

# Unfinished

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## A long obedience

How lasting ministry makes a permanent difference

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**Publisher/CEO**

Dick McClain

**Editor**

Ruth A. Burgner

**Associate Editor**

Reed Haigler Hoppe

**Design**

Dain Johnson

**Proofreaders**

Theresa Gardner

Beverly Mancuso

Ari Morsella

**Founding President/President Emeritus**

H.T. Maclin

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**Cover photo:**

As we examine lasting ministry, we celebrate our president, Dick McClain, who is a shining example of "abounding in the work of the Lord." Photo by Allison Wiggins



# Remembering our founding president and friend



The Rev. Dr. H.T. Maclin  
1925-2014

Just at the time this issue was going to press, our beloved founding president and president emeritus of The Mission Society, the Rev. Dr. H.T. Maclin, at age 88, went to be with the Lord. We rejoice in the knowledge that he is with Jesus, and we praise God for H.T.'s life of faithful service.

H.T. became a follower of Jesus in 1944, after being led to the Lord by a shipmate on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific in 1944. For 20 years, H.T. and Alice served as Methodist missionaries with their four children in Congo and Kenya. In Congo, H.T. served as director of a teacher training institute and taught in the seminary at Mulungwishi. In Kenya, he founded and directed the All Africa Conference of Churches' Christian Communications Training Institute. In 1964, President Tubman of Liberia honored H.T. by naming him Knight Grand Commander of the Humane Order of African Redemption.

After returning from Africa, H.T. served as an executive with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church for nine years. He left that post in 1983 to become the president of the newly-launched organization, The Mission Society for United Methodists.

"H.T. and Alice's basement became The Mission Society's first office, and a hollow core door covered in fake wood adhesive paper was H.T.'s first desk," tells President Dick McClain. "Tutored by his son, Greg, regarding how to use his newly-acquired personal computer, H.T. soon produced his first 'Dear Christian Friends' letter, making hundreds of photocopies at a nearby store, and responding to each person who wrote, thanking them for their interest, and asking for their prayerful support."

H.T. thought it would take at least two or three years for the new mission agency to be in a position to send anyone anywhere, but just 17 months later, The Mission Society commissioned its first 10 missionaries in May 1985. H.T. retired in from The Mission Society in 1991.

It would be impossible to overstate the gift H.T. and Alice have been to The Mission Society, not only for their leadership and friendship, but for the example of their lives—their commitment to serve and love God with their whole hearts.

It is striking that in this issue of *Unfinished* in which we celebrate lasting ministry, we announce the passing of this great saint, who so epitomizes faithfulness to his beloved Lord and King.

Nearly any time we heard H.T. tell the story of The Mission Society, he would conclude with this scripture (which was the text used by the retired missionary during the service in which H.T. and Alice—at ages 22 and 19—were first challenged to give their lives to world missions):

"But get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you my servant. You are to tell others what you have seen of me today and what I will show you in the future. ... You are to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, so that they will have their sins forgiven and receive their place among God's chosen people" (Acts 26:16,18, TEV).

"It is my prayer that the Lord will continue to enable us to stand on our feet and sustain us," wrote H.T. in his book, *The Faith that Compels Us*. "We carry on by faith believing He is abundantly able to do far more with us and through us than we dare ask or think."

May God bless the legacy of this faithful servant. We will surely miss him.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts in honor of H.T. can be sent to The Mission Society and designated for the "H.T. and Alice Maclin Training Institute." Thank you for joining us in prayer for Alice and the Maclin family.

# Table of Contents

*"Therefore . . . be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." – I Corinthians 15:58 (ESV)*



## Servant for life

Celebrating President Dick McClain, friends and colleagues bear witness to the permanent results of a life given to loving God and the world.

## 7 Let's do this thing!

Long-time missionaries tell how God sustained their passion through some of the most difficult seasons of their ministry.

## Happenings

News from The Mission Society's office and fields

## 2 News

Introducing CenterForm

## Perspective

**What's so commendable about staying?** In his last *Unfinished* article as president, and after 28 years at The Mission Society, President Dick McClain addresses what really matters in long-term ministry.

4

## Newer every day

This professor-turned-missionary seems to have discovered a key to resilience in ministry.

21

## What is to become of me?

Is your fervor waning? Dr. Susan Muto describes six phases of the erosion process and offers good news for depleted ministers.

24

## Plotting a course through the wilderness

Missionaries offer advice to burned-out and parched fellow ministers

28

## World

**Staying power** Missionaries tell why longer-term service makes a difference.

## Church Ministry

**Unsung heroes** If you fear you haven't been doing your part in missions, don't miss this article.

32

## Calling

**The season continues** Your invitation to a life of service

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facebook.com/themissionsociety

Read our blog at [blog.themissionsociety.org](http://blog.themissionsociety.org)

13

30

32

34

36

# Happenings



Photos (left to right): Incoming president, the Rev. Max Wilkins; Global Gathering attendees; Asbury Theological Seminary president, Dr. Timothy Tennent

## FROM THE OFFICE

### The Rev. Max Wilkins to become president of The Mission Society

The Mission Society's board of directors has elected the Rev. Max Wilkins as president and CEO. Wilkins will take the helm June 1.

Wilkins has served on The Mission Society board since 2011 and has ministered in nearly 20 countries during the past decade. His most recent pastoral positions include lead pastor of The Family Church in Gainesville, Florida and New Hope Christian Fellowship in Oahu, Hawaii, where he served as teaching pastor of the then-fastest growing congregation in the US.

"The Mission Society has been at the forefront of creative cross-cultural witness for 30 years," Wilkins said. "With its innovative vision and mission and entrepreneurial emphasis on reaching the least-reached people, this is a cause worth giving my life to."

"Max Wilkins is as able and passionate a mouthpiece for world missions as I know," said the Rev. Dick McClain, outgoing president of The Mission Society, who has served the organization since 1986, the last nearly five as president and CEO. "Having successfully led The Family Church into effective and strategic global engagement, Max became a champion for world missions, challenging churches literally from coast to coast to leave the safety of their comfort zones and join Jesus in His mission."

"I don't anticipate a change in direction, but a renewed commitment to passionately pursuing the unfolding frontiers that God has already begun opening for us," Wilkins continued. "I truly believe missions is the reason the Church exists."

Wilkins and his wife, Dee Dee, have two children, ages 20 and 18. The Wilkinses will relocate to the Atlanta area this summer.

### Global Gathering brings together missionaries from 26 countries

The Mission Society's first-ever Global Gathering was held on January 17-23, 2014. More than 150 missionaries from 26 countries returned to the US to attend.

Jim Ramsay, The Mission Society's vice president for mission ministries, said of the event, "The Global Gathering is the first time in The Mission Society's history that we gathered all of our missionaries from around the world into a single place.

"The focus of the Global Gathering was to connect missionaries by ministry focus and passion. Missionaries spent time in affinity groups, sharing experiences and ideas, and were charged with developing recommendations in these different areas. We want to learn from each other and from others engaged in similar ministries so that we can serve not only with passion, but also with excellence."

A celebration was held on Saturday to mark the 30th anniversary of The Mission Society's incorporation, which occurred on January 6, 1984. Dr. Tim Tennent, the president of Asbury Theological Seminary, gave the keynote address at the celebration and also preached at the Sunday morning worship service.

Steve Saint, the son of missionary Nate Saint who was killed by members of the Huaorani Indian tribe in Ecuador, made a special surprise appearance Tuesday morning.



Photos (left to right): Steve and Ginny Saint (photo by Daniel Goshorn); missionary to Germany, Nicole Sims; missionary to Costa Rica, Beth Tatum

## FROM THE FIELD



### 'Relational' is better, say missionaries to Europe identifying traits of fruitful ministry

"The recent Global Gathering (see page 2) was as a catalyst in bringing together missionaries serving in Europe to have discussions," writes the Rev. Kirk Sims, regional consultant for Europe. "Some commonalities were: (1) in what is an increasingly post-Christian West, ministries that are highly relational and less programmatic seem to be most fruitful in connecting with people; (2) informal cell groups are having an appeal; (3) with the flow of people from across the EU and beyond, multiculturalism is a prominent issue in villages and urban centers, and in many instances, migrants are instilling fresh life in the Church in Europe."



### Startling population projections for Africa invigorate missions discussions

"Last September, The Mission Society's African leadership team participated in Ghana 2013, a pan-African mission conference with 500 delegates from 45 countries. We heard about the 400 or so people groups in Africa who have no Christian witness among them and learned effective tools for reaching them," writes Mary Kay Jackson, regional consultant for Africa. "Experts estimate that by the year 2100, one-third of the world's population and more than half of the world's evangelical Christians will live in Africa. The Mission Society is actively discussing the most appropriate roles for Western missionaries in Africa and setting our strategy for advancing God's kingdom there."



### Vibrant faith abounds among many Latin American local churches

"As I've visited Mission Society missionaries across Latin America, I love seeing how local churches engage their communities where people live, work, and play," writes Steve Wilson, regional consultant for Latin America. "There, you can find Saturday Bible clubs on the Facebook pages of most churches we partner with. Home-group Bible studies abound. One-on-one discipleship meetings are common. Having spiritual conversations with coworkers is normal. We take mission trips to Latin America, and yes, there is still work to be done. But I also think we should have Latin Americans send mission teams to us. We can learn something from them about how to live missionally where we live, work, and play."



### Discipleship ministry aims to infuse Chinese university campuses

Mission Society missionaries to Northwest China report: "Currently we have two weekly discipleship groups made up of students from five universities. With the help of another missionary who has joined our ministry and is deeply involved in the local house church, we are connecting new believers to the house churches so they may become active in their own communities. We pray that many of these new believers will also become disciple-makers on their own campuses."



# What's so commendable about staying?

When a worker's average tenure is now just a few years, is 'long-haul' ministry still laudable or important?



The average length of service for a career missionary today is reported to be seven years. This is "quite different from the experience of our missionary forbears, who signed on for a lifetime," writes President Dick McClain, whose own grandparents (left) served for 30 years in Korea, China, and India.

Here, in his last *Unfinished* article as president and after serving at The Mission Society for decades, Dick McClain addresses what really matters in long-term ministry.

I've been pondering what "ministry for the long haul" looks like ever since we settled on it as the theme for this issue of *Unfinished*.

Grandpa and Grandma French come to mind. They left for Korea as rookie missionaries in 1925 with a daughter, my mother, then just one year old, in tow. A few years later, they transferred to China. Two decades after that, when China closed to foreign missionaries, they transferred to India. Health issues ultimately caused them to return to the US prematurely, but that was after 30 years on the field. Even then, they remained involved in missions from

this side of the ocean.

Or I think of Auntie Mun. (She wasn't my real aunt. MKs just called all adult missionaries "aunt" or "uncle") Florence Monroe was her real name. She and her husband spent decades in China, raising 69 Chinese girls who had literally been thrown away as infants. The Monroes rescued these girls and took them into their home. After Auntie Mun's husband died, she moved to Hong Kong in the mid-'50s at the age of 69 to continue her ministry among Chinese people, serving another decade or two in Southeast Asia. Even after she "retired" from Hong Kong, she relocated to Costa Rica where she spent the remainder of her life living and working among Chinese immigrants. "For the long haul" meant a really long time for Auntie Mun.

Even though The Mission Society is only 30 years old, that's been long

enough to accumulate our own cadre of cross-cultural witnesses whose lives reflect their commitment to being in ministry for the long haul. During our recent 30th anniversary celebration, we recognized the Guzman family. Florencio and Maria were among the first five missionary couples commissioned by The Mission Society in May 1985. Twenty-nine years later, and a few years after normal "retirement" age, they are still going strong in Monterrey, Mexico, where they evangelize, minister to the poor, make disciples, plant churches, and raise up leaders. The Guzmans haven't just "tried out ministry" for a season. Missions has been and is their lives.

## The stayers and leavers

Through most of the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a tradition of



Florencio and Maria Guzman (see page 14) were among the first five missionary couples commissioned by The Mission Society in May 1985. Twenty-nine years later, and a few years after normal “retirement” age, they are still going strong in Monterrey, Mexico.

missionary service being a life-long calling. Cross-cultural witnesses might change fields, but they didn’t change vocations. That reflected not only deep devotion to Christ and His call, but also the stability and “job loyalty” that was part of the dominant culture. In other words, even in the secular arena, it was not uncommon for someone to spend a lifetime working for the same company, perhaps even doing the same job.

But times change.

A Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) news release published in July 2012 examined the number of jobs that people born in the years 1957 to 1964 held from ages 18 to age 46. These younger baby boomers held an average of 11.3 jobs from ages 18 to 46. The BLS further reported that the average worker today stays at each of his or her jobs for 4.4 years and that the expected tenure of the workforce’s youngest employees is about half that.

Beyond just changing jobs, conventional wisdom suggests that people today actually have seven careers during a lifetime. That can’t really be documented, but it’s probably somewhere close to the truth.

It is reported that the average length of service for a “career missionary” today is seven years. Even allowing for considerable latitude in the number of years, the fact is that that is quite different from the experience of our missionary forebears, who when they

volunteered to become missionaries, signed on for a lifetime.

It makes me especially grateful for the Guzmans, who are coming up on 30 years with The Mission Society. And for the several missionaries to whom we gave 25-year service awards during our celebration in January. But the truth be known, I’m just as grateful for the 20-somethings who sign on with us for a nine-month internship. Here’s why.

### Defining ‘long-haul’ ministry

What really matters when it comes to ministry for “the long haul” is not the Christian worker’s tenure with

“The average worker today stays at each of his or her jobs for 4.4 years. The expected tenure of the workforce’s youngest employees is about half that.”

a particular mission organization or in a particular country, but his or her tenacity in following Jesus. Some years ago I heard Theo Williams, then-president of the World Evangelical Alliance, speak at Asbury Theological Seminary’s Kingdom Conference. I can’t tell you what his message was about, but I’ve never forgotten one statement he made. “We do not follow our calling,” he asserted, “but the One who calls us.”

Ministry for the long haul is not about spending several decades faithfully executing one’s call, but spending a

lifetime following hard after the One who calls us not to a profession, but to Himself.

I’m very grateful that when I retire from The Mission Society on May 31, I will be able to look back on nearly 28 years of service with this marvelous organization. I have been blessed beyond measure to have been able to be part of this ministry for nearly three decades. But what matters most is not that I’ve pursued this particular calling for 28 years, but that I’ve pursued the One who calls me to follow Him.

I’m mindful that June 2014 will be the first month (not counting two years in seminary) since August of 1971 when “ministry” for me has not involved a paycheck. Honestly, I’m excited about discovering how Jesus will use Pam and me in His service when it has nothing to do with my job. I suspect that my understanding of ministry for the long haul will become richer and deeper on the other side of the “retirement” line.

What’s needed in “the long haul” is not just a cadre of workers who receive their 25-year service awards, but a generation of women and men who devote themselves for a lifetime to following Jesus.

That’s the long haul that really matters. □

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

JOURNAL CONSTITUTION  
**ACH-TREE**  
Road Race

# Servant for life

## Celebrating the faithful ministry of President Dick McClain

On May 31, the Rev. Dick McClain will retire after nearly 28 years with The Mission Society, in which he served in various roles before becoming president in 2009. Without his knowing, we asked a few of his friends and colleagues to offer a short greeting or remembrance. These represent an incalculable number of lives Dick has marked through his years of steadfast and joyful service and bear witness to the permanent results of a life-long ministry. We love you, Dick!



The Guzmans

### Blessing

In all these past years of service, I cannot imagine what great things and blessings you have brought to God's people. So many times you have been such an encourager by helping to give a little push to our ministry and life. As a family, we are very thankful and honored to have you as a friend, leader, and, most of all, a true servant of our Lord and His Great Commission.

As missionaries, we know the word "retirement" means that we continue in a different way to pursue God's purpose in our lives to glorify His name. It is a time for you and Pam to take a breath and help the upcoming generation to learn from your experience and become better men and women of God. Words can't express how grateful we are as a family to be serving with The Mission Society through all these years. My dear friend, may our Lord and mighty God bless you and your family in this new stage of your lives.

*In 1985, the Rev. Florencio and Maria Guzman were among the first group of missionaries sent forth from The Mission Society. The Guzmans and their family continue to serve in Mexico and other areas in Latin America today. See more on page 5.*



Frank Decker

### Christ-like

I have known Dick since my family joined The Mission Society in 1986 to serve in Ghana. During our initial years on the field, Dick was the one upon whom we would call when we needed counsel from the home office.

At the time, we were the only missionaries in country, and letters took a round-trip time of at least five weeks. To make a phone call from Ghana, we had to go to the post office the previous day and make a reservation for the call, and then return the following day to actually place the call. (The maximum allowed call time was 10 minutes.) Every time we called Dick, those precious 10 minutes were never wasted. He always gave us wise and thoughtful counsel.

Dick visited us in Ghana in 1987 and accompanied a group of three missionaries on an overland trip to northern Ghana in our 4WD truck. This journey lasted several days, and we stayed in places that most mission work teams visiting from the US would probably find unacceptable. However, in every village we visited, Dick always had a joyful spirit. One Ghanaian pastor even commented to me about how wonderful it must be to have people like that in our home office.

When we returned to the US eight years later to settle in Atlanta, Dick was my main "cultural interpreter." He and Pam provided helpful guidance in response to our numerous



questions about life in this now-strange land, including where we should live and other practical counsel.

I could write a book about how Dick's positive influence in my life has caused me to see him like a big brother to me. If allowed the space, I would talk about his servant's heart, and how a casual question last year about a malfunctioning hot water heater ended up with him giving up his evening after work to solder the pipes of a new unit in our home. Or I could mention how, through the years, it has been evident that he continues to flourish in the habits of beginning the day in quietness before the Lord. These are but a few examples of the Christ-like character in Dick that have encouraged me for almost three decades.

*The Rev. Frank Decker is The Mission Society's vice president for member care and development. He has served in ministry with Dick since 1986.*



**Julia McLean Williams**

## Available to God

In those first brave months of The Mission Society for United Methodists, I was named executive vice president.

One day, Virgil Maybray called me into his office to tell me about a young pastor in Michigan who had a passion for missions. This young man would be willing to come to Atlanta to serve with The Mission Society if we needed him. We did! Dick became our director of missionary personnel. I have boasted ever since that Virgil found him, but I hired him!

Dick's creative energy was remarkable! His spiritual depth grounded him and inspired trust in missionary candidates, churches, board members, and internationals with whom we partnered. He had the courage to learn from any errors, and he welcomed exploring new ways to improve our mission.

With a wide smile and a caring spirit, he was a steady presence amidst all the complexities of an upstart ministry. He inspired all who worked with him.

His devotionals, sermons, and prayers were heard deeply. He was so in touch with the essence of life that people were drawn to his leadership. Team building was natural to him. When I became president, he was there for me with a quiet wisdom beyond his years, helping put together an amazing team.

Time has brought many miracles, including a mission ministry that is recognized for excellence worldwide. Dick has helped develop vibrant strategies to help reaching the unreached. He has also intentionally and skillfully helped build into The Mission Society's systems of operation processes that will continue to help bring about new and dynamic ways to do this sacred work.

And, he sings! He sings beautifully, because he is happy. That is what you do when you are available to God. May Dick and his wonderful family find the happiness of continued availability to God—and sing, sing, sing!

*Julia McLean Williams, veteran missionary and educator, is a former president of The Mission Society.*

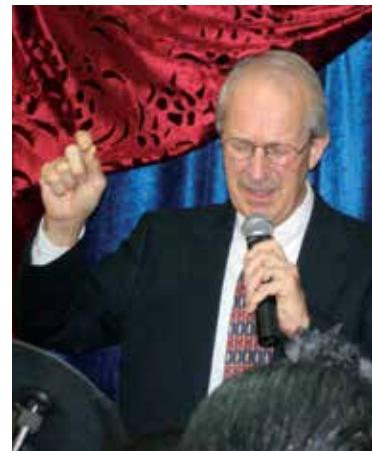


**John Bailey**

## Servant

I had the amazing opportunity to go to Monterrey, Mexico in 2008 with Dick McClain, Darrell Whiteman, and others from The Mission Society. Steve Wilson, former missionary to Mexico who serves as The Mission Society's director of missional communities, had arranged for leaders and pastors from all around Mexico to come to the Global Outreach Seminar.

We made our way to the conference site and began our



preparations for the weekend. We hung flags and banners, checked computers and projectors, and placed binders at every seat in the conference room. Once everything was set up, we paused for a moment and looked around the room. From my perspective, everything seemed to be ready to go.

Then Darrell turned to Dick and said something to the effect that all of this preparation is for nothing if the Holy Spirit does not show up. Dick agreed and immediately, Dick and Darrell began to pray and invoke the Holy Spirit to anoint them, the rest of the team, and those who were traveling to attend.

I have been deeply impacted by the witness of these two men of God. When it comes to mobilizing the church for mission, these two are “experts.” Even so, they recognize that it is God who mobilizes His church, and we are humble servants.

I will always be grateful to Dick McClain for his humility that is evident to everyone around him.

**The Rev. John Bailey** is the missions and evangelism pastor of Huntsville First United Methodist Church in Huntsville, Alabama.



## Leader

I am honored to share a few words about Dick as he completes 28 years with The Mission Society.

Dick is a great leader because he is a great follower. No matter who the president of The Mission Society was, Dick was loyal, helpful, and encouraging in whatever task he was given. Starting with his directing the missionary personnel

department in his first years, and much later directing The Mission Society’s church ministry efforts, Dick left his mark of excellence. But through all the changes and challenges the ministry experienced, Dick always held close to his heart the needs of people and especially the world’s unreached.

Dick is a great connector of people. When I was on the board of directors and still serving a church, I received a phone call from Dick. He asked if I would call a young Indian pastor in Chicago, who was feeling dejected because his calling as an evangelist was not being affirmed by his denominational leaders. Dick thought I might be able to

Dick's wisdom, thoughtfulness, and joy will be missed, but the ministry of his 28 years of service will continue to bear much fruit.

encourage this man. I called right then and spoke and prayed with Peter and Esther Pereira. The rest is history. Peter and Esther and their family later felt called to move to India, and today are being greatly used of God. Dick made the connection.

I know there are many others like Peter and Esther who, because of Dick’s sensitivity and love, were lifted up and encouraged so that they could follow their calling or continue in their ministries.

Dick’s presence, wisdom, thoughtfulness, and joy will be missed in the office, but the ministry of his 28 years of service will continue to bear much fruit. Thank you, Dick, for your faithfulness to Christ’s calling to “go into all the world.”

**The Rev. Dr. Alvern Vom Steeg**, a former president of The Mission Society, is the senior international director for the International Leadership Institute.

Alvern Vom Steeg



Hannah Duggins-Warf

## Kind

Sometime in my early pre-teen/teenage years I remember having a conversation with Dick about his childhood in Hong Kong. Besides being deeply delighted to be having a serious conversation with one of the "bigwigs," I was surprised to find that his story resonated so strongly with my own. As a young MK I most wanted to be validated, to be told that I was not alone and that my experience growing up in a culture different from my parent's culture was valuable. Dick McClain, in that brief conversation, was able to give me that validation I craved. Even though I might be different from a lot of people, there was a community in which I could belong and feel at home. Dick's willingness to be genuinely interested in encouraging and sharing with me—as just a young child—speaks volumes to his compassion, humility, and kindness.

**Hannah Duggins-Warf**, a former MK, grew up in Central Asia. She, her husband, and daughter now live in Arlington, Massachusetts.



William Johnson

## Companion and guide

I met Dick in 1998 as one of the leaders to whom God introduced me as I was transitioning from 20 years as a marketplace minister and commercial real estate developer in the Atlanta, Georgia area. It was through Dick's influence that our family became partners with several Mission Society missionary families.

In 2000, I helped The Mission Society launch its World Parish division, which Dick led. Dick recruited a team of us to travel with him to deliver weekend seminars around the

Southeastern US in local churches. It was my first experience to be involved in joining Jesus in His mission by training and encouraging local pastors and leaders.

In 2001, I realized that, as I taught in these US churches, I was delivering only "head knowledge." So the Lord convinced me to take my first cross-cultural mission trip to Kenya. While there, I met pastors who were passionate about the gospel, but who lacked practical mission strategies to implement their passion. Dick encouraged me to return to Kenya in 2002 to teach the concepts we had been teaching in US churches. I returned home with a burden that The Mission Society needed to have an "ends of the earth" strategy for its church mobilization. So, in 2003, Dick led a team of us to Ghana to teach The Mission Society's first international version of what would later become the Church Ministry division of The Mission Society.

Since that time, I have served in several roles with The Mission Society and traveled with Dick around the world. As Dick passes the baton of leadership to The Mission Society's 7th president, the Rev. Max Wilkins, I realize that I have become a global Christian on mission with God because Dick McClain not only showed me the way, but went with me to the ends of the earth.

Dick has taught me that without a destination, any road will get you there. And, that when a traveler goes somewhere he or she has never gone, more than a map is needed. The traveler needs a guide.

Dick, you have been my guide on the road to "join Jesus in His mission, especially to least-reached peoples" towards the end that Matthew 24:14 will be fulfilled.

**William M. Johnson**, an Atlanta businessman and commercial real estate developer, is former chairman of The Mission Society Board of Directors, on which he has served for 16 years.



Stephen Seamands

### Obedient

Dick and I met in 1966 as incoming freshmen at Asbury College. Ever since I have known him, he has always had a burning passion for two things: The Lord Jesus Christ and His Great Commission. And so, 20 years later when Dick was invited to join The Mission Society, it came as no surprise to me that he agreed. At the time, however, and ever since, what most impressed me about his decision was the costliness and the courage of his "yes."

Dick had been a successful United Methodist pastor in West Michigan for 11 years. He was on an upward and secure career path with a guaranteed pulpit, parsonage, paycheck, and pension. The fledgling Mission Society was just getting off the ground and could promise none of those things. Also, it was perceived as a threat to another mission agency, the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.

Dick's bishop would not grant Dick an "appointment beyond the local church" to serve at The Mission Society. But no matter. Dick was willing to burn bridges and put his future in jeopardy to follow where his Lord Jesus was leading. In the face of the bishop's "no," Dick said, "yes!"

I'll never forget a sentence in a sermon preached by Dr. Sam Kamaleson, the beloved Christian leader from India. "The most creative thing you will ever do in your life," declared Sam, "is to obey God." Thanks, Dick, for your willingness to be obedient to Christ regardless of the risk and cost. Your 28 years of faithful, fruitful, and joyful service at The Mission Society is a living embodiment and testament to the truth of Sam's words. I count it a privilege to call you my friend.

**Dr. Stephen A. Seamands** is the professor of Christian doctrine at Asbury Theological Seminary.



The Moras

### Encourager

First, I wish to express my deepest gratitude for the privilege of participating in this tribute to my brother and friend, the Rev. Dick McClain.

My first meeting with Dick is very significant, because it had its beginning in the birth of the Methodist work in Paraguay.

From those first days of my arrival in Paraguay and from my first trip to The Mission Society offices, Dick has been the contact person and the continuity. The Mission Society presidents were very important in the process of establishing the church in Paraguay. As Dick continued in different roles on staff, he took up our cause firmly.

In my most recent visit to office, I was able to share with Dick about my situation of leaving the leadership of the church after 25 years. His wise words gave me encouragement and direction as he shared that he was living through the same situation.

While we visited in Dick's office, he made a call to Mrs. Julia Williams, with whom I had not talked for a long time. In the middle of the conversation she said, "I have so much pride in what you have both done for the Lord." I felt doubly blessed to hear from this servant of God those words, and to be compared in some way to Dick.

I'm sure that God has many more things for Dick in the very near future, and I will continue to give thanks to God for how, at The Mission Society, he stood up for the Methodist Church in Paraguay. May the Lord be praised for the life of His servant, Dick McClain!

*A native of Paraguay, the Rev. Mora served in leadership in the Paraguayan Methodist Church for many years, the last four as bishop, and helped plant 42 Methodist churches.*

## In the providence of God

The Rev. Virgil Maybray, tells of the unimagined outcome of a chance meeting with young Dick McClain

I well remember the day a young college student rang the doorbell of the Grace Church in Oil City, Pennsylvania and said, "My dad said to look you up, and you would find me a place to live."

That was the first time I met Dick McClain. I helped him find a place

to live, and he spent the summer selling Bibles in the Oil City area and worshipping with us at Grace Church when he was in town.

Several years later, Dick invited me to speak on missions at a United Methodist Church in Western Michigan he was pastoring. I asked him if he had ever thought of getting back into missions, knowing he had grown up on the mission field overseas.

He said, "Yes, I have." I said, "The Mission Society could use you." The

rest is history!

Thank you for giving good leadership to The Mission Society as president. It makes me very proud to have had some small part in your life!

**The Rev. Virgil Maybray**, a retired elder in the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, was the founding vice president of The Mission Society. At 95, Virgil is still a passionate voice for missions.



Bill and Laura Hewitt with Dick

interesting weekend.

In April 2008 The Mission Society sent a team, led by Dick McClain to St. Michael's Anglican Church in Charleston, South Carolina, to conduct a Global Outreach Weekend, in which Laura and I participated. That weekend caused a voice in my head to say, "Missions isn't optional; Christ is clear in His direction to us."

Dick is a leader. I have watched The Mission Society grow in quantitative and qualitative ways under Dick's leadership, always with scriptural underpinnings, an entrepreneurial bent, and a winning personality. He sets the bar high, develops a persuasive case for a course of action, and follows through to get results.

The key to Dick's ability to lead is knowing which human attributes, when demonstrated by the leader, will help the organization excel. I have seen Dick demonstrate love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and the self-control that allow him to appear serene in the most trying of times.

Where have we seen those attributes before? You know that Saint Paul in Galatians 5 describes them as the "Fruit of the Spirit," and Dick McClain lives them.

Dick, Laura, and I have learned so much through our association with The Mission Society and, in particular, with you. You have helped to change our lives to better serve our Lord, and there is no higher calling. God bless you in your

future endeavors.

**Bill Hewitt** is a businessman and a member of St. Michael's Anglican Church in Charleston, South Carolina.



Helen Rhea Stumbo

Ever since I have known him, Dick McClain has been a sterling example of something he often says: "It's not enough to say that God loves the world. Obviously, He does. But we must also know what kind of world it is that God loves." Dick's love for God and for

those around the world who do not know Him has energized his whole life and ministry. Only eternity will reveal the influence of Dick's life here on earth!

**Helen Rhea Stumbo** is a businesswoman and chair of The Mission Society Board of Directors.



Gerald H. Anderson

## To God be the glory!

I want to add my word of appreciation to Dick McClain for his many years of outstanding service to The Mission Society in various positions, but especially for his time as president from 2009-2014. As a member of the original board of directors in 1984, I

have witnessed with great pleasure the advancement of the organization toward the fulfillment of our goals in world evangelization under his leadership. Thank you, Dick, and to God be the glory!

**Dr. Gerald H. Anderson**, former missionary in the Philippines, is director emeritus of the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut.

# Let's do this thing!

Running with joy through the hard parts

Long-time missionaries tell how God sustained their passion through some of the most difficult seasons of their ministry



Mission Society missionaries engage in team building activities during the Global Gathering event (see page 2) in January 2014. Those pictured include (left to right): Beth Tatum (Costa Rica), Paul Wiegert (Peru), Jesse Tatum (Costa Rica), Martin Reeves (Peru), Matthew Goshorn (Peru), and Donald Paige (Paraguay).



The Guzmans and their two sons minister in Monterrey, Mexico and other areas in Latin America through The Guzman Ministries. They are involved in leadership development, discipleship, and evangelism among children and youth; women's and men's ministries, and outreach to extremely poor areas.

## Through a time of diminished faith

During a season of national violence, it was hard not to give up, tell the Rev. Florencio and Maria Guzman (Colombia/Mexico/Peru), The Mission Society's longest-serving missionaries.

### Have you often been discouraged in ministry?

**Maria:** Oh my goodness, that's a tricky question.

At the beginning of our ministry, I thought it would not be a real challenge to reach people, since we were speaking the same language. I imagined how difficult ministry was for other missionaries who needed to learn another language to spread the Word of God cross-culturally.

After being in Colombia for a short period, I felt discouraged because, even though we spoke the same language, the way of life was so different that Florencio and I really had to become students of culture.

Serving in Mexico has been a real challenge in our lives. In these past years, as a family we felt discouraged due to the drug cartel violence and corruption in our country. Our hometown has experienced much violence, and several church locations were forced to close for the safety of our church members.

When almost all our friends and regular church members stopped attending, our hearts sank to a level we have never experienced before. Nevertheless, we stayed confident with hope that our God was in control of our lives and church members' lives. I must say that a couple of times when the financial support and project support dropped, I thought of quitting.

As a women's leader and minister's wife, I kept praying for God's provision and to trust that our Lord would continue to help us in our ministry. The enemy kept fighting us in ways

we didn't expect. Like a snowball rolling down a mountain, we encountered an avalanche when it rolled all the way down. Such hard times diminished our faith.

We started to pray more than ever and, as a family, used our own resources to fulfill the needs of our ministry. God is so great and wonderful that He never forgets His servants. Knowing how to transform that discouragement into victory has made us stronger.

### What advice would you give others about how to avoid burn-out in ministry?

**Florencio:** We know that the first thing is to pray to our God. If we keep thinking that God has abandoned us or that our supporters have lost their faith in our ministry, we would not last long. (I thank my Lord Jesus for the family we have and the organization with which we serve.)

One of the things that I am assured of is that God never leaves us. He will never fail us. He always has a plan, bigger than our imagination and vision. At the moment we start to think our ministry is failing, we need to remember how far God has brought us and see where we are standing. We need to recognize that we are standing on His mercy and grace, and that His favor is on us. We must declare our faith in our Almighty and Powerful God. He will supply our needs because He is El Shaddai (God Almighty) and Jehovah-Jireh (my Provider). He always answers on time. We are a living testimony of His grace and mercy.



Andrew and Margaret Howell have served 28 years in missions in former Zaire and in France. Today, the Howells work with US churches and missionaries, providing counseling, coaching, teaching on prayer, marriage, and parenting. They also work with families to offer training and encouragement.

## Through depression

Andrew and Margaret Howell (Zaire/France/US) remember when any future ministry seemed impossible.

Clinical depression. That sounds so...well, cold and clinical. The reality was difficult to live with. Even harder was imagining what ministry would be like on the other side of depression, if it would be at all. My family had just returned from our second term in Zaire (now The Democratic Republic of Congo). Margaret was still just sitting on the couch when I returned from a two-week trip visiting churches. Not much had been unpacked or done around the house except the bare minimum for our four children. She seemed despondent. I knew we needed help. The first thing we did was call our former pastor who was also a well-known counselor. After a few questions he said, "Margaret, dear, you are depressed." He referred us to a local counselor with whom we began to meet weekly.

A few weeks into the sessions, Margaret was still a bit panicky. Fighting moments of suicidal thoughts, she felt the need for something more. A friend of the family recommended we check out Link Care in Fresno, California. We called and learned there was an opening. Ten days later we flew out with our youngest son, Jason, who was five. (The Lord helped us arrange in one week the care for our other three children.)

After a week of tests and counseling sessions, Margaret was diagnosed as clinically depressed due to bipolar disorder. The Link Care team recommended we spend three months with them so we could benefit from some intensive counseling and learning situations. We found a family to care for our two older daughters in Kentucky (after they flew

with our other son to California to join us for Christmas).

Margaret now calls Link Care our "spiritual intensive care unit." We spent three months in therapy as a couple, as individuals, in groups sessions, in gender-specific sessions, with psychologists, family counselors, and pastoral counselors. As a result of that time, I ended up dealing with some sexual abuse from my past and found healing. In fact, Margaret has even said that it wasn't fair that she got the "blame," but I got the "benefit." In fact, though, we both benefited. Our marriage grew stronger. We have healthier boundaries. And we began to use what we learned to help others.

Little did we realize that God would use this season as preparation for our move to France, where depression exists in epidemic proportions. The time at Link Care also served to solidify our desire to minister to families.

We are still in ministry after that difficult season because of a supportive family, a great team at Link Care, a loving church family, an encouraging mission organization, and a generous friend (who covered our expenses for Link Care). Ultimately, the Lord Jesus brings healing, yet often He uses a lot of human hands in the process.

The Howells spend a part of each year in France with Famille Je t'Aime, the French family association with whom they have been associated since 2001. To schedule the Howells for your church, contact them at [chezandrew@gmail.com](mailto:chezandrew@gmail.com).



Sue, who has served in Russia for 19 years, is involved with humanitarian aid distribution and children's outreach ministries in the 15 orphanages in a city in the Russian Far East. She also teaches English at a language school and is involved in transition ministry that provides life skills for children who are graduating from orphanages.

## Through heartbreak

Sue (Russia) remembers when she feared her ministry might hurt the ones she was there to love.

Several years ago our team started going to an infant orphanage a couple times a week to hold babies, feed and play with them. With humanitarian aid funds, we were able to purchase new cribs to replace the ones that were literally falling apart. We built a good relationship with the orphanage staff and the director.

At a meeting with other Americans who were a part of our team, we shared about the orphanage, the babies who we had come to love, and about some of their stories. Inadvertently this information got passed on to some adoptive parents who had come to adopt one of our babies, and the orphanage director got into serious trouble.

We had felt so good about this ministry. We had felt like the Lord had been blessing it and blessing us by allowing us to love on these kids and build relationship with the staff and director.

In the end, though, our presence made the already-tough job of the director even harder because of the indiscretion with the kids' information.

The director said we could still come, but her reason was because the orphanage couldn't afford to lose the humanitarian aid help, not because she really wanted us there. I was heartbroken.

We did continue to help with the physical needs of the babies, but we stopped going regularly to be with them. I

The Lord really used this experience to teach me (or maybe to re-teach me) that He really doesn't need me to do what I do, but He allows me to join Him to learn more about His love and heart for the world.

felt like giving up. I felt like any of our ministries could—in a split second—hurt those to whom we had come to show Jesus' love and compassion. Many of our financial supporters were really behind this ministry and couldn't understand why we weren't going to the orphanage any more.

The lessons I learned through this were many. The biggest one is that the Lord's love and care for His children in Russia (or anywhere in the world for that matter) will not end because of my mistakes. Jesus loved these babies even more than we did, and He was not going to stop His care for them because we were no longer seeing them every day. The Lord really used this experience to teach me (or maybe to re-teach me) that He really doesn't need me to do what I do, but He allows me to join Him to learn more about His love and heart for the world. Many of those babies were adopted into Christian families who we still have contact with and His watch and care for them continues.



John and Colleen have served in missions for 24 years, beginning in Ghana, West Africa. Since 2000, they have been serving with the Methodist Church in Paraguay. John teaches in the Methodist Bible Institute and helps pastor the Siloe Methodist Church. Colleen teaches English-as-a-foreign language at Nuevo Horizonte Methodist School.

## Through burnout

John and Colleen Eisenberg (Ghana/Paraguay) tell of when the burden seemed too much.

It was our second term in Paraguay, and our responsibilities had changed. New missionaries arrived who specialized in roles that we had pioneered. Some, who were more qualified, came to teach in the Bible Institute. Others came to focus on construction. The Toba Carpentry Shop (which John had started with the indigenous Tobas) had failed in our absence during our year of home ministry while we were visiting churches in the States.

As field leader, John served on the Directive Commission of the National Methodist Church. This became a difficult post. Several new pastors had to be disciplined. As more missionaries arrived, tension mounted in the national leadership among Brazilians, Paraguayans, and North Americans. We celebrated, negotiated, and mediated the differences in mission practice between missionaries from Brazil and the States that stemmed from divergent mission models. (Tension can lead to innovation but also to conflict.) Somehow we felt responsible to reduce the discord among our friends from three culturally diverse groups who had good intentions and all thought they knew best. We often felt overwhelmed as we tried to resolve conflicts that seemed only to multiply. Relationships would improve, only to fall apart over another issue or with someone else.

We were also expected to provide transportation and to translate for work teams. No problem there, except that as many as 22 teams might visit in a year! Also, during this time, our teenagers were growing up, testing their wings, and even leaving for college. We needed to be there for them as

they prepared for their futures, but our roles as parents were changing.

We survived those three years of our second term, but wondered what had gone wrong. By the time we came back to the States, we felt burned out and unfulfilled.

It was during a debriefing at Mission Training International (MTI) in Colorado that we learned to put our experience into words. Then we realized that we had been facing difficulties that were usually not of our own making and had been trying to tackle them in our own strength and wisdom. We had not waited on the Lord. We had often come up with our own solution and asked God to bless it. We realized than even though we had prayed, we had not really expected God to show up.

The team at MTI advised us not to go back, because most of the situations were beyond our control, and the stress of trying to handle them was affecting our health. Had God changed His call on our lives? After asking forgiveness for going on our own, we drew close to God in prayer, and began listening again. We poured out our hurt and frustrations to the Lord. As the weeks and months passed, we felt a peace about returning to Paraguay. "Beyond our control" was now in God's hands. God was changing peoples' hearts. We recognized He was in control.

Our third term was so much more fulfilling, as we joined God in what He was doing and let prayer produce conflict resolution.



Neal Hicks and his wife, Mari, ministered in Japan for 27 years, until the time of her passing in 2012. Today, Neal (shown here with ministry partners), is the Tennessee director of the International VIP Club, a Christian business networking group launched in Japan.

## Through no foreseeable way forward

Neal Hicks (Japan/US) remembers when God's word to him seemed unimaginable.

Many years ago, after ministering in Japan for seven years as an independent missionary, God began to speak to me that He was going to expand my ministry borders in Japan. I had been the assistant pastor of a Japanese church in Hiroshima for five years and was working three part-time jobs. Ministry was going well, but over that time period, I grew uneasy. This discontent drove me to intense prayer, because I had no idea how a broader ministry could or would ever be possible.

Desperate to hear some direction from the Lord, I began an extended fast of only water. On the morning of the eighth day, I received a call from a friend in Tokyo (we had not spoken in two years), asking if I had given any prayer to joining a mission agency. You could have knocked me over with a feather!

It was a hard decision to forsake all again, but the Lord led my family back to the US. I no longer had a job or income, and we had two little boys. We had sold our van just to buy our tickets to return to the States. After the agency we initially approached interviewed us, I remember sitting on a chair in the hallway beside my wife, each of us hugging one of our sons, and saying, "What if we misheard God, and they say 'no'? What will we do?" But that didn't happen. We were accepted!

Following our training and efforts to raise the amount of support Japan required, things again were not looking good. Again, our faith was challenged. Then a retired Methodist pastor told us about The Mission Society for United Methodists. "One of our pastors from this conference

has just become the director of missionary personnel," he said (referring to Dick McClain), "and you should go and see him." And so we did. We went to Georgia, and met with Dick, and God moved. That's how we became part of The Mission Society family 24 years ago.

Now Mission Society missionaries, we returned to Japan. And over time, what God had first spoken to me became a reality. We were able to join the International VIP Club, which is an outreach to Japanese businesspeople. It was a new ministry then, with about a dozen chapters. By the time Mari and I left Japan, not only were we involved in pastoral and prayer ministry and outreach to the homeless, but we had become chapter leaders in the VIP Club, and had seen God expand this work to 130 chapters domestically and about 45 chapters internationally. God would later work to have me launch the first International VIP Club chapter in Tennessee.

What I have learned through this long journey is to trust the Lord with my whole heart and not to lean on my own understanding, in all my ways to acknowledge Him, and He will direct my path. We must cast all our cares on Him, because He cares for us. He is our Care-taker!

The Tennessee chapter of the International VIP Club is reaching unreached Japanese living and working in the greater Nashville area with the gospel message.



"When our kids were homesick, we prayed. When we couldn't do something right, we prayed. No matter what it was, we prayed. Praying immediately about everything started as a way to deal with culture shock, but it became a way of life," remembers this family who is unnamed, because they serve where security is a concern.

## Through mourning

For these young missionaries, deep disappointment gave way to a new calling.

We are young pups. We have only been on the field two years and have so much to learn. We are honored to be asked to share our story with you.

We have served in South Asia among a people group we fell in love with about 15 years ago. We joined with an in-country ministry that worked with children-at-risk and that translated the *Jesus* film into many different languages. At the urging of The Mission Society staff, we made our goal to spend the first year in language and culture learning, which was exhausting. It was during our first year that staff members of our in-country partner ministry approached us, asking for our help with a hospital project. They wanted us to be a liaison between them and the donor. Because of our training, we thought this was something we could do. We felt honored that they were ready for us to help them. Unfortunately, we came to realize the staff was only attempting to pacify the donor and felt there was no real need of us. We helplessly watched a much-needed project disappear. We cried and mourned over this project and asked God "why"? But we carried on. The next role we stepped into was caring for students at a school. We love kids and have served students our entire married life, so this brought us much joy.

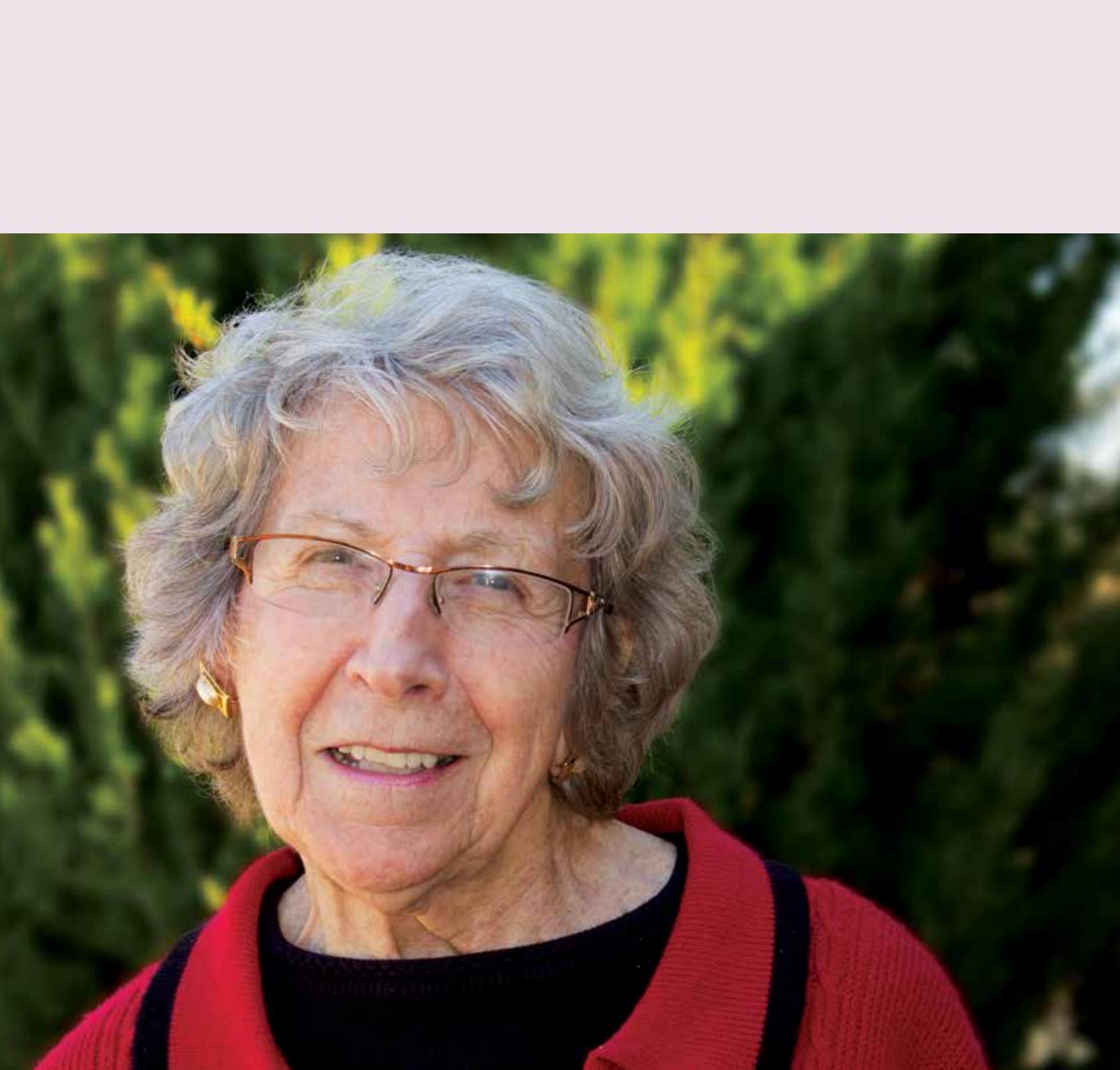
During our next year with the ministry, we continued to watch things disappear just as the hospital project had. As we continued to work and pray, we began to fear that we would become part of a statistic of a large percentage of missionaries who went home during their first two years. We were scared. We had been called to serve others in South Asia. We began to

wonder how we could continue to move forward with what we now knew.

The answer for us was to begin to depend on the staff in The Mission Society home office, to call to prayer others who were serving South Asia as well, and to "circle up" as a family. (We had been called into ministry more than 15 years earlier and had served in youth ministry for years. Once we began to have children, we resolved that our family is our ministry.)

Our time with the in-country ministry with which we partnered ended, but our time in South Asia did not. God called us to this ministry to learn, to understand a new culture, to create lifelong friendships and, most importantly, to grow together as a family. We discovered, with great joy, that when we support each other as a family of faith, we can make it through more than we could ever dream. Our family prayer life, worship, and even "down time" help us connect to each other and the Father in very meaningful ways. Even our mourning about what we thought was our future truly ended in joy. Between our family growth and the help of The Mission Society, we pushed through, and we discovered a calling to a new location.

We are so grateful for The Mission Society's worldwide family and for the body of Christ. Thank you for supporting and helping those of us who desire to go and serve Christ in places in other parts of the world. †



When many of her peers were retiring, Dr. Kathy Herzog was gearing up to be a missionary.

# Newer every day

This professor-turned-missionary seems to have discovered  
a key to resilience in ministry

*Ruth A. Burgner*

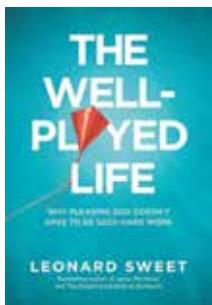
I had breakfast with Dr. Kathy Herzog to ask her some questions about her life. It was just the two of us with our fruit, yogurt, and coffee in the back cafeteria table at a retreat center in Florida.

As we chatted, Kathy told me of her escapade getting to this center, 500 miles away from her home. She drove to the wrong Florida town (which has a very similar name to this town). The telling of it seemed to delight her—as if the mishap made the whole trip more enjoyable. She met some of the town's residents, found a hotel, spent the night, and made it to this center the next day, no worse for the wear. “Times when I get lost,” she said smiling, “it turns out to be an adventure, rather than a calamity.”

It was easy to see that she’s a “glass-half-full” lady. Having a conversation with her was like getting to see the world through high-definition lenses. In every direction, things are bright. And the universe is friendly.

Kathy is a bit of a rock star in The Mission Society community. Earlier in the week she had been recognized during one of the main sessions of the Global Gathering as an example of serving God well into one’s latter years. That’s because last year she returned to the US after serving with The Mission Society in Central Asia for eight and a half years. She is 80 years old.

Some say life is a series of new beginnings. Emily Dickinson wrote, “We turn not older with years, but newer every day.” I think Kathy would agree with that. I wanted to discover the key to her resiliency.



## New release from Leonard Sweet

### *The Well-Played Life: Why pleasing God doesn't have to be such hard work*

"How many epitaphs would read, 'He lived 80 years, but died 40 years ago.' So many die intellectually, spiritually, emotionally years before their physical deaths. The world is filled with the living dead: joyless, passionless, zeal-less, lifeless Christians," writes Leonard Sweet in his new book, *The Well-Played Life*. In it, Sweet shows us how we can please God by embracing God's gift of play, and what it means to experience the fullness of joy that comes from being in deep with the divine.

#### **Course set**

Sometimes one sermon can influence a person's whole life course. That was true for Kathy. A preacher's kid, she gave her heart to the Lord early and attended Wheaton, a Christian college. "There was a speaker one day who talked about the Lordship of Christ," she remembered. "I realized that following Christ is not a one-time act. It's a whole-life experience." That realization marked her. She set sail to serve Christ all her life.

Kathy's two brothers would become Christian college professors; her sisters would become Bible translators/missionaries. But Kathy would discover a different passion.

She loved teaching children. After majoring in Christian education at Wheaton College, she began teaching kindergarten at a church school and fell in love with the children. "I felt like God had given me a gift to work with kids," she remembers. "And I felt loved in return." Kathy went to Florida State and earned her master's degree in reading. She stayed in Tallahassee to get an advanced master's, planning to return to an elementary school classroom. But a professor recommended she pursue a doctorate instead.

So she did, but not without second thoughts.

#### **Recalibrating**

The idea of teaching at the university level scared her. Still, Kathy, who had come to see herself as an elementary teacher, was willing to take on another image of herself—as university professor.

She graduated from Florida State University, and for the next 18 years, the now-Dr. Herzog worked as professor of language arts at Morehead State University, Morehead, Kentucky. "One day I said to my brother, who was teaching at a Christian college, 'But I just want to be serving the Lord.' And he said, 'You are serving the Lord.'" That seemed to settle it.

"I loved every moment of teaching on the university level," she said, "One thing that was special was when I would introduce myself at the beginning of each semester, I would give the students my background, and then I would say, 'And I am a Christian.' And I could see who the Christian kids were, because their eyes would light up."

#### **Course re-set**

In 1987, Kathy took an early retirement and cut back to part-time university teaching for more than four years to care for her ailing father. During her season as caregiver, friends sent her brochures about short-term mission opportunities.

That began a string of short-term and longer-term trips. She fell in love with Russia, and wanted to return. But, later, when the only opening was in the former Soviet republic of

Kazakhstan, she decided that country was "close enough." By now, she had made a practice of walking through open doors.

Once in Kazakhstan, she began to run into Mission Society missionaries, who told her about ministry opportunities with The Mission Society. So in 2005, she began her work with The Mission Society, teaching English and working in a special program with needy children. She even re-upped for a second term.

Kazakhstan was where Kathy, who has no children of her own, would become Baba Katya ("grandmother Katherine" in Russian). A young woman there, whose grandmother had passed away, latched onto Kathy. "We went for a walk, and when we came back, I was her grandmother," recalled Kathy. "We've had a really close, loving relationship."

It would be hard to number the special relationships Kathy has developed with university students, as well as with children who considered her a second mom. (One three-year-old daughter of a friend even wanted to name her guardian angel "Kathy Herzog.")

Despite the joys of her life, Kathy would be the first to admit that she is not always “up,” but she is learning that “when the enemy comes in like a flood, Jesus is always there to renew my joy and strength.”

### **Ready for more**

Now back in the States, Kathy has moved to a different state to be closer to family. Boxes nearly unpacked, she has become a bit bored these days. So she has been praying, “What’s next, Lord?”

She is in the process of finding the right church home. (Having a place to serve is a top criterion for the church she will choose.) She has joined a church Bible study group and is studying Russian in her spare time, hoping to get involved in reaching out to Russian people in her area.

Kathy seems to have discovered that the key to resilience is the willingness to—at any juncture—abandon our plans, and even our image of ourselves, for God’s.

As we finished our coffee, I asked Kathy what she would want to say to retirement-age people who are wondering if there is anything more for them. “I would say, ‘The best is yet to come. International missions may not be for everyone. I’m single, so it may be easier for me than others who have families or other commitments. But there’s a place for people to serve the Lord right in their communities. There are much more fulfilling things to do that make a difference in the world than just to travel.’

“I look back over my life, and I wouldn’t change a thing. I say, ‘Wow, what great adventures I’ve had as I’ve followed in God’s path.’ It’s surprising what God has for you if you just ask.” †

**Ruth A. Burgner** is The Mission Society’s senior communications director.



While serving in Central Asia, Kathy taught English and worked with a special program for children.

### **Letting go of the familiar**

“When you are invited to pray, you are asked to open your tightly clenched fist and give up your last coin. But who wants to do that? A first prayer, therefore, is often a painful prayer because you discover you don’t want to let go. You hold fast to what is familiar, even if you aren’t proud of it. You find yourself saying: ‘That’s just how it is with me. I would like it to be different, but it can’t be now.’ Once you talk like that, you’ve already given up believing that your life might be otherwise. You’ve already let the hope for a new life float by.”

—Henri Nouwen, from *With Open Hands*

# What is to become of me?

After years in ministry, your initial fervor is waning. You keep trying to look like you have it all together, but inside you're falling apart. Sound too familiar? Here, Dr. Susan Muto describes six phases to the erosion process—and offers some good news for depleted ministers.

We often hear people who have been in ministry for any length of time saying they cannot wait to retire. The pressures on them are so depleting, it seems almost impossible for them to continue in their ministry beyond a certain age. The question is: Can we grow through the inner and outer turmoil associated with ministry or does the stress of ministry, ranging from physical exhaustion to spiritual aridity, take more out of us than we have to give?

Experience tells us that if we do not grow through the stresses our ministerial roles place upon us, we may atrophy interiorly while pretending to commiserate with others. Our capacity to care shrinks like wool in a washer. Trying to succeed by trying to boost ourselves up or by plastering a smile on our face just worsens our predicament. We need to find a way to cope with stress before it diminishes our creativity and erodes our already waning fervor to the point of total depletion.

### **Symptoms of ‘eroded ministerial presence’**

Many physical symptoms may indicate that our ministerial presence has been compromised, including headaches, insomnia, chemical dependency, chest pains, excessive fatigue, back aches, heart and digestive disturbances, skin rashes, repeated colds, and increased susceptibility to a host of other viral infections.

These signs of physical distress are accompanied at times by such emotional upsets as aggravation, irritation, frustration, doubt, quiet desperation, to say nothing of such sicknesses of soul as dejection and aridity. These spiritual ills further erode the inspiration and efficiency of our ministerial life as a whole.

### **Reforming erosion**

Faced with the erosion of ministerial presence, we must be willing to ask God to let us find means to halt and reform this process before it gets totally out of hand. One means of reformation is critical and creative self-examination, aided by perhaps the following questions:

1. Do I live in trusting abandonment to God as ultimately meaningful, however meaningless my life now feels?
2. How may commitment to Christ in faith, hope, and love deepen, despite my trials and setbacks?
3. If these virtues have weakened, can I rekindle their flame by dwelling in meditative presence on the risen Christ, whose life I have pledged to celebrate?

Prayerful reflection on these and similar questions of our own

devising prevents the erosion process from becoming worse. Complementing this phase of its reformation may be practical interventions like vocation counseling and spiritual direction. Perhaps the time has come for us to move to a place or position more in tune with our own calling in Christ. This may mean that your ministry must undergo a few alterations if a fresh start is to be found. A more compelling style of dedication may succeed a former more comfortable one. Stressful as these changes may be, walking down a different road often results in reversal of the erosion process.

### **Regaining fervor**

Nothing about sincere ministry puts us in a period of smooth sailing. Stresses like violent storms at sea threaten to cast away the good we have accomplished. Such disappointments may contribute temporarily to the depletion we feel. They tempt us to vent more indignant feelings. These only add fuel to the fire of the depleted spirit that began to burn up our commitment to ministry from the start.

Effective “repletion sessions” (small groups) encourage us to regain our fervor through faith, hope, and love. They help us to be not social-issue but social-presence oriented. A replenished spirit, heart, and mind, and will generate more sensitive and responsible ways to diminish stress while enhancing our capacity for Christlike care and concern.

Such sessions banish the obsessive conviction that we have to wait until certain adverse conditions are removed before we can be spiritually and socially present in justice, peace, and mercy to this wounded world.

Effective repletion facilitates the insight that by focusing

continued on page 27



## Six phases of the erosion process

To understand the seriousness of stress in ministry, we must consider the six phases that account for the alternating cycle of fervor and fading interest in the life of any sincere minister.

**1**

**Initial phase of exaltation.** Exalted aspirations and ambitions, strongly influenced by egocentric preoccupations, are prevalent at the start of any ministerial enterprise. They exercise an aggrandizing influence on our imagination. Our service tends to exceed the bounds of common sense. It is overly

inflated and elated. The more we experience the practical impossibility of executing our dreams to "save the world, the church, and the people of God" the more these unrealistic expectations prevent us from facing reality. This stubborn insistence that we can do it alone does not last for long.

**2**

**Apprehension of dissonance.** We soon begin to sense how stressed we are. What we thought were realistic aspirations and ambitions prove to be unworkable for many reasons. Such initial

apprehensions that something is wrong become recurrent, yet they are still widely spaced. We tend to deny the dissonance they evoke, but such blindness is increasingly impossible to sustain.

**3**

**Significant increase of inner stress.** Peculiar to this phase is that we experience a distinct rise in our stress quotient accompanied by a noticeable erosion of care

and concern. As a result of these apprehensions, we can no longer deny the dissonance we feel, nor its possible deleterious effects.

**4**

**Start of a crisis.** The tense push and pull between normal stress and abnormal stress becomes unavoidable. It manifests itself in a waning of inner dedication. In the meantime, we force ourselves to

appear to others as perfectly behaved as a trained professional should be, all the while realizing that our motives for caring are fast slipping away.

**5**

**Resolution of a crisis.** Since we are now fully immersed in a crisis of presence, accompanied perhaps by dour feelings of being utterly abandoned by God, we have to choose between adding to our stress by moving towards a negative solution or tempering it by the beginning of a more positive response.

The negative way only heightens our indifference and inertia. We risk a lasting depletion of social and spiritual presence. Especially if our avocation is in the helping professions, we can rely on our training to move us through the motions of ministry; however

much our heart is sick with stress. We wonder what is to become of us. "Woe is me" might be the secret refrain of our disgruntled heart.

A positive solution to this dilemma entails reaffirmation of our appreciative, hope-filled abandonment to the God of forming, reforming, and transforming love. Exalted dispositions tend to "come back down to earth" when we take a more realistic approach to ministry. A side benefit of this positive turn is a lessening of stress, leading us to more effective ways of coping with what triggered this crisis in the first place.

**6**

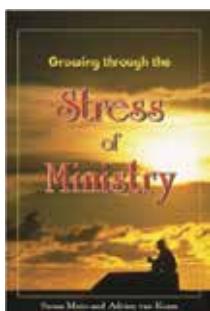
**Evolution of a renewed ministerial presence.** As this path opens before us, we close off the prideful assumption that we can find the answers we seek based on our own will power. We turn towards the living wisdom of the faith we espouse. Though we feel less stress, this approach does not free us from challenges that still lie before us. Similar crises may

reoccur in our lives. Stress and the ideal of sincere Christian service go hand in hand with one another. The more we cling to God, the less anxious we feel. In every crisis, we witness the evolution of an opportunity to follow the "better part" that balances Mary and Martha in us (Luke 10:38-42).

first on our calling in Christ, we prevent undue distractions that deplete our energy. Effective repletion sessions also lead to the sober realization that we can never eliminate once and for all the threat of erosion and depletion. The need to keep our stress in check goes hand in hand with any worthwhile ministerial engagement to which we commit ourselves. We learn to be gently alert to whatever forces begin to dry out our dedication. We remain vigilant to do the work of the Spirit in us. We cooperate with grace by freely choosing to reform whatever dampens our hope for a deeper, more enduring transformation of life and world in Christ's name. †



**Susan Muto, PhD, co-founder and executive director of the Epiphany Association, is a native of Pittsburgh, a renowned speaker, author, teacher, and dean of the Epiphany Academy of Formative Spirituality. She has authored or co-authored with Adrian van Kaam more than 30 books, including *Growing through the Stress of Ministry*, from which this article was adapted. Three Mission Society staff members have taken or are presently enrolled in the certification program offered by the Epiphany Association. In November 2014, Dr. Muto will present a two-day seminar for the entire Mission Society community.**



**Growing through the Stress of Ministry** offers instruction and inspiration to help ministers move towards replenishment. Each chapter concludes with scripture meditations, meditative exercises, and questions for reflection. Consider this book for your small group discussions (available on Amazon and at the Epiphany Association bookstore [www.epiphanyassociation.org/catalog](http://www.epiphanyassociation.org/catalog)).



Photo by Daniel Goshorn

## FILL UP FIRST

"If you are wise you will be reservoirs and not channels. The channels let the water flow away, and do not retain a drop. But the reservoir is first filled, and then, without emptying itself, pours out its overflows, which is ever renewed, over the fields which it waters. How many there are devoted to works, who are never anything but channels, and retain nothing for themselves, but remain dry while trying to pass on life-giving grace to souls! We have many channels in the Church today, but few reservoirs.

—Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153)

Quoted by Fred Meadows in *Reforming the Broken Heart of Leadership*

# Plotting a course through the wilderness

Missionaries offer advice to burned-out and parched fellow ministers

By Lauren Mead

Photos by Allison Wiggins

The newness and excitement of answering God's call to ministry does not last forever. Often the demands a community places on a missionary or minister and the expectations they have for themselves can cause emotional and psychological stress, even serious health problems or burnout. God promises to be our strength and our protection, but He never promises it will be easy. We asked some of our veteran missionaries what advice they would give to other ministers who may be approaching burnout. Here's what they told us.



## Rest in your Father's arms.

Missionary to Paraguay Donald Paige, with son, Daniel

## Rest

Learning to rest can be a difficult when there is so much to be done, yet many missionaries urge fellow ministers to rest. "Learn to rest in the finished work of Christ," writes Neal Hicks, who served in Japan for more than 20 years. John and Colleen Eisenberg, also serving globally for more than 20 years, advise to rest in the Lord's presence and His timing. "Know that you are called, know that in your heart of hearts, and lean on that in the tough times." Also, don't forget that taking care of all the needs is not your calling. And rest physically. Several missionaries sent us the same advice: take a vacation. Fourteen days at a time is best. And relax. A missionary in India writes, "Find a friend who asks nothing of you except to visit, shop, play, and pray together." Johnny Winkle, former staffer and missionary to Europe, suggests healthy boundaries. Learn to set aside at least one-third of your day for yourself, he offers. This will help to keep ministry fresh and keep missionaries from over-extending themselves.

"To be commanded to love God at all, let alone in the wilderness, is like being commanded to be well when we are sick, to sing for joy when we are dying of thirst, to run when our legs are broken. But this is the first and great commandment nonetheless. Even in the wilderness—especially in the wilderness—you shall love him."

— Frederick Buechner, *A Room Called Remember: Uncollected Pieces*



### **Pray about everything right away.**

Staffer Debra Bembeneck during a Global Gathering worship service

## **Pray**

This is the obvious answer, but time and time again missionaries reminded us how important prayer is to a life in ministry. In your prayer time, give over your control to God. Pray big. The Eisenbergs write, "Ask for God to move and expect Him to show up." A family serving in India told how prayer helped combat the culture shock and homesickness their children felt. Pray about everything, always, and right away. Another from India counsels, "Spend more time on your knees than you think you need, and make sure you spend more time praying for others than yourself." John and Katheryn Heinz, missionaries who serve as co-directors of CenterForm in Atlanta (see page 30) observe a weekly Sabbath. Katheryn writes: "They are necessary, revitalizing, recentering, and refreshing. Centering our lives upon Christ was crucial in both avoiding burnout and finding our way out of it."



### **Remember to laugh.**

Natalie Barbee (whose family serves in Thailand) with long-time staffer, the Rev. Lauren Helveston

## **Remember**

Much of the advice from missionaries was geared towards self-care. Former Mission Society intern to India-turned-staffer, Sylvia, advises "don't be a hero"; don't over-commit yourself. She offers that saying "no" is okay even when expectations are high. Don't forget to take care of yourself and your own needs. One missionary writes, "Give yourself permission to bawl, scream, curl up in bed, and pull the covers over your head on occasion." A life of full-time ministry is not easy. "There are constant needs pressed into your family's life that 'normal' people just don't have." Finally, remember to dwell on prayer and scripture, never on the bad. Remember to laugh, and remember that you cannot take care of others if you fail to take care of yourself. Give your cares away to the One who cares for you.

**Lauren Mead**, The Mission Society's receptionist and finance clerk, was an English major and occasionally takes on writing and editing projects while managing her other duties.

**Allison Wiggins**, office manager and executive assistant to the president, has been spending many off-hours behind a camera lens. Some of her photos are featured in this issue.



## Introducing CenterForm New Mission Society ministry purposes to shape 'non-missionaries' into local missionaries

The Mission Society has spent the past 30 years equipping missionaries for incarnational, cross-cultural mission internationally. CenterForm, a new ministry of The Mission Society, is pointing the way forward for cross-cultural mission in our own communities.

CenterForm, headquartered in Atlanta, is a creative generator for local mission. Its directors, John and Katheryn Heinz, discover the most innovative and effective practices of cross-cultural mission, make these practices accessible and practical for everyday Christians, and then shape, equip, and support churches, organizations, and individuals to be effective vessels of transformative mission.

Drawing participants from across the US, CenterForm utilizes the city of Atlanta as the context for learning. It provides missional formation experiences, discipleship, and ongoing coaching for churches, organizations, and seminary students to better prepare them for mission in their own communities. CenterForm shapes people into local missionaries, whether they feel called to serve single moms, immigrant or homeless populations, or their next-door neighbors.

For more intense study and missional formation, residencies are available for "missional entrepreneurs" who want to explore a particular area of urban mission. For more information, go to [www.centerform.org](http://www.centerform.org).

CenterForm staff: John and Katheryn Heinz and Christina Crim



Bishop João Carlos Lopes, a Mission Society board member, led some of the sessions in São Paulo. A bishop of the sixth region of the Brazilian Methodist Church, Lopes was instrumental in launching this event.

## The Mission Society leads Mission Mobilization and Discipleship Consultations in Haiti and Brazil

The Mission Society led two international conferences in February. Dr. Darrell Whiteman, resident missiologist and vice president for mission mobilization and training, and the Rev. Dr. Denny Heiberg, a Mission Society missionary and member of the Ministry Resource Group team, led the events.

More than 50 Haitian pastors attended the International Mission Mobilization and Discipleship Consultation held in Cap-Haitien, Haiti, February 10-14. In São Paulo, Brazil on February 18-21, 79 pastors and church workers and 31 students attended the Consultation, which was hosted by Bishop Carlos Peres and the Third Region

of the Brazilian Methodist Church and the Methodist University School of Theology. A significant portion of the Consultation sessions were taught completely by Haitians in Haiti and Brazilians in Brazil.

At the conclusion of the event in Brazil, one participant said to Dr. Whiteman, "What you have taught this week seems like familiar territory to us, but it was done in such a different way that we received new and profound insights. How could something so simple be so profound and insightful?"

International Mission Mobilization and Discipleship Consultations are planned for Bangkok, Thailand, Shillong, India, and Francophone West Africa this year.

# They are on their way!

## Natalie Brown Haiti (October 1, 2013)

Natalie works with a Christian non-profit organization in Haiti whose ministries include a school, a mobile Bible school for pastors, and a school of evangelism.

## Unnamed missionary couple

Central Asia (October 2013)

This family serves in Central Asia building discipling relationships with young people and working with women enslaved in the sex industry.

## Unnamed missionary

India (October 2013)

This missionary is a licensed professional clinical counselor and serves missionaries in India. He also trains nationals and other believers in counseling theory and technique.

## Todd & Pam Attaway

Thailand (December 3, 2013)

Children: Sidney, Ashley, Noah, and Hannah Grace

Todd and Pam teach English-as-a-Second Language to people in the Northeast area of Thailand in an effort to develop relationships and share Christ with their students.

## Unnamed missionary

India (January 2014)

This missionary serves in northern India discipling Christians and visiting least-reached villages to share the love of Christ.

## Jonathan & Amy Killen

Paraguay, via language school

(December 2013)

Children: Eli & David

Jonathan will teach computers to pastors at the local seminary and will teach mathematics at a ministry center to neighborhood children. Amy will serve as a director of church daycare in the city of Santa Rosa.

## Steve & Suzanne Buchele

Ghana (February 18, 2014)

Steve and Suzanne Buchele minister at Ashesi University. Suzanne serves its associate provost and as an associate professor of math and computer science. Steve teaches leadership, works in campus ministry, and serves as a teaching pastor at Asbury Dunwell Methodist Church.

## Tim & Jennifer Goshorn

Peru (March 2014)

Children: Daniel, Matthew, and Katherine The Goshorns work with The Mission Society team in the areas of discipleship, evangelism, and small groups and children's ministry.

## GreenLight Interns

**Natalie Collins** – Paraguay

(January – December, 2014)

**Alex Mitchell** – Paraguay

(January – May, 2014)

# Get the inside scoop



In our monthly podcast, our missionaries describe their ministries, tell about the challenges of living cross-culturally, and the places they see God at work. Listen in at [themissionsociety.org/learn/multimedia/podcast](http://themissionsociety.org/learn/multimedia/podcast)

## Recent podcasts:

### Episode 64: Denny Heiberg

Denny and his wife, Cindy, work with The Mission Society to develop disciple-makers around the globe. Their mission is to equip and mobilize an intentional movement of disciple-making followers of Jesus throughout the global church.

### Episode 65: Jim Ramsay

Jim Ramsay, vice president for mission ministries, recently visited The Mission Society field in South Sudan. Here he talks with Mission Network News about the fight against polio and malaria and what Christians are doing to help the South Sudanese gain better healthcare.

### Episode 66: Ashley Fryar

Ashley serves with The Mission Society, traveling globally to serve and support other missionaries on behalf of orphans and vulnerable children. In 2009, she felt God leading her to focus specifically on the orphan crisis in Kenya, where she co-founded and served as executive director for the Project 82 orphan ministry.



# Staying power

Missionaries tell why longer-term service makes a difference



One of the greater joys of longer-term service, says Jim Ramsay, "is that you get to go through life with people. A highlight of my years in Kazakhstan was performing the wedding of a young couple who I had known since they were teenagers." The relationship continues today. Jim and Shawn Ramsay visited this couple during a recent trip.

When asked once what the difference is between going on a mission trip and serving in longer-term missions, one missionary responded, "We stayed." That simple answer seems obvious, but the implications are profound. In an era where, because of advances of every kind, we can accomplish more in a shorter time than ever before, one may wonder if the time has passed for the kind of longer-term missionary service that has characterized the last two centuries. I have been reflecting on this question based on my own 10 years of serving in Kazakhstan, and I invited response from several Mission Society missionaries who have 10 or more years of service.

## The benefits

In the missionaries' responses, there were several commonalities. The key recurring theme was that missions is primarily about relationships, not about tasks. That is one reason I have never liked the phrase we hear often in

missions, "Our goal is to work ourselves out of a job." While the phrase expresses an important truth (a topic for another column), it mistakenly puts the focus on tasks, functions, and activities rather than on relationships. All those who responded spoke of building deep relationships as key to transformation. We believe Jesus is the answer to the deepest questions of any person or culture, but we first have to do the hard, relational work to understand what the questions are.

One missionary who spent 11 years in Kenya and 15 in Kazakhstan noted, "Some cultures will not 'let you in' until time and trust has been built. Relationships take time to develop."

So, how long does this take?

Interestingly over half of those answered noted that they felt that they began having significant, deeper relationships after five years of living in the culture. One veteran missionary wrote, "I think I felt like I really had connected about five-to-six years into the process. That

was when I started really realizing that I had friends." Another wrote, "After five years we 'started' understanding how Chinese people think." Of course, this doesn't mean there were no friendships prior, but that when living cross-culturally, it takes time to get sufficient language, culture, and contextual understanding to go deeper with people. And, as one in India noted, "Facebook cannot replace face-to-face!"

Related to this is one of the greatest joys of longer-term service—you get to go through life with people. A highlight of my years in Kazakhstan was performing the wedding of a young couple who I had known since they were teenagers and had walked with them as they came to faith, grew in the Lord, then grew in their own ability to be in ministry. This joy was also expressed by those on the missionary panel. One in Paraguay said, "I think the feeling of being spiritual parents to those who were in the youth group back in the early 2000s keeps me coming back." Another

God has placed the desire in our hearts to be here and fills that desire every day.

valued “the personal time spent with people, going through their hardships and losses.” From Ecuador still another wrote, “One of the big benefits of long service is being able to see some of the first folks we worked with come into the kingdom and into His service.”

### The risk

It is possible for a missionary to get stuck in a rut even living in a different place. That certainly is a risk in longer-term service. The new place can become a new comfort zone. It is important that we realize that God does not just send missionaries to bring change to people in a given place, but God uses that place for His ongoing transformation in the life of the missionary. Our person in China shared a significant change he experienced over the years. “Being longer term moves the focus away from a mindset of ‘me in China’ and turns it more towards the people. I know people will say in their first months and years that their focus is on the people, but in

our experience and watching others around us, the focus tends to be on the people in relation to how it affects us. Longer term has helped us move away from that and just being focused on the people in relation to how life affects them.” Another wrote, “Some people’s attitude has been, ‘You’ve had your adventure, when are you coming home?’ Whereas, we see this as our life now.”

### The big question

So, when is it too long? That answer depends totally on the situation and the Lord. Most of the people spoke of “not being released”—not in some onerous sense of duty, but just in the simple fact that they believe God continues to call them to the place where they are now serving. “We know very clearly that we are where we are supposed to be, and during the trying times, it is no longer a feeling of sacrifice or just serving, but we enjoy living here. God has placed the desire in our hearts to be here and fills that desire every day!”

All who responded expressed a similar sense of peace knowing that they are living where God has called them to live and doing what He has called them to do. And they equally expressed the realization that the day may come when He will tell them it’s time to move on.

### The question for us all

Regardless of whether we are called to serve on the other side of the world as missionaries, this raises a question for all of us. Are we investing in relationships with people where God has us living right now? Are we learning the deep questions of those around us? Are we exploring with them how Christ desires to bring transformation to our lives? All those who claim Jesus as Lord are called to that mission. †

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

## The big reveal

### One missionary tells a truth well known by long-terms

The biggest benefit to longer-term service is that at some point you realize that this isn’t “a big adventure” or “a phase” or whatever phrase gets put on your term, but that this is now your life. Your home, your work, who you are become defined by the place you

serve, not the place you left behind. We are always a bit puzzled by well-meaning friends who say “when are you coming home?”, because we don’t know what we would be coming home to. Our lives and our work are here now.



# Unsung heroes

If you fear you haven't been doing your part in missions, don't miss this article.



Since the Rev. Martin Reeves and his family arrived in Peru 10 years ago, they have been used of God to plant three churches and train dozens of leaders. More than 40 new believers have been baptized. Today, in addition to five regular church services, 12 discipleship groups meet on a regular basis, and "we are witnessing an incredible outpouring of the Holy Spirit," says Martin. Here, he and other missionaries identify the most important thing to a missionary.

Last year I had the distinct pleasure of mentoring First United Methodist Church of Washington, Georgia, as the people of that congregation planned and conducted their first Global Impact Celebration. Leading up to the event, I made several visits to the church. As a result, I not only learned a great deal about its members and the church's history, but I learned a lot about the city itself.

One of the more interesting discoveries I made was that noted attorney, preacher, and author E. M. Bounds lived, died, and was buried in Washington. In fact, the home where he lived now houses the Washington Historic Museum. In case you are not familiar with Bounds or his work, he is considered by many to be one of the greatest voices on the subject of prayer. He wrote nine books solely on the subject of prayer. In any search on prayer, you will find numerous quotations attributed to him.

One of his practices was particularly interesting: He arose every morning

at 4:00 and prayed until 7:00. Most mornings he could be seen walking the streets of Washington praying as he went. Some people have said that Washington might be the most prayed over city in the United States.

## Natural as breathing

E. M. Bounds took prayer seriously, and nothing got in the way of his praying. In fact, the product description for *The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds* states that he "truly followed the charge to pray without ceasing. It was as normal and essential to him as breathing. But though he was in prayer constantly, it never became a chore to him."

Bounds prayers and writings included the work of missions. Note what he wrote in his book titled *Jewels*: "The spirit of missions is the spirit of prayer. Prayer is the chief factor in the genuine missionary movement. Prevalent, united prayer is the agent that moves the world toward God and moves God

toward the world." In his book, *The Essentials of Prayer*, Bounds writes, "Prayer is the hand-maid of missions. The success of all real missionary effort is dependent on prayer." In the same book, he reminds his readers that "the missionary movement in the apostolic church was born in an atmosphere of fasting and prayer." I think how true that is. It was when Peter was going to the rooftop to pray that God gave him the vision of taking the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10:9-48). Later in the book of Acts, it was at a prayer meeting at the church in Antioch that Paul and Barnabas were called and sent out as the first international missionaries (Acts 13:1-3).

For Bounds, prayer and missions are inextricably connected. Our missionaries agree. I asked them to comment on the role of prayer in their ministries, and this is what some of them told me.

## More important than anything

**A missionary will never have a fruitful ministry** without an army of prayer warriors standing with him or her.

Nothing of eternal significance happens apart from Christ. (John 15:5) Christ often waits for us to come to Him in prayer before He will act. Our prayers are not effective because we say the right words, but because we have a right relationship with the Creator of the universe. –*Martin Reeves, Peru*

**For me, raising my support was important,** but prayer for me here is what will sustain me on this journey.

There are days when I just can't pray for myself, but knowing there are people praying for me is knowing someone has my back during my hard times. –*Natalie Brown, Haiti*

**The Lord does not call His servants into battles of ministry,** which we can fight and win on our own. When we decide to follow God's call into ministry, we are not suddenly transformed into spiritual "iron men." The arrows of sin and suffering and death we encounter will cut us. The Church must faithfully commit to stand alongside those serving on the "front lines" in ministry. That is what intercessory prayer is. –*Miki Chastain, Estonia*

**There are things that only prayer can change.** No amount of money, time, or effort on our part can make certain things happen. Having a specific prayer team who can pray for those things that are sensitive in nature (and therefore not for everyone) provides support through the most difficult circumstances. For example, when John was in car accident last year, I just emailed the prayer team leader before I knew any details. She got the word out before I knew the extent of the accident or even how John was doing. –*Colleen Eisenberg, Paraguay*

**Prayer is essential because:** (1) It undergirds the ministry for the work that we know we're doing; (2) It covers and protects us from and through the unexpected, specifically dealing with spiritual warfare; (3) It serves as a "direct" plumb line to the heart and will of God, ensuring that our prayers and the prayers of others line up with God's perfect plan, all for His glory. –*Sonia Crawley & Sonji Pass, Kenya*

**One hundred percent of everything** that I do here in Paris is based on decisions that I need to make. One hundred percent of decisions that I need to make is based on a clear vision that I need to have. One hundred percent of a clear vision that I need to have is based on people who are behind me day by day, praying for me, my family, and my ministry. So, I would say that one hundred percent of everything that I do here is based on people praying for us. –*Gustavo Faleiro, France*

### Behind every victory

Since its founding more than 30 years ago, The Mission Society has been blessed by having a community of praying saints who resonate with what these missionaries and E. M. Bounds are conveying. Although the intercessors may not have been called to go to serve on the mission field themselves, in many respects they have gone before us. As Richard Halverson reminds us, "Intercession is truly universal work

for the Christian. No place is closed to intercessory prayer. No continent, no nation, no organization, no city, no office. There is no power on earth that can keep intercession out." Intercessors generally carry out their ministry in obscurity, but what grows out of it is anything but obscure. Everywhere we see victories won, we know that behind those victories are people on their faces before God, interceding on behalf of missionaries and staff.

If you are among those who regularly pray for the work and people of The Mission Society, we want you to know how much we love and appreciate you. You are the unsung heroes of this ministry. May you be blessed abundantly, and may your number increase. †

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



# The season continues

Your invitation to a life of service



The game of baseball ended when Jackie Robinson retired from the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1957. A trailblazer, Robinson played in the major leagues for 10 years. Once he hung up his cleats, the game ceased, and Major League Baseball was no more. Of course not!

When Jackie Robinson retired, the game didn't end. Drafts for new players continued, and fans packed out stadiums for more baseball. Even this year, the Major League Baseball season began again in March with returning and new players. And this is in spite of the players and managers who retired last season. The game continues.

## Retiring the numbers

So it is with The Mission Society. Founded in 1984, the organization continues to serve on mission with Jesus. When Dr. H.T. Maclin, The Mission Society's founding president, retired in 1990, God raised up others to take his place, and the mission continued. This June, our beloved Dick McClain, The Mission Society's sixth president, will retire after 28 years of service—the last nearly five years as president. He has served

this organization (and the Lord) with all of his heart and has helped to make it what it is today. As he leaves, the mantle of leadership will fall upon Max Wilkins, who will assume the duties of president and CEO.

The mission and vision of The Mission Society are greater than any one leader, and its kingdom work will continue even as people come and go. The book of Joshua gives us a wonderful example of such times of transition. Joshua 1:2 (NRSV) reads: "My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites." The promises of God outlive the leaders God calls.

## Batter up!

Each year, hard-working and respected missionaries are called to leave the field and return to their countries of origin. Yet, every March and September, The Mission Society hosts a Candidate Assessment and Orientation event, in which we welcome those who sense a calling to full-time, cross-cultural service.

The individuals who are approved are trained and sent out to places throughout the world to join Jesus in His mission. So we celebrate what God has done through the pioneers who have gone before, who have—by grace—blazed trails for those who would follow. We will miss them. And at the same time, we recognize that the mission must continue. We fix our eyes on that which is ahead. Our God longs to be worshiped by every people group. He longs for injustice to be confronted. Until the time of Jesus' reappearing, His mission will go forward. Another season continues. †

**Richard Coleman** is the senior director of mobilization and candidacy.

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