact the custodian or administrator to ask for a "Change of Beneficiary" form and request written confirmation of the change.

## Set up a 'POD' recipient on an account

Another way to create a bequest without cost is to visit your bank or brokerage firm and name The Mission Society

as the "Payable on Death" (POD) recipient on an account, such as on a CD. Prior to your passing, the account principal is available for medical or other major financial needs. However, if these accounts are not depleted for such major needs, the remainder value can be transferred directly to charity. Naming "The Mission Society of Norcross, Georgia" as the POD recipient is as easy as visiting the bank and signing their form to make this designation.

## Add a codicil

Finally, another way to arrange a bequest is to ask an attorney to add a codicil (amendment) to your existing will. This requires a short visit (when you bring your existing will with you) with an attorney and a very limited expense.

We've offered creative ideas on quickly and inexpensively arranging a bequest to extend your commitment of caring for missions beyond your lifetime. Write me here at The Mission Society, email me at [advancement@themissionsociety.org](mailto:advancement@themissionsociety.org), or call me at 800.478.8963 for a brochure or for more information. Thanks for caring. †

*Lewis von Herrmann, The Mission Society's vice president for mission advancement, is a CFP® from Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc.*



# Facebook and missions

What kind of “friend” are you?



Pictured here at the Great Wall of China, Jim Ramsay draws attention to his affection for the Magnum ice cream bar. His post is intentionally light-hearted. Often the ministries that staff and missionaries are involved in are best left off public forums such as Facebook.

*(Facebook is a trademark of Facebook, Inc.)*

It was back in 2006 that I first created a Facebook account. Unbeknownst to me, up to only a month before that, only college students could create accounts. I had heard about Facebook, MySpace, and Xanga (anyone remember those?) and thought it might be a neat way for our missionary kids to connect with one another. I wanted to test these platforms first before recommending them to parents. When I did, MySpace and Xanga immediately brought me invitations to “connect” with various people with names like “Bambi,” so I quickly discounted them as options. But Facebook was intriguing. Within

a week I was connected with several of my college-age nieces and nephews and could be a part of their lives in ways not possible before. Little did I know at the time how much this product would impact culture in general and missions in particular.

## The upside

E-mail, the Internet, and now social media have completely transformed how missionaries connect with their support partners. The training my family had back in 1994 prior to moving to Kazakhstan encouraged us to send out four postal newsletters a year. Then we

were to return to the United States every four years to connect in person with churches and friends about our life and ministry. In other words, once we got on the plane, family members really did not expect to hear from us. The adage was “no news is good news.” But now, if family members don’t get an e-mail, a Skype call, or at least a Facebook post within a day or two, they begin to assume the very worst!

The obvious advantage of the technology is that now missionaries can be connected to their support team in a much more significant ways. Specific prayer support of hundreds can be

Recently a family was kicked out of a closed country simply simply due to some photos they were tagged in by friends back home. Before posting something on a missionary page, assume that their local friends, the local police, and the local thugs all could potentially read it!

garnered literally within minutes of identifying a need. Support teams can follow lives of missionaries through blogs, Facebook photos, video chats on Skype, and tweets. Family members do not feel that their loved ones are quite so remote when they can see them on the computer screen.

### **The downside**

However, as supporting churches and individuals, are there some downsides that we should be aware of? As with nearly any technology, there are indeed!

Most of the social media platforms are fairly public. Especially in the past couple years, most of the places where missionaries serve have access to the same platforms and, naturally, the local people want to “friend” the missionaries. That means that any post a missionary puts on Facebook is also visible to local friends—believers and nonbelievers alike—and likely to government officials and even to those groups who might wish missionaries ill.

This reality means that a platform like Facebook cannot usually be used for deep personal or ministry-related information, since there is limited control of who sees it and how it might be used. Many of our missionaries and staff use Facebook, but maintain a more fun, light-hearted presence. For example, if visiting workers in a closed country where security is an issue, I am certainly not going to post photos of me meeting with ministry leaders, thus inviting their

arrest! Yet I might post a photo of myself at an ice cream shop. It is important that the support team understand the limits and not have expectations that detailed ministry will be depicted on such a platform. Do not assume that a missionary’s Facebook presence represents the deep realities of his or her life!

### **The cautions**

Related to this, it is also important that the support team members be sensitive to what they post on missionaries’ Facebook pages. Remember, their nonbelieving friends are likely seeing whatever is posted. Supporters and friends should

*Do not assume that a missionary’s Facebook presence represents the deep realities of his or her life!*

take their cues from the missionary and limit posts to the subjects and tone that they see the missionary using. Because the word “missionary” carries with it a lot of unhelpful and usually inaccurate baggage in much of the world, it is better to avoid using that word altogether on social media unless the missionary him or herself uses it. Recently a family was kicked out of a closed country simply due to some photos they were tagged in by friends back home. Before posting something on a missionary page, assume that their local friends, the local police, and the local thugs all could potentially read it!

Another challenge is the level of expectations friends and family have for ongoing connectedness. It is important that missionaries bond to the local culture, build deep relationships with locals, and develop trust. If they are in constant contact with relationships back home, then those continue to be their primary relationships, and the cultural bonding is impeded. Instead of learning to depend on and trust local people, missionaries might continue to lean on those at home, with whom they can Skype, Facebook, and e-mail daily. While it is wonderful that we can be more connected now than ever before, it is equally important that the expectations be kept in check so that the primary focus of the missionaries can be on the people they have gone to serve. Homesickness and culture shock can actually be prolonged by frequent, ongoing communication with people back in the home country.

### **The focus**

We can enjoy the technology that is available to us now to stay connected to and to care for one another, but as with anything, we need to exercise wisdom on how we use it. We need to keep our expectations in alignment with the fact that we all want the missionaries to be safe and to be focused on the people we have partnered with them to serve. ✝

*Jim Ramsay is The Mission Society’s vice president for mission ministries.*



# 10 ways for a local church to care for a home-grown missionary

A message for every congregation



Start praying and preparing now for missionaries to be raised up from your congregation. Shown here, Travis and Lorna Curry, Mission Society missionaries to Namibia, join members of Norcross First United Methodist Church (their home church) for their annual Global Impact Celebration.

Perhaps your first thought in seeing the title to this article was something along the lines of, “We don’t have a missionary from our church.” Well, you are not alone. Far too many churches have no missionaries they can call their own. But whether you do or don’t have missionaries from your church, you should find the list helpful.

## 1. Pray that God will produce missionaries from within your congregation.

In Matthew 9:37-38, Jesus tells us to pray specifically for God to raise up workers for the fields that are white unto harvest. Every local church should regularly and in a variety of ways be praying for just that. Not only does praying for workers fulfill the command Jesus gave to His followers, it raises

expectations that it will happen whether for the first, fifth, or fiftieth time. If you are truly expecting to see individuals in your church called to the mission field, you will not be surprised or unprepared when it happens.

## 2. Assume everyone in your church will be a missionary and prepare them accordingly.

A difficulty mission agencies often encounter is that many of their candidates come to them lacking basic spiritual formation. Too often Bible knowledge is weak; attention to spiritual disciplines is lacking, and faith-sharing is difficult. These behaviors are best learned and put into practice in the context of a local church. It is incumbent on the local church to provide robust, deep, and meaningful opportunities to worship,

pray, learn, and serve.

## 3. Provide cross-cultural opportunities and experiences.

There was a time when one would have to travel to a foreign country or one of a handful of large U.S. cities for a cross-cultural encounter. No more. In some ways, God has brought the world to our doorstep, and few places are devoid of cultural diversity. A great opportunity for cross-cultural encounters is before us. Jesus modeled cross-cultural engagement. Peter was rebuked for not doing it, and every church should be reaching out to the stranger and alien in their community and surrounding area. This will not only be the church doing what it should do, but it will also provide a wonderful context for future missionaries to develop personal relationships

with people who are different from themselves.

#### **4. Model evangelism and discipleship.**

Missions is about introducing people to Jesus and helping them to become Christ-like followers of Him. There is no magic that happens once a missionary arrives on their field of service. If they have not learned and practiced sharing their faith and walking beside new believers as they grow in their faith, it is unlikely they will do that as a missionary. As someone has rightly said, “We shouldn’t be spending money to send someone halfway around the world to not do there what they are not doing at home.” The local church should be the training ground for evangelism and the place where the future missionary hones their skills in disciple-making.

#### **5. Respond positively to their call.**

Remember the one hearing God’s call is part of your body and will be your missionary. The church should celebrate their call, encourage them, come alongside them as never before, and avoid any well-meaning but less-than-helpful negatives. Your strong and steady support will be a blessing of immense worth.

#### **6. Help them form a home team.**

Every missionary needs a core group of advocates and caregivers “back home.” This support group stays tightly linked with the missionary from the time the home team is formed until the missionary returns from their field of service. They will be there to respond to your missionary’s needs for spiritual, emotional, and material support while encouraging meaningful congregational participation in the many aspects of

calling, sending, and sustaining.

#### **7. Pray for them.**

Nothing is more important than prayer. It is the bedrock of everything your missionary will envision and accomplish. To quote missionary Robert Hall Glover, “From Pentecost and the apostle Paul right down through the centuries to the present day, the story of missions has been the story of answered prayer.” There will be dark days, times of struggle, doubts will arise, difficult decisions to be made, and more. Your prayers are a vital component of the help your missionary will need to overcome and prevail. So pray! Pray as individuals, pray as groups, pray as a collective body for your missionary.

The local church should be ... the place where future missionaries hone their skills in disciple-making.

#### **8. Fund them at a significant level.**

Your missionary will need to raise funds to prepare for, go to, and remain on the field. This is especially true if they will be raising their own support. They will, of necessity, depend on the support of individuals, churches, and possibly secular groups. Their most generous partner should be their own local church. A church that supports their missionary at a substantial level gets them started off on the right foot, removes a great deal of anxiety, and instills confidence.

#### **9. Keep them as part of your fellowship no matter where God sends them.**

Proverbs 25:25 says, “Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land.” Provide ongoing cold sips

by encouraging consistent personal contact with your missionary by members of your congregation. Help them stay abreast of happenings in the church by sending bulletins/newsletters, study notes from their classes/small groups, or other information in a manner they can best receive it. Don’t forget birthdays and anniversaries. A care package every now and then would be nice. Skype them into a service occasionally to pray for them. In all cases ensure you have the missionary’s approval in how you communicate to avoid security issues.

#### **10. Use them in your church when they come home on furlough.**

Obviously, you will not have access the entire time your missionary is home from the field. There will be family and friends to see, other supporters to visit, personal R&R, and logistical needs that will need to be addressed. However, as time permits, your missionary can bring a wealth of information and experience that will significantly increase your congregation’s missions knowledge and provide opportunities for the missionary to establish or deepen relationships within their home church.

The list is not exhaustive, and other ways to support your home-grown missionary could have been included. However, the general list here is basic and fundamental. The creative ways you add to this list will serve to enhance the quality of the relationship between your church and your missionary. †

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



## Ready, set, go explore

A potentially life-changing message for you and the young people in your life



The Mission Society officially launched its new and improved intern program in January of this year. Named “GreenLight Internship,” the program is for individuals who would like to spend 2-18 months exploring what a call to full-time missions could look like. But where did the name originate? Did someone from our mobilization department receive some inspiration while passing through an intersection? “Aha! Green means ‘go!’ Wouldn’t it be a cool idea to rename our internship the GreenLight Internship?”

Good guess, but there’s another explanation for the title.

### Lights. Camera. Action.

Kate Hilderbrandt, the coordinator of mobilization and candidacy, worked in Los Angeles in the film industry prior to her joining the staff of The Mission Society. She did post production for behind-the-scenes documentaries, the kind found on DVDs. While considering outside-of-the-box ways to describe what she envisioned The Mission Society’s internship program becoming, she

borrowed some terminology from her previous occupation, in which “Green Light” is a verb. Here is Kate’s loose definition: “When a screenwriter or someone presents a project, ‘Green Light’ is the point at which a producer says, ‘Let’s go ahead and see what this can do.’” She continues: “It’s when someone is willing to put in the investment to see if the project will work.”

Whereas in the past, the internship program was open to anyone who was looking for a short-term missions experience, the GreenLight Internship has been infused with new life, focusing on long-term service.

### Go explore

Just as a film is given the go-ahead to explore production options, a GreenLight intern has permission to “go explore” a future in missions—explore the possibilities. This exploration takes place in a real, cross-cultural setting under the mentorship of a veteran mis-

“If you really feel God is leading you to cross-cultural ministry, do it.” Read Amanda’s story about how the internship changed her world at: <http://tinyurl.com/TMS-Haynes>.

sionary or national partner. Interns will have opportunities to learn the language, participate in hands-on ministry, develop a ministry plan, bond with a community, and learn to thrive without excessive hand-holding. It is the hope of The Mission Society that such an experience could help the intern decide whether or not a career in missions is in his/her future.

Whereas in the past, the internship program was open to anyone who was looking for a short-term missions experience, the GreenLight Internship has been infused with new life, focusing on long-term service. If you know of people who are considering with a call to a career in missions, please have them contact someone in the mobilization department at [greenlight@themissionsociety.org](mailto:greenlight@themissionsociety.org). One of our staff members will be able to listen to the story told and match it up with an opportunity. †

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



# Go explore. >>>>>

Are you considering a life of cross-cultural ministry? Trying to piece together your education and experience with what God is already doing worldwide? Do you have a passion for people and cultures? But at the same time, are you maybe not so sure where to begin?

**A GreenLight Internship of 2-18 months gives you the go-ahead to explore.**

Explore what it looks like to live, work, and do ministry with people in another culture. Learn from missionaries with valuable experience and perspective. Make friends and engage in conversations that allow you a glimpse of the gospel through their eyes. Immerse yourself in the story that God is telling throughout the world—a story that is bigger than your own.

We are now accepting inquiries for the GreenLight Internship. If you're ready to explore, contact Kate Hilderbrandt at [greenlight@themissionsociety.org](mailto:greenlight@themissionsociety.org).

"I had no idea how much higher and different and better God's plans were for my life. He was working in a foreign place I knew nothing about. He invited me and continues to invite me to be a part of it."

*—Jennie Clements, Monterrey, Mexico*

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