

# The God Made Known

THROUGH ORDINARY PEOPLE LEADING *EXTRAORDINARY* LIVES

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# Endorsements

*The God Made Known* should be required reading for anyone ministering or leading within our Alliance churches, as well as for anyone looking to be inspired and encouraged by God's hand and provision in the joys and deep challenges of reaching out to the nations with the Good News of Christ. How does God work in the world? For some insight, read through the pages of this compelling history.

*Clyde Glass, Lead Pastor, Southview Alliance Church, Calgary*

These are exactly the types of stories I want the children in my church to hear and read about as we disciple this younger generation for the greatest adventure on earth—sharing the Gospel with those who haven't heard, whether that is the neighbour across the street or an unreached people group across the globe.

*Shauna Archer, Children and Family Pastor, Living Hope Alliance Church, Regina*

Warning! The stories in this book may inspire you to greater sacrifice. *The God Made Known* celebrates the extraordinary work of God through faithful men and women who “*had given up all for Christ, and His work meant all to them.*” (Simpson). Reading this book makes me want to join this Missionary Alliance all over again.

Many things have changed in the world of missions. Least-reached people groups are now moving into our backyard. New and creative opportunities for missions abound. What has not changed is the power of the Gospel to save and the need for the church to proclaim it...Everyone! Everywhere! All the time! “*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*” (Galatians 6:9).

*Stephen Harbridge, District Superintendent, Central Canadian District, Burlington*

The compilation of stories in this book reflect people empowered by the Spirit, living on mission, bringing God's Kingdom to earth. They tell our story, the story of The Christian and Missionary Alliance around the world. I am grateful for the godly examples of men and women taking risks to go where others may have never ventured. They inspire the readers' own pursuits of going to those on the margins, to those often forgotten and in need of the good news. I highly recommend this book.

*Glendyne Gerrard, Director of Defend Dignity*

What struck me most in this book, particularly in all the stories, is the incredible commitment and bravery of the missionaries. Nothing in my opinion speaks more loudly than the life testimonies of our faithful international workers. I cannot help but finish reading this book from cover to cover with tears in my eyes.

This is an important book. It is a documentary—one that captures our spiritual heritage, movement and missional DNA as The Christian and Missionary Alliance. It's all about our need to connect with missions. The stories of this book will stick with you for life!

*Genghis Chan, Lead Pastor, South Edmonton Alliance Church*

As I read *The God Made Known*, I felt I was walking among giants—but giants who I know personally. It reminds me that, as ever, the Kingdom is built as each of us says 'yes' to God.

*Leon Throness, Senior Pastor, Chilliwack Alliance Church*

No one could dream up and write a book like this. There are too many incredible twists, turns and tragedies to make it believable...unless you understand that a sovereign God was behind it all, creating His amazing tapestry of transformation through ordinary, yet committed people and churches. I have had the privilege of knowing many of them. Some were my heroes, used by God in missionary conferences at Foothills Alliance Church in Calgary to woo me to missionary ministry. Others were missionary colleagues during my years as an international worker and later at the National Ministry Centre.

As I read their stories in *The God Made Known*, it became clear to me that this is more than a history book. It's about the future. This book clearly chronicles God's persistent faithfulness over generations. However it's also a future statement that this same God empowers us for the challenges yet to come. What God starts, He always finishes. So, when you are done the book, start what He has called you to do. He will then see it to completion (see 1 Thessalonians 5:24).

*Harv Matchullis, Executive Director, Encompass Partnerships*

This book is the story of some who have gone to their neighbour down the street, across Canada, or out to the ends of the earth, to the least reached, with the message of Christ and His love. Many sharing their stories are friends and classmates from Canadian Bible College and Canadian Theological Seminary, individuals who obeyed God's call to go wherever He led.

*Velma Warnock, Former Staff Ambrose (CBC/CTS)*

This book is modern day Acts of the Apostles...filled with God stories of the carrying-out of the Great Commission by His disciples in the Canadian Alliance family. When evangelism and discipling is lived out, life becomes extraordinary, for the power of the Holy Spirit and His presence are manifested as promised!

*Helen Lee, International Worker*

Instead of "history," read this in the light of the window of time we are in: the day of salvation before He returns! Discover your peers from Calgary, Owen Sound, Burnaby or Toronto as they dramatically alter their lives because they caught a glimpse of Christ and his beloved nations through that same window. If you look long enough, you will see it too, and He will have His glory again.

*Mike Linnen, Lead Pastor, Cederview Alliance Church, Ottawa*

History is often shaped by larger-than-life people with an unshakeable commitment to a political agenda for changing the world. The Church of Jesus Christ is most often shaped by little people with an unshakeable commitment to God's agenda for changing the world. Here are accounts of how Alliance people of daring faith, radical obedience, courageous action, and extreme sacrifice have been God's instruments for changing the world and building His Church. You can't read these accounts and not ask yourself, *How does God want to use me to impact my world?*

*Bruce Edwards, former Congo international worker and former Lead Pastor of First Alliance Church, Toronto*

What joy to read through *The God Made Known*, written by and about people I've worked with or heard about over the past 35 years. These men and women are my heroes, choosing to respond to God's call to make Jesus known among the least-reached people of the world. In my work as director of Member Care, I often got to see the price they paid for choosing to live in some of the most challenging areas of the world, with new and strange diseases, environmental hazards, poor infrastructures, increased violence and often unstable governments.

I am grateful to those who have taken the time to write their stories. And I praise God for the fruit that He has borne through the lives of these, His saints.

*Judith Wiebe, Spiritual Director, former Director of Member Care, Global Ministries*

The reading of this excellent book literally captured my attention. I could not put it down. This is, in part, because of my personal connection with some of the key players in the story it tells. However, most importantly, it captured my attention because of the way in which it weaves together the extraordinary work that God has done in some of the most unexpected places through an ordinary family of churches, and most ordinary people. The resulting narrative ought to challenge and inspire the present and generations to come for missions. I highly recommend the book.

*Justin-Robert Mabiala Kenzo, District Superintendent,  
St. Lawrence District, Montreal*

When I think of how God has used countless Alliance people in His Kingdom ventures, my heart is thrilled and humbled beyond measure! So, I am grateful that *The God Made Known* is capturing more of these great faith stories.

*Ken Driedger, Executive Director, Missional International Church Network*

Many of the “reporters” in this new edition to our missions library are personally known to me. They are stalwart and passionate in their continuing pursuit of their calling! I highly recommend that you become acquainted with them in the volume before you and follow on in the path they have so faithfully and fruitfully established.

*Gordon Fowler, Former District Superintendent, Canadian Pacific District*

*The God Made Known* captures snapshots of frontline ministries for Kingdom advance accomplished with our investment of intercessions and finances for our Global Advance initiatives. Be ready to be stirred in your heart to ponder, praise, and pray!

*T.V. Thomas, Evangelist, C&MA in Canada*

What are our core values and purpose as a denomination? What is the C&MA DNA? This book helps answer these questions by telling various stories of who we are and what we have been doing all these years. They testify to our heritage and our values. I highly recommend this book to all our church members.

*Aaron Tang, Executive Director, Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association*

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# Introduction

By Ronald Brown and Charles Cook, Editors

We're so glad you picked up this second volume of the Canadian Alliance global engagement story. This is the story of Canadians, members of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada's family of churches, who left their home and native land to head out as bearers of good news to people who have never heard the name of Jesus.

The first book entitled *The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives* was published in 2016 and contained two main parts. The first included eleven chapters about some of the original fields to which our founder, A.B. Simpson, first sent missionaries. These were fields like Tibet, Palestine, Congo and Vietnam. The second part of the book included twelve short biographies of Canadian international workers. The book was dedicated to Dr. Arnold Cook. You can learn more about this book and see how to purchase it at [www.extraordinarystories.ca](http://www.extraordinarystories.ca).

Here's what you'll find in this second volume:

- The Contributors section provides short bios of Canadian writers who have collaborated to make this book possible. Most of them have lived, or are currently living, in the part of the world that they write about and know so well.
- The Preface answers the question, "Why this book?"
- A Foreword by the president of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada (C&MA) introduces a thread of embracing new immigrants.
- The Dedication includes the story of a woman in Regina who well modeled engaging new immigrants.
- The Glossary will help with some of the terms and special words used by the writers.

## Part A - The Work

In this section you will read fascinating stories about parts of the world to which A.B. Simpson first sent Alliance missionaries from his base in Nyack, New York. You will be moved by the cost that some of our Canadian workers paid as they entered lands few foreigners had previously entered with the Gospel. You will, hopefully, be encouraged to read about growing faith communities in these countries as a result of gospel seeds being planted

and nurtured by our missionaries and the support of Canadian Alliance churches over the decades. You will also note in this section a few sidebars of individuals from these mission fields who came to study in Canada and then went on to make a significant national and international impact. This is our story of some of what God has done through us.

### **Part B - The Workers**

For some, this section will be the more interesting section of the book. These are brief autobiographies of Canadian Alliance workers. Most of them are living among us in Canada. You may have had the privilege of meeting some of them or they may have visited your church.

### **Part C - Sending Churches**

Each of the workers that went to some country or field was sent by a local Canadian Alliance church. Five chapters tell the story of several churches with a long history of calling out, sending, and supporting Alliance international workers.

Thank you for spending time with our book. If you are already a member of our Canadian Alliance tribe, then this is your story too. If you are new to the family, welcome, and we invite you to lean in to our ongoing passion to bring the good news of Jesus to the yet unreached people around us, just as we have been doing for the past 134 years. It's what we do! It's us!

## Contributors

### **Craig Bundy**

Craig Bundy, a descendant of immigrants from England and Scotland, grew up in the Pacific Northwest and attended Canadian Bible College in Regina, Saskatchewan. In 1971, he married Mora Matheson, also a descendant of immigrants from Scotland. They moved to Chicago, where Craig studied at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) and pastored for six years. The Bundys were appointed to Argentina in 1977 and spent 16 years in evangelism, church planting, teaching, field leadership, and the coordination of the Encounter with God program in Buenos Aires.

Craig's doctorate (TEDS) is in missiology. He did a three-year teaching rotation at Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina from 1993 to 1996 and promoted missions in the Canadian Midwest District the following year.

The Bundys coordinated the CANAL Project, teaming Canadian and Latin American international workers focusing on North Africa. This took them back to Latin America for six years (1997–2003) to mobilize workers; they then moved to North Africa (2004–2011) to direct the team.

They returned to Canada to care for aging parents. Currently, Craig leads a team at First Alliance Church in Calgary, Alberta focusing on global, community, ethnic, and refugee ministries. They have one daughter, three sons, twelve (and counting) grandchildren.

### **Bonnie Burnett**

Bonnie Burnett, the descendant of Scottish, German, and Jewish immigrants, was born in Saigon, Vietnam to C&MA missionaries, Dave and Helen Douglas. When Vietnam fell, the Lord sent them to the Philippines, where Bonnie began boarding school at Dalat International School, in Penang, Malaysia.

Bonnie graduated from Dalat in 1985 and went on to receive a Bachelor of Religious Education from Canadian Bible College. In 1993, the same year in which she married Derek Burnett, Bonnie began studying at Canadian Theological Seminary. Bonnie and Derek have three children, Carlin, Jesse, and Jemma.

In 1999, following two years of home service at New Covenant Alliance Church, in Scarborough, Ontario, the Lord sent the Burnetts to serve as international workers in Thailand. In their first term, they learned Thai and served in a Thai church, learning the culture. In their second and

third terms, Derek and Bonnie helped to train lay leaders in local churches across the country through a modified Theological Education by Extension program. During their fourth term, they planted the international church, All Nations Church Phuket, on Phuket Island. They are currently slated to begin a fifth term in Thailand, training pastors at the C&MA Bible School in the Northeast.

### **Donald Dirks**

Don Dirks was born in central Saskatchewan. His ancestors emigrated from Russia and finally settled on the Canadian Prairies. In 1952, he became a student at Western Canadian Bible Institute, where he met Elma Toews, a student from Montana. They were married in April 1955 and later applied to the C&MA to become life-time missionaries.

Their home service was done in the Regina (Alliance) Gospel Tabernacle, for two years, and then in Hythe, Alberta, for eight months. In 1960, they did one year of French language study in Paris, on their way to Gabon.

In Gabon, they were active in church planting during their first term; in their second term, they took over the Bible school and changed the teaching language to French. In their third term, Don served as field leader. After 14 years in Gabon, they were asked to transfer to France, where Don was the board representative to head up a new church planting venture. They lived in France for 25 years, and by the time they left for Canada in 1997, there were 20 churches in the registered Union of Alliance Churches in France.

In the last nine years, Don has made 11 trips to West and Equatorial Africa to assist with computer installations and provide training. Along the way, he has been given many opportunities for preaching and teaching.

### **Arnold Downey**

Arnold Downey was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, where his parents were active members in the Alliance church. When he was three, his father passed away, and his mother raised him and his younger sister. Following high school, Arnold attended Canadian Bible College, where he met and married Joan Bisbing from Beaverlodge, Alberta.

In 1961, they were appointed to plant a church in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. After eight years, when the church was well established, they accepted a call to Westgate Alliance Church, in Saskatoon, also in Saskatchewan, where they faithfully ministered for twelve years. In 1981, Arnold became the district superintendent of the Canadian Midwest District. He relocated to Calgary, Alberta in 1990 to become the superintendent of the Western Canadian District and served there until 1999, when he retired.

During their 18 years of retirement, Arnold and Joan have enjoyed fruitful ministry, serving in a recreational vehicle park church in Arizona, using their gifts of music, pastoring, and preaching. Their home is in West Kelowna, B.C.

Arnold is delighted to learn that this book is dedicated to the memory of Ruby Johnston. She was a close friend of his mother and often spent time in his childhood home. He says, “Ruby is a great example and challenge to all of us to reach out to the mission field we find at our very doorstep.”

### **Thomas Ford**

Thomas Ford (pseudonym), the son of an English immigrant mother and fourth-generation Irish-Canadian father, was born in Vancouver, B.C. He studied in Regina, Saskatchewan, at Canadian Bible College (CBC) before obtaining master’s degrees from Regent College, Ambrose Seminary West (now Ambrose University), and Trinity Western University.

While he was deciding on a major at CBC, Arnold Cook visited Tsawwassen Alliance Church, in B.C. and assured him that missions was a great choice. He graduated five years later with a Bachelor of Theology degree, after Paul Yu-Chuen Siu had assured him that learning Greek was easy. Having failed French in high school, this took some courage, but four languages later, he was glad to have taken Dr. Siu’s advice.

Thomas first went to China in 2003 to teach English. In 2010, he and his wife, who is from China, returned to the country. They and their children minister among a Muslim least-reached people group. When not teaching, reaching, or preaching, Thomas enjoys a good book and a cup of tea.

### **James Foster**

In his late teens, Jim Foster discovered that God had invited him to partner with Him in missions by serving leaders who communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ to people of other faiths. After studying at Ontario Bible College (now Tyndale University) and Canadian Theological Seminary (now Ambrose Seminary), Jim served for years in pastoral, church planting, leadership and business-as-missions capacities with The Christian and Missionary Alliance and other organizations while living in Alberta, Lebanon, the Arabian Peninsula, and Ontario.

While in the Middle East, he and his wife, Sharon, served alongside national leaders in the C&MA churches in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Jim returned to Canada to serve as the C&MA’s vice president of Global Ministries, from 2006 to 2012. He is currently on the leadership team of Toronto Alliance Church as the marketplace pastor and director of The Re-Build Centre, where he develops and coaches those called to church and marketplace ministry.



Jim was instrumental in the establishment of two leadership training, consulting, and coaching companies that assist the activities of business-as-missions leaders, one in the Middle East and one in the USA. He currently consults as a leadership coach with Christian business and organizational leaders, and he especially enjoys giving assistance to young business leaders in Canada and missional entrepreneurs running businesses in the Middle East and Asia. Sharon teaches children with special needs in downtown Toronto; Jim and Sharon have three adult children.

Jim is third-generation Canadian, with grandparents who emigrated from England and Scotland after World War I. Sharon is second-generation Canadian, with parents who emigrated from India to the U.S. in 1962 and then to Canada in 1964. Jim and Sharon enjoy hiking, canoeing, and biking together and will accept any invitation out for any ethnic food...just ask them!

### **David Hearn**

Dave Hearn was born in Lillooet, B.C. and grew up in a godly home in the Okanagan, his grandparents having come from the United Kingdom. In his early teens, God called him to move from his concern with image and walk towards intimacy with Him. Dave surrendered his life to Jesus and was filled with an overwhelming sense of joy.

As Dave became a passionate follower of Jesus, he began to sense a call into church ministry. His calling was confirmed at Canadian Bible College, where he met his wife, Agnes. Dave and Agnes have been married for more than 30 years and have three daughters, two sons-in-law, and three grandchildren.

From 1984 to 1997, Dave was senior pastor at Bramalea Alliance Church, in Brampton, Ontario. He then attended Regent College, in Vancouver, B.C. and received a Master of Divinity degree. While living in B.C., Dave served as lead pastor at Lake Country Alliance Church, in Winfield, and then as assistant district superintendent and district superintendent in the Canadian Pacific District. He has also served on the national Board of Directors (1994–2000) and on District Executive Committees in the Canadian Pacific District and Eastern and Central Canadian Districts.

Dave's passion is to see the C&MA in Canada as a Christ-centred, Spirit-empowered, and Mission-focused movement.

### **Daniel Ibsen**

Dan Ibsen is the second son in a family of seven children. One of his grandfathers immigrated to Canada from Denmark, and the other immigrated from Scotland. Both parents became school teachers in Spruce Grove, Alberta.

Dan sensed a call to missions at age 11, during a missions conference at Stony Plain Alliance Church, in Alberta. After high school, he explored becoming a businessperson, but when the business failed, he went to Moody Bible Institute and attended their aviation program. While there, he discovered gifts in teaching and a desire to serve in leadership training overseas. He continued his studies at the University of Alberta, where he met his wife, Melodie.

Dan taught school for two years in Edmonton, Alberta then went to Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, Saskatchewan for his master's degree. The Ibsens were a church-planting pastoral couple at Westlock Alliance Church, in Alberta for five years.

They were appointed to Guinea in 1985, learned French in Quebec, and arrived in Guinea, West Africa, in 1986. Dan served in Theological Education by Extension, training lay leaders in the church, and as district missionaries in Gueckedou. The Ibsens developed and taught a discipleship training course for 12 Muslim-background believers, then Dan served as field director for 10 years. More recently, Dan and Melodie developed a program for training and orienting apprentices and interns who visited Guinea. They also helped their local church in Mamou develop a ministry to the majority Muslim people group of that community.

Dan recently completed his DMin thesis at Bethel Seminary, in Minnesota. He explored the work of the C&MA in Guinea and the growth and development of the church there. They have four children; two are serving at Dakar Academy in Senegal, one is in Haiti, and the other is in Niger.

### **Marilyn Klassen**

Marilyn Klassen (Goerz) was born into a Christian family in Alberta. Her parents met at Prairie Bible Institute, in Three Hills, Alberta. Rudy Goerz arrived in southern Saskatchewan from Russia at the age of 11. Edith Goerz was from a family of homesteaders in northern Alberta who had arrived in Ontario several generations earlier. Edith and Rudy planned to be missionaries in Chile, but a health issue kept the mission board from sending them.

When she was five, Marilyn felt God call her to missions, and missions was a vital part of her growing up years. After moving to the Fraser Valley in B.C. at the age of six, she was always at the missions events of the local Alliance church in Yarrow. At Canadian Bible College, she met Ernie Klassen, and, upon completing the educational requirements, they married. They then spent three years of home service in Dartmouth, N.S. before returning to Canadian Theological Seminary for a year of preparation for missions.

Chile was the field first assigned to them, but the move of God was already so great in Peru that they were reassigned to Peru, to her parents' great joy.

### **Anita Leung**

Anita Leung was born and raised in Hong Kong. Her grand-uncle was led to Jesus by missionaries sent from Germany. Five generations of his family are all believers of Jesus, including her. She accepted Christ as her personal Saviour at the age of nine.

Responding to God's call, she completed her Master of Religious Education at the Canadian Theological Seminary. Immediately after graduation, she began to serve God at Edmonton Chinese Alliance Church, then Vancouver Chinese Alliance Church, Foothills Alliance Church in Calgary, Burnaby Alliance Church, and now, Fraser Lands Church, in Vancouver.

In 1992, she served as the first full-time executive secretary to promote the ministry of the Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association (CCACA). In 2000, she became the ministry director of Chinese Christian Mission of Canada. From 2002 to 2009, she served as the ministry director of Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelism, Canada West. She also served on the Board of Governors of Ambrose University, and on the District Executive Committee in the Canadian Pacific District (CPD). She has been a minister-at-large in the CPD since 2011 and a member of the Board of Directors for the C&MA in Canada since 2016.

She loves to see firsthand what God is doing around the world. We wonder which will be the 58th country she visits!

### **Ilana Lobbezoo**

Ilana Lobbezoo is a third-generation Canadian of British, Scottish, and Irish descent whose ancestors immigrated to Canada around the time of the Titanic. Ilana was born in Bangkok, Thailand as the only daughter of former C&MA missionaries, John and Penelope Hall, who were serving in Vietnam at the time of her birth.

Ilana began school at Dalat International School, in Penang, Malaysia, but then her family was forced to leave Vietnam and return to Canada. When she was 10 years old, her parents began serving in South America. Following one year of Spanish language study in Costa Rica, they moved to Ecuador, where she attended the Alliance Academy through to high school graduation.

While attending Canadian Bible College in Regina, Saskatchewan, Ilana decided to pursue cross-cultural ministry and met her husband, Bill, a second-generation Canadian of Dutch descent.

After serving on staff at Calgary Chinese Alliance Church for a year, Ilana and Bill were married in 1991 and moved to Orleans, Ontario to serve for three years at Redeemer Alliance Church. Since 1996, they have been serving in Cambodia; they have raised two daughters who now consider Cambodia to be their home. They have filled a number of ministry roles through the years, and all have involved youth and young adults. They are currently overseeing ministries that impact the student communities in various locations around the country.

### **Laurie McLean**

Laurie McLean was born in Ottawa, Ontario and grew up in the small village of Manotick. His parents were both believers in Christ and attended the Alliance church in Ottawa. Laurie knew from an early age that the Lord had His hand on him and desired to use him in missions. In his teen years, Laurie surrendered his life to the Lord to serve Him wherever He would lead.

In the early 1960s, Laurie attended Canadian Bible College, where he met Nancy Westcott from Lethbridge, Alberta. They were married and eventually arrived in Gabon, Equatorial Africa, where they were involved in many different ministries, including women's ministries, village evangelism and church planting, field administration, and teaching at a Bible institute and in Theological Education by Extension ministries.

Laurie and Nancy have three children; their daughter, Sharon, is currently an Alliance international worker with her husband in Dakar, Senegal. After 36 years in Gabon, Laurie and Nancy returned to Canada; they then served with the Alliance in Gatineau, Quebec for six years. They are currently attending Cedarview Alliance Church, in Ottawa, and are involved in ministries at the church as well as in the senior's residence where they live.

Laurie is a fifth-generation descendent of Scottish immigrants from western Scotland. The first immigrant from his family settled in the area around Perth, Ontario.

### **Eric Persson**

Eric Persson was born into a non-Christian family in Regina, Saskatchewan. His grandparents emigrated from Sweden and settled in Stockholm, Saskatchewan. They later homesteaded in Dauphin, Manitoba, where Eric spent many summers working on the farm as a teenager. In 1950, Eric's family moved into the Regina area, a few blocks from the future location of the Canadian Bible College (CBC).

In his pre-teen years, Eric attended a boys' club run by a couple of students from CBC, Arnold Cook and Lloyd Draper. The boys were led to pray for

Arnold's uncle and aunt, who were missionaries. After Eric accepted Jesus as his Saviour, he said, "I always wanted to be a Mountie, but now I want to be a missionary!" Eric's desire eventually led him to CBC, where he met and fell in love with Gwen Longhurst, who came from a Baptist background and had lived in the area of Ontario close to the Glen Rocks Bible Conference grounds. Eric and Gwen were married in 1965 and have a son, two daughters, 10 grandchildren (five of whom are married), and two great-grandchildren.

Upon graduating from CBC, Eric and Gwen began a ministry at the Hopeville Bethany Chapel in Ontario; at the time, it was the oldest Alliance church building still in use. In 1969, they left by boat from New York for a year of French language studies in Albertville, France. In 1970, they began church planting ministries in the Banfora District in Burkina Faso (then known as Upper Volta) and established churches in major centres of the region.

In their third term in Burkina Faso, Eric and Gwen began a teaching ministry at the Maranatha Bible College (MBC) in Bobo-Dioulasso. Following graduation, in 1986, with a Master of Missiology degree from the Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, they returned for a fourth term, and Eric became the president of MBC. Eric moved the college towards accreditation and led in the development of a Theological Education by Extension program called "PEDIM" for the training of lay pastors and church elders. Eric and Gwen also saw the final transition of leadership at MBC change from missionaries to Burkinian presidents.

In 1996, they returned to Canada due to persistent health issues. Since that time, Eric served as missionary-in-residence at CBC for one year, as an English pastor at South Edmonton Alliance Church, as pastor at Marwayne Alliance Church, as global impact pastor at Beulah Alliance Church, and as transitional pastor at Barrhead Alliance Church, all in Alberta. Over those years, Eric was a contributing influence in numerous people's decisions to serve as international workers; two couples and one woman went to Africa, two couples and one woman went to the Asian Spice Region, and one couple went to the Caribbean Sun Region.

Eric and Gwen are now retired and live in Edmonton, where Eric supports his favourite football team by wearing green and white in a sea of green and gold.

### **Richard Reichert**

Richard Reichert was born of farming stock and raised in Outlook, Saskatchewan. His parents were founding members of Outlook Alliance Church, and Richard's pastors included Mel Sylvester and Les Hamm. He

studied at Canadian Bible College (1965) and the University of Saskatchewan (1966-1970) before marrying Hope Ens of Windsor, Ontario. After studies and teaching in New Brunswick and Newfoundland, Richard finished his master's studies at Canadian Theological College and pastored in Luseland, Saskatchewan (1975-1979).

The Reicherts went on to serve as international workers with the C&MA in Ecuador (1980-1998), Cuba (2002-2009), and Mexico (2009-2113), with an interlude as district missions consultants in Eastern Canada (1999-2002) while Richard completed doctoral studies at Gordon Theological Seminary in the area of "Ministry in Complex Urban Settings."

In all of their assignments, Richard and Hope have been involved in theological education, and they have sought to develop delivery systems for producing leadership development in complex urban settings such as Cuba and Mexico City.

Richard has authored three books, *Daybreak Over Ecuador*, *Missions is a Contact Sport*, and *Un Siglo de Avance, One Hundred Years of the Alliance in Ecuador* (co-authored with Cesar Mendoza). During their retirement, spent in London, Ontario, they were always on the lookout for the next generation of global servants. Richard went to be with the Lord on June 26, 2017.

### **Timothy Tjosvold**

Tim Tjosvold is of Norwegian descent. His grandparents immigrated to Canada from Norway in the early 1900s. He was born in Saskatchewan but was raised, for the most part, in Edmonton, Alberta. He attended Beulah Alliance Church from his infancy. He spent five years of his childhood on a farm northwest of Edmonton and then returned to Edmonton and Beulah for junior and senior high school. It was at Beulah Alliance that he first sensed the call of God on his life for international service.

Tim attended Canadian Bible College in Regina, Saskatchewan and served as a youth pastor in Hamilton, Ontario (1976-77) and in his home church, Beulah Alliance (1978-79). After his marriage to Brenda, he returned to study at Canadian Theological Seminary as Brenda studied at the Bible college.

After their graduation and one year of French study in France, they began their service in Côte d'Ivoire (1982). Tim served as missionary-in-residence at Canadian Theological Seminary from 1990 to 1993. While there, he began a study program that would eventually give him a Doctor of Ministry degree in missiology from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. From 1999 to 2004, Tim and Brenda served in Benin, where they helped the national churches move forward in reaching least-reached people groups. From 2005 to 2016, they served as lead couple in Niger, West Africa.

### **Brent Trask**

Brent Trask was born in Sarnia, Ontario into a Christian and mobile family. His parents, a nurse and an engineer, met at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. They married young and went on to raise their three children in Canada, England, and the Netherlands.

Brent's ancestral roots are all Western European. On his mother's side, the Ubells came to Canada from Alsace-Lorraine, Germany (now France), and the Steeles arrived from Ireland. His grandmother was born on St. Patrick's Day and always claimed to have Irish royal blood; this was never verified, but she did often sport blue permed hair. On his father's side, the Edlers emigrated from Germany, and the Trasks from Somerset, England. Seven generations ago, four Trask brothers left the British Isles; one went to Australia, one went to Newfoundland, and two settled in Southwestern Ontario.

Brent's family moved to Edmonton, Alberta when he was 14. On his first day of school, he made a lifelong friend, and it was through this friendship that Brent came to faith in Christ and joined the Alliance church. He attended Canadian Bible College and Seminary, where he fell in love with Mandy Wakeman, daughter of British immigrants. They married in Toronto at Mandy's home church, Rexdale Alliance Church, and moved to Calgary, Alberta in 1986 to plant Bow Valley Alliance Church, where they served together for 25 years. As this fledgling church expanded, it launched new ministry sites and later morphed into RockPointe Church.

Brent was elected as district superintendent of the Western Canadian District in 2011, where he continues to serve. The focus of this role is to catalyze Alliance pastors to pursue Jesus for life, church and world transformation. They have three adult children, one son-in-law, and three grandchildren. All of them are outward-bound and on the move in the nations.

### **Bernie Van De Walle**

Bernie Van De Walle was born and raised in Regina, Saskatchewan, a block away from the Canadian Bible College (CBC) campus; his father was born in Bruges, Belgium, and his mother was born near Elgin, Scotland.

Bernie currently resides in Calgary, Alberta, where he is professor of historical and systematic theology at Ambrose University, a position he has held for the past 18 years. Following a few years as a "Top 40" DJ, he enrolled in college to prepare for a life of Christian ministry. It was while he was a student at CBC in Regina that he and his wife Colleen (the granddaughter of German and English immigrants) recognized a divine call to missionary service.

Upon graduation, they did their home service at Surrey Alliance Church in B.C., later returning to Regina and his old neighbourhood. There, he attended Canadian Theological Seminary, where he obtained an MDiv, graduating with highest honours. Still with missionary service in mind, Bernie enrolled at Drew University in New Jersey, writing his doctoral dissertation on A.B. Simpson and the fourfold gospel.

In 1999, instead of heading overseas as they had anticipated and longed to do, Bernie and Colleen were called back to Regina, where Bernie became a professor at CBC. His first book, *The Heart of the Gospel*, which is required reading for ordination within the C&MA in Canada and elsewhere, has recently been translated into both Vietnamese and Chinese with plans for both French and Spanish underway. Its sales have far exceeded initial expectations. His next book, *Rethinking Holiness*, explores what holiness truly is.

In addition, Bernie has served as the chair of the board of directors of the C&MA in Canada and as chair of the Alliance World Fellowship's International Commission for Theological Education.

### **Josie Vance**

Josie Vance was born in Edmonton, Alberta. Her paternal grandparents, of German and European descent, settled in Alberta near Pincher Creek, where they brought a pioneering gospel witness to the Blackfoot nation near their home. Josie's mother, raised in California, came to faith in her early teens, when her family encountered the healing power of Jesus. The life-changing physical healing of Josie's grandfather, then an atheist, transformed the trajectory of the family as they embraced God's call to evangelism. Influenced by her mother, father, and this rich heritage, Josie developed a deep belief in God's nearness and faithfulness at an early age.

Josie lives in Edmonton, Alberta with her husband of 20 years, Jason, and their three children. She serves as a pastor and part of the senior leadership team at Beulah Alliance Church. She is compelled by the conviction that the wider Church must continue to be salt and light in the changing cultural context of Canada and beyond. To this end, she enjoys regularly participating in C&MA New Workers' Orientations, discussing what it looks like to be mission-focused in these days. She is privileged to work with other people who mobilize the Church outward.

Before her time at Beulah, Josie taught elementary school, with a bachelor of education degree from the University of Alberta. She then led in ministry at Spruce Grove Alliance Church for eight years, where she was accredited with the C&MA. In this context, a passion for team-building and leadership

development was born. This passion found expression as she spoke at several equipping events and still fuels her ministry role and graduate studies in leadership today.

### **Patrick Worsley**

Pat Worsley was born in Calgary, Alberta and moved to Longview, also in Alberta, when he was seven years old. He accepted Christ as his Saviour there, in the small Baptist mission church, at the age of eleven. When 17, Pat's family moved back to Calgary, and he began attending First Alliance Church. Pat was baptized the following year, and during a missions conference, he sensed God calling him into full-time service overseas.

Pat met Ardyce in his final year of high school, and they were married six years later. The following year, in 1966, they entered Canadian Bible College to begin formal preparation for mission service. Following Pat's graduation, in the first graduating class of Canadian Theological College, in 1972, with their year-old son, they served for two years in Cobourg, Ontario before going to Irian Jaya (now Papua), Indonesia where they ministered for twenty years.

From 1994 to 2000, they served as district missions consultants for the Western Canadian District. In February 2001, they accepted the role as team leaders for a new C&MA venture in the Silk Road Region. They retired from global ministries and returned to Calgary in July 2007. Pat was invited to join the staff of First Alliance Church, where he continues to serve today.

His ancestors emigrated from the British Isles to Ontario and Alberta.

### **Terry Young**

Terry Young was born in St. Paul, Minnesota and moved to Calgary, Alberta when he was five years old. He is a descendant of immigrants from Scotland and Ireland. He grew up in Calgary, attended Canadian Bible College in Regina, Saskatchewan from 1974 to 1978, and then Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois from 1979 to 1982.

Terry and his wife Deb commenced their pastoral work in 1982 at in Calgary, and then spent three years at Kelowna Alliance Church in B.C. before they returned to Calgary, where Terry assumed the lead pastor role at First Alliance Church from 1998 until 2009. He was teaching pastor there from 2009 to 2011 before moving into interim pastoral work in Fort McMurray, Alberta, and then Calgary with the River of Life Alliance Church family. Along the way, his learning journey included PhD work at Gonzaga University, involving research on holding environments for leaders. He graduated in 2004 with his PhD in Leadership Studies.

Terry and Deb were married for 35 years before she passed away in December 2012. In 2013, he joined the faculty of Ambrose University in Calgary as associate professor of pastoral theology. He is now married to Maureen, and they are enjoying the journey of life with four grown children and seven grandchildren. His work in the seminary at Ambrose is dedicated to teaching, training, and equipping leaders for an increasingly complex world and to encouraging and inspiring frontline leaders throughout Canada through a new venture called Ambrose@Large.

## Editors

### **Ronald Brown**

Ron Brown was born in the Congo and raised by missionary parents. His mother, a Mennonite from Main Centre, Saskatchewan, went as a single missionary to the Belgian Congo, where she met and married an Australian. His grandparents came from Russia and settled in southern Saskatchewan. Ron's high school years were spent in Swift Current, Saskatchewan where he was baptized by Mel Sylvester. While attending Prairie Bible Institute, he met Myra, and they were married by Gordon Fowler at Foothills Alliance Church in Calgary, Alberta. They have two adult daughters.

Ron was a pastor at Vegreville Alliance Church and Southview Alliance Church in Calgary. The Browns spent 26 years in Africa as Alliance missionaries (1980-2006) and lived in four countries in Central and West Africa. Since 2007, Ron has worked in the Western Canadian District office in Calgary as a missions coach. He is a senior associate at the Jaffray Centre for Global Initiatives at Ambrose University. His doctorate in missiology is from Trinity International University. His research project dealt with factors contributing to the resiliency of international workers who continually go through traumatic incidents.

Ron is the creator and editor of [globalvault.ca](http://globalvault.ca) and host of the biweekly Global Vault podcast. His memoir, *INTERSECTIONS*, can be found at [ronaldbrown.ca](http://ronaldbrown.ca). He has a collection of air sickness bags from the 30 different airlines on which he has travelled.

### **Charles Cook**

Charlie Cook was born in Owen Sound, Ontario to Canadian C&MA international workers and was raised in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Charlie

and his wife, Darla, served with The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Bolivia, Mexico, and Argentina. A Coca-Cola bottle collection from over 100 countries is evidence of his extensive travel.

Charlie is presently professor of global studies and mission at Ambrose University, where he has served since 1989. When he is not teaching, he is involved in collaborative Kingdom ministries in various corners of the world (cdnglobalsoul.org). Among some of the organizations he has helped establish are the ReGen Community Development Foundation, the Onesimus Global Foundation, Church Partnership Evangelism, the onSite Study Abroad program, Canadian Missiological Resources (cmresources.ca), and the Jaffray Centre for Global Initiatives at Ambrose University.

Charlie holds a PhD in Intercultural Studies from Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois. He is also the author of numerous articles on missions, and he co-authored the book *Pathways to the Soul*. He and Darla reside in Calgary, Alberta.

Charlie and Darla are descendants of Scottish and English immigrants to Canada.

## Acknowledgments

As with any project of this magnitude, there are a lot of people who are part of the process. One individual who has contributed significantly is Gladys Thompson, who served as project coordinator. She and the team in the Communications department of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada ensured that all the pieces fit together in a timely manner. The project also benefited from the invaluable assistance of Alliance archivists Sandy Ayer (Ambrose University Library) and Kristin Rollins (C&MA-U.S. Archives) who provided the project with various documents and images.

## Preface

By Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Our neighbourhoods might be a lot like yours. A microcosm, you might say, of what's been going on in neighbourhoods all across Canada—in fact—around the world. Walk down a street in the west side of Calgary and you'll meet James from Ethiopia who lives next door to Beatrice, born and raised in India. She lives just three doors down from Sunni who came from Korea. On the other side of the street and a few doors from James is Sammy who came from Malaysia, and he and his family live across the street from Carlos and Pillar who, several years ago, moved from Colombia.

This story of neighbourhood diversity is likely similar to yours—or it will be. Over the past few decades, Canadians have witnessed a significant visible change in their regional demographics. Gone are the heretofore typically predominantly Caucasian communities replaced by the ever-expanding eclectic multi-ethnic neighbourhoods.

You're also likely familiar with the fact that this global shift is the result of a variety of factors—not the least of which is the unprecedented migration of people from the global south, northward and from the global east, westward. For example, in Toronto, fifty-one per cent (51%) of its citizens report being born outside of Canada (*National Post* - <http://bit.ly/2uDMJEa>). Toronto has become the world's most cosmopolitan city. Montreal and Vancouver are following suit. Calgary is projected, in this decade, to become the third most cosmopolitan city per capita in Canada.

The changes in Canada are part of a much larger demographic shift that is taking place in our world over the past century. A quarter of a century ago, the majority of the world's Christians lived in the global north (North America and Europe). Christianity has moved to the global south and is doing very well—not just holding its own, but growing. The expansion of Christianity in the majority world has led to the emergence of a younger, larger non-western Church. Indeed, the growth of the Church in the majority world has significantly outpaced the growth of the Church in the west during the last quarter century.

Consequently, the western mission machinery of the twentieth century that jettisoned the all-encompassing good news of Jesus to the far corners of the world is presently undergoing an unprecedented time of recalibration. While there are still many challenges in the Church in the global south, it is true that there is a significant vitality to the Church in the south and east

that has also found expression in their increased desire to take responsibility for global mission.

So, like you, we recognize that the 21st century world in which we live and serve is radically different from that of previous generations, and it is precisely this changing reality that this volume begins to explore. Today mission is no longer understood primarily in terms of geographical expansion, but as the Lausanne Covenant (1974) reminds us: reaching our world “... *requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world*” (paragraph 6).

This volume picks up where Volume One, *The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives*, left off (extraordinarystories.ca). It is dedicated to Ruby Johnston, a woman whose story quietly played out in Regina, Saskatchewan where she responded in her own way to the shifting demographics around her. While working as a registrar at Canadian Bible College, she began to reach out to the new Canadian Chinese. Her involvement and concern for them led to the formation of a movement of churches that numbers in the hundreds today.

Now as the years have passed, C&MA missions have come full circle. The latter part of the 20th century witnessed an increasing symbiotic relationship among the nations that make up the Alliance family (Alliance World Fellowship). In time, leaders from various regions of the Alliance world entered into more intentional ministry together, so that leaders from historic fields like Guinea (1919), China (1891), Argentina (1897), Chile (1897), Thailand (1929), Cambodia (1923), Papua (1929), Peru (1923), and France (1962) began to work and strategize together in global mission. One hundred and thirty-four years later, it is fitting that we take time to reflect and celebrate what God has accomplished through our Canadian Alliance family and to remember the lives of those who, in obedience to God, determined to see God’s Kingdom established in many of the hard places of our world.

These chapters continue to trace the hand of God in transforming and using people both in Canada and in different regions of the world in order to make an impact both at home and abroad. Today, we are witnesses to God’s grace manifested to and from Canada as the global Alliance family engages in mission from “everywhere to everyone.”

Likewise, this second volume was created with the desire to inspire a new generation of Canadians to find a dynamic 21st century way of engaging in the mission of God. These chapters, particularly the autobiographical material in the second part of the book, seek to portray the great joy there is in serving the living God in cross-cultural settings. Though hardships were plenty, though sacrifice was costly, God’s faithfulness was experienced

as God’s Spirit brought change and people turned to walk in the light of the presence of Jesus.

We hope you will quickly see that each of the authors write out of their passion for Jesus and the insights generated over a lifetime of service. Much of their understanding comes from years of living and working among people they came to love and enjoy. Our prayer is that something will either be ignited or re-ignited in your heart as you read these pages.

For the glory of God,

Ronald Brown and Charles Cook  
Calgary, Alberta

### **For Further Reading**

Tira, S.J. (2016). *Scattered and Gathered: A Compendium of Diaspora Missiology*. Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International.

Wan, E. and Leand Le, T. (2014). *Mobilizing Vietnamese Diaspora for the Kingdom*. Colorado Springs, CO: Publishing SOLO.

# Foreword: A Courageous Walk

By David Hearn

One of the most inspiring moments in my life was retracing the footsteps of our founder, A.B. Simpson, as he transitioned out of the prestigious 13th Street Presbyterian Church to plant a new movement in New York City. Along with a few colleagues from Canada, I walked from the 13th Street parsonage, past the 13th Street Presbyterian Church to the Caledonian Club where Simpson held his first gathering of a new ministry. The walk only takes a few minutes, but it was a pivotal point in the birth of a new movement.

Every new movement for God brings with it a courageous walk! As Simpson walked past the church where he had recently resigned, he was letting go of financial stability, prestige, security, status and future advancement. Each step moved him further away from all the things that humans crave in life, and toward a completely unknown and unpredictable future. It was the walk of a hero. But why did he do it?

There were many reasons, but perhaps the most significant was the church's unwillingness to embrace and welcome new immigrants. Simpson was passionate about reaching the lost and discovered that the most receptive were those who were migrating to New York City from other parts of the globe. On his days off, he would go down to the docks and preach to the Italian immigrants who were coming into the country. Many were getting saved, but when Simpson attempted to bring them into the upper middle-class congregation of 13th Street Presbyterian Church, the message was clear, "No way!" This was a church where you purchased your family pew a year in advance and no one dared sit in your place, even if it were empty.

Something broke in Simpson's heart at that moment and he realized that reaching the nations with the good news of Jesus far outweighed any security, prestige or status he could ever experience. He courageously stepped away from a salary of \$200,000 (by today's standards) and put an ad in the New York paper that read, "If you are interested in reaching the nations for Christ, come and meet with me!"

Only seven people showed up on that cold November day, but a spark was ignited and God's presence and power were poured out on that ordinary group of Christ-followers. A movement began that now spans the globe.

The question my friends and I asked ourselves as we redid Simpson's courageous walk was, "How have we become the very thing that Simpson



left in order to start a new movement for God?" This was, and is, a daunting, soul-searching question.

Is The Christian and Missionary Alliance today still willing to embrace the marginalized, the lonely and the neglected? Have we figuratively "paid for our pew" and now expect to be served rather than serve? Do we see new immigrants as opportunities to reach the nations, or have we become calloused towards the displaced? With the massive migration of people into Canada from countries mired in decades of war, the opportunity abounds to express the love and compassion of Jesus.

One of the threads woven in the stories you are about to read is the incredible love and sacrifice of Alliance men and women to embrace new immigrants. The explosion of global terrorism has forced millions to flee for their lives. Many are ending up in our neighbourhoods or in other countries where they are gaining access to Jesus.

My hope is that these stories will stir your heart and expand your imagination. It is time for a fresh "shaking" in The Christian and Missionary Alliance, an awakening of renewed passion for the most

vulnerable among us. Could it be that God is asking us to take a heroic walk, to move past the places of comfort and the security in our lives in order to engage someone who is new to our country?

My daughter is an elementary school teacher and she was recently offered two very different teaching positions. One was in a Christian school, with like-minded teachers all dedicated to discipling a new generation of Christ-followers. The other was working in a Muslim school where she would be the only believer and everything would be out of her comfort zone. She chose to work in the Muslim school. Many of her students will be new immigrants to Canada and her opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus in serving these families abound. She walked past the known into the unknown, the familiar into the foreign, and the safe into the risky. It was a heroic walk!

What about you?

David Hearn, President  
The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada

It is time for a fresh "shaking" in The Christian and Missionary Alliance, an awakening of renewed passion...

## Dedication



**Ruby Johnston**

This book is dedicated to the memory of Ruby Johnston, who continues to be honoured as the mother of the Chinese Alliance churches of Canada, whose work was launched in quiet determination and faithful prayer over 50 years ago, spanning our nation and the continent, and is reaching out to the distant corners of the Chinese world.

# Ruby Johnston, Mother of the Chinese Alliance Churches

By Eric Greenway

For a quiet, 21-year-old secretary named Ruby Johnston, 1930 would mark a dream, a dream that would one day make an impact across the continent.

Ruby's father, a wholesale lumber dealer, had returned from a religious meeting held at the Orange Hall and announced to his wife and daughters: "I've found everything that satisfies my heart." He had attended a fledgling Alliance congregation.

Reluctant to leave their Methodist church, Ruby, her sister Kae, and her mother did not begin to accompany Mr. Johnston to the Alliance services until April 1930. But when they did, the three female members of the family immediately met Christ in a new way.

From that moment, Ruby had a quiet determination to serve the Lord. While others in the tiny congregation were enthusiastic participants in street meetings and house-to-house evangelism, Ruby, being shy, was hesitant.

But despite her reticence, she had a growing conviction that there was a work for her to do. While Kae and other young Christians around her were preparing for ministry overseas, Ruby noticed that nothing was being done for the few hundred Chinese of Regina, Saskatchewan. Perhaps there was a mission field for her – right at her doorstep.

The obstacles to such a ministry were formidable. Almost all of the Chinese in Regina were men. They were victimized by an immigration policy that viewed them as undesirable and that prevented them from bringing Chinese wives to Canada.

Undaunted by her youth and gender—and her inability to speak a word of Chinese—Ruby obtained Chinese tracts and posters from a missionary. Then she began to visit Chinese laundries, cafés and shoe repair shops. Her determination and vision were contagious. A tall, rugged policeman, Dave Rempel, started to invite Chinese men into his home to study English and the gospel message. When he moved away, an enthusiastic high school student, Beth Allinger, joined Ruby in prayer and visitation. Alf Orthner, another convert of the Alliance, took up the challenge, convinced that



Ruby Johnston, c. 1960s.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives

if missionaries were being sent to China, the handful of Chinese in Regina should be reached as well.

The small group met faithfully on Saturday afternoons to pray before their visitation ministry. Later in the afternoon, Ruby would gather a number of children into her home for Bible stories, and a co-worker taught them choruses.

Although response was limited, there were moments when it seemed something at least was getting through. One of the posters they used depicted a man leaving his old, ragged clothes at the foot of the cross and putting on new clothing. Asked whether he could understand what

that meant, one of the men replied, “Yes! New style!”

For 15 years, only Ruby’s determination and faithfulness in maintaining contacts kept the vision alive. Meetings were held sporadically in the Alliance chapel and other locations, but very few Chinese came. Buddhist parents discouraged their children from attending Sunday school. Communication was difficult, but the Chinese recognized real love – and that began to open their hearts.

In 1944, Ruby left the supervisory position she held with the Workmen’s Compensation Board to become registrar of the three-year-old Canadian Bible Institute (later to become Canadian Bible College). The school soon moved from the basement of the Alliance Tabernacle to a downtown location close to a number of Chinese businesses. With a change in immigration laws that opened the door to Chinese women and young people, came an increased demand for English and citizenship classes – and a number of Bible school students were there to fill the need.

In the early 1950s, students Garth Hunt and Dave Douglas, who both went on as Alliance missionaries to Vietnam, began teaching English to several young Chinese men, among whom was Arthur Louis. Arthur had left mainland China as a teenager to come to Regina to work in his uncle’s restaurant. Arthur’s motivation for memorizing Bible verses and attending church occasionally with the students was purely selfish—he wanted to improve his English.

In 1953, Arthur, while driving with friends, lost control, and the car overturned. He suffered a fractured femur and a broken ankle. During his 10-week hospitalization, Paul Bartel, who had returned from overseas service to be dean of the Bible school, visited him and prayed for him. Suddenly all the verses Arthur had memorized became real to him, especially, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*” (1 John 1:9).

Although few others had been converted in previous years, Arthur became the first baptized convert of the Regina Chinese church – and of the Chinese Alliance church in North America.

It seemed a turning point for the tiny group. Not only did they have a convert in Arthur Louis, they had a young man who was eager to get involved. With Arthur as interpreter and with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Bartel, services were held regularly throughout that year. The following summer, Arthur and another young Chinese convert took responsibility for bi-weekly services in the Bartels’ absence.

If the period from Arthur’s conversion until 1960 was not one of rapid growth, it was a time of stabilization for the congregation. In 1955, it became the Regina Chinese Christian Fellowship. Then in 1956, Dr. and Mrs. Peter Kuan came to Regina from Hong Kong to begin a significant lay ministry. That same year, Arthur Louis returned from a year of studies at Alliance Bible Seminary in Hong Kong with his bride, Margaret. Besides conducting classes to teach Chinese children to read and write their own language, Margaret interpreted for Ruby Johnston during her regular visitation.

Underlying the spare prose of Ruby Johnston’s annual reports in those years is a glow of joyful optimism. In 1957, the average Sunday attendance was 20-25. In 1958, six people prayed for salvation at evangelistic services with Calvin Chao. And 1959 seemed a banner year.

In that year Augustus Chao, a lay preacher who worked in the Hong Kong branch of a New York bank, felt God was telling him to go to Canada. At Mr. Bartel’s urging, ordination proceedings were initiated in order to bring him to Regina. Mr. Chao was asked at that time about his goals. His quick reply would later seem prophetic: “I want to see 50 Chinese churches established.”

With that vision, Mr. Chao arrived in Regina in June 1960. Just a few months later, on January 29, 1961, the first Chinese Alliance church in North America was officially organized. More than anything else, that day marked the culmination of years of prayer, love, faithfulness and sheer determination – especially on the part of Ruby Johnston.

While Regina was its Jerusalem, the history of the Regina Chinese Alliance since 1961 stands as a tribute to its vision to evangelize not only its Judea and Samaria, but also the uttermost parts of the Chinese world.

The legacy of Ruby Johnston's dream remains. Although she died of cancer on July 13, 1983, she continues to be honoured as the mother of the Chinese Alliance churches of Canada and as a friend to the Chinese. The work she launched in quiet determination and faithful prayer over 50 years ago is a living monument today. It is a memorial that spans the nation and the continent and is reaching out to the distant corners of the Chinese world.

*Adapted from the original article in the Alliance Witness  
by Eric Greenway, June 22, 1988*

## Foreword: Why Invest in Missions?

By Bernie Van De Walle

The book you hold in your hands is an exploration of the international ministry of the movement that has come to be known as The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). Even before its inception in 1887, the people who gave birth to this movement, including its founder, Albert Benjamin Simpson (1883–1919), were whole-heartedly devoted to the missionary cause. They worked tirelessly and gave beyond sacrificially to place ambassadors for the Gospel in all lands.<sup>1</sup> While the early Alliance participated in a cadre of other activities and ministries, none were to overshadow or to diminish its steadfast commitment to missions.

One might ask, “Given the very real and pressing needs of their own neighbourhoods, cities, and countries, why did the Alliance place so much emphasis on overseas missions?” That is, if the spiritual and physical needs of those at home were seemingly so great—and undoubtedly, they were—and so close, why did the Alliance prioritize a ministry and invest vast quantities of its resources, both in property and personnel, to those who were so very far away, those that they had never met and likely never would? The question, of course, could continue to be asked about our contemporary situation, “With so many around us, our neighbours, suffering so greatly in both body and soul, why does the Alliance dedicate so much—time, money, effort, and personnel—to reach out to those so far away?” This is an especially poignant question when one realizes that the fruit of these various efforts may not be everything that we would hope them to be.

These questions are good ones and should not be too readily dismissed. After all, Jesus, hearkening back to the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18), exhorts His followers to love their neighbours as themselves (Mark 12:31, Matthew 22:39). The C&MA's reasons for investing so much abroad are both numerous and biblical, including:

- the righteous and dutiful response to the “Great Commission”;
- the natural consequence of the “Deeper Life”;
- the gathering of the “elect”;

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<sup>1</sup> *The Gospel in All Lands* was actually the name of a magazine that Simpson published (1880–1881) that had as its goal the promotion of international mission.

- the destitute situation and impending eternal destruction of a lost humanity;
- and—most importantly for these early Alliance pioneers—the bringing closer (the “hastening”) of the return of Jesus Himself.

The “Great Commission” is the phrase used to identify Jesus’ parting instructions to His followers. While it is found in various iterations (Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:19-23, Acts 1:8, and, perhaps Matthew 24:14), its most famous form is found in Matthew 28:19-20. There, following His resurrection and prior to His ascension, we find Jesus giving His farewell address to His followers. After noting that He has the authority to do so, the Lord said, “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” (Matthew 28:19-20). Why then has the Alliance placed such great emphasis on the deployment of missionaries? The answer may, on the one hand, be this simple: because Jesus said to. For the Alliance, to be involved in foreign missions was a bit of a “no-brainer,” if you will. It was going to go make disciples of all nations. Beyond that, since it was Jesus’ parting command to His people, they deduced that it was that activity that was to occupy their time and effort until He returned.

In addition to being founded for the promotion of missions, the Alliance was also founded to promote and to experience something called the “deeper life.” While the notion of the deeper life is wider than just an emphasis on holy living, it is certainly nothing less. The pursuit of holiness is a significant part, perhaps even the greatest part, of the deeper life. In the history of the Alliance, the deeper life and the emphasis on missions are closely related. This relation is seen in at least two ways: first, in perspective, and second, in practice.

When thinking about holiness, we do well to remember that the Christian notion of holiness is not merely adhering to a list of abstract virtues, even those that we might draw from Scripture. Instead, Christian holiness centres on nothing other and nothing less than Jesus Himself; to be holy is to be like Christ. Holiness is Christ-likeness. The apostle Paul promotes this idea by noting that the goal of God’s saving work in our lives is that we would be conformed to the image of the Son (Romans 8:29).

Consequently, Paul notes that those God is saving are gaining the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). This means that they gain, among other things, Christ’s perspective, Christ’s priorities, and Christ’s agenda. For this reason, believers cannot help but become involved in those activities that marked Jesus’ own life. In His own words, Jesus’ activity on Earth was to seek and to save those that are lost (Matthew 18:11; Luke 19:10). Moreover,

the apostle John reminds us that if we profess to be His followers we must do as He did (1 John 2:6). Of course, this would include preaching good news to the poor, freedom to the captives, sight to the blind, and working to set the oppressed free (Luke 4:18; Matthew 11:5). It would mean laying down their lives for others (John 10:11; John 15:13; Romans 5:8; and 1 John 3:16). Seeking the lost, preaching good news, and laying down one’s life for others are at the core of what missions is all about. To pursue the deeper life well, therefore, is also to take up missions. The two cannot be divorced. One cannot have a passion for the deeper life, for Christ-likeness, and not also be involved, in some way or another, in missionary activity. While some may suggest that one can pursue holiness apart from a dedication to the missions work of the Church, such a disposition is not only biblically unwarranted, it is rather unChrist-like.

Another reason that the C&MA has been so committed to missionary work is that it might be involved in the work of gathering from among the nations, what some might call “the elect.” Theologically, the “elect” refers to those who God has—in His mercy, love, and wisdom—chosen from all eternity to be in relation with Him and in whom His grace will be effective, preparing and enabling them to respond positively to the Gospel (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9). Simpson understood that while God did the choosing and preparing of the elect, He left the collecting of those He elected to the Church. Therefore, Simpson wrote:

We know that He has some people in every nation whom His Providence and Spirit are preparing to accept the Gospel, and our business is to find them and bring them to Him. We cast our nets into the great sea, but we do not gather all the fish that are in the sea, and when we shall have gathered all who are willing to accept the Gospel message, this commission is ended. (Simpson, 1912, pp 201-211).

Fourth, the Alliance has committed itself to missions because of the situation in which humanity finds itself, a destitute situation of impending destruction and doom. In addition to seeking to address the often-deplorable conditions in which people find themselves, the Alliance has always been convinced that those apart from Christ “*are separated from the life of God, and can be saved only through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.*”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Article 5, “Statement of Faith,” The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada.

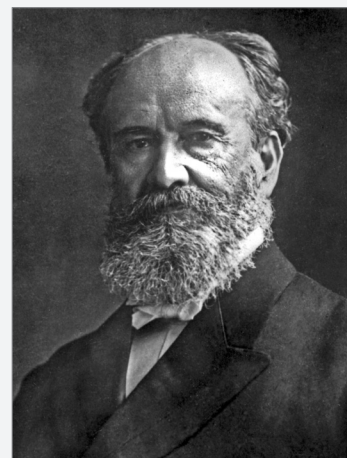
(Romans 8:8; 1 John 2:2). The language used in the very next sentence of that same statement to describe the eternal destiny of those who remain alienated from Christ is most vivid and heartrending. Therefore, given this urgent and desperate need, the Alliance is dedicated to bringing the blessing of Christ to them.

The fifth and final motivation to missionary activity that we will address is one that may sound both novel and even bizarre to many contemporary Alliance people. Yet, when the movement was first formed, it was the leading, most influential, and to some degree, precipitating one. As is the case today, in those days there were many reasons for being involved in missions. For Simpson, his colleagues, and his followers, however, one reason to be involved in missions stood head and shoulders above others. In Simpson's words, "*best of all it is to bring Christ Himself back again.*" (Simpson, 1965, p. 66).

While this idea's popularity is currently waning, particularly in North America, the Alliance has historically held that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—what theologians often call the *Parousia*—is the direct effect of the Church's efforts. This belief is based particularly, though not exclusively, on the C&MA's historic interpretation of Matthew 24:14 (and, by extension, Mark 13:10). There, in talking about the end times, Jesus tells His disciples, "*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*" Simpson and others concluded, then, that if you want Jesus to return, the way to bring it about is by evangelizing "all nations." This task of preaching the Gospel to the whole world is what we call "missions." For the early C&MA, the reason to be involved in missions is about, as they would often say, "Bringing Back the King." They understood the relation between these two aspects to be so automatic, that at one point, Simpson referred to the evangelicalism of the world as "*the lever that will hasten His return*" (Simpson, 1965, p. 66).

The reason they wanted to bring Jesus back was at least two-fold. First, the love that this band of believers had for Him was so great that they were willing to do whatever it would take to bring Him that much closer. He was truly their beloved. He was their "blessed hope." They didn't long for Jesus merely as the courier of something else for which they longed; He was, instead, Himself, the very object of that longing. They loved Jesus intensely and they longed for the intensified intimacy that would accompany His more immediate presence on Earth. They longed for Jesus' return as one yearns for anyone or anything that they deeply love. Second, they desired Jesus because they understood that He alone was the all-sufficient answer to the world's present ills. While the Church could (and should) do what it could to alleviate suffering in the present—and these people were heavily involved

### Albert B. Simpson



Albert Simpson was born in Cavendish, Prince Edward Island, Canada. His conversion of faith began under the ministry of Henry Grattan Guinness, a visiting evangelist from Ireland during the revival of 1859. Simpson grew up in the Chatham, Ontario area, and received his theological training at Knox College, University of Toronto. At age twenty-one, he accepted a call to the large Knox Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ontario, and later to Louisville, Kentucky.

Simpson was called to the Thirteenth Street Presbyterian Church in New York City, where he immediately began reaching out to the world with the Gospel. Two years later, he resigned in order to begin an independent ministry to the many new immigrants and the neglected masses of New York City.

In 1889, Simpson and his church family moved into their new home, the New York Tabernacle. This became the base not only of his ministry of evangelism in the city, but also of his growing work of a deeper life and missions fellowship, which became what we know as The Christian and Missionary Alliance (see *The Life of A.B. Simpson* by A.E. Thompson).

in what today we might call types of relief work—they realized that even the best of such efforts were ultimately merely symptomatic. While they may for a time soothe the world's ills, the cure for them was beyond their ability. The ills of the world are so deeply entrenched that nothing short of the return of Jesus is able to address and, ultimately, solve them. If, then, the world was going to get better, Jesus Himself, was to come back to make it so.

Indeed, it was for all these reasons that the Alliance was well justified in investing significant resources in overseas missions.

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# PART A - THE WORK

## Opening the Work in Africa

By Eric Persson

*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15:16)*

In John 15:16, Jesus gave the first indication of a principle that would eventually be formalized in the Great Commission. That “going” led Alliance international workers from the USA, Canada, Holland, and France to the French-speaking territories of sub-Saharan Africa. From the beginning,

...the Alliance has always sought to go to areas of the world where there was no other witness to the Gospel.

the Alliance has always sought to go to areas of the world where there was no other witness to the Gospel. From the beginning, it was also a “church planting” Mission. Its goals were that, through direct evangelism, translation of the Scriptures into local languages, and training of national pastors in Bible schools, culturally relevant churches would be established.

The principle of separation of Church and Mission ensured that, while our international workers would be governed and directed by their sending Western leadership, the churches that would be established in new territories would be self-sustaining, self-governing and self-propagating.

Over the last 100 years that “going” in West Africa has produced fruit, just as Jesus said it would. While a number of the 1,000 plus pastors have received training in France, Canada and/or the United States, 99% were trained in vernacular language Bible colleges in their own countries. There are also three higher level Bible colleges and a seminary that are taught in French and have been shared by the Alliance churches in the area.

We recognize that these results came slowly in the beginning and that a great price was paid in order to reach a place where the National Churches in the countries where the Alliance has worked are reaching their nations for Christ. It all started in 1890 when a group of seven American missionaries who called themselves "The Sudan Band" sailed for the west coast of Africa. Their goal was to take the Gospel to the millions who lived in what was then called "The French Sudan" under colonial rule.

Freetown, in Sierra Leone, where they first stepped on African soil, proved an inhospitable host. Within three weeks of their arrival, three of this band were dead. The Alliance sent out an additional fourteen to join the effort. The climate and a host of new diseases continued to take their toll and Sierra Leone soon became known as "the missionary graveyard." It wasn't until 1917 that any permanent progress was made as permission was granted to enter Conakry in French Guinea, and a station was opened in Baro.

In 1921, an Alliance headquarters for work in French West Africa was established in the administrative town of Kankan in the mountains of Guinea. The goal was to establish a line of mission stations about fifty miles apart from the west coast of Africa to Timbuktu on the edge of the Sahara Desert at the elbow of the great Niger River.

The arrival of three railroads stretching from the coast into the interior made transportation possible to great sections of the hinterland. An ever-increasing flow of new international workers could hardly keep up with the task of opening new stations, building residences, learning new languages, preaching the Gospel and translation work.

In 1938, it was reported that nearly half a million pages of Scripture portions and helps were printed in different languages. Now the work had moved eastward and southward into the areas that are today the Republic of Mali and the Republic of Burkina Faso (then known as Upper Volta). Finally, the advance of Alliance efforts turned back towards the west coast and the Republic of Ivory Coast.

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## Chapter 1

# Guinea



Note: Maps are not drawn to scale



# C&MA Ministry, Conception Through Maturity

By Dan Ibsen

*“...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6)*

In the early years of The Christian and Missionary Alliance’s (C&MA) effort to reach French West Africa with the Gospel, over 30 workers lost their lives to tropical diseases before even gaining a foothold in the French territory. Those who remained persevered because they were called by Christ to plant His church where His name was not yet known. Today in Guinea there are about 85,000 believers and nearly 600 C&MA churches in four different ethnic groups. This church has a significant presence on the national stage in the country and has sent over 20 cross-cultural workers to the unreached peoples in other areas of the country.

Church planting, like birthing a child and guiding it toward maturity, is a difficult and costly process that can bring great joy and fulfillment.

## Conception

The work in Guinea and French West Africa was conceived in the heart of the C&MA’s founder, Dr. A.B. Simpson: “The Soudan and West coast, stretching from Bengal to Benguel, with a population of eighty million, have about two hundred missionaries, or one to every four hundred thousand; and many tribes on the Upper Niger, the Binue, and other rivers, and in the interior, are wholly unevangelized.” (Simpson, 1882, p. 41).

All mission work was concentrated in the coastal areas that are easily accessible. Alliance workers sought to find the headwaters of the Niger River in Guinea and used the river as a highway into the vast unreached interior of French West Africa. Their desire was to establish a chain of mission posts along the banks of the Niger to serve as “lighthouses” from which they could evangelize the millions of unreached peoples in this area.

The Soudan and West coast...with a population of eighty million, have about two hundred missionaries, or one to every four hundred thousand...

## Gestation

The first group of eight workers left the United States in May 1890. They went to Freetown and followed the Rokel River to the interior to find the source of the Niger. Three of the eight succumbed to tropical fever and died within the first month.

During the next 28 years, about 100 joined the effort in Sierra Leone. They set out to establish posts along the Rokel to facilitate travel to the French Soudan. This thrust became known as the Soudan Mission.

From 1890 to 1918, numerous attempts were made to get permission from the French colonial authorities to begin work in Guinea so they could find the headwaters of the Niger. However, trips to Paris and voyages across Sierra Leone to attempt entry into Guinea at the frontier town of Faranah were repelled by French authorities. The door to Guinea was firmly shut.

## Birth

The gestation period for the Guinea mission drew to a close in 1918. Because of American participation as allies to France in World War I, France was more disposed to consider allowing Protestant missions to enter French West Africa. In 1917, while returning to Freetown from the U.S. by ship, A.E. Loose met a French colonial official who arranged for the Looses to meet the governor of the region in Conakry. This meeting was favorable.

In 1918, the governor granted permission to the C&MA to begin a work in French West Africa. Several exploratory trips indicated great openness and freedom to proclaim the gospel message. Toward the end of 1918, the town of Baro was chosen as the initial site in Guinea for the C&MA Mission. This town is located on the Niandan River near where it joins the Niger and was about a kilometre from the new rail line.

In January 1919, the first C&MA workers, R.S. Roseberry and C.C. Ryan moved to Baro to begin working there. Mrs. Roseberry and Claire Ellenberger joined them in April. The new work in Guinea was born.

## Childhood: Rapid Growth

For twenty years, the ministry expanded rapidly in Guinea as well as the rest of the French Soudan. Eleven different mission posts were established throughout the country. Workers were committed to a strategy that included ongoing intense evangelism and regular in-depth training of new believers.

Two couples were sent to each new community, alternating ministries in three-week cycles. One couple went to all the surrounding communities, holding itinerant evangelistic campaigns every day. Their colleagues remained

### Robert and Edith Roseberry



R.S. Roseberry went as a single missionary from his home in Pennsylvania to Sierra Leone in 1909. He married Edith, also a single missionary, in his second term. In 1919 they became the first missionary couple to live and work in Guinea.

Roseberry was appointed as field chairman and served in this role for over 30 years, retiring in 1955. Under his leadership, churches were established throughout Guinea and all of French West Africa. One could say that Roseberry was to West Africa what the Apostle Paul was to the expansion of the early Church.

During his last term in Africa, the French government gave Roseberry, the Cross of the National Order of the Legion of Honour. (from Maurice Irvin's article in *Alliance Life* entitled "A Giant in West Africa" Vol. 126, No. 22, Nov. 6, 1991. Pages 8-10.)

in the central village, discipling and training those who made decisions or were interested in more teaching. They taught three hours per day, five days a week. The curriculum included Scripture memorization, singing hymns, hearing Bible stories, and basic literacy training. After the three weeks were up, the couples changed places. This intense program of evangelism and teaching enabled the developing new believers to be well established in their new-found faith.

Another contributing factor to the churches' rapid growth was the commitment of new believers to take the message to their families. One such individual was Cova Zoumanigui who had received a good French education and managed the store of a French merchant in Kankan. His friend worked for the Ellenberger missionary family and Cova waited daily on their veranda for his friend to finish work. Pastor Ellenberger gave Cova a Bible which he read, and duly came to accept the message of Christ's salvation, after which he enrolled in catechism classes. Subsequently, Cova became burdened for his people, the Tomas, who live in the Macenta region of Guinea about 300 km to the south of Kankan. He asked the Mission to send a couple to his home region.

In 1931, a couple became available, so Cova advised his employer that he was resigning to go and evangelize his people. The business owner gave him a month off for the trip. When Cova returned at the end of the month, he again tendered his resignation and even though the owner offered him both a raise in pay and a promotion, he left determined. He was instrumental in reaching both the Macenta and N'Zerekore districts with the message of Christ. His sacrifice and commitment played a big part in opening the forest region of Guinea.

Literature and Bible translation were also important to the growth and development of the new church. In 1939, the C&MA press in Kankan, Guinea, printed 227,000 pages of literature in 11 different languages. Early workers gave themselves to sharing the message and affirming the new believers.

### Adolescence: Seeking Independence

Mission work entered the adolescent phase (1940-1964) with a focus of preparing the developing church for independence. World War II and the independence movements in the African colonies both contributed to a shift in the Missions' focus. Because of the war, many workers could not return to their posts in Africa. Some who remained in Guinea were incarcerated by the Germans who had taken over the colonial government when they conquered France. The absence of missionaries motivated local believers to take on greater responsibility for the church.

When international workers were allowed to return in 1945, the Mission placed a strong emphasis on leadership training. It was also responding to increased desire in the African colonies to gain independence from the colonial authorities.

Two Bible schools were started. The Baro women's training school opened in 1944. Women from all over Guinea went to Baro to live in dormitories and be trained in such things as basic literacy, Bible stories, scripture memorization, how to be godly women and good parents, household management, sewing, and small business principles. Many of these women became pastors' wives and played a significant role in the growth and development of the women's ministry in the emerging church.

The other school that was started at this time was Telekoro Bible Institute—a resident Bible school program for those who wanted to be pastors and leaders in the church. The school acquired a beautiful property near Kissidougou with enough land for students and faculty to have fields that they could cultivate in order to earn enough to cover school expenses. Telekoro continues to train pastors and church leaders today.

From these schools have gone forth men and women with a deep heart knowledge of the Word of God and a fervent desire to win souls. The graduates of these schools are today the spiritual leaders of the Guinea Church (Ratzloff, 1960).

In the early 1950s, districts began to organize and select their own leadership for their churches. The Mission also began to encourage the believers from the various areas of Guinea to come together for fellowship. Churches existed in four different ethnic regions, but the believers did not know each other. The first inter-ethnic conference in 1953 was so well appreciated that this became an annual event, unifying the Guinean believers. They began to develop a national identity.

In September 1958, a month before the independence referendum in Guinea, the Mission and church met to discuss a path toward self-support and self-governance for the Guinean church. Each district was to become financially responsible for the support of pastors over the ensuing three-year period. The Mission would decrease its level of support to 60% the first year, 40% the second and 20% the third year, and after that the church would assume 100% of its pastors' salaries and operational costs. Ralph Shellrude played a key role in this process. He was also instrumental in helping the Kissi churches begin to give towards the support of their pastors.

Between 1958 and 1962 the church made great strides towards financial and governmental independence from the Mission. They elected an interim national leadership committee, adopted new statutes and bylaws, and elected their first national executive committee. By 1962, the churches no longer received Mission subsidy for pastors' salaries and were caring for their own operational expenses. The name adopted by the newly formed church was the "Evangelical Protestant Church of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Guinea" (later shortened to the French initials EPEG).

### **Young Adulthood: Taking Responsibility**

The young church and the parent Mission faced several significant challenges as they sought to adapt to church independence. International workers needed to learn to let the Guineans take the lead and make their own decisions; the church had to learn to no longer depend on them to direct their actions.

In the 1958 national referendum, Guinea voted to leave all association with the French colonial power and was the only West African country to take such a strong stand on independence. All former conventions with the French colonial authorities needed to be renegotiated with the new Guinean government. Each district of the church and the National Church leadership had to submit their governing documents to the new political

leadership. The Mission also had to submit its documents for government approval. These actions at the political level forced the church to develop a clear organizational structure. Also, they necessitated extensive contact with political authorities in Conakry.

In 1964, the Mission moved its headquarters from Kankan to Conakry, the capital of Guinea. The National Church followed suit. A new church was planted for the first time in Conakry and the Mission and the church began to reach out to this area of the country.

A decision by Guinean president Sekou Toure helped the church take even greater responsibility for its life and ministry. In his May 1, 1967 speech, Touré declared that within one month all expatriate missionaries had to be gone from Guinea. He wanted the Guinean churches to be led by Guineans, not foreigners. A call to prayer went out and many prayed that God would intervene and allow C&MA workers to remain.

Ralph Shellrude, field leader, sought an audience with the president and a meeting was arranged for May 20. In the meantime, Paul Keita, president of EPEG, had written asking the government to permit C&MA missionaries to remain to help train Guinean leaders. He said that he was already the leader of the church, but that they still needed the missionaries to help with training their pastors at the Bible school. When Ralph went to see Touré, he gave permission for the C&MA personnel at the Bible school, the MK school in Mamou, and one administrative couple in Conakry to remain.

They could neither preach in evangelistic campaigns nor speak in public except in a constructed church building. They needed written permission from the regional governor to travel. These policies basically restricted the international workers to the school where they were serving, so the National Church had to step up and take responsibility for evangelism.

The 1970s saw the church develop several effective approaches to evangelism to attract people to gather and hear the Gospel. This included: music and choirs; youth-organized evangelistic campaigns throughout the church districts; and district-organized evangelistic teams that held several campaigns annually. Claire Ellenberger's son, Paul, was teaching at the Bible school. He noted that evangelistic effort increased significantly in the decade of the 1970s and "there was an explosion of people responding to the message." (Ellenburger, 2015). The church now owned responsibility for spreading the Gospel in its own districts.

### **Adult Years: Maturing Through Life's Circumstances**

From 1980 to the present, the Guinean church has had to face many significant challenges. EPEG has also developed a vision to reach out to the unreached

peoples of Guinea. In 1982, Touré's government granted permission for a new mission to be established in Guinea. The Swiss-based mission, Philafrican, was given a green light in 1982 to engage in medical work in the Macenta region. Their workers also wanted to work with the EPEG church. The church has had to manage relationships with two missions that have differing philosophies of ministry. This has stretched both the church and the missions. They had to learn ways of working together in this challenging three-way relationship.

In 1984, Touré died and the military took over power. The new president, Lansana Conté, opened Guinea to western countries and invited the international community to come and help. This initiated an influx of churches and mission agencies. The C&MA put a significant emphasis on Guinea and during the next 10 years assigned over 31 missionaries to the country. Canadian workers who came in this period included:

- Phil and Judy Ralph (Bible school and Maninka people group ministry);
- Jack and Lynne Campbell (Susu people group ministry and Theological Education by Extension);
- Larry and Pixie Charter (Bible school, Maninka people group ministry);
- Dan and Melodie Ibsen (Theological Education by Extension, ministry to the Kissi church peoples, leadership training and field leadership);
- Lizette Lavoie (leadership training, women's ministry, and compassion ministries);
- Ray and Kathy Cobb (Maninka people group ministry).

Over half of the new workers were assigned to reach the unreached peoples of Guinea.

During the 1980s, EPEG greatly influenced the church with the creation of private church schools. A young pastor, Samuel Kamano, went to N'Zerekore district to do his Bible school internship in 1983. He had been trained in child development by Dorothy Adam, a missionary who taught at Telekoro Bible Institute. Samuel had a vision to give preschool children preparatory training in French and biblical principles.

When government officials in the area heard what he was doing, they insisted he include their children. His first group had 30 preschoolers. The next year the parents requested Samuel to continue with these children, and so he taught them first grade in French. Samuel trained others to teach, returned to Telekoro for his remaining two years of Bible school, and went back to N'Zerekore to help establish the school. He served there until 1990, then started schools in several of the major centres in Guinea. He also developed a teacher training program for all who taught in the church

### Isaac Keita



Isaac Keita grew up as a pastor's son in Guinea. After completing his seminary studies at Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, Saskatchewan, he returned to Guinea and was elected president of the National Church for nine years. From 1996 until his death in 2012, Dr. Keita served at the West Africa Alliance Seminary in Abidjan as professor, academic dean and president. He completed his doctor of ministry degree at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

schools. Today, many of these schools are noted to be among the best in Guinea and have given the church a positive reputation for contributing to the community (Kamano, 2015).

In the early 1980s, EPEG established a national evangelism team under the leadership of Daniel Maro Beavogui who had developed a passion for evangelism through his mission courses in Bible school (Beavogui, 2015). This team planned evangelistic outings in areas of the country where there was not a strong church presence. In the latter part of the 1980s, the team held a congress on evangelism. This gathering proved to be a turning point for the church. Believers began to catch a vision for the whole nation and for all its unreached peoples.

This national team also organized an evangelistic campaign in Conakry. Until the late 1980s, there was only one C&MA church in the city. The national leadership decided to plant three new churches there. In 1987, they planned intense evangelistic campaigns in each of the three target locations. This resulted in doubling the attendance at C&MA churches in the capital region. Campaigns were held, and churches started in several communities in the part of the country that is majority Muslim. In the latter part of the 1990s, EPEG began to send national workers to these regions. The evangelistic team changed function and became a department of the church known as Mission EPEG. Today the Mission EPEG director affirms that his department has sent and helps support 22 missionaries to the unreached peoples of Guinea (Onivogui, 2015). Missions had now come full circle.

The 1990s saw a huge influx of refugees, over 800,000 citizens fleeing to Guinea from neighbouring Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. Each

country had experienced civil war. The forest region of Guinea, where EPEG is strongest, borders these three nations. As the refugees arrived in large numbers, the Guinean believers, despite their meager resources, welcomed them. Some even fed their seed rice to their guests. Because of the challenge of this situation, they appealed to the Mission for help. The Mission responded by calling refugee organizations to meet this need. CAMA Services (Compassion and Mercy Associates), the relief and development arm of the C&MA, came to Guinea and worked with the church and the other organizations. The church created its own non-governmental organization called SECADOS to work with CAMA Services.

The refugee program presented a great temptation to pastors and church members. Some pastors saw the program as a means for personal gain and took rice that was designated for refugees (Kamano, 2015). This set a poor example for believers. Because leaders got away with this, the church lost its moral ability to discipline those who misused funds. The church learned a great deal through its efforts to respond in compassion to this influx of refugees.

Since 1990, there have been several political and social crises in Guinea. These have tested and strengthened the church. Often when the country was on the verge of political chaos, the government leaders would call the church to pray and mediate. On several occasions civil war was averted through the prayers of the church. The church has been instrumental in negotiating peace between various factions in the country.

Internal problems have also challenged and strengthened the church. One of the National Church leaders had introduced the church into a partnership with the World Council of Churches without consulting or gaining the support of other leaders. He had also been accused of misusing funds and creating projects for his personal benefit in the name of the church. Leaders met to discuss the theological implications of this situation, taking disciplinary action and handling the matter without Mission involvement.

The 2013 ethnic uprising enabled the church under attack to show Christ's love. The Kpele are the majority group in the church in the N'Zerekore region and an incident involving the killing of a young man from another ethnic group triggered attacks on the Kpele, specifically targeting the church. They ransacked and burned church buildings, pastors' residences and schools.

As the refugees arrived in large numbers, the Guinean believers, despite their meager resources, welcomed them.

The church responded with grace, which was a huge testimony to the people and to government officials.

EPEG has also demonstrated its concern and compassion during the recent Ebola crisis in Guinea. When others shunned Ebola patients, Guinean pastors visited them. The crisis left families decimated: children were orphaned, many lost their spouses and often many of their children. Canadian international worker, Lizette Lavoie, encouraged the church to respond with compassion and initiated programs for widows and orphans of Ebola so they could get back on their feet and the kids could get back to school. The church was also engaged in helping people learn how to treat and avoid Ebola. Many people mistrusted government programs to try to curb the disease, and a Guinean pastor was killed when a crowd rioted during one of these training sessions. His widow's response was to forgive those who killed her husband. Today in that area of the country, several have responded to the Gospel.

The C&MA Mission in Guinea is proud to see the fruit of its efforts as EPEG takes its place alongside Alliance international workers and other mission and church agencies as they seek to influence and impact Guinea for Christ. The church has grown in its ability to deal with the issues and challenges of being the people of God in an often hostile environment. It has also obtained a reputation for demonstrating the power of God through prayer and its efforts in peacemaking on the national scene. The Guinean director of the Bible school expresses his perception of the church in these terms: "Now the church is at a level of autonomy and maturity. Today the church is mature." (Millimouno, 2015).

Childrearing is challenging, costly and rewarding!



Victims of Ebola, 2015. Courtesy Lizette Lavoie

**Guinea Alliance Statistics**



Churches:  
578



Ordained  
Pastors:  
224



Inclusive  
Members:  
86,565

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

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**Mali and Burkina Faso**



Note: Maps are not drawn to scale

# The Road to Timbuktu

By Eric Persson

*“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last...” (John 15:16)*

After the declaration of independence from the colonial French powers for the countries of West Africa, Canadian Alliance international workers arrived on the scene. Like many in the American Alliance, some of our first Canadian personnel started their careers in Guinea and then were transferred into the interior. In these beginning years, the fields of Mali and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) were joined under one administration in Bobo-Dioulasso, in Upper Volta.

In 1960, Kay Thompson began her French language study in Paris. Her first assignment was as nurse at the school for missionary kids in Mamou. She was later transferred to Mali where her career continued for 34 years until 1993.



Joan Foster visiting a village, date unknown.  
Courtesy Eric Persson

Joan (Foster) Sylvester began her career in 1965 and was assigned to Mamou as the school nurse. She was transferred to Mali and her ministry continued for 39 years. Both Kay and Joan spent a large part of their careers setting up medical and maternity clinics throughout Mali. They trained nationals to the point that they were able to run these medical facilities as centres where both physical and spiritual needs were met.

Dennis and Dorrie Hansen and Jim and Marilyn Flynn were assigned to ministry in Mali after French language studies in Quebec.

Myrna Jones, a nurse, was the first Canadian Alliance worker to arrive in Upper Volta. She did her French studies in Paris, France where she met an American Alliance worker, Lin Ballard, who had grown up in Mali. They were married in Bobo-Dioulasso before beginning their work in the Nouna district.

Gwen and I, with two young children, did our French language studies in Albertville, France in 1969 and went directly to Upper Volta to enter a church-planting ministry in the Banfora district in the south of Upper Volta.

Dave and Denise Golding were the last of our Canadian international workers in the region. They did their French language studies in Quebec before going to Burkina Faso. They spent one term in the Banfora region before being assigned as dorm parents at the Ivory Coast Academy. During an evacuation, Dave tragically died of a heart attack and was buried at Yamoussoukro; Denise and the children returned to Canada.

Sherry (Hoover) Spaans did an internship in the Missions office and Gerald Hogenbirk taught at Maranatha Bible College for one year, replacing me during one of our home assignments.

While our roles seem easy to define, it is more difficult when it comes to the contributions made. As the Scriptures say, some planted, some watered, and some harvested, but it is God who gives the increase. (See 1 Corinthians 3:6).

## Church Planting in Banfora

I remember walking into the city of Banfora for the first time. We had been assigned to the district to do church planting. I prayed, “This is beyond us. It doesn’t fit with our personalities or the spiritual gifts that have been in our lives up to now. However, because leadership has said that this is the need of the church in Burkina, we will do this with all our hearts, but You are going to have to transform us and gift us in new ways.”

As we look back over the two terms we spent in that ministry, we see that our role was that of inviters or collaborators. Within a few months of our arrival, I took a couple of our young people to a youth camp. The speaker was a young man from Mali, Yiranou, who was in his senior year at Bible school in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast. As the week progressed, I felt the Lord prompting me to speak to him. I asked him if he would consider coming to Banfora to help us. He said that for years, as he took the train down to Bible school, he passed through the Banfora district and the Lord burdened him with the fact that there was no Gospel witness in the area. It took some negotiation with his church in Mali, but upon graduation from Bible school, he came to work with us.

In spite of the fact that Gwen and I were in Gouin language study, because there was no pastor at the little rural church that had been established by the former missionary, we began preaching and teaching when we arrived. With Yiranou’s arrival, we also began to reach out to the four largest towns on the outer borders of the district. They were the towns where there were major markets that brought people in from smaller centres each week.

Again, we requested help for the expanding work. An evangelist from the Dogon district, Adalai Doyon, and the district president, Jacque Toni, from the Tougan district came to help us in one-week evangelism in the town of Orodara. Within a couple of years, we had small groups in Orodara and Niangoloko. These towns were far enough away that we could not give proper supervision to the new believers on a regular basis.

Three pastors from the Sanakui district in Mali responded to our appeal for help. One was assigned to Orodara, a second to Niangoloko and the third settled with the original rural church in Siniena. This allowed Yiranou and me to focus on the growing church in Banfora. A border conflict later forced these pastors to return to Mali, but churches had been established. Yiranou went to study at Canadian Theological Seminary (CTS) in Regina, Saskatchewan, before returning to an evangelistic ministry in Mali and surrounding countries. I later invited him to regularly teach courses on evangelism at Maranatha Bible College.

Our language study was on the Gouin language because it was used by the small group in Siniena. As we began to move out into the district, we found that there were close to twenty different language groups in the Banfora district. The new groups that were being formed were in different language groups, so we were constantly forced to use our French and work with a translator.

While visiting our children at the MK school, we met the director for Wycliffe Bible Translators in West Africa. We talked about the situation in the Banfora district and discovered they were looking for an opportunity to expand their ministry into Burkina Faso. Within a year, there were three teams of translators working with us. One team worked out of Orodara, another worked out of Niangoloko and a third team centred in Banfora. They were great contributors to the establishment of the new churches in the district.

## Teaching

As we broke with the tradition of working in the rural areas and moved to the key centre of Banfora, we felt like spectators watching God at work. We were meeting in a small mud brick chapel that was about 10m x 15m. That was adequate for the Gouin family that had moved from Siniena to work in Bandora, plus several other believers. That small group was all that we had for months.

The group of believers all walked to church, so one Sunday morning we were surprised to hear a motorbike drive up. Pascal and his wife, two mature believers, had just moved to the small town of Nafona, just outside of Banfora to teach at a rural school. Soon after, we had three fine looking young men

walk into our Sunday service. Joseph, Samuel, and Zongo had been hired as foremen in the new sugarcane factory the government opened north of Banfora. They were also mature believers with a heart for ministry.

When the new school year began, Moussa arrived in Banfora. In Burkina there are many elementary schools and a smaller number of high schools. If you passed your final grade of elementary school and had high enough marks to go to high school, you were assigned to one of those high schools. Moussa was from the Nouna district but was assigned to the high school in Banfora.

These men, along with Lazare Hema, became the leaders of the Banfora church. My role for the first two terms there, was to train them to be preachers and teachers who could go into some of the new church plants as they were formed. Gwen worked with a couple of key women for ministry among the women and children. By the time we were reassigned for our third term, these men and women had assumed ministry roles throughout the church. They all took roles as lay leaders within the broader National Church structure. Four of them had a hand in preparing future pastors for the church as I invited them to give seminars on the areas of ministry where they had spiritual gifts and experience.

When Moussa finished his high school studies, we sent him to the Bible school in Yamoussoukro that offered a bachelor's degree. He eventually became the pastor of the church in Banfora during our second term. From there he went to Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina for his master's degree and later became the director of Maranatha Bible School for a period of time before going to the USA for his doctoral studies. Years after Gwen and I had left Africa, I returned to Burkina with short-term missions (STM) teams from Beulah Alliance Church (Edmonton, Alberta), and found all of the original team of church leaders still carrying on in effective ministries.

The story that stands out from those beginning years is that of Enoch Hema. He and his cousin, Yakouba, were in elementary school when we arrived in Banfora. They sat in the front row of the church on Sunday and spent many days at our home playing with our children. Enoch, being timid, always lived in the shadow of Yakouba who was more outgoing. Yakouba eventually went to university and became a teacher and the coach of Burkina's



Eric Persson teaching, 2004.  
Courtesy Eric Persson



women's national volleyball team. When our son Mark became a university soccer coach in Oklahoma, he invited Yakouba to be his assistant coach. This allowed Yakouba to get his master's degree, marry an American girl, and he now works with troubled youth in the justice system in Seattle, Washington.

Enoch came to Maranatha at the time I was president of the Bible college. During freshmen testimony time, at the beginning of the year, Enoch's turn came. He started by saying, "Each of us have left our fathers to come to Bible school. I, too, have left my father, but I have come to find my second Father." It was pretty special for Gwen and me to have a part in his training and to see him grow "*in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.*" (See Luke 2:62).

God gifted Enoch as an evangelist and in composing songs in the Gouin language. He went to Guoin villages to sing and preach the Gospel, establishing churches in many that were part of the vision God had given us for the Banfora district many years ago.

As time went on, it was discovered that Enoch had sickle cell anemia. When I visited Burkina later, I found that the disease had rendered him blind, but he was still preaching on the radio and in villages around the district. He was so excited to tell me that he was opening another Christian bookstore in Niagoloko near the bus station, where people would stop by and purchase Bibles, Christian literature and CDs. He now has five Christian bookstores. Most sickle cell anemia sufferers do not live past their thirties, but Enoch is in his mid-fifties and still going strong in ministry.

### **Maranatha Bible College**

In our third term, we realized anew that, though this ministry matched our personalities and our primary spiritual giftedness, we needed the Holy Spirit working within us and through us if anything of eternal significance was to be accomplished for God's Kingdom. We again asked Him to equip us for the ministry He had for us, and once more we witnessed Him at work in building His Church.

Gwen became the office manager, college president's secretary/accountant, and in charge of producing all the course materials for the college and our Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program. I became the college president and then mentored several African vice presidents for the Bible college until they were ready to take on the task of president.

This was still just a young ministry that in many ways went against what had been the norm in the way pastors were trained in West Africa for decades. It took the established African leadership time to make that transition, from training in the trade language for men with no formal

schooling, to the idea of training those who were at the high school level. The former process had excluded the vast numbers of young men who were part of the country's expanding educational programs. As the step was made to a French language Bible college, slowly momentum began to increase as scores of young men in the Burkina church, who had high school training, began to feel the call of God on their lives and were sent to Maranatha for five years of training.

After a few years, through conversations with the presidents of the Alliance churches in Côte d'Ivoire and the Republic of Mali, recognition of the potential of pastoral training at this level moved them to send scores of students from their regions as well. Other denominations and organizations also sent their students to Maranatha. This cross-pollination from the diverse churches, ministries, and cultures brought greater ministry insights to the graduates.

...a critical mass of progressively-minded young men entered ministry and worked their way through the ranks to eventually becoming the leaders of a strong National Alliance Church...

In the end, a critical mass of progressively-minded young men entered ministry and worked their way through the ranks to eventually become the leaders of a strong National Alliance Church which God is now moving into areas of impact on the Burkina society where Western missionaries never dreamed possible. To have been part of that process is a very humbling honour.

In many areas of West Africa, the church experienced rapid growth, but scores of churches filled with recent converts had no pastor to lead them. They were led by older men or someone who could at least read the Bible and try to explain passages as they understood them. However, they often interpreted Scripture through the filters of their past Animistic or Islamic experience. The dangers and occurrence of heresies were a constant threat.

After further studies at CTS, I was named both the president of the college and director of a proposed TEE program to train the lay leadership of the church. We had seen firsthand that lay leaders were functioning as church leaders and their ability to do that effectively would be progressively enhanced through ongoing TEE studies.

Before I took on the leadership of this program, God convinced me of two important foundational steps. The first was that the success of this important program was contingent upon being embraced by our entire missionary staff. Therefore, everyone needed to have an understanding of the basic principle of the TEE model and also to offer their input into

**Tite Tiéno**

Tite Tiéno grew up in Burkina Faso, West Africa. While pastoring an Alliance church in Bobo-Dioulasso, he founded and directed the Maranatha Bible Institute. He did graduate studies in France and the United States before serving as president and dean of the West Africa Alliance Seminary in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

From 1997 until his retirement, Dr. Tiéno was academic dean and chair of Global Theology and World Christianity Research, and a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School near Chicago, Illinois.

the development of a model that was adapted to our local needs. Patricia Harrison, a known expert, came to train our entire mission staff and lead us through the process of tailoring a program suitable to our needs.

Secondly, God showed me that this TEE program required sufficient status for the National Church leadership to embrace it as a viable training method for church leadership. God gave me the name PEDIM as the name for our TEE program. In reverse order of the letters to fit with English, you get "Maranatha Institute's Decentralized Education Program." The national office for PEDIM was built on the Maranatha campus and the programmed texts were contextually written by our Maranatha professors Gerry McGarvey, Peter Coleman, Jim Albright, Moussa Coulibaly, Nancy Pierce, and me. We sought to match our college curriculum as closely as possible so that in the future some lay leaders could enter our resident program. Nancy Pierce trained all the resident program students in the principles of TEE so that they could serve as PEDIM course trainers when they graduated. These God-directed steps have led to the strengthening of churches and their leaders in West Africa.

Throughout these latter years, the greatest privilege was that Gwen and I were able to continue to work side by side. Milt Pierce, when he was the Burkina field director, said that Gwen had perhaps a greater role in developing the Burkina church than any other missionary. She had played two significant roles at Maranatha Bible College. One was in her role as secretary to the president. The Burkinian men who took over the role of college president were

gifted, but they were not detail people. In other contexts where Burkinian men took over roles from missionaries, they had failed because of lack of attention to detail in planning and handling finances. At Maranatha, they succeeded because of Gwen's support, and that allowed the training of national pastors to be placed in the hands of the church. This was a major development of the Alliance church in Burkina.

Gwen's second important role was in the production centre on the Maranatha campus. This centre produced both the class notes for the college students and the programmed education texts for the PEDIM training of church lay leaders. Initially, that involved Gwen typing wax stencils on a manual typewriter and then running the courses off on a hand-cranked mimeograph machine. Each missed stroke had to be corrected with a gel-like fluid and then re-typed. When teachers, in progressing years, would add a paragraph to their note, Gwen needed to re-type the entire course. This arduous task provided notes for pastors' future ministry in the churches they would serve, because there were so few books in French available in the interior of Africa. As Gwen came to the end of her ministry in Africa, computer and ink jet printers became available, allowing her to train a Burkina lady to take over the production of these essential notes and text books when we returned to Canada.

Many pastors trained at Maranatha Bible College have been ministering in churches throughout the area. We conclude with the story of Job Dao, one of our first graduates. We had high hopes for him, so we were surprised years later to hear him say he had left the ministry. He was taking a business course as he was not able to sustain his family in the church ministry.

A couple of things led to this situation. Job's dad was also a pastor and did not get along with his district leadership. Then along came his son, Job, one of these upstarts who had been trained in the French Bible school. They were both placed in a remote struggling church where Job became discouraged.

After a number of visits with Job, I proposed that he come and teach a couple of the first-year courses. Our Burkinian college president had just left for studies in Canada and it would be good to have additional Burkinian personnel on staff. Job accepted the offer and did a remarkable job. This step also raised the attention of the church leadership in Bobo-Dioulasso and, as a new extension church was being opened, Job was asked to pastor this group. The church flourished under his ministry.

When Gwen and I left Burkina, Job was one of the church leaders that came to say good-bye. Ten years later, when I returned with a short-term missions team to help construct the first stage of the new hospital the church was opening, we were greeted by the new National Church president. It was Job.

In the past, the president stayed in power until he retired or died. That has changed, and Job, after eight years, stepped down and another of our Maranatha grads, Thomas Traore, is now the National Church president. Job is the vice president and is pastoring our largest Alliance church in the nation's capital, Ouagadougou.

The Canadian Alliance is no longer needed in either the Republic of Mali or Burkina Faso. Those of us who had the privilege of ministering among these people count it an honour and long for the day we stand beside them in God's presence declaring together that the One seated on the throne and the Lamb are worthy of praise, honour, glory and power, for ever and ever.

### Mali Alliance Statistics



Churches:  
520



Ordained  
Pastors:  
264



Inclusive  
Members:  
86,374

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

### Burkina Faso Alliance Statistics



Churches:  
624



Ordained  
Pastors:  
n/a



Inclusive  
Members:  
113,338

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

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## Chapter 3

# Ivory Coast



Note: Maps are not drawn to scale

## Where Have You Been?

By Tim Tjosvold

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:19-20)*

In Matthew 28:19-20, the last command of Jesus, there are four verbs but only one is in the imperative form, “make disciples of all nations.” The other verbs in the passage explain how the job is done.

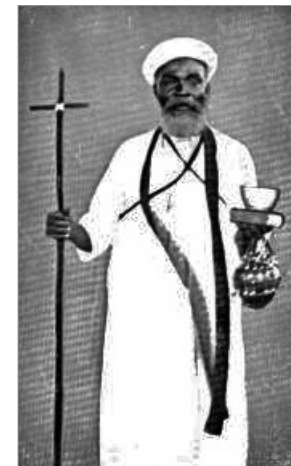
To make disciples of all nations, someone must GO to those nations. Then those who put their trust in Jesus for salvation are to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This identifies them as children of God through Jesus. And finally, to make genuine disciples of Christ, they must be taught to observe all that Jesus has commanded. This calls for an apprenticeship kind of teaching that not only tells the story and gives intellectual awareness, but also teaches how to live out the truth.



Tim Tjosvold baptizing new believers, date unknown.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives

In the West African nation of Côte d’Ivoire (CI), (Ivory Coast in English), God revealed Himself in incredible ways to bring men, women and children to Himself. A quick overview of our experience in CI would show that we *went*, we *baptized*, and we *taught*. Initially, God used several supernatural methods in bringing people to Himself, implementing His divine intervention in a world of spirit worshippers. That’s exactly how they would expect the true God to work.

Somewhere between the years 1913 and 1915, a John the Baptist kind of preacher from Liberia, William Wade Harris, journeyed through the coastal towns of CI, evangelizing as he went. His preaching was accompanied by miracles of healing and deliverance and thousands committed their lives to Christ. He taught the basics of the Gospel, set up churches, and when he left he told them to wait for the white people who would come with “the Book”. The coastal peoples, newly committed to Jesus, waited and eventually Methodist missionaries came with the teaching that Harris had promised.



William Wade Harris,  
date unknown.  
Courtesy Tim Tjosvold

The message filtered its way through to the central part of the country where the Alliance would eventually be planted. When one of our missionaries, Walter Arnold, perhaps the first Canadian to serve with The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) in CI, arrived there in 1936, he wrote, “What hunger for the Gospel! They said they had waited for years for us to come. One with tears in his eyes said, ‘*Why have you neglected us so long? Why have you not cared for us?*’ For years they had waited for a teacher to come.” (Ritchey, 2006).

An Alliance missionary, George Stadslev, along with a national pastor, visited a village in the rainforest where people had been waiting for about 20 years for a “white man with the Book” to come and teach them. An elderly man greeted Stadslev with the words, “You have come at last! Where have you been for these many years?” After two days and nights of teaching, Mr. Stadslev prepared to leave.

“Have you finished telling all of the stories?” the old man asked.  
“No,” he replied. “But I will return and tell you more.”  
“I will be dead by that time. You must stay and tell all of them.”

...The old man asked Mr. Stadslev to come with him to the cemetery. The old man could not walk, so the young men from the village carried him. He pointed to the graves one by one, graves of men and women who had waited to hear the Gospel story but never heard because no one came to tell them. "Where have you been for these many years?" the old man said over and over. "So many waited. So many have died. Where have you been?" (Ritchey, 2006)

God had prepared the way and implanted a desire in many people for a relationship with Him through Jesus. With so many coming to Christ, the biggest task to be undertaken was that of teaching the new followers to observe all that Jesus had commanded. Missionaries spent much time doing lay leader training wherever they served.

### Teaching New Believers

Bible schools were established early on. Magazine articles tell of Bible schools conducted in both Toumodi and Bouake (*Alliance Weekly*, 1939, p. 576). Instruction was in Baoule, the language of the majority of new believers. From the beginning, care was taken to have the funding be the responsibility of those being taught, so dependency on Westerners was reduced. After the opening of the Yamoussoukro Bible Institute (YBI), the school in Bouake continued for a while, but eventually it was closed.



Yamoussoukro Bible Institute, 1994. Courtesy Tim Tjosvold

The school in Yamoussoukro, l'Institut Biblique de l'Alliance Chrétienne (IBAC), has been producing leaders continuously since 1963. God had miraculously provided the land on which the school is built. When the Alliance started their search for land, they went to the president of the country, His Excellence Felix Houphouet, who was born in the city of Yamoussoukro. He told them, "I owe my life to an American Protestant missionary. You may have all the land that you need in Yamoussoukro for your new school!" (Timyan, 1966, p. 10). Several years earlier, one of the pioneer Alliance missionaries, George Stadslev, had found Houphouet in the ditch after a bad car accident and saved his life. God used that gesture, years later, to provide a very sizeable property for the school.



Yamoussoukro Bible Institute, date unknown. Courtesy Alliance Archives

YBI was established to raise the educational level of the pastors being trained for the Alliance churches. It was started by the Alliance in partnership with the Conservative Baptist Mission and the Paris Tabernacle Mission in October 1965. Five years earlier, these groups had formed an evangelical association along with the national churches with which they worked. They all felt it was time to raise the academic level of training pastors in their churches. YBI provided training for Ivorian pastoral candidates as well as many from Mali and Burkina Faso (Upper Volta until 1984). For the first time, the evangelicals of the territory formerly known as French West Africa were working together to provide the churches in this vast area with well-trained ministry on a scale that would be impossible for any individual mission or church.

From the beginning, Charles and Henriette (Hetty) Bossert were the Alliance teachers at YBI until they retired 30 years later. They were French citizens but had received their missionary training at the Missionary Training Institute (now Nyack College in New York), the first missionary training school in the world, started by Canadian A.B. Simpson, founder of the C&MA.

Canadians who served at YBI over the years were Jim and Carole Elliott, Gerald and Dorothy Hogenbirk and ourselves, Tim and Brenda Tjosvold. Quite early on, the operation of the school was given to African church leaders. Our Baoule brothers, Dr. André Kouadio and Celestin Koffi, led the school for many years. It is currently under the direction of Kouassi Kanga Martin.

Once YBI began, the National Church decided they would only ordain new candidates who had been trained in the French program. Those trained in the Baoule school in Bouake would serve in villages with their maternal language but the cities needed pastors with a grasp of the French language and at least YBI training. This principle slowed the advancement of the National Church.

The training of local lay leaders fell to area pastors and missionaries, so they all went to the villages to teach. Most of the village assemblies have been led by local lay leaders and directed and assisted by a pastor from the closest larger town.

On October 18, 1993, a regional theological seminary was launched by the C&MA. FATEAC – Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de l'Alliance Chrétienne (West Africa Alliance Seminary) was a dream brought to fruition under Tite Tiénou, a pastor and educator, originally from Burkina Faso, who has been used by the Lord in wonderful ways in theological formation both in North America and Africa. Prior to its founding, African church leaders were sent to Canada, the United States and France for graduate level theological training. Training in foreign countries created major problems. The cost was astronomical, so few leaders could be trained. Families were often separated as the father or both parents would be sent, leaving children behind. Also, the training was from a Western perspective, leaving the students somewhat weak in relating the Bible message to their own cultures.

After being launched and directed for five years by Dr. Tiénou, the seminary was capably led by Isaac Keita, a graduate of Canadian Theological Seminary, from 1998 until his death in January 2012. Issiaka Coulibaly, an Ivorian professor at the seminary, became the dean and has led since 2012. Fourteen denominations in French-speaking West African countries benefit from the excellent service of this solid institution, which now also offers doctoral degrees.

Another part of the training ministry of the Alliance in CI is that of Theological Education by Extension (TEE). In the 1980s, the program started by using materials produced by the Centre de Publication Evangélique (Evangelical Publishing Centre) in Abidjan. One helpful development, as the ministry spread through the country, was the coming of a Canadian missionary from Gabon, Julie Fehr. Her teaching strengthened the program and we saw many lay people become involved throughout the country.

In the beginning, the Alliance work took place in the central part of the country. This was in an agreement with the Methodists who were in the south. In the agreement concerning who would work where, responsibility to evangelize and plant churches in the north and central parts of the country

fell to the Alliance. In the end, the Alliance was overwhelmed with the large area and asked the Conservative Baptists (now World Venture) to come and take care of the northern section of the country. The rest was plenty for the Alliance, populated mostly by the Baoule people.

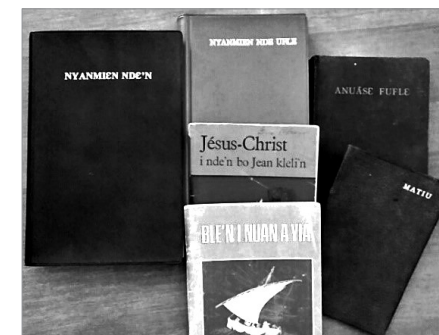
In the 1970s and 1980s, a move began to the south where many of the Baoule believers, formerly living in the centre, had moved to plant coffee and cocoa plantations. The president, Felix Houphouët, in a law passed in March 1963, established the principle that *la terre à celui qui la met en valeur* (the land belongs to the one who develops it) (Kakadoundiaye, 2011). This law motivated many Baoules from the centre to move southward to lands that were more favourable for the plantations. Those plantations eventually made CI the world's largest cocoa producer up until the present time, producing 40% of all the cocoa in the world. It is also the thirteenth coffee producing country in the world (World Atlas, 2017).

The Baoules, as they moved, took their faith with them and established small churches in most of the villages where they settled. The National Church, helped by the Mission, assisted local congregations in building churches and sending pastors. The Mission sent workers south to help and to train the lay leaders who led those churches. Canadians involved in this expansion of the Mission's involvement were Blaine and Shelly Sylvester, Wes and Cori Nevius, Dave and Cyndy Ingram and Gerry and Karen Dargatz. "Build and the Lord will fill it" was the reality we experienced as we moved to the major cities of the south.

As the Western partners moved in, they ended up giving communion in every service they led because that was a privilege reserved for ordained leaders. Many churches went for years without communion and were happy to receive and celebrate *la Sainte-Cène* (communion) with them. When there were new believers to baptize, they were active in that as well. All the pastors and missionaries spent much of their time training lay leaders throughout the years. Thus, they got to fulfill the orders of Jesus to baptize and to teach them to observe all that Jesus had taught.

### Translating God's Word

From the beginning of the work with the Baoules, translation was a huge concern. The New Testament



Translated books.  
Courtesy Tim Tjosvold

was quickly produced. The Old Testament project moved slowly and the Bible Society representative who oversaw the program decided the project should be dropped. Then he looked at the history of the New Testament in Baoule. It was the best-selling version of the New Testament in the region of West Africa. It was obvious the Baoules wanted the Word of God. Brenda and Tim Tjosvold put a new emphasis on the project, letting the Baoule Christ-followers know more about it and soliciting their assistance. Committees were established in many local assemblies and they were given the task of reading and revising the different parts as the translation was completed.

One significant aspect of this project was the attitude of the people concerning the dialect to be used, as there are around 13 different dialects of the Baoule language. Deciding which of several dialects should be used has often meant the success or failure of a translation project. The Baoules said, "Just give us the Bible in whichever dialect and we will learn to read it!" The project moved ahead under the hand of Kouakou Koffi Marcel and Craig and Marilyn Hanscome and was completed and dedicated in 1998.

Other translation work was done to provide Baoule literature. Many collections of verses were translated and printed with the help of groups like the Scripture Gift Mission. Canadian missionaries, Jess and Ann Jespersen, were involved in literature ministries.

### Spreading the Gospel Message

From the mid-1960s up until 1990, a very important part of the Alliance ministry in CI was through daily radio programs.

For about two decades, seven nights a week, Radio Evangelique CMA was on the air. This daily half-hour program in Baoule was beamed into the Ivory Coast from radio station ELWA in Monrovia, Liberia. In fact, ELWA's powerful transmitters reached far beyond the limits of Ivory Coast. Letters came from dispersed Baoule listeners in Ghana and Togo, and reports came from Upper Volta and Mali indicating that a clear reception came through to these far-off places (Ritchey, 2013, p. 131).

With the help of Radio ELWA in Monrovia, Clyde and Doris Ritchey carried on this ministry. People who had moved to the south and were far away from their Baoule homelands, were happy to find something on the radio in their mother tongue. Christ-followers and non-believers alike claimed that these were their programs. Evangelist David Arnold and his team were granted permission to hold a meeting in a village but were told they would have to wait until everyone finished listening to their program (Ritchey, 2013, p. 133).

There was a tremendous response through letters. Each evening a different speaker presented Bible truth in the Baoule language. One day each week was given to answering questions received through the mail. Dedicated pastors took the time to explain the Word and people, many of whom were off in the southern rainforest far from any evangelical church, received the knowledge they needed to help them grow in Christ. The radio ministry also gave birth to a ministry of cassette tape recordings that extended the radio ministry to those who wanted to be able to go deeper in a certain subject.

In the 1970s, work was begun among the Dioula people of CI. These were people who had come down from Mali and Burkina Faso as merchants or to work on Ivorian plantations. Many had been involved in Alliance churches in these countries to the north and when they moved southward, it was normal that they look up their own church. Initially church services were usually held in Baoule so they would often be frustrated. As urbanization took place, French services were added in the churches, often accompanied by Baoule translation. It was a good thing to see the Dioula language added to services in many cities.

Carol Simon along with her American husband, Ray, and Richard and Merinda Enns were the Canadian members of the Dioula team. Those early Alliance Dioulas, in the southern parts of CI, were under the care of the Methodist church since the Alliance wasn't in Abidjan or other southern locales. When the Alliance did move into Abidjan, many Dioulas stayed with the Methodists. Integration of Dioulas into the CI Alliance church has been slow and painful.

Mention should be made of the youth ministries in the major cities, especially of Bouake and Dimbokro, which had active youth centres. Many missionaries were involved in youth programs in schools in other cities as well. The impact of this ministry on the future of the National Church was tremendous. Out of this movement came the men and women who led the church forward from the 1980s through the first decade of the 21st century. The movement produced those who went into full-time ministry as well as many capable lay leaders who served in administration, church



Doris Ritchey reading correspondence from the radio ministry, year unknown.  
Courtesy Tim Tjosvold

planting, evangelism and education. It helped the church move from a rural centre to a more urban culture at the same time the nation was moving in the same direction.

Another pastoral training school was begun in 2009, in the city of Toumodi. It is known as l' École de Théologie et Mission (School of Theology and Mission). Operating on a modular structure, laymen, laywomen, and pastors, who do not have the academic level to study at IBAC, receive training at a primary school level. They go on to pastor churches mainly in the rural areas, where people generally do not have a high level of formal education.



International Christian Academy, year unknown.  
Courtesy Tim Tjosvold

Another school that made the work more effective was the International Christian Academy. ICA, a school run by the Conservative Baptists, served as the school for missionary kids (MKs) from the African Alliance fields. Canadian couples who served as dorm parents, were Larry and Pixie Charter and Dave and Denise Golding. Many Canadian young women served as

dorm assistants. Among that number were Donna Laurie (Toldy), Kerri Jenkins, Janice Cober (Philips), Kelly McIntyre (Higdon), Anne Stephens, Rhonda Haas (Case), Cindy Ferguson (Enns), and Dianne Harding. Joan Foster (Sylvester), veteran missionary to Mali, took time out to serve as school nurse on several occasions. The school opened in 1962 and was closed in 2004 after a second evacuation due to the civil unrest at that time.

The Alliance National Church is part of a wider, interdenominational missions movement that began in the years leading up to 2000. It seemed as if the Holy Spirit was bringing the responsibility of every church to be a missionary-sending church. Many conferences were held and teaching was given. There was a wide participation by evangelical churches in such movements as AD2000. Canadian Alliance missionary Dave Ingram was part of a team of Alliance missionaries that traveled from region to region giving missions training to the pastoral leadership.

The C&MA of CI, came to an even greater realization of its responsibility to carry the Gospel to other ethnic groups around the height of a 10-year period of civil and ethnic unrest. Celestin Koffi tells of the attitude change that took place during that crisis time. As expatriate workers began to leave the country, especially in 2002, the national workers realized that the obligation was theirs to reach the nations. They began to have mission

### Celestin Koffi



Celestin Koffi has been the Africa regional coordinator of the Alliance World Fellowship since 2012. Rev. Koffi has served the Alliance in a variety of roles including national president of the Alliance of Côte d'Ivoire for eight years. He completed his pastoral and theological studies in various institutes and seminaries including the Bible Institute of Yamoussoukro (Côte d'Ivoire) and Canadian Theological Seminary, Regina, Saskatchewan. He served as director of the Yamoussoukro Bible Institute for several years and has been instrumental in establishing another school for pastoral studies designed for the many lay preachers that are serving the church in Ivory Coast. He is highly respected and loved by the Alliance family in Ivory Coast and around the world.

conferences and the response was wonderful. In 2002, they had only one worker sent as a church planter to the north of CI. They currently have 100 workers sent out to work with people of other ethnic groups both in CI and in two neighbouring countries. The Spirit of God is moving them to fulfill this all-important task of the Church. Obeying the prompting of the Spirit, the national Alliance church is taking on its God-given task of making disciples of all nations. The Spirit is working through them doing good things (Koffi, 2012).

L'Eglise CMA de Côte d'Ivoire (The Christian and Missionary Alliance Church of Côte d'Ivoire) now has around 300,000 baptized members, making CI one of the largest Alliance fields in the world. They meet in over 4,300 fellowship groups, and they have three training schools with over 80 people studying for ministry. The current president of the church is Alonle Brou Pierre.

God has worked in powerful ways to build His Church in Côte d'Ivoire. We have had the privilege of working with Him. We were allowed to go, to baptize and to teach new Christ-followers to observe all that their Master taught. We were allowed to make disciples and we are very thankful.



### Ivory Coast Alliance Statistics



Churches:  
3,162



Ordained  
Pastors:  
249



Inclusive  
Members:  
497,009

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

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## Chapter 4

# Gabon



Note: Maps are not drawn to scale

## Three Aspects of Missionary Work

By Laurie McLean

*“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,  
the people he chose for his inheritance.” (Psalm 33:12)*

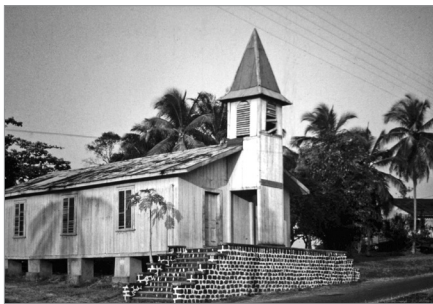
The woman was desperate. She was not well at all. In her mid-thirties, she had suffered greatly from a sickness that seemed to linger. She had been in this state for several years, and in her own words, had spent a great deal of money going to doctors, shamans (village women who had knowledge of local indigenous medicines), and to the two local hospitals. Even the medical professionals at the Albert Schweitzer Hospital could not diagnose the problem. She was a modern day “woman who touched the hem of His garment”, with a sickness that just would not or could not be cured (see Matthew 9:20-22).

One day while visiting the market in the town of Lambaréné where she lived, she met one of the elders of the Alliance church. When she told him her story, he related the biblical story mentioned above. He invited her to church the next day, Sunday, where the people would pray for her healing. She came to church, placed her faith in Jesus, and was instantly healed. She felt the change in her body, and started praising God, thanking Him over and over again.

The following Sunday she wanted to go back to her village about 50 km away so she could tell her family and friends what God had done. When she arrived there, the people who knew her could see the change. Again, she gave praise to the Lord for her healing. That day, after the pastor who

had accompanied her to her village proclaimed the Word of the Lord, forty people accepted Jesus as Saviour. This was the beginning of a church that continues to this day.

In 1842, the American Presbyterian Board of Missions established a missions outpost at Baraka on the northwestern coast of Gabon. A small church building was constructed in New England in the United States, then dismantled and



Original Presbyterian Church built in 1844 at Baraka, 1974. Courtesy Laurie McLean

shipped to the Baraka station. There, in the sweltering heat of what is today the capital city of Gabon, Libreville, the church was rebuilt. That church still stands today with a new metal roof and new pews. Although the church is not used today as a meeting place for Christians, it is a strong reminder of the work of many men and women who received the call of God to bring the Gospel to this part of the West African coast.

What is interesting to me and to visitors to the city of Libreville is the small cemetery beside this church. There, people can still read the names on the weathered headstones of those pioneer missionaries who are interred there. Some came to Baraka and only lived a few weeks or months before succumbing to malaria, dengue fever, or some other tropical disease. The outpost continued and the mission became a light in the darkness of the population in the area. This was the first Protestant work in Gabon.

“In 1844 the king of that region of Gabon ceded his territory to France and effective occupation took place that year. The (Baraka) mission was then turned over to the Paris Missionary Society. In 1850 the Presbyterian Church opened work among the Bonga (people group). Both societies were later united, but the Americans were unable to maintain the work under the French authorities and the property of the two stations passed to the Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris in 1892.” (Hunter, 1964).

The Paris Evangelical Mission birthed a National Church and it is interesting that this Evangelical Church of Gabon remained uniquely in the northern half of the country. Missionaries from the Paris Evangelical Mission continued to proclaim the Gospel to the different people groups of north Gabon only, concentrating on the larger towns and cities such as Libreville, Port Gentil, Oyem, Ndjolé, Makokou and some smaller towns. There were still some French missionaries of the society in Gabon until the late 1960s, but the Gabonese government asked them to leave in 1970.

The Evangelical Church of Gabon increasingly became less “evangelical” and more liberal in their theological outlook and doctrines. The results have shown that there is little or no outreach to new areas or to unreached people groups. However, there was a “revival” in the mid-1980s in the large Libreville congregation which spawned the birth of a new church called “Bethel,” though the main body of the original remains stunted and appears to be dying. By contrast, the Bethel group has planted many strong evangelical local churches throughout Gabon.

In the early 1930s, Alliance missionaries in Congo received a call from the Paris Evangelical Mission to send workers to the southern part of Gabon. Two couples, the Piersons and the Fairleys, made a survey trip in 1933, and in 1934 entered Gabon to begin the Alliance mission at Bongolo. There was an agreement with the Paris group and a comity understanding was initiated. The Alliance Mission would work only in South Gabon and the Paris Mission would work only in North Gabon. This agreement lasted for more than 40 years.

Later more workers joined the Piersons and Fairleys and the main focus was on reaching all the major ethnic groups in south Gabon. New mission stations were opened among the Bapounou, the Mitsogo, the Massango and others. With the opening of these mission stations in a space of less than 10 years, missionaries were appointed to learn the language of each group. The Mitsogo, for example, that comprises less than 40,000 people became the focus of American missionaries, Austin and Ruth Parlman. Later Julie Fehr, a Canadian Alliance missionary, spent several years translating the Bible into the local language. Others, such as Ray and Helen Cook, along with Grace Nelson worked among the Bapounou people and the Bible was eventually translated and printed in the 1970s.

The first mission station at Bongolo was in the ethnic area of the Banzebi people. This station, reaching out to more than 300,000 people at one time, became the largest of all Alliance mission field stations covering a large area of well over 100 acres beside the Bongolo Falls.

In July 1966, my wife Nancy and I left Canada for Paris, France, studied for a year at the Alliance Française, and then traveled by ship from Bordeaux to Gabon's capital city, Libreville. In September 1967, Austin Parliaman, field chairman at the time, met us in Libreville. We eventually arrived at a small village, site of a previously occupied mission station called Yileka Yimonyu, (Spring of Life). This station was opened 25 years earlier by Rev. and Mrs. Ray Cook.



Jungle road near Yileka Yimonyu, 1968.  
Courtesy Laurie McLean

Here we also began to adapt to a different culture, a new language and a new life in Gabon. This transition proved to be difficult. We were the only "white" people (with one exception) within a 100-km radius. It took great effort to get to know the people group, the local government officials and the village believers.

As the years passed, more American, Canadian and Dutch workers were appointed to Gabon with the intention of reaching the 65 different ethnic groups in the country. Thus, the Corbys were appointed to Mouila, and the Cooks to Yileka and Tchibanga, and then the Harveys to Fougamou to work with the Eshira people; others went to southeast Gabon to Koula Moutou, Lastoursville and Moanda. These towns were home to different people groups, each with their own language.



Mission house at Yileka Yimonyu, built in 1941. Photo taken in 1967. Courtesy Laurie McLean

In the mid-1970s, the Alliance church of South Gabon felt that God was calling them to reach all of Gabon and thus the comity/parity agreement with the Evangelical Church of Gabon was set aside. Alliance missionaries began working in north Gabon where many people had never heard the Gospel proclaimed. Many believers from south Gabon had moved to the north and wanted strong evangelical churches. Alliance workers started churches in Libreville, and Port Gentil, the two major political and economic cities of the country.

As the years progressed, new works were also established by Canadian workers Gary and Sharon Howell in places such as Oyem and Minvoul; Ray and Maureen Holcomb were heavily involved with the work in Moanda and Franceville reaching several people groups in the southeastern corner of Gabon; Esther Lutzer had a great ministry in Mimongo and later on in Mouila. Sandra Scott had an extensive ministry in Libreville while serving as the Gabon field bookkeeper.

Our Canadian Alliance international workers learned the local language in these locations, proclaiming salvation in Jesus. At one point, in the late 1980s, there were 45 Alliance missionaries serving in Gabon. These included workers from the United States, Canada, Holland and France. They were scattered in many areas of the country reaching out to a large majority of the 65 people groups, including the Pygmies of north Gabon.

Our experiences in Gabon over those 36 years seemed to encompass three phases or aspects of working in Gabon, to do our part to help complete the task of winning the lost to the Lord Jesus and nurturing these new believers in the Word. These aspects have been mentioned in other mission books and are well known by missionaries:

**Esther Lutzer**

After Esther Lutzer graduated from Bible College, the Regina General Hospital School of Nursing, and after completing a diploma in Public Health from the University of Saskatchewan, she spent 30 years in Gabon, Central Africa as an Alliance missionary. She currently lives in Regina. Her autobiography—*God Has Arrived: A Missionary Journey in Gabon*—is available at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)

- A. The missionary as leader of the National Church;
- B. The missionary as partner with the National Church;
- C. The missionary as servant of the National Church.

**The Missionary as Leader of the National Church**

Missionary work has changed dramatically in the past 25 years, not only in central Africa but also around the world. Missionaries are now referred to as “international workers” (IWs). In many parts of the world, fulfilling the Great Commission has transferred from the west to the east and southern regions of the globe. National churches are now becoming, or have already become, the sending churches. They understand their role in the evangelization of lost people wherever they are found, and most importantly, they are sending workers to areas of the world that are unreached and sometimes even hostile to the message of the cross. This is happening on an ever-increasing scale in the first two decades of the 21st century. But it has not always been this way.

When we arrived in Gabon a few years after it gained political independence from France, missionaries from the west, notably from Europe and North America, were the leaders of church expansion and church growth. Missionaries took the lead in church planting, youth and women's ministries and pastoral training and development. National pastors in Gabon followed the lead of the missionaries, heeding their counsel and serving alongside them as the missionaries gave instruction on how to lead and how to do “church.”

When we arrived in 1967, a Gabonese pastor was present in this small village of about 50 people living in mud houses with palm thatched roofs. There was no electricity nor running water. Women and teenage girls carried

the water from the nearest stream for cooking, cleaning and bathing. The women tended gardens deep in the forest during the day while their husbands looked after the pre-school children in the village. Our memories of those early days in Gabon included cooking on an iron “wood stove” and spending much time gathering water and other supplies.

We moved into the “missionary house” and began learning the local language and getting to know the local pastor, Benjamin Mbadinga. We took every opportunity to reach out to the Bapounou people group in the area for limited ministry. I vividly remember walking 4 - 6 km each Sunday afternoon to visit and teach the Word of God in nearby villages. Walking through the jungle on trails presented a whole new world to me and I wondered if I would be able to adjust to the heat and humidity, to say nothing of coping with clouds of malaria-infested mosquitoes. However, those occasions gave me opportunity to hear the spoken language. Learning the Yipounou language was difficult and it took several months before I could carry on a conversation or preach a simple sermon.

It was obvious that the local believers still wanted to follow the “white” man, not just out of courtesy, but with a sense of dependence learned throughout the time of the colonial rulers. The Christian and Missionary Alliance Church of South Gabon, as it was known in those early days of our time there, depended on the Mission for leadership training, financial help in paying salaries of the pastors, and many other situations they faced. During these early days, we experienced this dependence of the church, especially for finances as programs such as “New Life for All” and “Reaching the Cities” began and lasted for three or four years. The church asked for help in transporting workers to new villages that needed the Gospel, buying equipment for showing films and procuring generators and projectors, and giving the itinerant workers a salary to do this evangelism. Teams of missionaries and nationals would travel for several weeks going from village to village for up to three or four days in each place to project the *JESUS* film in French, and then counsel and lead the villagers in understanding the message. A harvest of souls came from these campaigns and new churches were started in places that were previously untouched with the message of Jesus.

The Bible school leadership training was led uniquely by missionaries. It wasn't until much later that Gabonese men and women were sufficiently trained to teach their own young men and women. The Bible school that began in the 1950s went through some difficult times, but God was faithful and young men and women were being prepared for ministry. Later, a second school was opened in Koula Moutou and just a few years later the Bongolo school was closed and a new Bible institute was opened in Libreville.

Missionaries were the teachers in these schools until the turn of the century when almost all expatriate workers were withdrawn from Gabon and the church was able to appoint their own professors.

It is interesting that the first non-North American worker at these training centres was a Congolese from the Boma area of Congo. Now, Konde Tona is the director of CFTAC, the Centre for Theological Formation of the Alliance in Gabon. Nancy and I had the privilege of teaching at this institute for several years. We are grateful for the privilege of serving in the capacity of teaching theology, pastoral methods, the role of a pastor's wife and many other courses. Today, Gabonese professors are preparing pastors and Christian workers for the evangelization of Gabon as well as several Gabonese couples to serve in other countries on the African continent.

### **The Missionary as Partner with the National Church**

More elementary schools and some secondary schools were being built by the government and the Mission, staffed by the Gabonese. Much of our time partnering with the National Church took the form of village evangelism, including driving to distant villages with a Gabonese pastor to preach the Gospel, assisting with baptisms and building small tin roofed chapels. The story of the work of Julie Fehr in a book written by Lisa Rohrick, entitled *Both Feet on God's Path*, highlight what it is to work with nationals in village church planting and evangelism. We worked in villages that had few believers. Demonic cults such as the *Buiti* cult revered throughout Gabon were centred mainly in the area around Guévéde where Julie spent most of her missionary career.

I was asked to serve as director for the Mission at one point in our ministry and during the years from 1987 to 1991, I worked very closely with the president of the Alliance Church of Gabon. Together we made many visits to churches throughout the country. Rough roads, log bridges, and in the dry season of the year, a lot of dust and in the rainy season many mud holes, all made for interesting travels and memories. Not all 65 ethnic groups in Gabon have been reached but the Alliance Church of Gabon is continuing to send workers to these peoples, some hidden deep in the thick forests and hill country.

The three doctrines of indigenization were instituted in the Alliance Church of South Gabon: self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. As these were implemented, missionaries became closer partners with the churches in all aspects of missionary work, helping them to become truly independent from the Alliance Mission.

This was also a time when our international headquarters in the United States initiated Five Year Working Agreements with National Churches

in many countries, including the Gabonese Alliance Church. Pastors and missionaries met to work out an agreement detailing how the two entities would work together in the next five years to reach the lost. Those agreements provided good working relationships with occasional disagreements on how to implement the strategies in bringing the National Church to maturity. For example, the Mission would provide finances and transportation and the National Alliance Church would provide the workers to go to lost villages throughout the country. Sometimes there would be disagreements like who would take the lead and how much of the finances would be covered by the Mission. Eventually both parties would sign the agreement and the work of evangelism would go forward. This was a time of slow growth of the Church but it led to better days of working together, missionaries and pastors, and new churches being started.

### **The Missionary as Servant of the National Church**

I remember returning to Gabon after a home assignment year in 1986-87. The largest Alliance church in the capital city of Libreville had an unprecedented size, for Gabon, of approximately 700 people when we left in 1986, but had doubled in size to over 1,400 one year later. This was the result of strong Gabonese leadership in that congregation and the ongoing program of Theological Education by Extension begun a few years earlier by Julie Fehr. This program, primarily led by the Holy Spirit and using Gabonese pastors and lay leaders produced many new congregations in the capital city and then throughout the country. Missionaries served under Gabonese leaders. The church executive now had a vision for reaching all of Gabon, and Alliance missionaries were happy to be a part of this program. The third phase of mission involvement in Gabon was well underway.

Another example of the results of the Five Year Working Agreements came with the work being done in medicine. Gabon Alliance missionaries began a dispensary at the Bongolo station in the late 1940s and this continued with little growth until the Alliance Church of Gabon asked for an evangelical hospital to replace the dispensary there. Dr. David Thompson and his wife Becki, U.S. missionaries, were appointed in 1977 to begin this work, and over the years the hospital had a tremendous effect on the advance of the Gospel. The Gabonese Ministry of Health stated at one point in time that the Bongolo Evangelical Hospital was the best hospital in the country. The story of this work is told in Dr. Thompson's book, "On Call", part of the *Jaffray Collection of Missionary Portraits* published in 1991.

The medical ministry expanded. The Pan African Association of Christian Surgeons (PAACS) was developed to train African medical doctors in surgery.

Many doctors from several countries in Africa have been trained, not only at Bongolo, but also in other African mission hospitals under this program. These “new” surgeons return to their home countries to practice surgery in their hospitals.

With the arrival of international workers almost annually, plans were made early in the work in Gabon to develop what is known as “Missionary Kids School” at Bongolo. This school originally provided quality education through grades 1 – 6, and now all grades up to eighth grade are included. In 1980 all high school students transferred to the International Christian Academy in Bouaké on the Ivory Coast and the Bongolo students transferred to an international school in Libreville. Fifteen of these Gabon “MKs” have returned to Africa as international workers and are serving the Lord today in several countries of West Africa.

### Gabon Alliance Statistics



Churches:  
141



Ordained  
Pastors:  
106



Inclusive  
Members:  
38,423

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

### For Further Reading

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## Chapter 5

# China



Note: Maps are not drawn to scale

## From Receiving to Sending

By Thomas Ford

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mark 16:15)*

Christian and Missionary Alliance missions to China began in 1887 and continues to this day but has come full circle with Chinese Christians making a big impact on the Canadian C&MA as well as being widely involved in global ministries. Currently half of the Canadian international workers in China are ethnic Chinese who have ventured to the homeland of their ancestors in order to reach the remaining least-reached people groups of China. In this chapter we'll look at the beginning of this movement and how it has developed into a two-way street.

A.B. Simpson had an interest in China missions from an early age due to the preaching of George L. McKay and H. Grattan Guinness (King, 1986, p. 263). In 1887, the first Alliance missionary to China, Canadian medical doctor William Cassidy, was sent out. He had studied at the Nyack Missionary Training Institute (MTI) and was the first missionary ordained by the Alliance. His initial work was "to proceed in advance to open the work and select a field for the mission in Central China" (Reynolds, 1981, p. 100). Unfortunately, his desire to travel steerage in order to be with the Chinese and learn some of their language resulted in his contracting smallpox en route; he died and was buried in Kobe, Japan.

Just before sailing, Cassidy wrote to his wife, "The Lord knows I am ready to give my life for Him, and if it be the best way to promote His glory, I am

### William Cassidy



William Cassidy was a school principal in Toronto before studying medicine and setting his sights on China. In 1887, after studying at the Missionary Training Institute in Nyack, New York, he became the first ordained Alliance missionary and was assigned to China. He contracted small pox en route and was put ashore at Kobe, Japan, where he died on January 9, 1888.

ready to die for Him as well as work for Him." (Ibid.) He was the first of many who died to further the work in China. His death was the catalyst for a number of new workers who volunteered to take his place. His widow and two young daughters journeyed to China just over a year later and a number of other single women soon followed. The work began in Anhui on the Yangtze River.

As can be seen from the following table, during this early period spending on missions in China was consistently higher than for any other region.

Dollars Spent on Missions								
The Story of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1900								
	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899
China	27,392	24,517	30,625	29,278	21,024	29,278	30,840	33,744
Japan	2,241	2,750	2,786	2,235	3,235	2,695	1,648	2,375
India	19,275	19,678	15,621	15,349	15,546	15,349	22,879	17,743
Africa (Sudan)	10,893	4,308	8,243	8,756	6,842	8,756	7,007	9,228
Africa (Congo)	12,696	12,072	18,681	20,891	12,126	20,891	18,932	12,084
Palestine	520	1,679	1,292	2,364	1,184	2,364	2,620	3,373
S. America and West Indies	3,785	4,954	4,384	5,234	3,780	5,234	10,772	8,587
Missionary Institute	16,004	15,033	13,166	12,775	9,705	12,775	16,432	22,914
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$92,806</b>	<b>\$84,991</b>	<b>\$94,798</b>	<b>\$96,882</b>	<b>\$73,442</b>	<b>\$97,342</b>	<b>\$111,130</b>	<b>\$110,048</b>

By 1895, Alliance missionaries had moved inland as far as the Gansu-Tibetan border where they reached out to Chinese, Tibetan and Muslim people groups. This northern mission was staffed by Swedes and they suffered greatly during the Boxer Rebellion. Twenty-four adults and thirteen children were killed and the remaining workers escaped overland through Mongolia and into Siberia (King, 1986, p. 270). The Boxer violence led to a greater interest in China and eleven new workers were sent out in 1904. In 1900, Wuzhou Bible School was established in Guanxi Province and continues today in Hong Kong as Alliance Bible Seminary. The focus was on training nationals for the continued work of evangelism and church planting.

Robert A. Jaffray, son of Robert Jaffray the Canadian senator and owner of the *Toronto Globe* newspaper (now *The Globe and Mail*), sensed a calling to become a missionary. He felt that China was to be his field of ministry. However, his father had great plans for him to follow in his footsteps. This led to great tension between the two and his father refused to finance his studies in missions. Jaffray Sr. told his son, “If the Alliance sends you to China, they’ll pay every penny of the expense. Not a dime will you get from me. But if you decide the whole thing was a mistake and want to come home, just let me know. I’ll send you the money.” (Tozer, 1990, p. 19).

After three years of study at Nyack College in New York, Jaffray was sent to Wuzhou, Guangxi in 1897 and lived overseas for 35 years. Simpson had conducted a quick visit to China in 1892 and felt that the hard soil of Guangxi, then known as Kwangsi, was the best place for Alliance pioneer work. Jaffray quietly rose to prominence and upon retirement of the South China field chairman, he assumed the role. The Wuchow Bible School was of primary importance to him.

Jaffray was knowledgeable of the publishing business and instrumental in developing Christian literature to be distributed throughout the Alliance field. Many of the lectures from the Bible school were printed in *Bible Magazine*, of which he was the editor. Upon learning that the home board had no funds for a printing press, he appealed to friends in Canada and the United States. The response was overwhelming and he soon had the South China Alliance Press up and running (Ibid., p. 26). This allowed literature to be printed and distributed not just in Wuchow, now called Wuzhou, but throughout the

### Robert A. Jaffray



At a time when the North American Church was unable to respond to the urgent need to send missionaries to Indonesia, Dr. R.A. Jaffray mobilized the Chinese National Church to fulfill God’s mandate. The Chinese Foreign Missionary Union (CFMU) was formed, and within the first eight years 21 Chinese workers were out on the field. Within ten years, Chinese and North American missionaries and their Indonesian co-workers were operating on every major island of Indonesia.

Chinese speaking world, including Chinatowns in North America.

Jaffray had gone to China single and in 1900 he married accomplished American missionary Minnie Doner. He suffered from diabetes and a heart condition which necessitated doing much of his work in bed using a tray desk. Although physically weak, God gave him the needed energy for his tasks. He often began the day at 4:00am, working on lectures and manuscripts for publication.



Robert Jaffray is seated, in the middle, date unknown.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives

Robert Jaffray’s literature ministry was of great importance for the development of the Chinese church, but even more important was his support for the principle of self-propagation, self-support and self-government. Some missionaries in the south China field believed that full autonomy should only come with full self-support and as long as the western Mission was funding a local church, they should have a say in its direction. However, Jaffray took the side of the Chinese and believed that the local church should be as autonomous as possible, as quickly as possible (Ibid., p. 37ff).

This emphasis greatly helped the Chinese church become autonomous and survive during the coming decades of persecution. It also laid the foundation for contemporary missions-oriented Chinese churches. Jaffray also worked with Chinese pastors L.T. Chao and Leland Wang to found the Chinese Foreign Missionary Union (CFMU) which sent out workers to other countries in Asia, including those serving with Jaffray in Indonesia when he turned his attention to that country.

This early effort to mobilise Chinese Christians for work overseas is seen as a forerunner of the modern Chinese missions movement. Tozer reports that “By the end of 1931, 13 foreign missionaries were on the new field. A growing number of Chinese missionaries were working alongside them. Eight stations had been established, a vast amount of exploration had been done, hundreds had been baptized and a real church had come into being in the Dutch East Indies.” (Tozer, p. 108).

The first two decades of the twentieth century were ones of unbridled optimism on the part of missionaries in China. This is reflected in George Pardington’s words of 1914: “In China...all the provinces are wide open to the gospel...Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the leader of the revolutionary party, has advised his people to listen to the missionaries, and to believe in their gospel,



because Christianity is the best religion for China today” (Pardington, 1914, p. 154). He adds that “Tibet has opened its gates. With a small amount of money, along a border line of 400 miles, a dozen cities could be opened, each the center of a population of hundreds of thousands.”

In 1921, there were 129 Alliance missionaries in all parts of China. Anhui, Hubei and Hunan had 54, Gansu 26, and Guanxi 49 (Atlas, 1924, 73). These were aided by 331 national workers with the result that 3,202 baptisms took place during the period 1917-1921. By 1925, the Alliance had 77 preaching stations in Guanxi alone, in southern China beside Vietnam (Tozer, 78). According to the National Christian Conference held in Shanghai in 1922, they made up the bulk of missionaries in that province with 49 out of a total foreign contingent of 76 (Atlas, 1924, p. 73). The story was similar with national workers, the Alliance having 121 out of a total of 276. This was one of China’s least-reached provinces in that it had a population of 11 million and only 4,722 communicants. Alliance work here reflected our policy of going to the least-reached areas and least-reached peoples.

Unfortunately, this success was not to last as the tides of war returned to drive out most missionaries. The Protestant missionary movement reached its peak in 1927 with some 6,000 workers but the beginning of the civil war that year led to two-thirds of them leaving; that number was never again reached.

Work did continue with much interruption in various places. In 1932, the Alliance Press Depot was opened in Shanghai and the 1936 *Missions Atlas* reports that in one year 775,657 salvation tracts were published; 9,639 books for Christians; 4,149 scripture motto cards; 38,908 tracts for Christians; and 22,673 *Bible Magazines*. (Snead, 1936, p. 87).

The year 1936 saw 103 Alliance missionaries deployed to China, including those on furlough, along with 240 Chinese workers supporting a church of over 5,000. The Alliance was only one of numerous missionary societies at work in China during this period: there were two from Australia, 21 from Great Britain, 34 from North America, 25 from Europe and five from Korea. (Ibid., p. 77).

The advent of World War II led to significant disruption of the work. Robert Jaffray had moved to Indonesia, but his island was taken by the Japanese in 1942. He was arrested and died in an internment camp in 1945. He was in his 70s and the conditions were horrid with malnutrition and rampant disease. He wasn’t alone in dying at the hands of the Japanese during these years, as both foreign missionaries and local Christians suffered heavily.

Those who could leave returned home with the hope of returning after the war. The year 1945 brought the defeat of Japan but renewed hostility in China. Nevertheless, the Alliance sent out new personnel as well as returning veteran missionaries to the field. The return was to be short lived with some, like Anthony and Evelyn Bollback, not being able to complete their first term.

In China, prior to the Communist victory in the civil war, the Alliance had averaged 85 missionaries and 225 native workers with a total church membership of approximately 8,000. (Snead, 1950, p. 96). Paul Bartel was instrumental in preparing the local Alliance congregations for the coming reality. He united the four districts into one body and prepared for it to continue under national leadership. He recognised that the printing office in Shanghai could not continue so the China Alliance Press was moved from Shanghai to Kowloon, Hong Kong. There was hope at the time that magazines might still be permitted to be mailed throughout China to subscribers but this was not subsequently possible. (Ibid., p. 97). After the Communist victory, Alliance missionaries were redeployed to other areas of the world unless they were older and had extensive China experience. These veterans remained in the China sphere in the hopes that the Mainland would soon reopen. When this didn’t happen, they took up work in Taiwan or Hong Kong or returned home.

The Bollbacks, for example, spent five years in Japan before being deployed to Hong Kong to take over the Presbyterian work there. (Bollback, 1991, p. 101ff). In Hong Kong, they worked with the thousands of Mandarin-speaking Chinese refugees who had fled the advancing Communist armies. Anthony became the field director and the Hong Kong government soon tasked him with equipping and providing teachers for the many new refugee schools. In 1969, there were 10,000 students and 300 teachers in the school system. (Ibid., p. 126).

Hong Kong was the bright spot in the Chinese world as Mainland China was fully closed to missionaries under the Communist leadership. Furthermore, the Cultural Revolution took place in China from 1966 until 1976. This movement sought to remove all Western influence from China, including Christianity, and attacked religion in general as the “opiate of the masses” in line with Marxist teaching. While the work continued in Hong Kong and other Chinese areas, it also greatly expanded among the Chinese in Canada.

The earliest Alliance work with Chinese in Canada occurred in the 1930s in Regina, Saskatchewan. In 1932, a lay woman named Ruby Johnston ordered gospel tracts from China and began to distribute them among the Chinese in Regina, most of whom were single men working long hours. She arranged a children’s meeting in her home and an older man and a young boy were

the first two to become Christians. (Johnston, n.d.). Canadian Bible College (CBC) in Regina, Saskatchewan, was founded in 1941 and moved closer to Chinatown in 1945, so students began outreach to the Chinese. This coincided with more open immigration which, in 1947, allowed women and children to immigrate; some settled in Regina.

The work did not advance very far at first but later Paul Bartel taught missions at CBC for two years from 1953-1955 and during that time the Chinese work advanced. Most notably Bartel led Arthur Louis to Christ. Louis subsequently attended Alliance Bible Seminary in Hong Kong for 10 months in 1955-56 and became an ordained pastor. In 1955, at the end of Bartel's time at CBC, the Regina Chinese Christian Fellowship was founded. There was not yet a pastor and the church could not afford to hire one. However, in 1960 a Chinese church in the Philippines provided financial support and Augustus Chao (Zhao Shichang), a former banker from Hong Kong, came to Regina. He was the first pastor of a Chinese Alliance church in North America. (Chiang and Tam, 2015, p. 47).

In 1960, Bartel returned to CBC where he became academic dean and his wife Ina became dean of women. He continued to be involved in Chinese ministry and he encouraged groups of Chinese to start churches and organised Chinese student conferences at the college during break time. (Bollack, 2002). Bartel moved to Hong Kong in 1965 to become the director of the Alliance Press, leaving behind a well-established church in Regina. In Hong Kong, he focused on raising the quality of the *Bible Magazine* but also took time to raise up pastors who could be sent to Canada to lead the Chinese churches there. This was the beginning of a fluid relationship between the Hong Kong and Canadian churches which continues to this day.

In 1961, Augustus Chao, accompanied by Louis, began weekly Friday evening and Saturday visits to Saskatoon doing outreach and creating a Chinese congregation within University Drive Alliance Church (the forerunner of Circle Drive Alliance Church). Louis became pastor of that congregation in 1962 and they formed the Saskatoon Chinese Alliance Church in 1969. (Willems, n.d.). Chao had come to Canada with the vision of planting 50 Chinese Alliance churches in North America, so Saskatchewan was only the beginning. During his career he saw seventeen Alliance Chinese churches planted in Canada and nine in the United States. In 1966, he moved to Vancouver and began leading the Chinese congregation affiliated with Tenth Avenue Alliance Church. During the six years he was in Regina, Chinese churches were also begun in Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Swift Current, and Lethbridge.

### Augustus Chao



Augustus Chao was born on July 21, 1912 and raised in Hong Kong. He became a banker, married and had five children. In 1960, he came to Regina, Saskatchewan to study at Canadian Bible College and plant Chinese churches. Regina was the location of the first Chinese Alliance church in North America. During his lifetime, he saw seventeen Alliance Chinese Churches planted in Canada and nine in the United States.

The Alliance work among the Chinese in Vancouver began in 1962 with a small group led by Joe Ottom. He had been attending Canadian Bible College with Augustus Chao and intended to return to Vancouver and begin a Chinese fellowship with the eventual intention of calling Chao to be the pastor. He became the custodian at Tenth Avenue Alliance Church in Vancouver and began with a Chinese children's Sunday school. He partnered with Philip Mah who provided translation into Cantonese. They soon began Bible classes for adults which met in the Tenth Avenue pastor's office due to lack of space.

Ottom learned that in order for men to sponsor their wives to immigrate, they had to prove they had a sufficient command of English and knowledge of Canada's history, government and social customs. He therefore began to provide classes in these subjects as motivation for men to attend church. (Ottom and Gouldthorpe, 2004, p. 72). They soon had 42 students which was more than the church could accommodate. They therefore moved to a bowling alley which caused some resentment among the students. Ottom emphasised that God had provided them with many blessings and promised that next Sunday he would detail all the things God had provided, even if they were meeting in a bowling alley.

The next Sunday he provided a list of things they had received: some beef, a bag of vegetables, a new refrigerator and a carpet. This impressed the congregation, but next he mentioned that his car had broken down that morning and said, "I have been praying for a VW bus for a year, but

God has not provided one for me, because until now, I did not really need one. When you come again next week, you will see me drive in with a VW bus.” (Ibid., 84). That week, two acquaintances who apparently knew nothing of his boast offered him a free VW. Ottom says that “the Chinese folk were very impressed. They started to attend the services regularly and in increasing numbers.”

From 1964-1966 Ottom attempted to persuade Augustus Chao to give up his work in Regina and move to Vancouver. Chao writes that for two years Ottom wrote him two or three letters every week urging him to come, saying “Here, very big fish in Vancouver, lots of Cantonese.” (Chao and Yu, 2002, p. 79). This was certainly true, as Vancouver had about 10,000 Chinese to Regina’s approximately 500. Meanwhile, Ottom challenged his Vancouver group to raise \$500 at which time they would be financially able to employ Pastor Chao. This was successfully accomplished and, in 1966, Chao moved to Vancouver and took over the Chinese work that Ottom had spearheaded through Tenth Avenue Alliance. The congregation numbered 70 at that time. By 1969, there were 200 Chinese affiliated with the new church and they realised that they would soon need their own building. Therefore, they purchased a property at 3330 Knight Street in Vancouver and began to plan and raise funds. They remained at Tenth Avenue until 1972 with about 110 meeting on a typical Sunday.

Throughout the 1960s the C&MA efforts in Vancouver focused on evangelism and small group Bible studies. Ottom and later Chao would make trips to Chinatown to invite Chinese immigrants to English classes and church and Sunday school for their children. Although the late 1940s saw the possibility of Chinese living outside of Chinatown and thus using English in daily life, Ottom discovered that most of those who did live in Chinatown had very limited English ability. They were motivated to learn English and Canadian culture because it would help their prospects in sponsoring their family members to join them.

The 1980s saw the beginning of overseas missions among Chinese expatriates. Canada was seen as a mission field by many in Hong Kong who wished to see their compatriots converted to Christianity. Canada in turn saw a responsibility in continuing to spread the Gospel among overseas Chinese. Chao personally oversaw several projects in the United States. As early as 1977, Vancouver Chinese Alliance Church had provided financial support to Wheaton Chinese Alliance Church in Chicago, Illinois. The congregation also sent three missionary couples with full financial support and short-term missions teams over the years to reach the Chinese communities in Latin America, in Peru, Guatemala and El Salvador.

As we’ve seen over the course of 100 plus years of missions to and from China, the majority of growth has been through the partnering of Chinese and non-Chinese Christians. Jaffray led the way with his emphasis on giving Chinese churches autonomy, which greatly helped in the ensuing decades under Communist rule.

Ruby Johnston is considered the mother of Chinese Alliance churches and was buried in the cemetery’s Chinese section (see page xxxi). It has been through the great sacrifice and lives of both Chinese and Western Christians that the Chinese church has grown and thrived both in China and Canada. Today, this tradition continues as ethnic Chinese and others work together to bring the Gospel to the least-reached people of China. The hardships of the past remain for all: learning new languages and cultures and working under harsh conditions. With determination and prayer, we continue with the task as Jaffray recorded it in 1894:

“The supreme and crying need of this lost world today is the Gospel...shall we not rise at His command in these last days and carry the blessed saving news to every perishing one, and so the miracle of wondrous grace be gloriously completed.” (Jaffray, 1894, p. 517-8).

### China Alliance Statistics

There are no statistics, as China is a country that is not open to mission work.

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## Chapter 6

# Cambodia



Note: Maps are not drawn to scale

## Rivers of Living Water

By Ilana Lobbezoo

*'The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs. I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive. I will set junipers in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together, so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.'* (Isaiah 41:17-20)

Cambodia is a country with a long history of those battling for control over its land and people, not to mention the spiritual battle that has ensued down through the centuries for the souls of its people. However, one needs to simply take a bus ride through the countryside to be reminded that our Creator has ordained new life to grow in spite of perceived death that has, or currently is, seeking to choke out that life.

Given Cambodia's location along the Mekong and Tonle Sap rivers, its soil is rich with nutrients which allow for lush and unbridled greenery year-round. This serves as a picture of the possibilities of new life and growth where God's rivers of new life flow. Since the early 1990s, the testimony of hope and life found in Jesus has once again been permitted to flourish, beginning with the few remaining believers left after the Khmer Rouge Regime, and also the seeds planted by Christian humanitarian efforts in the refugee camps along the border with Thailand.

The cultural religion of Buddhism was not providing answers to spiritual questions that many had, and they were drawn to consider the claims of the Christian Church that a relationship with Jesus Christ would release them from their spiritual and physical bondage, both in this life and the life to follow.

### Church History

This Asian kingdom of rice fields, palm trees and golden-spired and serpent-adorned temples boasts a long history steeped in Buddhist religious tradition. It is estimated that over 90% of the population would consider themselves to be Buddhist. A popular Cambodian saying, "to be Cambodian

is to be Buddhist," reminds us that there are three things very important to all Cambodians: their country, their religion, and their king.

To the Cambodian, religion is an integral piece of their worldview and affects every walk of life, even reaching to their view of the monarchy. Their perception of their king is one that gives him deity status, since as part of the coronation ceremony, a ritual is observed during which the spirit of a deity is invited to come and possess him and guide him in all that he does throughout his reign. Consequently, for centuries the Cambodian Buddhist has considered Christianity to be a Western religion.

Cambodia's first contact with Christianity was in 1517 when Catholic missionaries gained access to the country, and by 1570 they had established a permanent presence within. Upon Cambodia's colonization by France in 1863, the Catholic Church gained the freedom to grow in numbers and influence albeit slowly. Many decades later, in 1923, Protestant missionaries arrived in Phnom Penh, preceded by the work and influence of Robert Jaffray in the Indochina region before and after World War II.

The first Protestant missionaries to reside in Cambodia were from The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), Rev. and Mrs. David Ellison and Rev. and Mrs. Arthur Hammond. Rev. Ellison served as a church planter and then went on to establish the Cambodian Bible School in Battambang, while Rev. Hammond led the task of translating the Scriptures into the Khmer language. Between 1923 and 1965, the Protestant church grew, despite early persecution, and recorded over 2,000 people coming to Christ through these ministries of the C&MA, which was the only established Protestant church in the country at the time.

Due to unrest in the region and within the country in 1965, all foreign missionaries were expelled from Cambodia. Many of these missionaries moved to the southern part of Vietnam and worked with the Kampuchea Krom, Khmer-speaking people groups living in the Mekong Delta region. In 1969, the missionaries were able to return, discovering that the Cambodian church had grown in their absence.

In 1970, these C&MA missionaries were joined by many other missions organizations and Christian groups. These various groups were involved in ministries such as church planting, leadership development and relief work. However, as the war escalated within Vietnam, the unrest spilled over the borders to Cambodia as well, forcing many displaced people to find refuge in the capital city of Phnom Penh.

This allowed for a time of unprecedented growth for the church. Large evangelistic crusades were held during the years 1972-1973, and as the number of believers grew, more churches were established. It is estimated that there

were over 10,000 Christians in Phnom Penh by the end of 1974. *Could it be that our sovereign God was preparing His Church for the catastrophic and trying years that were to follow?*

In 1975, the Khmer Rouge came to power in Cambodia and continued their devastating rule of cultural revolution and genocide under the leadership of Pol Pot. During that time an estimated two million people lost their lives, many of whom were those who had become believers in those few years leading up to 1975. The Cambodian Church, together with the entire nation, was displaced and persecuted; recording a loss of 27 of their 33 trained National Church leaders. Records indicate that by the end of the Khmer Rouge's brutal control of the country, only 200 believers had survived the civil war; exemplified by a mere three survivors listed from a former Phnom Penh congregation of over 600.

In 1979, the Vietnamese army attacked Cambodia and defeated the Khmer Rouge, bringing the Cambodian civil war to an end. Cambodians trying to escape the cruelties of the Khmer Rouge and subsequent collapse of the country had begun to flee the country to Thailand, where they found refuge in camps set up along the border.

Together with other relief agencies, Christian organizations came to provide medical and other forms of relief assistance. These Christian agencies, including CAMA Services (relief arm of the C&MA), took advantage of the opportunity afforded them to do evangelism and carry out discipleship ministries. Many Khmer refugees became believers through the ministry of these Christian relief workers, and some camps recorded as many as 10,000 converts gathering for weekly worship services. Although many of these new believers migrated to foreign countries, others were repatriated to their homeland beginning in 1992. These believers formed the foundation of the rebirth of the Protestant Church within Cambodia.

### Vessels of New Life

Sok Sophon and his wife Maram are just two of many with powerful stories of the work of God in their lives; drawing them from a life of service to the Khmer Rouge army, to service for their Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. Rev. Sophon is currently the president of the Khmer Evangelical Church, the C&MA affiliate National Church in Cambodia.

Before Pol Pot came to power in 1975, these two individuals, just in their teen years, were recruited to train and fight with the Khmer Rouge forces as they prepared for civil war. Sophon rose to the rank of Special Forces officer, while Maram served as soldier and medic. Maram's journey to the Cross began following a bombing event which left her with burns over most

of her body. The year was 1974 and the country was already at war.

Maram was a 14-year-old soldier and stationed at a training base in Takeo Province. This base was notorious for their intensive artillery combat training. One day it was bombed, sending the entire troop of 60 teen soldiers, save Maram, to an early grave. Due to the injuries incurred from the blast, Maram lay in a coma for the following 15 days; her burnt body wrapped in banana leaves. While in her unconscious state she had a vivid vision, as if she were conscious, of the scene in Heaven as described by John in the Book of Revelation of an unending list of names being read off. She understood from the vision that this was a list of names of people who would be awarded eternal life. When she regained consciousness, she recalled the vision and kept it in her memory as something meaningful, until years later when she was introduced to Jesus and found described in the pages of Scripture the vision she had been given while in recovery.

Following her dramatic recovery, she was transferred to work as a medic in the northwest region of the country, the stronghold for the Pol Pot regime for many years, even after the Vietnamese invasion and subsequent overturning of the Khmer Rouge rule. By 1986, she had been stationed in Phnom Dang Rek base where Sophon was serving as Pol Pot's bodyguard. There these two young people were matched up in a notorious Khmer Rouge mass wedding.

Following the birth of their first child, Maram became ill with mastitis and was transported and admitted to Khao-I-Dang Refugee Camp Hospital in Thailand. At the same time, one of the soldiers under Sophon's leadership was there being treated for a leg injury which resulted in amputation. Christian workers began witnessing to Maram, while this young soldier who had met Jesus there began witnessing to Sophon as well. By God's sovereign plan, He took this young family to Khao-I-Dang to be introduced to their Saviour in 1989. Having received treatment, they were awarded papers to remain in the Khao-I-Dang refugee camp where they began to attend worship services, were discipled by CAMA Services personnel working in the camp, and were baptized together in 1992.

They were hungry to learn the Scriptures. Maram never forgot the vision she had while laying somewhere between life and death. The testimony of others and the Scriptures she read served to verify the truth for her. Under the discipleship of Bounoeuy and Chanthan Kes, who are to this day American international workers with the C&MA in Cambodia, Sophon and Maram



Rev. Sophon and his wife Maram,  
c. 2017.

Courtesy Ilana Lobbezoo

studied Theological Education by Extension (TEE) courses and began to serve God in the Khao-I-Dang church until the family was repatriated to Banteay Meanchey Province. There they committed their lives to serving God for the next 20 plus years.

They were instrumental in planting nineteen congregations in that district, faithfully teaching TEE and discipleship classes. Maram used her medical training to care for the physical needs of those in the communities they were reaching with the Gospel. Before Sok Sophon was elected as National Church president in 2009, he had also served as pastor of the Phsar Thmey and the Pi Slang churches in Banteay Meanchey Province.

### Testimonies to the Transforming Power of Jesus

The biblical claims of a Creator God and the testimony of Jesus' power over the spirit world through His victorious death and resurrection remain one of the most powerful attractions to those who live under the bondage of Buddhist beliefs and fear of the spirits. The Eastern worldview is one that holds to the existence of an active world of angels and demons who interact with our lives on this earth resulting in our success and failures, means and lack, good health and illness.

Most Cambodian Buddhists also hold to Animistic beliefs which foster a religion that requires constant appeasement of the spirits in order to maintain good fortune and secure a better afterlife as they move through what they believe to be a reincarnated life cycle. Without proceeding to theologize extensively on the problem of evil and the capabilities of Satan, we should remember that Scripture describes him as a crafty serpent and a roaring lion who roams the earth seeking to devour the human race.

Satan and his minions will use every opportunity to deceive and shackle the human race. In the Cambodian context, he takes advantage of their belief in the spirit world, manifesting in a variety of visible forms and deceiving them into paying homage, keeping them in a bondage characterized by fear. For a Cambodian, to be presented with the truth that Jesus Christ's death on the cross cancelled out Satan's power over mankind and brings victory over death is truly liberating to those who dare to place their trust in this all-powerful God and Creator of the world.

Early on in our ministry years in Cambodia, we were challenged by the faith of a local Phnom Penh pastor, Bin David, who had experienced firsthand the power of invoking the name of Jesus over demons who would attempt to yield their power over his family or those in his congregation. His emphatic faith and subsequent release and victory were tremendous witnesses to his church and community of the power of Jesus over the darkness they live under.

This testimony caused the New Jerusalem church to grow from its small beginnings to a church today which truly proclaims God's faithfulness to those who will wholeheartedly place their trust in Him to care for their needs. We have walked beside this church and its leadership over the past 15 years and have witnessed their shift from dependence on the international workers/Western church and the finances they provided to meet their needs, to a complete reliance on Jesus to meet their spiritual and physical needs alike.

Today, this congregation is blessed to have their own building which they utilize well on Sundays and throughout the week as they have a heart to continue to reach their community with the hope of the Gospel message.

### The Modern Church

Today, Christians make up an estimated 2.5 per cent of the population of 16 million people, and the church continues to grow in each province of this small country nestled between Laos, Vietnam and Thailand. The Khmer Evangelical Church (KEC) (C&MA), records 220 local organized congregations, most of which are led by lay pastors who are bi-vocational. A few churches in our urban centres have between 100 and 200 worshippers

#### Norman and Marie Ens



Norman and Marie Ens were both born and raised in Saskatchewan. They met at Canadian Bible College and departed for Cambodia as missionaries in 1960. The prolonged military conflict in SE Asia forced the Ens family to leave Cambodia in 1975, just weeks before the Khmer Rouge came to power. They eventually relocated to France due to the large influx of Cambodian refugees.

From their home in Versailles, they continued ministering to Cambodians all over France for 13 fruitful years. Norm died suddenly in 1991 of a heart attack while visiting their daughter Shelly and her family who were C&MA missionaries in Côte d'Ivoire.

Today, well into her 80s, Marie continues her ministry in Cambodia with Rescue, an orphanage which is home to hundreds of needy children.



Phearum Gnea and his family, c. 2017.  
Courtesy Phearum Gnea



Village church planted by Phearum  
Gnea and Phsar Leu Church,  
Siam Reap Province, c. 2017.  
Courtesy Phearum Gnea

gathering in established church buildings on Sunday mornings, while other groups in rural areas will meet as small groups in the home of the pastor or lay leader to worship together.

The leadership of the Phsar Leu Church in Siem Reap offers one example of the Cambodian Christian's zeal to share the hope of Jesus with their fellow countrymen. Pastor Bhut Nnom and his son, Phearum Gnea are passionate about evangelizing the communities in the surrounding area of Siem Reap City, home of the world famous ancient Hindu/Buddhist temples and city ruins. This group of 70-80 believers has now started 20 small church plants within their area of influence. When Phearum purchased a small piece of land just outside of town to develop as his family's orchard, he witnessed to his neighbours there and now holds a small worship service each Sunday afternoon.

Recently we joined this family and the family of KEC churches and believers to mourn the death and celebrate the life of his mother, Chan Rith. As a young wife and

mother, she too found freedom from the trials of life in Cambodia under Khmer Rouge rule in the refugee camps along the border. While their young family resided at Site 8 camp, Chan Rith came to know Jesus as her personal Saviour through the testimony of an older Khmer woman and Christian relief workers at the camp. She faithfully took her children to the weekly worship services and remained a faithful wife to her husband, a former Khmer Rouge soldier, who remained resistant to the Gospel for some time after her conversion. However, upon his subsequent conversion they have served their Saviour and the Cambodian church since their repatriation.

Upon attending her funeral, one can appreciate the tremendous impact one faithful individual such as Chan Rith has had on the souls of many Cambodians, not the least of which would be those of her own family. It would be safe to estimate that, because of the faithful testimony of the older lady who witnessed to her and God's work in Chan Rith's life, the lives of hundreds of individuals in the Siem Reap area and beyond continue to be changed by the life of Jesus Christ.



Dave Ens teaching, c. 2017. Courtesy Dave Ens

Even as the Cambodian church today has a growing new generation of church leaders who are trained and poised to reach their countrymen with the Gospel message, they would do well to remember and cherish the testimony of the older generation of believers. Individuals like Sok Sophon and Maram, Bhut Nhom and Chan Rhit and Bin David came to know Jesus through hardship and faithfully served through years of limited training and resources, with few people responding to the Gospel message.

Today, our team of international workers sent by Canadian Alliance churches is focused on equipping the next generation for life and ministry through discipleship and leadership training as our core principles, while offering assistance with education, skills and employment training.

David and Patti Ens direct a university residence ministry in Phnom Penh where they are equipping Christian students to be active in their churches, even as they pursue careers in the marketplace. Mike and Cindy Schmidt, upon completing Khmer language study, will partner with local churches to reach the city student communities.

Still, 80% of the Cambodian population live in rural areas where they live from day to day on a subsistence livelihood. There our village churches continue to impact their communities with development programs. My husband Bill and I, Darren and Minako Polischuk, and Kim Bui continue to partner with our National Church leaders to support their efforts to offer education and skills training for the youth of their communities. In so doing, we are able to reach whole families with the Gospel message.

During the past seven years, the population of Christians has more than doubled in size with an estimated 300,000 believers around the country. Please join us in praying that the light of Jesus will continue to saturate this land which still harbours corners of darkness. May the words of Isaiah



become a shining reality to the glory of the Godhead within the Kingdom of Cambodia. May living waters bring spiritual life just as the waters of the Mekong perpetuate life and sustenance in this land.

### Cambodia Alliance Statistics



Churches:  
71



Ordained  
Pastors:  
31



Inclusive  
Members:  
5,871

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

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## Chapter 7

# Thailand



Note: Maps are not drawn to scale

# The Light in the Night

By Bonnie Burnett

*“I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.” (John 12:46)*

“Wait. You mean that this God wants me to *rest* on the seventh day of every week? Then I want to become a Christian!”

Never in my wildest dreams had it ever occurred to me that God’s day of rest would be the turning point in someone’s salvation! But as Khun Malee (pseudonym) and I sat in the front of her busy storefront studying the Bible, Jesus’ love became real to her. She went on to explain that in all her 40-plus years she had never had a day off, and the idea that the God who created her wanted her to rest was beautiful to her heart. She accepted His love and His salvation.

The movement of the Spirit of God in Thailand has never followed our formula for evangelism. From the beginning, the spiritual darkness here has seemed thicker and more impenetrable than so many other nations into which the Lord has called C&MA workers to serve, but even here Jesus is calling hearts to Himself. This is the Thai God-story.

In 1828, the first Protestant missionary set foot in Thailand—Dr. Karl Gutzlaff, a self-supported volunteer with the Netherlands Missionary Society. He began translating the Scriptures into Thai after only six months of language study and went on to finish the immense task of translating the entire Bible in only four years. He was the first to encounter what future missionaries would experience—the incredible darkness of Thailand—for all of his evangelistic efforts saw only one person accept Christ as Saviour.

Soon the Lord sent American Presbyterians to Thailand, and from the mid to late 19th century they began the first lasting work among the Thai. It was during these years that Alliance missionaries in Cambodia and Vietnam began to feel God’s call to spread the Good News into neighbouring Thailand.

On New Year’s Day 1929, in keeping with the C&MA’s mission of going to the least-reached, the Alliance sent Rev. and Mrs. Paul Gunther from Cambodia to set up a base in Ubon in the northeast of Thailand. This was in keeping with the Alliance practice of going to the unreached. Although evangelical missionaries had served in Thailand for almost 100 years by this point, the entire northeastern region of Thailand lacked any gospel

witness. The Alliance eventually accepted responsibility for all seventeen provinces in that region.

As the Gunthers, and later that year, Rev. and Mrs. Voth, began to share the Gospel, they also ran into the thick spiritual darkness that characterized Thailand. Though Thailand officially welcomed all religions, cultural and spiritual resistance kept fruit to a minimum in those early years. When World War II exploded after twelve years of faithful witness, they could count only eighty-five believers.

Although never officially at war with Thailand, Japanese forces occupied the country until the war ended. All mission work halted. The invading Japanese captured the Western missionaries and then later released them in exchange for Japanese citizens. Alone and harassed, the small Thai church struggled through the war years.

At the end of the war, only a small number of believers still clung to Jesus, but help was coming! An advance party of nine Alliance missionaries and ten children boarded a Thai-bound ship on Christmas Eve Day, 1946, to resume the ministry there. Over the next two decades, the Alliance mission and the Gospel Church of Thailand (Thai C&MA) continued to struggle against seemingly superior odds with little success, as did other groups. The unsuitability of large-scale evangelism in a Buddhist culture left Alliance workers with no alternative but to slowly, painstakingly, win hearts one by one.

During these years, leprosy pervaded the northeast, and missionaries serving amongst them saw many come to the Lord. What the other North-easterners saw, however, was small, rural Christian churches filled with leprosy-afflicted members, and it affected how they perceived this Western God. Years later, Watcharin, a young pastor in Bangkok, related that as a child she had seen so many Christians from the leprosarium established by the C&MA that she assumed that if you accepted the Christian God, you would get leprosy!

The church did experience hard-won growth, however, and in percentages it looked impressive. The pre-war total of eighty-five baptized members rose to 1,446 by 1964. This represented an incredible 1,700 per cent increase in twenty-three years, despite the interval of the costly war. But in comparison to an estimated nine million people in Northeastern Thailand in 1964, believers still constituted only .016 per cent of the population.

## 1946-1970: Autonomy, Broadcasting, and Training

During the next three difficult decades, several events stand out:

1. The Gospel Church of Thailand became a recognized organization with a provisional constitution in 1950. The church achieved permanent

and official autonomy four years later, becoming an equal partner with the Mission in evangelizing the nation.

2. The Alliance began broadcasting the Gospel over medium-wave radio. Realizing their work could be more effective by teaming up with the Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC), the Alliance programmers entered a cooperative effort with the Manila-based radio mission in the late 1960s.
3. God led the C&MA to build the Maranatha Bible School. Earlier, the Alliance had initiated a special ministry to people suffering from leprosy, a large problem in the poorer regions of Thailand. Lepers lived as outcasts victimized not only by a dread disease but also by widespread ignorance within society. Response to this, at first wary and then enthusiastic, grew swiftly. In 1953, the missionaries built Maranatha Bible School to train students afflicted with leprosy how to minister spiritually to others in similar straits.

One event in 1952 dramatized the fact that missionary work is often one breath away from martyrdom. While Paul and Priscilla Johnson led a worship service one evening, bandits entered the small village chapel in Baan Don Mafai and fired shots at them. Priscilla died immediately and Paul a few days later. On the 50th anniversary of their death, their three children returned to Thailand to find a church still meeting in that village.

As the 1960s drew to a close, the spiritual darkness of Thailand still seemed to blanket the hearts and minds of the people. But God had His people praying and believers could feel a shift coming.

### 1970s: Revival

The first Thai Congress on Evangelism opened in January 1970 with the prophetic motto, “The Hour Has Come.” The conveners had no idea how many would attend, but before the congress ended, they began to hope that a new

#### Suragarn Tangsirisation



Suragarn Tangsirisation was discipled by Canadian missionary Dorothy Hubert and later studied at Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, Saskatchewan. He went on to receive his PhD from Trinity International University and today leads Youth for Christ in Thailand.

hour had indeed come for their country. From nearly every denomination and Christian organization came 250 representatives. The feeling of unity in purpose and fellowship resounded throughout the country.

### 1980s: Overcoming Challenges

The spirit of darkness never gives in easily, so bad news launched the Alliance into the next decade with uncertainty. The Department of Religion called for a meeting with mission leaders in February 1981. The director informed them that, effective immediately, the current number of missionaries in the country would be frozen for each mission.

At least 125 prayer cells formed after the congress, and unusual events began happening in scattered parts of the country! Revival broke out among nominal Christian youth at a church high school; churches reported healings and miracles; evangelistic spirit grew in spiritually dormant churches. The executive secretary of the Church of Christ in Thailand (Presbyterian) reported that conversions had doubled that year. It was the beginning of a new chapter as believers began to see cracks of light in the wall of darkness that was Thailand.

There was more. The director said that after three years, during which replacements could be brought in, the agencies were expected to begin reducing their staff by 10 per cent yearly until they were *all* withdrawn! What a blow! But God’s plans were different. Although no mission agency has been able to obtain additional visas since then, the actual elimination of the mission workforce has never been enforced. Indeed, “*Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.*” (Proverbs 19:21).

The new policy, however, could not have come at a worse time for the C&MA. Our international worker force had shrunk from a high of 74 to a low of 36 that year (including a few permanent visa holders). To this day, the Siam Mission of the C&MA holds only 31 visa slots to enable 31 families/ singles to serve in Thailand.

The Thai C&MA (TCMA) had also not yet consolidated. Its churches and members had little passion to evangelize or multiply. Its Bible school only had eighteen students studying full-time. At that low point, however, rather than despairing, Alliance mission and church leaders chose to step out in faith knowing that the time might be short! They formed joint evangelistic teams that targeted the major cities and adopted the goal Harvest 5000/87: five thousand believers by centennial 1987. The goal, though not reached, demonstrated that, by faith, the Alliance church in Thailand had begun to take the Great Commission seriously. They were giving notice that the Light was coming.

That year the Bangkok Bible College signaled its faith and determination that “we will not be defeated” when it broke ground for a four-story building that would increase its capacity for students and its effectiveness in operations.

The C&MA Mission expressed the same intentional faith by moving its headquarters from the interior city of Korat to the capital city of Bangkok in 1986. Bangkok, with over five million inhabitants, ranked among the key cities in Alliance overseas ministries, and was therefore included in an urban church growth plan entitled “Good News for Great Cities.”

God blessed the faith of His people during that time and the country saw a significant rise in the number of believers. The TCMA church in Khon Kaen, the largest in the northeast, filled to overflowing and had to begin looking for a larger facility.

The Mahapawn Saphan Kwai congregation in Bangkok, one church to be boosted by the “Good News for Great Cities” strategy, had already been in existence for several years. By 1984, it was overflowing its meeting place on the mission guest house property. That year it began building its own structure.

All three Thai churches in Bangkok saw God’s hand move mightily within the first two years! The congregation at Saphan Kwai, with an attendance of 160, was already worshipping in its new sanctuary. The newer groups doubled in size and put on Christmas programs that attracted a combined total of seven hundred people – unheard of figures just a few years before!

Under Alliance pastoral leadership, the English-speaking Evangelical Church of Bangkok also became a spiritual force in the city, reaching into the foreign diplomatic and business communities. By the end of 1986, Sunday morning worship attendance topped three hundred! In addition to worship and Bible teaching, the church got involved in innovative ministries, such as providing counselling staff for the Community Services of Bangkok.

It was during this season that the Lord began to move His workers from all over the world into the harvest in Thailand. The North American C&MA team welcomed missionaries from Japan, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. Still later, workers joined from Holland and Malaysia. By the late 1990s, Thailand was the C&MA’s most multicultural field with missionaries serving together from nine different countries.

The darkness of Thailand, however, was not fading away without a fight. In 1984, a bookkeeper swindled the mission out of thousands of dollars and fled the country leaving behind legal problems that took months to solve, heavy financial loss, and the field director under arrest in a Thai prison. That decade also saw a whole generation of young missionaries resign, with family after family leaving the field due to medical emergencies, spiritual attack or moral failure.

Meanwhile, the National Church and Mission leaders sharpened their focus on evangelism and church growth in what appeared to be an emerging nation-wide openness to the Gospel.

Evangelistic efforts of necessity included the young because at that time, six of every ten Thai were aged twenty-five or younger.

Evangelistic efforts of necessity included the young because at that time, six of every ten Thai were aged twenty-five or younger. The country’s adult-oriented society had not welcomed youth camps for many years, and the first youth camps in the late 1950s had drawn only about thirty young people. By 1985, however, the attendance at the summer camp program had reached one thousand.

The Harvest 5000/87 campaign, with a goal of having 5000 baptized members by 1987, gained momentum as local churches got involved. Media evangelism did its part as well. In one instance, a provincial governor even accepted a video cassette version of the *JESUS* film for a private showing at his residence.

By the end of this decade the Lord had again doubled His church in the country of Thailand. Hairline cracks had appeared in the wall of Buddhist resistance and each year seemed to widen those cracks, allowing the light of Jesus to filter into the darkest of regions.

### 1990s: Building the Church

“In January of 1990,” relates Dorothy Hubert, missionary from Beulah Alliance Church in Edmonton, “Edna Hooper and I moved to begin work in Nong Khaem, a largely unreached area on the other side of the river in Bangkok. After an evangelistic service there, forty-two people came forward to receive Christ. As we visited each of them the next week, however, we found that none of them were interested any longer. Six believers from the mother church had expressed interest in worshipping with us, closer to home, but five of them changed their minds and the one old man who was still interested soon passed away. So, we were down to zero. How do you build a church with zero members? The darkness in this corner seemed impervious to our efforts! But our field director reminded us, ‘If you believe, you will get anything you ask for in prayer.’”

Dorothy goes on to say,

“I had leadership of the Nong Khaem team, but I didn’t feel very capable. We prayed and prayed, and we surveyed the area. We

### Dorothy Hubert



Dorothy Hubert was nurtured into her ministry calling by Beulah Alliance Church, Edmonton, Alberta. In 1962, after studying at Canadian Bible College, she landed in Thailand and gave her life to the people there in a variety of effective kingdom building ministries. Numerous young people that she discipled went into full-time Christian service.

found 25 Buddhist temples, 30 factories that made Buddhist idols, and only one Christian church. Two Pentecostal women had worked for seven years in the area, resulting in a congregation of thirty believers. We asked them to join forces and began praying together each week and handing out tracts. I had read John Dawson's book, "Taking our Cities for God", in which he describes prayer walking as a means to reach an area. A new idea, we decided to try it and began prayer walking through the streets of Nong Khaem.

Soon the Lord brought a man who had not been to church in four years, a Bible school teacher who needed a rest, and a 14-year-old boy to worship with us. Not long after that, a few ladies responded to the tracts and came to the centre to hear the Gospel. After discussing it with their brother, the whole family came to the Lord, doubling our attendance in one swoop! This was the beginning.

Eleven years later, at the dedication of the [Mahapawn Trimonthon] church building, over three hundred attended, including two of my brothers. What an exciting time of celebration! To God be the glory."

The Light continued to spread in Thailand and the 1990s saw God's church in Thailand double yet again. By the end of the century, Thailand had over 2,000 churches! It felt like such victory; and it was! And yet, in a country of 65 million, still far less than one per cent knew Christ.

### 2000s: Thai Leaders Step Up to Reach Their Own

If the 20th century was the time of mission-led evangelism in Thailand, then the 21st came in as the century the Thai church stepped up to reach its own. In 2002, the Billy Graham Association held a conference on evangelism in Singapore and the churches of Thailand sent 40 delegates. They returned fired up to reach Thailand for Jesus.

Thai leaders from key churches and denominations met and formed a strategy to reach the country for Christ by the year 2020. Their faith goal is that by the year 2020 the Gospel will be preached in every village, a cell group started in every sub-district, and a church planted in every district; all 928 districts, 7,424 sub-districts and 69,307 villages.

With greatly encouraged hearts, Mission leaders assigned personnel to partner with Thai colleagues to help share the Gospel and plant churches in some of those target areas. By the end of that first decade, the number of churches in Thailand had doubled again. That statistic is cause for great rejoicing as the Kingdom of Christ continues to grow in this great country. It is sobering to realize, however, that despite these great gains, still less than one per cent of Thailand have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

### 2010: Coming Out of the Darkness

Recognizing this continuing darkness, at the start of the next decade American C&MA leaders identified Thailand as one of their target countries, sending another four families to begin language study. At the same time, the Canadian C&MA began a new initiative in the little-reached South.

The south of Thailand is home to the country's three million Muslims. It also hosts a large part of the almost 30 million tourists that visit Thailand each year, contributing to the 400,000 men and women trafficked into a growing sex industry. Into this the Lord led mission leaders to send three Canadian families to Phuket Island to:

1. plant an international church to reach foreigners,
2. begin a program of prevention, rescue and retraining for those exploited in the sex industry, and to
3. build a pathway into the Muslim world of the south.

Our growing team of international workers report an increasing sense of God's presence and power across



Derek Burnett (R) conducts baptism at Phuket, 2017.  
Courtesy Derek and Bonnie Burnett

the island and surrounding areas. According to the E-Star Foundation, the Thai church is growing faster here than anywhere else, and the churches have joined hands to bring a Will Graham Festival to the island in 2018. They are asking the Lord to push back the darkness and bring 10 per cent of the population to salvation. This is a prayer of boldness when the rest of the country still has less than one per cent who know Him.

The Canadian team, through All Nations Church Phuket, the international church plant, is directly working with the Thai churches, giving leadership to reaching internationals through the festival. As of 2017, this fellowship of about 100 has begun to take steps to stand on its own with a vision to train its people, reach the foreigners on the island, and through them spread the Gospel around the world.

For Freedom International, the Canadian team's ministry to victims of sexual exploitation has begun to grow and gain momentum. The ministry addresses every aspect of the trade from prevention to rescue to counseling and retraining. As the team walks forward in faith, what they know to be true is this: This is the time for His Light in Thailand. Jesus is pouring out His Spirit and is calling Thailand "out of the darkness into His wonderful light." (I Peter 2:9).

### Thailand Alliance Statistics



Churches:  
141



Ordained  
Pastors:  
106



Inclusive  
Members:  
38,423

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

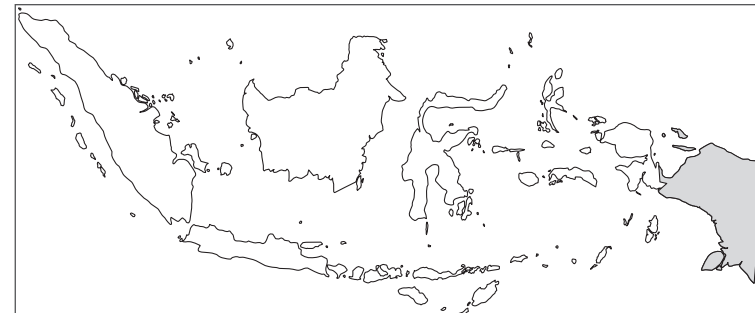
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## Chapter 8

# Irian Jaya



Note: Maps are not drawn to scale

## The People Time Forgot

By Pat Worsley

*It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." (Romans 15:20-21)*



Robert Jaffray visiting the Lowlands, date unknown.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives



Robert Jaffray visiting the Lowlands, date unknown.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives

The first Canadian Alliance missionary to have a strong desire to reach the inhabitants of Dutch New Guinea was the well-known statesman, Robert A. Jaffray. Shortly after Dutch aviator, F.G. Wissel spotted a network of lakes, villages and gardens in the western highlands of the island, Jaffray had a compelling urge that these people needed to be reached with the Gospel. He stated they "could be among the very last people on earth to be discovered." (Jaffray, 1938, p.18).

American C&MA personnel made the first trip into the interior beginning in December 1938. World War II necessitated their withdrawal and resulted in Jaffray's death in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. In October 1946, American Einar Mickelson and six Dayak and Ambonese Christians returned;

shortly thereafter, Canadian personnel were sent.

In 1952, additional workers joined the team, including Harold Catto from Owen Sound, Ontario. He had accepted God's call while in Bible school in Regina, and was ready to replace John Willfonger, an Alliance missionary to Indonesia who surrendered to the Japanese and was executed soon after Christmas 1942.

Harold and his teammate were assigned to Homeyo to work with Bill and Gracie Cutts among the Moni tribe, but his teammate left the field because

of stress. Shortly thereafter, he married Mary McIlrath, John Willfonger's former sweetheart, and they served in Papua until 1984. The Cattos served in the Wissel Lakes area, first in Enarotali and then in Tigi and then moved to the coast where, for many years, Harold served as field director.

Harold and Mary were loved by the Alliance team, their colleagues with other missions, as well as by the tribal peoples. Harold was famous for his colourful expressions and his direct and courageous prayers. One of the major accomplishments during his leadership was the formation of The Mission Fellowship (TMF), which brought together nine Christian missions to cooperate in reaching the people of Papua with the Gospel by helping to import materials, process government documents and coordinate ministries.

After the war, a second Canadian joined and started his missionary career as a pilot with the C&MA in Borneo, Indonesia. Al Lewis was a former Royal Canadian Air Force flight instructor from Hamilton, Ontario. He flew the mission's first Sealand amphibian aircraft.

As the passion to reach the tribes in the interior of New Guinea increased, Al and his family were reassigned. It was agreed that the Sealand would be the best airplane for the need, and Al was sent to Ireland along with Ed Ulrich to fly the plane to its base in Sentani. Ed shares the details of this heroic feat in his book *Out There Beyond Beyond*.

On November 13, 1953, the plane was officially turned over to the C&MA and dedicated; on January 12, 1954, Al and Ed were reunited with their families in Sentani. Within days, the new aircraft was flying supplies into the Wissel Lakes area, but the goal was to penetrate the Baliem Valley to reach the inhabitants with the Gospel. Ed and Al surveyed the valley from the air, and on April 20, 1954, the first landing was made with American missionaries Lloyd Van Stone and Einar Mickelson along with a native family from the Wissel Lakes, Elisa Gobai, his wife Ruth and their baby daughter Dorcas.

On April 22, the second landing on the river carried linguist Myron Bromley who was tasked with the job of learning to communicate with the residents of the valley. Later in the year, Al and his wife Mary had a furlough and returned to Sentani to resume flying the Sealand in February 1955. On April 28, Al left Sentani for his first solo flight since returning from furlough. When he did not arrive in the Baliem Valley as anticipated, and radio contact could not be made, an aerial search began. A month later, on May 28, the wreckage was found at over 10,000 ft., on the high rugged slopes east of the scheduled flight path.

Four years passed before a ground party was able to reach the crash site, and prior to their departure, Al's wife asked Harold Catto to bring back

Al's watch and wedding ring. Harold could not find the items in the cockpit but he realized that the plane was sitting over a big crevice that had a few blades of grass sticking out of the rock. There, hanging on one of the blades, was the wedding ring! It was returned to Mary, a permanent reminder of the sacrifice her husband had made to take the Gospel to the Dani of the Baliem Valley.

In 1956 and 1957, more missionaries were assigned to expand the work in the Baliem Valley. The first Canadian couple arrived on June 30, 1956 and were assigned to a new station at the upper end of the Baliem Valley. This station became known as Pyramid and ultimately became a more significant centre than anyone imagined. They experienced many challenging and frustrating situations. There was thievery, the fickle temperaments of the tribesmen, the frequent bouts of tribal warfare and the predictable communication problems. Gradually these situations changed and ministries were started. For some time, there was not much response but a base was established, an airstrip made, and accommodations built in preparation for the greater things God had in store. After almost four years of many discouragements and little success, the arrival of a Dani preacher from the Ilaga sparked a movement among the Danis of the Pyramid region with many turning to Christ and burning their fetishes in 1960.

When Donovan and Glenna Anderson (First Alliance Church, Calgary, Alberta) arrived in Dutch New Guinea in February 1957, they were flown first to Pyramid station to minister. Initially they helped other missionaries get settled into their stations as Donovan was an accomplished carpenter and cabinet maker. Thus, it was not until 1959 that their airstrip was dedicated and they could establish their station on the hillside above the Ibele River.

After the movement to the Lord in Pyramid, Gordon Larson and a group of Ilaga men went to Ibele. However, the village chiefs in the valley were opposed to burning their fetishes and threatened these Christians who left without seeing the results that were seen in Pyramid.

The Andersons served faithfully in the Baliem Valley at both Ibele and Sinatma until 1976, when their desire to adopt an orphaned Dani girl, who they had helped since her mother died in childbirth, contravened Mission policy. This Dani girl, Lena, was already a deeply loved member of their family and that love superseded Mission policy; they returned to Canada to become involved in other ministries.

Betty Little (Vermilion, Alberta) arrived on the field just after Christmas in 1959. During her first term, she was assigned to Ilaga and Sinak and the MK Home in Sentani. One of her early assignments and highlights was to teach in the Witness School and to see the eagerness of the ladies

...the students were orally taught a Bible story lesson which they would take back to their villages and teach on the weekend.

to learn. In this school, the students were orally taught a Bible story lesson which they would take back to their villages and teach on the weekend. One lady got sick while attending and her dying words were thanks to God and the missionary for telling her how to know Jesus.

While on furlough, Betty met and married American John Wilson and they returned to the field in 1967. They were assigned to Sinak where Betty had served earlier and they ministered to the Dani villages in that area for 10 years. They rejoiced when, assigned to Pyramid, there were over 100 pastors ministering in the valley and every village had a church. Light had broken through.

While in Sinak, they recognized the importance of honouring and respecting the village chiefs in their leadership so they decided to have a special school for them for two weeks. Most could not read and some could hardly hear, but 82 men attended and they were thrilled to think they could study like the younger men resulting in some accepting Jesus as their Saviour.

During this time John and Betty also gave leadership to the pioneer outreach into the northern lowlands where the Gospel was shared with smaller unreached tribes. In 1978, the Wilsons moved to Pyramid where they worked in the Bible school, except for a few years on the coast where John was field leader, until they retired.

### Three Sisters

In 1963, two sisters from Circle Drive Alliance Church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Elsie Toews, a school teacher, and Elfrieda Toews, a nurse arrived on the field. Elsie and Elfrieda both had long careers and filled vital roles, Elsie at the school for missionaries' children (MK school) and Elfrieda in the opening of Mapnduma station and ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the Nduga people.

It was their mother who first roused interest in missions when she enthusiastically read missionary stories to Elfrieda and her two sisters, Elsie and Elviera. Elfrieda wanted to become a nurse very early on. The Lord had already implanted His plans into her heart, to do something with her life that would last forever. She and her two sisters, Elsie and Elviera, applied to Canadian Bible College in Regina, Saskatchewan to get grounded in God's Word. Before the end of their three years of training, Elfrieda and Elsie were both appointed to Dutch New Guinea.





Adrian and Elfrieda van der Bijl, date unknown. Courtesy Alliance Archives



Elsie Toews, date unknown. Courtesy Alliance Archives

Elfrieda provided health care for the Nduga people and she spent significant time training a number of locals who were ultimately accepted as nurses by the Indonesian government. In addition, many Nduga children came to Christ through the junior church that Elfrieda held each Sunday in Mapnduma. In the process, she trained children's workers to minister in all the churches of the Mapnduma district.

In 1986, Elfrieda married widower Adrian van der Bijl who had played a major role in opening Mapnduma station and together they continued to serve the Ndugas until their retirement in 1998.

A very important support ministry for reaching the tribal peoples of Papua was the MK School. In order for missionaries to do the pioneer work of church planting and discipleship, meeting the need for their children's education was vital. The day after her arrival, Elsie was in the grade one to four classroom with 25 enthusiastic students. Over the years, she taught many different grades and subjects to numerous MKs, setting the foundation for their next years of study and life. Elsie taught at Sentani International School (SIS) until 1992, at which time the school was being inter-missionized.

For many years, Elsie was also the director of the Pioneer Girls Club at the school. The girls worked on numerous projects including cooking, outdoor living, art, music, Bible studies and charm courses that gave them many of the graces for their step into young womanhood.

Elsie also had a wonderful gift of hospitality that she shared with students' parents when they spent vacation time at the school campus.

In 1992, Elsie joined the faculty of STT-WP, the Walter Post Theological Seminary. There she was involved in training Papuans until she retired in 1999.

In September 1966, the third sister, Elviera, was granted a visa and she was assigned a teaching role in Irian Jaya. By November 1, she was on her way to Irian Jaya with veteran missionary Marion Doble. The final

flight from Wewak to Sentani was in the MAF (Missionary Aviation Fellowship) Cessna float plane that landed on Lake Sentani. Elsie and her whole class were there to greet her.

After four years in Irian Jaya, Elviera went home for furlough and educational upgrading. She sensed God leading her to stay home and assist their mother who had been in a serious car accident.

To reach the unreached in the jungles of Papua not only took rugged pioneer personnel, it also took administrators, secretaries, teachers and bookkeepers. In 1969, Pauline Clarke (Belleville, Ontario), now Mrs. Pauline Roswell, arrived in Jayapura to serve in The Mission Fellowship (TMF) office, providing a number of vital services—documents, purchasing, travel, and finance—for the personnel of nine different missions.

A judge and his wife once asked Pauline to teach them English using the English Bible. She accepted this as a 'God-Assignment' and began a class that also included a university professor and a university student. Halfway through the course, the professor was ready to pray and Pauline led this influential lady to the Lord. In 1973, after completing one term, Pauline returned to Canada but her contribution had been significant.

### **Pat and Ardyce Worsley (First Alliance, Calgary, Alberta)**

In 1960, as high school seniors, Pat and Ardyce committed their lives to serve the Lord as missionaries wherever He might lead. After 14 years of preparation, including marriage, they left Calgary with their three-year-old son for the long journey to Irian Jaya. After a short stay in Jayapura, they were on their way with MAF aircraft to the Wissel Lakes and the village of Gakokebo to learn the language of the tribal people called Ekaris.

After language study, the Worsleys were involved in upgrading the training of tribal pastors who had their Bible training in a tribal language Bible school. For 12 years, the Worsleys



Elviera Toews, date unknown. Courtesy Alliance Archives



Pat and Ardyce Worsley in Irian Jaya, ca 1991. Courtesy National Ministry Centre

lived in the Wissel Lakes region conducting seminars for pastors and church workers. During those years, Ardyce prepared Sunday school lessons and material for women's ministries in the tribal language.

In 1986, Pat was elected as field director and they moved to Jayapura where they lived for eight years. One of their main duties was seeing the transition of ministries and leadership from the Mission to the National Church.

There were New Testaments and portions of the Old Testament translated, songbooks, Sunday school lessons and other translated and printed helps all in the hands of the people. During this time, the Walter Post Theological Seminary was also launched with national leadership.

Serving in Irian Jaya had its challenges—traffic accidents, plane crashes, tropical diseases, government regulations and isolation—but through it all God has used missionaries who worked in relative obscurity to raise up a thriving church throughout the province.

### **Lois Belsey (Midland, Ontario)**

Lois was influenced early in her childhood about Alliance missions and was originally assigned to Vietnam, but after a short stay, all personnel were evacuated from that field and she was reassigned to Papua, arriving in 1976. Flexibility is a key word in this land; whether nursing at the MK school, teaching Bible classes, preparing Sunday school lessons, doing medical work or helping with evangelism in the lowlands, Lois quickly learned to be ready for anything.

For most of her time, Lois was assigned to Hitadipa to work among the Monis with veterans Bill and Gracie Cutts until they retired. The pressing need for Sunday school lessons for the Moni people pushed Lois to try her hand at translating materials. She also prepared lessons and taught the women at the Bible school. Concerned about leaders for the future, Lois took responsibility for youth work in the region and translated a youth manual into Moni. She also worked with the Moni medical workers to provide healthcare throughout the Moni regions and the lowland outreach areas.

For the past 15 years, Lois has been thrilled to equip Moni evangelists for ministry to five isolated tribes in the lowlands north of Hitadipa. From the end of 2008 until recently, she has had another Canadian, Mary McElhone, serve with her in Hitadipa, assisting with daily chores necessary for effective ministry to take place.

After 40 years, Lois continues to serve out of this isolated base with a special focus on assisting the Moni church in their outreach to tribal peoples in the lowlands, incorporating four large river valleys. The Moni church has sent evangelists to plant churches in these areas and Lois and Mary have made regular trips to encourage the workers and teach the people. Although Moni



Lois Belsey (L) and Mary McElhone (C) on a trip to the lowlands, 2012. Courtesy National Ministry Centre

leaders originally claimed that they would 'never bend to the Gospel,' we can rejoice that many have come to know and serve the Lord.

### **Marcia Thomas (Burnaby, B.C.)**

Marcia's exposure to missionary stories as a child led her years later to the conviction that missions was for her. After training at Canadian Bible College, the idea of using her office experience to serve the Lord began to take shape and, in 1981, she was asked to fill a secretary role with the C&MA in Irian Jaya. During her first term, she worked full-time as secretary for the field chairman in Jayapura.

### **Alex Valley (Thunder Bay, Ontario)**

After twenty rewarding years as teacher and principal in the Bandung Alliance School, Alex transferred to Sentani International School (SIS) in 1987. He was asked to become the principal at SIS and guide it through a major transition.

**Lois Belsey**



Lois Belsey was born and raised in Midland, Ontario. She has been interested in missions for as long as she can remember, because of the constant exposure to missions in her home and Alliance church.

Sensing a call, Lois went to Canadian Bible College (CBC), then to train as a nurse in Hamilton, Ontario, followed by midwifery training in Edmonton, Alberta and nursing practice in Hearst, Ontario. She left for Vietnam in September 1974, but was evacuated to Thailand in 1975, where she stayed for five months. When she couldn't get a visa to stay in Thailand, she moved to Indonesia in 1976 and has been there ever since.

Lois currently lives among the Moni tribe, numbering about 25,000, in Hitadipa in the Western Highlands of West Papua, Indonesia. The Moni are scattered in small villages over the mountains, covering about a 50-mile radius. She also works with evangelists in outreach to several other smaller language groups: the Wolani, Turu, Dou, Kirikiri, and Fayu. They live in the foothill and lowland areas, are semi-nomadic, quite isolated, and accessible only by small plane, helicopter, or dugout canoe.

Since its beginning in 1958, SIS was a boarding school for missionaries' children, accepting them from various missions but fully staffed with C&MA long-term teachers. When the number of Alliance students dropped significantly, Alex played a strategic role in seeing the school transition from a C&MA school to a multi-mission school with a staff consisting primarily of short-term teachers from many mission backgrounds.

Because other missions placed many of their new personnel in the Jayapura/Sentani area, the school also changed from a boarding school to one that was serving a predominantly day-student population. Despite physical challenges, Alex persevered to see the transitions successfully made and the standards and quality of the school maintained before he left Irian Jaya in 1995.

**Myrna Maxey (Calgary, Alberta)**

Another recent addition of Canadian personnel to the C&MA mission to Irian Jaya is Myrna 'Ellergodt' Maxey from First Alliance Church in Calgary. Myrna married an MK, Buzz, who grew up in Dutch New Guinea/West Irian/Irian Jaya with a passion to serve in the same field where his parents had spent their lives. A visa was granted in 1989 and they made their way to Bandung for Indonesian language study.

In 1991, a new visa was granted and they began their ministry in Irian Jaya as house parents at the MK home. Since then, much of their ministry has been under the banner of CAMA Services and has involved community development projects, HIV and AIDS awareness, Old Testament translation and soccer and discipleship ministries.

Because of their expertise, their ministry has not been limited to Irian Jaya. On December 26, 2004 a major earthquake occurred in the Indian Ocean off the west coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra causing an unprecedented tsunami that left a quarter of a million people dead and villages and cities flattened. Six days after the devastation, Buzz was in northwest Sumatra helping any way he could. In March 2005, after several weeks of wrestling with the decision, Buzz and Myrna decided to live and serve as a family in northwest Sumatra.

This has been true of all Canadians who served in Irian Jaya/Papua. They were obedient to the Lord's call and persevered through numerous challenges and obstacles to see Him build His Church in the province of Papua and throughout Indonesia.

**Papua Alliance Statistics**



Churches:  
473



Ordained  
Pastors:  
n/a



Inclusive  
Members:  
100,000

Source: 2008 statistics from Buzz Maxey

### For Further Reading

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## Chapter 9

# Argentina

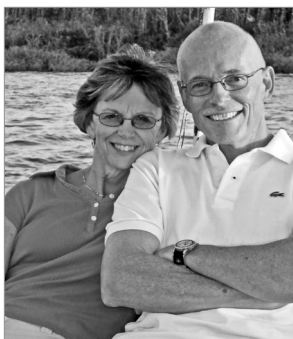


Note: Maps are not drawn to scale

# Ashes and Burning Coals

By Craig Bundy

*“He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.” (Galatians 3:14)*



Craig and Mora Bundy,  
c. 2010.  
Courtesy Craig Bundy

I came from the Pacific Northwest, USA and my wife Mora grew up in Regina, Saskatchewan. We met at Canadian Bible College (CBC) where we were both missionary candidates, and later married. After completing one year of language study in Costa Rica, we arrived in Argentina in mid-1978, in the midst of the so-called “Dirty War” pitting the conservative military government against anyone perceived to be leaning toward socialism. Our oldest son was two and Mora was pregnant with our second child.

Our initial ministry assignment while continuing language study was to help plant a new church an hour and a half and two bus rides away from

home. Those first months nearly ended in tragedy when Mora suffered a massive hemorrhage a week after the birth of our second son. Thankfully God intervened and spared her life. Two more children followed.

We spent sixteen years in Buenos Aires where we were focused on church planting with intermittent roles in field leadership and some involvement at the Buenos Aires Bible Institute. We left in 1993.

## Argentina: History of C&MA Missions

The Alliance history in Argentina, land of the Gauchos, the Tango, Evita Peron, and world-famous beef, began in 1897. That was the year The Christian and Missionary Alliance was created by joining the two sister entities, *The Christian Alliance* and the *International Missionary Alliance*. Several months later, three new fields—Argentina, Chile and Ecuador—were opened in South America.

The Canadian Alliance was involved in Argentina from the beginning; three of the initial team (William D. Smart and his wife, and David Buchanan) were from Bethany Chapel in Toronto, Ontario (Shannon and Grames, p.1).

When this team first deployed, the spiritual context in Canada and the United States was impressive. The team of eleven missionaries who initiated the new work in Argentina that year (Cable, 1939, p. 220) was a mere fraction of the results of an amazing century of spiritual renewal and missions mobilization. All eleven would have been, to some degree, a product of the great spiritual awakening of 1858 that began a few months earlier in Hamilton, Ontario, spread to camp meetings in both Ontario and Quebec (Orr, 1974, pp. 2, 3), and quickly erupted in the United States. Our founder A.B. Simpson, who was born in 1843, was a convert of this awakening (Orr, 1974, p. 163).

The year 1858 saw evangelism and revival that affected all Protestant denominations and that spread to the United Kingdom and beyond, wherever pastors and missionaries went. Like earlier awakenings, it brought renewed zeal for missions.

The launch into Argentina in 1897 was near the end of an era of unusual missionary endeavours carried out by the likes of David Livingstone, J. Hudson Taylor, Mary Slessor, Adoniram Judson, Jonathan and Rosalind Goforth, and John Geddie. The team of eleven would have grown up under the influence of spiritual leaders still revered a century later like Charles Finney, Dwight L. Moody, Ira Sankey, Henry Drummond, John R. Mott, Luther Wishard, Robert P. Wilder, and Albert B. Simpson, to name just a few.

In Argentina, the results of evangelism must have been a dash of cold water to early arrivals. Argentina, like Canada, was an immigrant-receiving nation in the late 1800s. Since the indigenous population had been mostly wiped out by earlier Spanish wars, the residents were mostly of European extraction from Spain and Italy with significant representations from the British Isles, other European countries and Slavic peoples. Physical adaptation was relatively easy.

Since the British played a large role in expanding the Argentine railroad system, numerous workers and families remained in Argentina. Interested friends back in England made a donation which helped launch this new ministry (Cable, 1939, p. 220). Although the Roman Catholic faith remains the state religion, the religious climate differed from the violent resistance in the Andean countries. Here the resistant attitude was mostly shaped by toxic indifference and materialism (Hunter, 1964, p. 156-57). The team encountered a piece of jaded Europe transplanted in South America. Progress was slow.

## Various Backgrounds and Traditions

The C&MA arrived in Argentina with its own internal complications. Although the team members were undoubtedly passionate about winning people to Christ, that fact may have been one of the few common denominators. By virtue of being an *alliance*, the C&MA drew workers from various

denominational backgrounds and church traditions. Very little existed by way of standardization in training, and what did exist was often brief. Occasionally teams would be joined by missionaries from other agencies and nationalities. A unified strategy would have been difficult to establish.

In 1984, John Shannon interviewed Vera Barnes who, along with her husband Samuel, had been an Alliance missionary in Argentina from 1920 to 1959. She mentioned that during the first twenty years of Alliance history in Argentina, “. . . no journals were written and much correspondence . . . was burned because of its vitriolic nature.” (Shannon, 1989, p. 4).

Internal team differences were not the only hurdle in those early years. There were strategic and eschatological issues. As Pyles noted, “It was not expected that a national church would rise up, but only that a few would be converted as a testimony.” (Pyles, 1986, p. 41).

Simpson’s early view of the missionary purpose was to convert a few people as a *witness* from every tribe and nation in preparation for the return of Christ. Then, during the following thousand-year millennial rule of Christ, the converted Jews would finish the task.

This approach meant that in those early years, at least until realizing that converts needed congregations, missionaries were constantly moving from city to city without establishing a trust base among the people. An example of this approach was the Swede, Emilio Olssen (leader of the first team) who, in 1896, proposed that with eighty-five earnest workers they could evangelize all of South America in four years (Shannon, 1989, p. 10). Initially, church planting was not on the agenda. It is noteworthy that by the end of 1899, more than half of the original team were no longer listed among the Alliance missionaries, including the Olssens.

In spite of the theological tension that lasted for years between itinerant ministries (to speed the return of Christ), and the gathering of new believers into congregations for nourishment (church planting), the early missionaries made headway in establishing some lasting works. As yet, there was no Alliance denomination in North America and no intention of establishing one overseas. Therefore, any churches planted either adopted the church structure most familiar to their leader or they adopted their own variation. Since the Alliance was eclectic in its recruitment of missionaries, it was also eclectic in passing those young congregations off to other evangelical groups when economic conditions deemed it prudent.

A prime example was when one of the original couples on the team, the Smarts, planted a church in the city of La Plata and then, in 1910, switched over to the Baptists. That church still exists after one hundred years but as a Baptist church. (Shannon, 1989, p.3). The same held true

for other missionaries. For varying reasons, a number of them switched mission agencies as time passed. Obviously, being an *alliance* of workers had disadvantages as well as advantages.

### The Pentecostal Movement

Another theological issue arose with the Pentecostal movement that began in California in 1906. The movement made its impact felt across the nation and overseas. The Alliance already had a robust emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but the Pentecostal insistence on the gift of tongues being the evidence of infilling caused a division among the ranks and a number of missionaries felt the need to choose sides. Some switched agencies over the issue.

On March 22, 1907, a note from J.D. Williams, secretary in Nyack, was drafted to two single women missionaries in Argentina. It read, “Miss Meissner and Miss Batchelor of Argentina, S.A., who have abandoned the study of the language in hope of receiving the gift of tongues were requested to resume their studies if the expected gift has not been realized at the time this resolution reaches them.” [*C&MA Minutes*, March 22, 1907; J.D. Williams, Secretary; found in the archives at the C&MA field office in Buenos Aires, Argentina].

Harry L. Turner, Canadian Alliance missionary in Argentina from 1913 to 1918, returned to Canada to become a leader of a Pentecostal denomination and then eventually became president of the C&MA in Nyack, New York from 1954 to 1960. The full effects of the Pentecostal movement on the Alliance overseas is unknown, but the Alliance in Argentina became known for bridging the theological divide among churches as well as among future students at the Buenos Aires Bible Institute. This attitude paved the road for the Alliance in Argentina to have fruitful involvement in mass evangelistic campaigns in the 1950s and 1980s that included Pentecostal participation.

### Rural Ministry

In 1910, Albert Simpson visited Argentina and recommended that the C&MA concentrate its efforts in rural towns of the province to the southwest of Buenos Aires rather than in the growing federal capital. This directive may have reflected early polity agreements between mission agencies to not all work in the same areas, or perhaps it reflected the new international missions trend to move from coastal regions to the interior of countries (China *Inland* Mission, Africa *Inland* Missions, Sudan *Interior* Mission, etc.).

The Alliance was successful in planting churches and establishing preaching points in rural towns and, in 1922, launched a Bible institute in the city of

### Jack and Jean Shannon



John (Jack) and Jean Shannon both came to Christ through the ministry of their church in Hamilton, Ontario. Jack and Jean, Canadian Alliance missionaries, served in Argentina from 1958 to 2003, including a three-year teaching stint in Australia. Their ministry at the Buenos Aires Bible Institute and in the Argentine churches made a lasting impact in the lives of thousands, including mine.

Azul. However, the prevailing trend in the interior was for young people to migrate to the big cities in search of employment. Evangelistic tent campaigns made rural evangelism effective, but the results were on the move—especially to Buenos Aires on the Atlantic coast. The strategy was ultimately counterproductive in terms of growth.

In 1920, Samuel and Vera Barnes arrived as new missionaries and eventually became living legends within the National Church. Although the C&MA decided to redeploy its missionaries from Argentina to other countries in 1921, the Barneses determined to remain. They started the Bible institute in Azul and oversaw significant growth of attendance and giving during the 1920s. Years of plenty made it possible for the Alliance Mission to subsidize pastors working in small rural churches and they thrived. However, when the Great Depression hit, it brought this practice to a sudden halt and the Alliance lost both territory and national workers during the 1930s (Shannon, 1989, p. 240). The Bible institute in Azul had to be closed.

Argentina remained politically neutral during World War II and its grain and beef were in demand by both sides of the conflict. Job opportunities increased and, in 1942, the first Alliance church was planted in Buenos Aires in the Liniers district.

In 1946, the Buenos Aires Bible Institute was opened and became the shining light of the Argentine Alliance for decades to come. Students from the Alliance in Argentina and from many other denominations would train in this school and influence ministries throughout Latin America and beyond. Although always involved in church ministries, for sixty years from the early 1920s forward, the primary focus of Alliance missionaries in Argentina was theological education and leadership training. This school

continues today, and Canadian missionaries Jack and Jean Shannon played an important leadership role in this ministry for some forty years until their retirement in 2003.

### Urban Ministry

An unexpected moving of God took place in 1954 which sped church growth. Divinely aligned events opened an unusual ministry door for an unknown evangelist, Tommy Hicks, who held successful mass campaigns in two soccer stadiums in Buenos Aires. The Liniers congregation grew and new churches were planted with the results of evangelism and healings. In a little over a decade, four more Alliance churches were planted in Buenos Aires—Boedo, Coghlan, Jose Leon Suarez, Belgrano. (Hunter, 1964, p. 158).

During the 1970s, a new evangelistic focus on the urban centre of Lima, Peru coincided with a moving of God in that country and the church growth was spectacular. In Alliance circles it became known as the *Encounter With God* movement. The evangelism and discipleship process resulted in church planting and rapid growth. This was a new phenomenon because, similar to Argentina, the Alliance in Peru had historically focused on the interior to the neglect of the large urban centres.

Interest spread rapidly throughout Latin America including Argentina. Buenos Aires became one of several Latin American cities to adopt a similar strategy of weeks of nightly evangelistic campaigns combined with aggressive discipleship. Part of the plan was to plant churches on major avenues with

### Walter and Estela Perez



Walter and Estela Perez have played an essential role in the Argentine National Church since the 1980s. Walter studied law in Argentina, theology and missions at Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, and ministered widely as an evangelist throughout Latin America.

He was the founding senior pastor of the Vicente Lopez Alliance Church in Buenos Aires, and at the time of this writing continues in that role in addition to his law practice.

Their contribution to the Alliance work in Peru, Argentina and beyond for over 30 years cannot be overestimated.

good visibility and easy access rather than on back streets where property was cheaper. The C&MA in Canada sent Royal and Linda Hamel to bolster the church growth efforts.

The Canadian Alliance stepped into the gap in the mid-1980s by raising church planting funds for several key cities around the world. Buenos Aires was chosen for a major fundraising drive to plant such a church. The *Buenos Aires Encounter with God* program was initially launched in 1982 by combining two smaller congregations, Urquiza and Coghlan, into one with a key relocation. Later, a team was formed which included a lawyer/evangelist, Walter Perez, who had studied at the Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, Saskatchewan, and a team of missionaries including Jonathan and Judy Grames (USA), Canadians Craig and Mora Bundy, Ruth Mitchell (Nilsson), Donald and Marilyn Ibsen plus several students from the Buenos Aires Bible Institute, all with the goal of planting a church from zero on a major avenue in a strong middle-class area of the city. The project adopted a strategy of weeks of nightly evangelistic campaigns combined with aggressive discipleship.



Ruth Mitchell (Nilsson),  
c. 1990. Courtesy Craig Bundy



Donald and Marilyn Ibsen, c. 1990.  
Courtesy Craig Bundy

### Factors Affecting the Spiritual Climate

Simultaneous to the launching of the Encounter with God program in Buenos Aires, three other key elements were affecting the spiritual atmosphere. The so-called *Dirty War* of the late 1970s, which resulted in thousands of the political 'left' being tortured and killed, culminated in the brief but deadly Falkland's War with England in 1982. The national economy was in serious crisis and the nation was transitioning from military rule to a democratic form of government.

At the same time, a movement of God was gaining momentum in the lower-class suburbs of Buenos Aires. Open air, mass evangelism and healing campaigns of weeks in duration were being led by a lay evangelist, Carlos Annacondia. Upwards of 40,000 people were reported to attend these meetings, and although the ministry was charismatic/Pentecostal in style, it attracted

participation across all evangelical denominations as well as among the unchurched. Thousands of lives were transformed, many sick and crippled people gave testimony of being healed, and many who were demonized were delivered through the aggressive prayer ministry.

These campaigns continued for several years and had a profound effect on the flavour of the Argentine Alliance. Churches grew, churches were planted, and some churches were split as a result of this movement. The combined effect of these diverse elements resulted in increased receptivity to the Gospel among the middle class where the new Encounter with God congregation was being launched. During this same period, Alliance missionaries began working with immigrants from Chile arriving in southern Argentina and soon planted a church among them.

It seemed like an opportune moment for the Alliance in Argentina. The C&MA in Canada became autonomous in 1981 and was interested in taking on a significant missions project overseas. In 1985, a group of Canadian pastors and district leaders accompanied Mel Sylvester, then president of the C&MA in Canada, on a vision tour to Buenos Aires. Their discernment process culminated in a fundraising campaign among Alliance churches in Canada for the purpose of buying property and erecting a church building on a major avenue in Buenos Aires.

The location chosen by the Encounter with God team for a new church plant was on Maipu Avenue in the district of Vicente Lopez. Ultimately, over a million dollars (Canadian) was raised resulting in the purchase of two adjacent lots, one of which had a large, old theatre on it. Unusual and divinely arranged circumstances enabled the timely purchases. (Bundy, 1991, pp. 281-83). Monthly evangelistic campaigns were held in rented quarters until the theatre was renovated enough to be used. At the time, Shannon described the enterprise as "extremely audacious." (Shannon, 1989, p. 252).

A number of students from the Buenos Aires Bible Institute assisted the church planting team as they began to build a congregation from the results of evangelism. It was a heroic endeavour in the sense of starting in a challenging area of the city with no core group of believers aside from the team itself. At times, the team was composed of people from five different countries: Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Canada, and the USA. Although this congregation did not grow to thousands in attendance like the Lima, Peru model, the Vicente Lopez church plant resulted in six daughter churches, a 24/7 radio broadcast, and a solid influence among a class of people that was mostly unreached prior to that time.

Parallel to this project, which officially ended in 1996, churches were also planted in the five provincial capital cities of Corrientes, Mendoza, Neuquen,



Posadas and Santa Rosa. (Grames, *Finishing the Task*, p. 1). When compared to earlier decades of few missionaries, a primary focus on theological training, and slow growth, the later expansion was significant.

At the time of this writing, numerous South American countries now have National Churches with sufficient strength to continue multiplying without the necessity of outside help. This does not imply that there are not cities in need of churches or that the task is completed anywhere. It does imply that enough resources are available to carry on so that workers from Canada may focus on other least-reached regions of the world where access to the Gospel is much more limited.

As a result, Alliance missionaries from Canada and the USA have redeployed from Argentina. The last couple, Jonathan and Judy Grames from the USA, left in 2011. Although the C&MA of North America nearly closed the Argentine Field in 1917, and then again during the Great Depression of the 1930s, it remained open for 114 years from 1897 until 2011. Future decades will reveal whether the timing was optimal or delayed too long.

In comparison to Chile and Ecuador, also entered in 1897, Argentina clearly reflects the stunted receptivity of its European extraction. In light of this unfavorable comparison, it is noteworthy that the influence of the Argentine Alliance has far outstripped its size. Preachers and evangelists from Argentina have ministered effectively throughout Latin America and were influential in the Encounter with God programs in Lima and the Latin countries.

The Mar del Plata quartet representing the Alliance of Argentina has ministered in Canada, the USA, Europe and throughout Latin America. Graduates of the Buenos Aires Bible Institute lead ministries by and for Latinos in many denominations around the world. (Shannon, 1989, pp. 240-43).

In 1989, Shannon quoted from Jean Juarez, French philosopher and statesman as saying, “take from the altar of the past the fire—not the ashes.” (Shannon, 1989, p. 1). In his conclusion, Shannon says that “...the ashes themselves speak and should keep us from the condemnation of reliving the errors of history.” (Shannon, 1989, p. 237). Over the years there have been plenty of *ashes* in the Alliance work in Argentina, but fortunately there were also *burning coals* that continue to produce results today in a country that has proven resistant from the beginning. May God multiply the influence of those hardy souls who continue the task!

### Argentina Alliance Statistics



Churches:  
79



Ordained  
Pastors:  
56



Inclusive  
Members:  
10,287

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

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Chapter 10

# Chile



*Note: Maps are not drawn to scale*

## Lord, Give Me from Here, South

By Richard Reichert

*“...Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. (1 Thessalonians 2:8)*

### Early History

The underpinning of the Alliance work in Chile began in 1883 when Oscar von Barchitz-Krauser, a German Baptist pastor, attempted to create a colony of Germans with Christian principles isolated from the influences of civilization. When he had to abandon the country, the Germans became aware of a missionary from North America who spoke German and sought out Henry Weiss. He became their pastor while learning Spanish and soon the group was reinforced by Spanish-speaking Chileans and the DNA of the Chilean National Church was determined: solid German ingenuity and structure with elastic native culture. So many people actually came to Christ at that time that church historians refer to the years between 1894 and 1897 as a revival.

Temuco, a town of 7,000 inhabitants at the time and 700 km south of the capital of Santiago, became the staging ground of the Alliance work in Chile. By the 1997 centennial, the First Alliance church of Temuco had 600 members. In succession, the Alliance added the second Alliance church of Temuco in 1930, followed by the third, fourth and fifth Alliance churches by 1972.

As the church grew, so did opposition. The first dedicated temple was constructed in 1900, in Valdivia. The building was pelted and the windows smashed. Several chapels were burned to the ground. There were physical attacks on the church leaders and congregations. Weiss himself was once beaten and his clothes torn in broad daylight.

### The First Missionary: Henry Weiss

Henry Weiss (1867-1915) was a Dutch immigrant raised in the Mennonite tradition. He and his wife Kate had planned to be missionaries to Africa, but a dramatic dream redirected their plans to Chile. They had a vision of a temple full of people worshipping idols but asking for the Weisses' help.

Though they were sent out under the banner of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, they went without economic support from them.

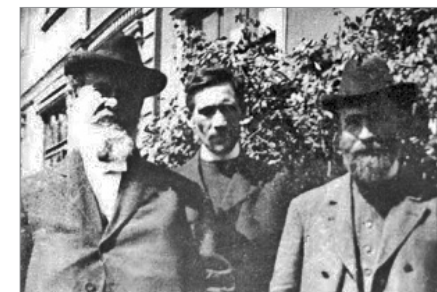
Instead, a Canadian pastor, Albert Dawson, financed Weiss. Dawson joined Weiss and is considered one of the founding pioneers of the Chile Alliance. His strength was literature distribution.

Henry and Kate Weiss set sail for Chile. While en route through Panama, their dream was reinforced when they visited a church in that city. To their surprise they saw the identical panorama of the original vision unfolding before their eyes. They saw the same people, in the same temple, asking for their help. It was all the call they needed.

They arrived in Talcahuano in April 1897. Henry climbed a mountain to ask the Lord to enable him to reach the people over the mountains, as far as the eye could see. Along the shores of the Bío Bío River he prayed: “Lord, give me from here south.” It was an audacious prayer. Chile stretches more than 5,000 km from Arica to Puente Arenas. Where he stood near Talcahuano, he was asking for 2,600 km of souls.

Henry travelled the length of Chile through inhospitable terrain to share the Gospel. As people responded to that prayer, Henry made sure they were grounded and established in congregations with their own chapels. As a practised carpenter, he was able to lend his expertise and sweat. A historian of the Alliance in Chile, Pastor Juan Wherly Romo, noted that “thanks to this attention, Chile church has more church properties than any country in Latin America.” He left a legacy of national preachers and pastors and local fellowships equipped with their own buildings. Ivan Flores says “the result was that wherever there was a congregation there was also an Alliance property.” (Wherly, 1997)

His colleague, Vital Sanhueza Jara asserted that Weiss’ “plan was to give the Gospel to all of Latin America” and that “he formed pastors to carry the Gospel in every direction.” Another colleague, Guido Bucher, referred to Weiss as being of the “stature of a missionary statesman” because “he recognized the importance of using nationals as preachers and pastors.” Bucher also noted that Weiss had “hardly any Christians who came for the loaves and fish because there was practically nothing to distribute.”<sup>1</sup>



Simpson (L), Dawson (C), and Weiss (R), date unknown.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives

<sup>1</sup> Guido Bucher. *Alliance Witness*, March 1968.

Hunter puts it this way. “From the earliest possible date, ...Weiss had no ‘rice’ Christians because he did not have any ‘rice’ to offer.” (Hunter, 1964, p. 167)

In the March 1958 *Chile Times*, the official field publication of the C&MA, celebrating 65 years of the Alliance in Chile, Guido Bucher identified three platforms that Weiss used to establish the evangelical church in the country. First, he believed in national leadership. Second, he was a builder. Third, he was a printer. In a budding evangelical church, locked in an unfair disadvantage with the traditional church, Weiss gained a foothold by promoting and empowering national leaders, leveraging advantage by purchasing properties for churches, and battling the oppression with pages and volumes of print material.

As a strategist, Weiss was perhaps a man a century ahead of his time, quick to capture the importance of the urban reality. He established the centre of his ministry in Victoria, 65 km north of Temuco. Flores says that while the city of Victoria had barely been founded when Weiss arrived, he understood the strategic location of this crossroads of wheat trade traffic and here opened his first church among the German colonists flocking to Chile. Flores says “This fact most clearly identifies his missionary vision: He chose the most prosperous city and used it as a base of operations. He did not hide. He projected outward.” (Flores. 100 Años. p. 26).

It was a strategy that the Alliance founder, A.B. Simpson, had picked up on as early as 1910 when he suggested missionaries begin work in the capital. (Niklaus, 1990, p. 146). There was an initial attempt but it was withdrawn and a second attempt was made in 1939.

Yet, mission and national leaders were somehow reluctant to capture or embrace that reality. Some who did were branded renegades or revolutionary for thinking outside the box. The box was the structure and organization of a highly predictable National Church. National president Eladio Medina once confided to an assembled gathering of Alliance leaders that Domingo Amstutz, Alliance church planter, was a man who disobeyed both the mission and national leadership in branching out in new ventures. “And it’s a good thing he did,” Medina added. Canadian Doug Snowsell and his wife Ann battled deeply held views that the upper-class Santiago person was unreachable up until they established a viable and dynamic church in the capital.

...while the city of Victoria had barely been founded when Weiss arrived, he understood the strategic location of this crossroads of wheat trade traffic and here opened his first church...

These foundations for a church of order and structure were probably laid by Weiss and became the hallmark of the Chilean church for years. As early as 1901, when the Alliance held its first annual conference, there was a policy manual that governed proceedings. (Flores, 1901, p. 28).

Weiss left his mark on the Chilean church through his administrative skill. There was structure, delegation, and order. He left the imprint of a highly organized National Church that survived his days by decades. Flores notes that “Weiss was the pivot of the Alliance work in Chile.” (Flores. 100 Años. p. 17).

On May 26, 1915, at the age of 48, Weiss was on a visit to the Alliance headquarters in Nyack where he was speaking of his mission to Chile when he suffered a heart attack and entered the Lord’s presence. Simpson made reference to Weiss’ commitment at his funeral when he remarked, “In view of the fact that brother Weiss spent his ultimate efforts for the work in Chile, I am interested in this country, like no other...” (Flores. 100 Años. p. 18).

### Training in Temuco

Very early in the history of the Chilean church, leaders saw the need for a training program. The initial impetus came in 1921 when Carl and Rose Lefevre accepted the call. Carl modelled the workers’ school after the prophet Samuel’s school of the prophets. It was an arduous beginning. Rose maintained the church in Capitán Pastane while Carl rotated between Valdivia and Victoria, spending 10 weeks of intensive classes in Valdivia, teaching morning and evening, and preparing lessons for the next day till 4:00 am. Carl created the class materials from scratch. Then he would pack up his ambulant Bible school and head to Victoria to do it all over again.

In 1923, after two years of alternate classrooms, 10 students came together in Temuco and helped build the first Bible institute. Such was the vision of Lefevre that, against the advice of his colleagues, he built a huge edifice, much beyond the needs of the school. That foresight signalled the establishment of a facility that became not only the site of the institute for decades, but also the location of the Alliance headquarters, offices of the mission, the print shop, a radio studio, and two residences. The eight men and two women who graduated December 4, 1924 went on to lengthy and distinguished years as workers in Chile. Three of them pastored for more than 40 years. The vision of the Lefevres left an indelible imprint in this first graduating class.

There were gaps in the training when, from 1934 to 1941, there were not enough professors to staff the institute and the doors were closed. A new era began with the arrival of Carl Volstad in 1941. With time, the institute added a female dormitory and library as missionaries like Ramon and Betty

Woerner who directed the institute for 17 years, the Amstutz family, and the Barkers served the institution. From the 1970s, national leaders assumed the mantle of administration and the Bible institute graduated to becoming a theological institution.

In 1994, Barbara Volstad was recognized for her constant presence in the institute as librarian for 34 years. She was listed as the rector in 1997. By the 1980s, it became apparent to both the Mission and the National Church that, in order to reach the country, theological education would need to be provided in the capital and in 1984, the Theological Institute of the Metropolitan Area was begun. Men like David Woerner, Lee Barker and Mike Strecker began to lead.

### Print Media

You cannot understand the reach of the church in Chile without understanding the importance of the printing arm of the church. S.W. Diener laid the foundation of what became the Spanish Alliance Press. Later, Robert and Barbara Newman were major players. Newman noted that “even today Roman Catholics have been heard to say that their biggest opposition in Chile is the very existence of the Spanish Alliance Press.” (Hunter, 1964, p. 165).

But most ministries found their way through Henry Weiss. He engineered three different presses, the last of which was so ingenious that he was advised to apply for a patent. Weiss refused because he was there to evangelize, not make money. As early as 1898, the Alliance Witness, official missions magazine of the Alliance in North America, was being published in a six-page Spanish edition by Weiss.

Later, Henry Wagoner and Carl Volstad began to sell materials outside of Chile, and by 1939 they were producing Spanish Sunday school materials in demand by other fields of the Alliance and other missions. Highlights of the printing arm were:

- A 10,000-copy edition of a hymnbook in Spanish and Amyra [Bolivian Indian language].
- Printing in Spanish, German, English, and Mapuche (Indian language of Chile).
- A line of Sunday school material and the monthly Christian magazine sold to over fifteen different denominations throughout Latin America.
- Literature produced in faraway Temuco, Chile, was mailed to every Spanish-speaking country, as well as to New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, and the Mexico-Texas border.
- From 1926 to 1960 printing figures show an increase in production figures from 887,836 pages printed annually to 18,816,400 for 1960.

- A peak circulation of *Salud y Vida* was over 50,000 in the years 1940, 1948, and 1956. The magazine had a run of 82 years.
- Over fifty book titles published.
- Editions of ten, fifteen and twenty thousand hymnbooks.
- By 1964, some 50,000 hymnbooks were in production for six different church groups in Chile and Bolivia. (Over 500,000 copies of *Himnos de la Vida Cristiana*, the Alliance Spanish hymnal had been printed).
- By 1964, close to two million tracts were in production.
- Fifty titles of Bible correspondence courses came off the press in just six years (1958-1964).
- Evangelical book stores in Latin America rose from 15 to 60 between 1953 and 1964.

### The Santiago Syndrome

David Woerner notes that growth in Santiago “happened spectacularly, some would say ‘without control.’” (David Woerner. *100 Años*. P. 111). The first missionary spurred on by Simpson himself set his sights on Santiago early in the church’s history. Woerner says that Weiss brought his family to Santiago in 1910 to begin a work. He was installed personally by Simpson. He was part of a church planting team that included Sanhueza, Bill Krauss and Ann Lefevre. Again, he was a man ahead of his time. In the three years he was there before the war, he set up his press, bought a used linotype, and attempted to plant a congregation.

The effort was gigantic for the times. A 1912 report notes that, in that year alone, they held 725 religious services with an average attendance of 33 persons. It was no mean feat.

In his chapter in *100 Años, (Missions Yesterday and Today)*, Woerner does a masterful job of capturing the more complete picture of attempts that were made to get into Santiago. It helps to realize that the idea of touching the capital was not a recent phenomenon of the modern missionaries who came later to the scene. Except for a brief interlude in 1921, attempts to plant a church in Santiago were abandoned between 1916-1939. To add context, Woerner points out people like Grossman, Oschilewski and Almonacid who began and pastored the First Alliance Church in Santiago between 1939 and 1964.

### Mahlon Amstutz: From Tip to Tip of the String Bean Republic

The intermediate years between the pioneer years of Weiss and the early missionaries and the modern era of advance to the capital was the era of provincial church planting, of the building of the Temuco enterprise and



The Amstutz family, 1966.  
Courtesy Richard Reichert

the infrastructure of the National Church. If the early missionaries were considered pioneer protagonists, and the final phase of missions endeavor marked as the time when missionaries became partners with the National Church, then the in-between years might be considered the time when missionaries were players and planters. To categorize anyone as fitting any of those molds is not fair, but it helps to understand the flow of growth of the church if we look at one individual from each

era who epitomizes that period. As a representative of those in-between years that bridge the gap between pioneer and partner, we have chosen a foot soldier planter by the name of Mahlon Amstutz.

Mahlon was born in 1915 in Springtown, PA of Swiss Mennonite descent. His father once heard A.B. Simpson speak in Ohio and joined The Christian and Missionary Alliance. After a year of studies at the Missionary Training Institute in Nyack, New York, his father pastored the C&MA in Springtown, followed by several other Alliance churches.

Mahlon graduated from Asbury College in Wilmore, KY, where he and Ruth met and married in December 1941. Having felt God's call to be a missionary, he attended the Missionary Training Institute, then pastored churches in Nebraska before going to Chile in late 1945 where they served for 42 years.

Their first years were spent in the Alliance headquarters in Temuco. Mahlon quickly got a feel for life in Chile. Apart from preaching, counselling and directing choirs, he also visited congregations in cities and towns reached by train or car, and also small groups of believers located in more remote areas accessible only by truck, boat, horseback, or oxcart. In the summer months, he organized tent campaigns in different cities in southern Chile. Over the years Ruth also enjoyed visiting and collaborating with women's groups.

During these years, the Amstutz family lived at the Temuco Bible Institute, where the parents both taught and where Mahlon was the director. Family life was shared with the students.

As field director in Chile, Mahlon worked closely with colleagues and leaders of the National Church, and continued to travel extensively, mainly south of Santiago. Since its beginnings, the work of the C&MA had been

limited geographically to less than a third of Chile's 2,600-mile length – that third being from Santiago to Puerto Montt, including the island of Chiloe. When the Alliance extended its outreach to Punta Arenas, at that time the southernmost city in the world, Mahlon had the privilege of assisting in the establishment of a congregation there.

For a few years, the Amstutz family lived in the city of Osorno, cooperating with the numerous churches and groups of believers in that area. When the opportunity materialized to plant a church in a new area of Santiago, the capital city, they were happy to meet this challenge.

But in the late 1970s, God had a bigger challenge awaiting them. The need to expand the Alliance work beyond Santiago into northern Chile—with its large coastal cities over a stretch of almost 1,300 miles—had been lying heavily on their hearts, a vision shared also by some Chilean Christians.

Mahlon and Ruth moved north to Antofagasta and established the first C&MA church there. They assisted in opening the work in Iquique, visited small groups of believers in Calama and Chuquicamata, near the large copper mines in the Atacama Desert, and finished their career in Arica, the northernmost city in Chile near the Peruvian border. Geographically, after Arica there was no more of Chile left for them!

### Lois Franklin



Lois Franklin came to know Christ in a home Bible study while she was in nursing school. After graduating from Canadian Bible College in 1979, she felt called into ministry but was not sure how to answer her call. It was during a short-term missions trip to Chile when God told her that she would return to South America.

She began in Chile where she worked in the Cordillera church for two years and another year in the First Alliance Church in Santiago. Her second term was dedicated to working on the La Florida team with special emphasis to women.

Lois ministered in Chile from 1991 to 1999. She was re-deployed to Mexico City in 2000, where she worked in evangelism and discipleship. After receiving a counselling degree in 2010, she has been involved in counselling, administration, and leadership development.

## The Generations

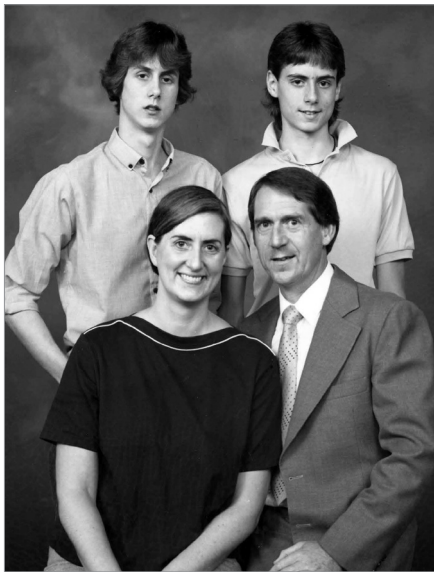
There was something about Chile that drew people back. Families like Woehr, Woerner, Amstutz, Volstad, and Bucher saw their children either return to Chile or serve in other countries.

Charlie Woehr taught in the Alliance Seminary in Guayaquil before marrying Elizabeth and returning to Chile. Nelda Amstutz married Paul Johnson and served in Ecuador for 35 years. David and Barbara Volstad returned to Chile to serve. Barbara gave a lifetime to Chile as librarian and rector in Temuco. David went on to serve as the Alliance regional director for Latin America for 27 years.

Carl Volstad's grandson, Mark Volstad, came to Chile in 1994 to serve the Mapuche people. Ramon Woerner was a force in the Alliance for decades and his son David followed in his footsteps. John and Dorothy Bucher had distinguished careers in Chile, following in their parents' footsteps. Marion Bucher served in Ecuador before marrying Allan Reed, a pillar in the Alliance Temple in Guayaquil.

When missionary children choose to return, it speaks volumes about the parents who took time enough to raise children as they served in Chile.

## Doug and Ann Snowsell



The Snowsell Family, date unknown.  
Courtesy Richard Reichert

Doug and Ann came to Chile in 1982 with their sons Brandon and Colin after a successful career in banking. Sensing God's direction to missions they headed for Bible school in Regina at 34 years of age.

Upon graduation, Doug was accepted into the missionary program and took his family to Latin America. They faced the pain of having to leave their children in boarding school as they went on to Chile. They were misunderstood in their passion to plant a church in the capital of Santiago. They were assigned to pastor an English-speaking Scottish Presbyterian church in Viña del Mar instead.

They planted the Cordillera church in Santiago among the

middle and upper class of the city. Their first meeting places were in upscale hotels in the capital. The church became a flagship of the Alliance in Chile. Following their ministry in Chile, they went on to serve in Madrid, Spain and pioneer marriage encounters in Canada, Spain and Thailand. Their sixteen-year missionary career with The Christian and Missionary Alliance ended sadly with Ann's premature passing in 2002. Doug went to be with his Lord in 2017.

Women like Joan Meger and Lois Franklin also made significant contributions to the church in Chile.

## National Leaders

We would be remiss to not mention the valiant Chilean men and those who stepped up quickly beside the North American missionaries and bore the brunt of ridicule and hardship in order to take Christ to their nation. We will let one man named to stand for all those nameless servants who poured their lives out for Christ in Chile.

There were men and women of the stature of Eladio Medina who served his country for decades as an itinerant evangelist, pastor, administrator of the Theological Institute in Temuco for eight years from 1977, and national president and executive of the Alliance World Fellowship.



Eladio Medina (R), president of the National Church in Chile with Cuban National Church president Ateno Morales (L). Eladio was a pioneer and promotor of world missions outside of his own country as well. Date unknown. Courtesy Richard Reichert

### Chili Alliance Statistics



Churches:  
145



Ordained  
Pastors:  
97



Inclusive  
Members:  
42,788

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

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## Chapter 11

# Peru



Note: Maps are not drawn to scale



## Watch and See What God Will Do

By Marilyn Klassen

*“You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you...” (2 Chronicles 20:17)*

In 1923, missionary Raymond Clark found a place to establish a permanent base. This materialized in 1925 when a mission station was built at Cahuapanas in the jungle, followed soon after by entry into the mountain city of Huánuco. A genuine indigenous movement among the Quechua Indians began, and very soon it was necessary to train local leaders. A short-term Bible Institute was formed in 1949 and later grew into a full-time institute in 1957 as the work spread throughout two of the three geographical regions of Peru; the mountains and interior jungle, with the work on the coast being much weaker.

In 1963, Don and Faith Scarrow joined the team in Huánuco to train leaders. Don grew up on a farm in Saskatchewan and Faith’s father had pastored several Alliance churches in the USA and Canada. Don and Faith met in Regina, Saskatchewan at Canadian Bible College. After years of teaching in the Bible Institute in Huánuco, they transferred to Lima. Don began many years as field director until the job was completed. They retired in 2002.

Although the capital city of Lima had been the business centre for the Mission since the arrival of missionaries, it was only in 1929 that a base was actually established in the main city. After many years and just one small church in the influential hub of the country, God gave a vision to a group of men. *Could He grow a church of 180 to 1,000 in one year? Did they have the vision and determination to see their dream come true?*

Canadian Kenn Opperman, who had some ten years previously served in Huánuco and Lima, went on a search to find a man who could lead the team. He found a fellow Canadian named Eugene Kelly. Eugene and his wife Muriel had spent several terms in the country of Colombia when God transplanted them into Lima. At the same time, God answered the prayers of the small church to give them a pastor. Alfredo Smith from Argentina answered the call. Richard Abrams, an American already living in Lima, and Roy LeTourneau, a businessman, completed the group. A vision was birthed, *Lima towards an Encounter with God* or LED (*Lima al Encuentro con Dios*).

In 1973, God began greater things than any of these men anticipated. Eugene Kelly seemed unstoppable. Kenn Opperman could go anywhere, and

often did, even to having a meeting with a sitting president of the country, and twice with the Pope. R.G. LeTourneau sent his son, Roy LeTourneau to persuade the Peruvian Government to release money that was rightfully theirs from a road-building project in the jungle. When permission to send the funds out of the country was denied, Roy redirected the money into purchasing properties and buildings for churches. Richard Abrams, with his gift for detail, rounded out the team. Architect Humberto Lay and Pastor Juan Gutierrez, joined the pastoral team very early in the movement.

What was the vision of LED? How do we know that it was from God and not just the hard work of a group of men with money and vision? Prayer was the central focus of the little church in Lima—prayer for revival and asking God to bring them a pastor. For over a year they prayed before God brought the circumstances, the people, and the vision into place—Alfredo Smith, a powerful preacher and teacher, accepted the call from Argentina, the LeTourneau money that couldn’t leave the country, and a team of men who were not afraid to try something different and who depended on God to see it happen.

With the strategy of purchasing properties in key locations on main thoroughfares, with high visibility and lots of foot and bus traffic, the team bought a house on Arequipa Avenue. When the house itself could no longer contain the congregation, the first phase of construction began with the Christian Education facility housing an auditorium on the lower level.

Campaigns with guest preachers from other Latin American countries started the new outreach strategy into the surrounding city. Before the first campaign even started, counsellors were trained to meet with anyone who might accept the call to the altar at the end of each night. That first campaign lasted two weeks and started the 15-month cycle of 15 days of campaigns and 15 days of discipleship. With prayer as a backing, good preaching by mostly Spanish-speaking evangelists, and immediate follow-up with discipleship classes, the churches started to grow with a very solid base.

Soon the mother church, Lince, sent a group back to their section of the city to form another church called Pueblo Libre. Both churches followed the pattern of campaigns and discipleship. At one point, because of the fast growth and lack of trained leaders, the discipleship classes met in homes around the city on a specific night and tuned into the radio class being broadcast from Lince. Two churches soon grew to four, with a leader and people being sent by the mother church to start something new in their area of the city. The German school in another sector of the city saw God’s blessing on this growth and was willing to donate their chapel to the Alliance for a church building.

With the churches growing and multiplying, it was evident that leadership development was essential to take care of the new believers. Following 12 years in Colombia and 6 months in Argentina, Arnold and Mary-Lou Cook joined the team with the specific challenge of looking for a church-based curriculum that could train lay leaders. Arnold found material out of Chile that is now used worldwide in over 70 languages. Familiarly referred to as SEAN (Study by Extension for All Nations), Arnold discovered that the six books on the *Life of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew*, was complete enough to cover all the areas needed in ministry in the church. Groups of students were soon studying the two-year curriculum and being integrated into leadership of the church. Arnold's time on the Peru field was short but the impact was felt for many years.

Although SEAN was a great way to prepare lay leaders, people were being called by God into full-time ministry and in 1973 IBLED (Instituto Biblico Lima al Encuentro con Dios), later called IBA (Instituto Biblico de la Alianza), later still to become SEBAP (Seminario Biblico Alianza de Peru), was birthed. Professors were pulled in from the missionary team. Among them were the veterans from Huánuco, such as Betty Sproxton (now Spooner), Joyce

Houck, Jim and Beth McKerihan and Donald and Faith Scarrow, as well as new ones coming to answer the great need. Duane and Lois Thiessen, as well as Ernie and I, arrived on the field within a year of each other and when LED was in full swing. We each took a role in the teaching of leaders even in the first term with limited Spanish fluency.

I recall the first week in Lima. The plan was that Ernie and I would receive orientation to what was happening there, and then to be redeployed to a city further up the coast where God was also at work and a large church was being built.

I remember the first campaign I attended in Lince. The new church facility had seating for 1,100 people. Ernie and I slid into the end of the third row from the back. Ushers urged everyone to tighten up to allow two more people in, as there was not enough room to seat everyone. By the time we finally settled into the service, we were a third of the way down the bench and six more people had been added to the row.

During the worship time, before the evangelist got up to speak, the leader asked for a show of hands of those who had come that night to receive Christ as their Saviour. Hands went up all over the auditorium. *How could they know*, I wondered, *if they hadn't even heard the Word preached?* Their friends and family members had already prepared the way and they were in the service to make their decision public. Neighbourhood Bible studies were held in the homes of new believers and they were encouraged to invite friends, neighbours and family. Transformed lives brought the next wave of people to the following campaign.

When we arrived in 1981, the team leading LED was a mix of Argentinians, Peruvians, Canadians and Americans. There were six congregations that met the conditions of LED churches. These churches had to be led by a team of pastors, they needed to be strategically located, and they had to agree to the conditions of the leaders to receive funding for a building.

Although most of the church growth occurred in the capital city of Lima, the leadership of the Mission along with the National Church did not want to limit the blessing to only one city. They identified the most strategic cities outside the capital. They found strategic locations in several cities up and down the coast of Peru and formed teams between national pastors and international workers.

We were first assigned to be part of the team in Piura on the north coast when the 800-seat sanctuary was in the process of being completed. As soon as the building was dedicated, campaigns began to fill the church just before the city suffered severe flooding. People in desperation turned to the only solace they could find, God. Later, while assigned to the city

### Don and Faith Scarrow



Don was born in Arcola, Saskatchewan. At the age of ten, he became aware of a need for forgiveness of sin in his life and received Christ as his personal Saviour. He dedicated his life to God at age fourteen.

Don entered Canadian Bible College in 1956. There, a friendship began with Faith Ronson, a college classmate; they were married on June 25, 1960 and have three children.

Don and Faith served the Alliance congregation in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Then for forty years, they ministered in Peru as missionaries with the C&MA in theological education, conference ministry, counselling and administration. After completing their work in Peru in 2002, they were assigned for an additional three years as the American regional director couple for Latin America. They live near Toccoa, Georgia.

of Trujillo, the church was relocated to a main avenue. That church grew over the years and is now the mother to seven daughter and three granddaughter churches.

Duane and Lois Thiessen (daughter of Bill and Anna Rose) left Lima for the south of the country. Their first assignment took them to the tourist city of Cuzco, high in the Andes, with limited impact. The assignment to Arequipa resulted in much more significant inroads into that hard-to-reach city. On both the north and south coasts, branches of the Bible Seminary were starting to train leaders in or closer to their home setting to have more immediate influence in the local churches. Previously, students going to Lima to study found it hard to readjust back into their home culture after the six-year course and were lost to leadership in their home church. The impact of these seminaries can be seen in the strong leadership, especially on the north coast.

Upon returning to Lima for our third four-year term in 1990, we found the face of the Alliance radically changed. While in 1981 there had been a handful of pastors and wives meeting for fellowship and encouragement, there were now meetings in the different sectors of the city to accommodate all those in ministry. In just ten years, LED had gained a presence in the city; no taxi driver was unaware of the location of all the Alliance churches.

In Lima, the lower and middle-class areas of town had large well-established churches. The largest churches, such as Lince, as well as Pueblo Libre and several others, had large buildings seating over a thousand people and were running two or more services with different congregations on the weekend. Lince had to keep planting daughter churches to keep to seven services in their 1,100-seat sanctuary. With this kind of church growth and strong discipleship program, LED was looking for the unreached sectors of the city.

The Miraflores church was located in the mostly middle to upper-middle-class section of Lima. With its new sanctuary and fully equipped Christian Education facility, it had attracted people from a more affluent and influential area of the city that had, as yet, been mostly unreached by any evangelical church. We were asked to spearhead this new outreach. Terrorism was at its height and these people were the target of threats on their families. They trusted no one except their family and closest friends.

Creating a safe environment required a whole new plan. There would be no sign out front. The walls would be high with no visibility as to who was inside. Events would be by invitation only. For a year, the team of 68 people

That church grew over the years and is now the mother to seven daughter and three granddaughter churches.

formed a plan before being sent off with the blessing as well as sadness of the mother church.

The senior pastor of Miraflores decided to head up the new church in Monterrico. In those first years, many accepted Christ as Saviour, not huge numbers like the campaigns had, but solid conversions mainly through Marriage Encounter, Youth Encounter and Women's Encounter. Whole families were being reached. Youth, transformed by Youth Encounter would invite their parents to the next Marriage Encounter, and parents transformed at Marriage Encounter would make sure their youth were invited to the Youth Encounter. Women transformed by Women's Encounter would impact their spouse and many agreed to attend the next Marriage Encounter.

As terrorism slowed dramatically with the capture of Abimael Guzman, the head of the Shining Path, the churches returned to a more public environment and Monterrico became a large established church on the main avenue of La Molina.

One more area of the city was identified as unreached: the upper class, a group identified by the last names of both mother and father. Many no longer had money but their name was everything to them. Houses were filled with tired, worn furniture that spoke of past wealth and position but told the story of the military coup that had taken away lands and positions in government and society. This closed group of people needed the Lord to reach into their quiet despair.

We were once again asked to study the best means of making contact and understanding this sector of society. The task was not easy and for six months, while continuing to assist with the Monterrico church but living in the target area, Ernie and I made daily prayer walks criss-crossing every area of San Isidro. We studied, asked questions and made observations while sitting in restaurants and tea shops in the area. Not a single contact was made. No one would even greet us on the street or respond in the grocery stores.

*How could these people hear the Gospel?* Ernie was asked to supply as pastor of an English international church in the area that had been part of the community for over 50 years. An idea took shape. This might give Ernie something for his business card and a credible occupation in a society where business cards were always exchanged as part of the introduction.

After several Sundays as supply pastor, the congregation asked if we would consider a half-time position until they could do a pastoral search. With the approval of the Mission and realizing the strategic location of the church, we accepted the call for two years.

On the day that Ernie accepted the invitation, there was a woman in the office who was a new Christian. She heard the vision we had for reaching the

upper class of San Isidro and offered her help. Julia was blonde, blue-eyed and perfectly bilingual, which led us to think that she was American and therefore not able to get us through the doors of the closed society. Out of courtesy, and knowing she was a new Christian in our new congregation, we agreed to meet. Much to our surprise, we learned that she was indeed an upper-class Peruvian. She was very well connected and so anxious to share her new faith with friends that we immediately knew that she was the answer to six months of prayer walks right under her window.

Many friends came for one or two weeks of Bible study, some out of curiosity for what had happened to Julia, and some just to be courteous. She lost many of her friends, but her faith was solidified as she studied. This was eight years of Bible study with a small consistent group that led to only two people accepting Christ as Saviour.

With rapid expansion in Lima, Trujillo, Arequipa, and several other areas up and down the coast, with Bible schools in not only several cities outside Lima but also in several zones of the capital city, the question was raised: *was it time for the Mission to move on?* No missionary still remained in the lead pastor role and all the Encounter churches were required to have pastoral teams rather than having all the power in the hands of one person. Peruvians with doctoral degrees headed up the seminary in Lima. Latin American



Display showing where Peruvians are serving with the C&MA, c. 2012. Courtesy National Ministry Centre

missionaries were being sent out to such places as Japan, India, Russia, England, Spain and North Africa, as well as to many Spanish-speaking churches in North America. The time had come for North American missionaries to move on to other least-reached areas of the world.

In 2004, the last of the Alliance international workers left Peru. The team that had worked together alongside the National Church for so many years was redeployed to several countries less evangelized within Latin America. We returned to Canada for several years serving in a Canadian church as pastors. When the call to missions grew too strong to resist, we returned to the Spanish-speaking world, this time to Spain. The National Church president in Spain was a former student of Ernie's from Lima, Peru. He is now an Alliance missionary from Peru to Spain. The story of missions couldn't be more exciting.



Many Peruvians are committing to go on full-time service to the mission field, c. 2012. Courtesy National Ministry Centre

### Peru Alliance Statistics



Churches:  
231



Ordained  
Pastors:  
371



Inclusive  
Members:  
186,660

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

### For Further Reading

<https://www.cmacan.org/stories/a-mighty-movement-of-god>

## Chapter 12

# France



*Note: Maps are not drawn to scale*

# A Witness to the Nations

By Don Dirks

*“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14)*

Europe was in the heart of God long before the church was born. In the first century, the Apostle Paul, led by the Spirit, found the doors of Asia and Bithynia closed to him. However, God had another door open for this apostle to the Gentiles—a door to Macedonia and to Europe.

## The Historical Setting

A cursory review of the centuries will uncover names in early Christian history that reveal there has been a glowing witness to the Gospel in France, possibly starting with the Apostle Paul himself. Many French Christians have had an enormous impact worldwide, names like Hilary of Poitiers, Martin of Tours, King Clovis I, who was the first King of the Franks to unite all the tribes under one king and introduced Christianity; and Bernard of Clairvaux.

In 1170, a rich merchant of Lyons, Peter Valdez, gave his money to the poor and preached in villages and open places which started the Waldensian movement, or as they were called, “Poor Men of Lyon.” Jean Calvin had a disciple in the great writer, John Knox of Scotland. Blaise Pascal wrote the classic, “Pensées. Other famous French Christians include Madame Guyon, Brother Lawrence, and also Marie Durand.

Felix Neff, a young artillery sergeant was converted and became a missionary and then a minister in the high Alps, where a great revival started. Frédéric Monod carried the revival to Paris in 1818, leading to the Paris Revival of 1830. Frédéric’s brother, Adolphe Monod was the most impressive leader of the revival, both in Paris and in the provinces. He ministered in the Oratoire in Paris in 1847 and was capable of attracting 2,000 people, two or three times daily.

Finally, Catherine Booth, daughter of the founders of The Salvation Army, arrived in Paris in 1881. She was to go down in history under her French title, “La Maréchale.” There is perhaps no country in which The Salvation Army has earned greater respect than France.

God has been at work throughout the centuries on the European continent. But often the resistance was fierce and unrelenting. Ellen G. White, in her incomparable book *Cosmic Conflict*, sums it up this way: “As in apostolic

days, persecution has ‘fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel.’” (see Philippians 1:12). Driven from Paris and Meaux, “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went” (Acts 8:4), and the Gospel found its way into many of the remote provinces of France.

## An Early Historic Connection Between France and the C&MA

Dr. R.S. Roseberry was the team leader of a party of missionaries who went to Africa in 1890, beginning the pioneer work of The Christian and Missionary Alliance throughout western Africa. He was to Africa what Dr. Robert A. Jaffray was to southeast Asia, a true missionary statesman.

France, as one of the biggest colonial powers in the world at one time, had convened with other colonial countries to discuss and make contracts known as “Comity Agreements”. They invited Dr. Roseberry to advise them with his invaluable knowledge and experience of missions in Africa. This is undoubtedly one of the first links between our mission and the political leaders of western Africa.

## From France to the Nations

In his book, *To All Peoples*, Robert L. Niklaus notes: Europe’s first link to The Christian and Missionary Alliance was as a sending continent, not a receiving one. Of the five European countries in which the Alliance works, England, France and Netherlands provided missionaries long before they received them. After World War II, French Christians indicated an interest in working among Africans in

France’s vast colonial territories. With French as their mother tongue and their understanding of colonial administration and education, they proved a valuable asset to the Alliance as it spread throughout Africa.

Some of our French missionaries to other nations include Jean and Myrtle Funé, Charles and Henriette Bossert, and Doris Bruckner.

## Jean and Myrtle Funé

Jean Funé was born in 1902, in Haute Vienne, France. Jean felt God’s call to service and enrolled at Nogent Bible School. In 1922, he heard about a strong call for French missionaries to serve in French Indochina with the Alliance. Now his calling became specific. After much prayer, he eventually went to the Nyack Missionary College to complete his training.

After home service in Quebec, he returned to France, then sailed for Vietnam in 1928, arriving in Saigon on December 25. His first term was spent in preparing the essential groundwork for missions there.

In 1934, while on furlough, he married Myrtle Hall, a school teacher he had met during his home service in Quebec City. The Funés returned to Vietnam, and in 1940 they moved to Sonia. They were captured there by the Japanese in 1945. After their release and a two-year furlough, they returned to their field. They were put in charge of the printing press and worked with the Dalat Tribes.

When American missionaries had to leave Cambodia during a difficult time, Daniel Bordreuil, at that time the board representative of the C&MA in France, suggested that the Funés be sent to Cambodia in order to preserve the work there.

In 1930, as the Funés passed through Hue in Vietnam, E.F. Irwin (missionary in Vietnam) wanted them to look up his personal friend, the governor of Hue. Contact was made at the time God ordained—the exact time this governor made a decree declaring that evangelical pastors were free to do their work *if they were French citizens*.

Over thirty years later, Jean Funé, being a French citizen, was allowed to go to Cambodia to fill the breach, under the protection of the above-mentioned decree. For four years, they bridged the gap until North American missionaries were once more allowed to enter Cambodia and continue the work.

The Funés returned to Canada to retire. They were an indispensable first link in the chain of French connection with the work of the C&MA in Southeast Asia.

### Charles and Henriette Bossert

Charles Bossert, a young Frenchman from Alsace-Lorraine, had a strange military career during World War II. He was forced to join the German army when Hitler's forces invaded France. When Alsace-Lorraine was returned to French control, he had to join the French army. He became proficient in three languages, French, German and English, which opened up a job for him with Air France.

Eventually he was transferred to Bamako in Mali where he met Alliance missionaries. Through serving as interpreter at church services, Charles heard

Contact was made at the time God ordained it—the exact time this governor made a decree declaring that evangelical pastors were free to do their work if they were French citizens.

the way of salvation and confessed Christ as his Saviour. He felt the call to missions and soon began training for a life of missions. He served under the Alliance banner in Mali and began his career in Somasso in June 1955. Later, he married a French school teacher who was assisting in the C&MA primary schools in Mali. They served in Somasso, then in Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina Faso) where they conducted French services and managed the Alliance bookstore. In 1964, they transferred to Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, to direct the Bible school. They served there with distinction for 26 more years.

### Doris Bruckner

Another French citizen from Alsace heard God's call to missions and began her career in Mali in 1959 as a missionary nurse. The Malians gave her the honorary title of *Ba Hawa*, meaning "Great Mother," which speaks eloquently of what she meant to them.

## Missions in France

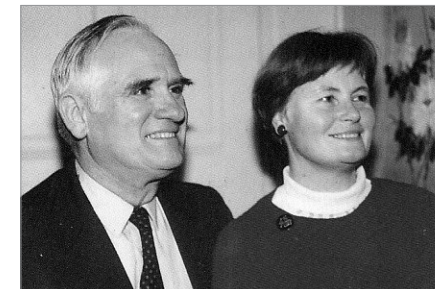
### Daniel and Pemmy Bordreuil

As we come into the modern era, two people stand out as leaders with pivotal distinction that God used in His time to connect the C&MA Mission with their call to work in France.

Daniel Bordreuil was the son of an Orthodox Presbyterian pastor in the Cevennes area in southern France. God used two books in his late teens to call him to missionary service: the life story of Hudson Taylor, and the *Call of Laos* by Jeanne Décorvet. A burden for Southeast Asia soon gripped Daniel's heart.

While in seminary in Aix-en-Provence, he met a Dutch lady, Pemmy Van Noorden. She had spent many years in South Africa and was fluent in English. Following their marriage, by divine appointment, they met Jean Funé who shared the spiritual needs of Vietnam. When they learned that the C&MA was the only evangelical mission working there, they began to enquire about serving with this Mission.

Eventually, launching out in faith, they enrolled at the Missionary Training Center in Nyack, NY. In 1956, Daniel graduated and one year later they left for Vietnam.



Daniel and Pemmy Bordreuil, 1976.  
Courtesy Don Dirks

After one term, they returned to France to begin a ministry of C&MA Missions promotion, with Daniel as board representative. Through monthly publications, radio ministry and speaking engagements, they faithfully promoted the missionary ministry so dear to their hearts.

A turning point came when Daniel was invited to become the pastor of an independent church in the suburbs of Paris. The promotional work still continued and his pastoral duties increased his workload. The Bordreuil were the first missionaries to serve under the Alliance in France.

### Christian and Suzanne Leflaëc

Christian Leflaëc was born in 1932 in a suburb of Paris. As a youth, he contracted tuberculosis (TB) because of the poor living conditions during the war, and eventually went for treatment in a sanatorium. A visiting pastor there gave him some gospel tracts that provoked many questions. Eventually, he invited Jesus into his life.

After recovering from TB, he began attending a Methodist church where he met his wife, Suzanne Calonne, who had been brought up in the Reformed church. After their marriage, Christian attended the Nogent



Christian and Suzanne Leflaëc, date unknown.  
Courtesy Don Dirks

Bible Institute and graduated in 1958. The same year, he received a brochure from Daniel Bordreuil describing their missionary work in Vietnam under the C&MA. This was the first time the Leflaëcs had ever heard of the Alliance.

They had a growing burden for the southwest of France, which brought Christian in contact with Daniel Bordreuil again. By then,

Daniel was serving as the C&MA board representative in France. After a series of miracles, God confirmed the Leflaëcs appointment to work under the banner of the C&MA for the planting of churches in Tarbes, Pau and Bayonne in the southwest of France.

Christian also served as the Pau church pastor for 25 years. He served for 20 years as the first president of the union of Alliance churches in France since the association was formed in 1977.

### Donald and Elma Dirks

While on home assignment from Gabon in Kelowna B.C., we received a call from George Klein, area secretary for Africa and Europe. He said,

“Don, I am calling to ask you and Elma to go to Paris, France to begin church planting.”

After discussion and much prayer in seeking the will of God, Elma and I both knew that this was God leading us into the next chapter of our lives, a chapter that would take 25 years to write.

### Dick and Karen Kaan

Canadians Dick and Karen Kaan joined our ranks in France in 1996. They came to reinforce and extend our mission’s growing ministries among the Chinese living in France. Their passion and vision included a focus on reaching into other European nations and even into North Africa.

Dick and Karen's ministry mandate is to focus on church planting within European metropolitan cities where a rich mosaic of people, including Asians and other Diasporas, immigrants, and the marginalized reside and work.

In 1996, there were four Chinese churches in Europe but they have now grown to become a family of 27 Chinese Alliance churches.

### A New Beginning

And so, the first overseas missionaries of the Alliance arrived in France in the summer of 1974 to join the Bordreuil in French church-planting ministries. We, the Dirks, had served in Gabon since 1959, but now it was time to move on.

Our appointment came with a clear job description: 1) to serve as board representative in France and lay the tracks for a full-fledged church-planting missionary thrust; 2) to serve as pastor of the “Maison de l’Evangile”; 3) to work with an existing committee of leaders of denominational churches of France, serving our Mission with its “holdings” in Cambodia. If we were now becoming a church-planting Mission in France, then there was obviously a conflict of interest. This would require tactful leadership to move towards the goals that had been set.

Since the Alliance already had two strong French leaders in place in Daniel Bordreuil and Christian Leflaëc, Louis King instructed us before we left for France that everything we would do should be done in harmony with, and in cooperation with, the French leaders. We were there at their invitation. So, from the start we determined to keep it that way. Later, when droves of SE Asian refugees arrived in France, we kept all of the



Don and Elma Dirks, 1974. Courtesy  
National Ministry Centre



church-planting projects under one umbrella and under one authority. This continues to this day.

In 1974, when we arrived in Paris, we quickly learned what our Mission was doing: radio broadcasts, regular publications of missionary news, and sharing in the evangelical churches what the C&MA was doing in other parts of the world. This was done to raise support for missionary advances worldwide and to recruit new workers. Daniel published a monthly newsletter and prayer bulletin, *“La Moisson est Grande”* (The Harvest is Great!). He also responded to many invitations from existing evangelical churches to come and share the stories of missionary work.

We launched a call for more missionaries and began laying the tracks for a full invasion with the Gospel message. There was no shortage of churches, but so many French citizens had never heard the Gospel.

### Growing the Church

We used every method at our disposal: home Bible studies, “conference” style meetings in neutral halls to attract the population, evangelistic rallies, market place ministries, a Bible Exposition, home visitation, and even the rental of a nearby theatre to show movies like “The Cross and the Switchblade.” Some 975 people came including 50 members of a Harley Davidson motorcycle club.

We used hospital visitation, and focused youth work, and later the FBA (Alliance Bible Formation), a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) type program to train leaders for ministry. Missionary rallies were scheduled and in the south of France our missionaries invited astronaut James Irwin and Charles Colson who spoke to large audiences. Eventually three international churches were started, in Paris, Strasbourg, and Toulouse. The goal was to make these churches independent and plant French churches.

By 1977, a union of Alliance churches was created, with four churches: the Boulogne (French) church that I was pastoring, the Pau (French) church that Christian Leflaëc had planted and was leading, the Vietnamese church that Daniel Bordreuil had planted, and a newly planted Chinese church that David Soquier had started. This group of churches was called the AECM (Alliance des Eglises Chrétiennes Missionnaires). This was the start of a hard-working team of 20 missionaries who came to join us over the next 20 years. Working with the Lord, we saw 20 churches develop and join the fellowship under the French C&MA banner.

While serving as board representative, I also served as pastor of the *Maison de l’Evangile* (The Home of the Gospel) French church for the first seven years.

With the support of Louis King, president of the C&MA in the USA, I organized a conference in England for all of our missionaries serving in the countries of Western Europe: France, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, and England. It became an annual event that the missionaries looked forward to. Members of existing churches were also invited and these conferences helped build an image for our work in Europe and also gave us more credibility.



All European C&MA Conference, 1985.  
Courtesy Don Dirks

In the 1980s, we began organizing annual conferences for all of our C&MA personnel in Western Europe.

In the last seven years of our work in France, I launched the “FBA” program (Formation Biblique de l’Alliance). This TEE-type of training program quickly grew and by the end of the first year there were 65 students registered to follow these courses.

We were assured that if we would be faithful in proclaiming the good news of Jesus, and exposing French citizens to the claims of Christ, the Holy Spirit would do His part. Time and time again God brought people into our lives, into the church that we served, and into our home.

### A Mission Field at our Door

In 1975, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos were overrun by Communists and multitudes of people fled for their lives. Refugee settlements sprang up just inside the Thai border and for the next seven years, scores of these homeless people were moved to other countries that would receive them. France, with its own history in French Indochina, knew it had a moral obligation to reach out to these displaced masses. A quota of 1,500 SE Asian refugees were allowed to enter France each month.

When God brought this mission field to our door, action was needed. I had a private audience with the mayor who later became the president of France. That one brief meeting opened doors for us to have access to the multitudes of refugees located throughout the country in 60 boarding houses. It also qualified us to receive classified monthly information on all the refugees coming in from SE Asia, and where they were locating in the country.

Soon a Welcome Centre was opened to assist the refugees in making a new life in France. The goal was to help them integrate as much as possible

into existing French-language evangelical churches. Workers were needed, preferably missionaries that could speak the language of the Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians. While the initiative to open this centre was taken by the C&MA, it quickly attracted missionaries and support from seven different church/mission organizations.

The Boulogne Billancourt church where I pastored signed on, and soon Tear (The Evangelical Alliance Relief) Fund in England came on board with generous donations. The ZOA in Holland, already active in relief work in Thailand through CAMA Services, extended their support. The Swiss Evangelical Mission as well as *Hilfe für Brüder* in Germany, along with Wycliffe missionaries, all joined us.

### George and Harriette Irwin

George and Harriette Irwin arrived to work among the Vietnamese people. They had served in Vietnam as career missionaries for 29 years. Both were MKs (missionary kids) and their parents also had been missionaries in that country. After the fall of Saigon and their forced evacuation, they were living in Toronto. They had lost their homeland of adoption and their hearts were aching for the multitudes of Vietnamese that were displaced. They eagerly responded to our call from Paris and came to help as quickly as they could.

The Irwins were assigned to ministry in the Paris area. Later, with the Vietnamese church well established, they moved to Toulouse in the south of France where they began a new ministry among the large Vietnamese population in that area. Not only did they start a church for them, but they were also instrumental in establishing an assembly with the Cambodians in that city and finding a leader to help.

### Norman and Marie Ens

The year 1978 was a pivotal one as we sought to reach out to the SE Asian refugees. Norman and Marie Ens had served in Cambodia and spoke the Khmer language fluently. When Phnom Penh fell and they were forced to evacuate, they returned to Saskatchewan and planted a church in the town of Rosthern. Meanwhile the influx of Cambodians had increased in France. We invited the Enses to come as special speakers for one of the big summer conferences



Norman Ens leading Cambodian youth choir, 1985.  
Courtesy Don Dirks

### Jean-Christophe and Keiko Bieselaar



French-born Jean-Christophe Bieselaar and his wife Keiko, who was born in Japan, were professionals working in a French travel agency. They came to Christ and were married in the C&MA La Defense church in Paris. Eventually Jean did theological studies in the USA at Alliance Theological Seminary and Westminster Theological Seminary. His PhD studies at King's College, University of London, focused on intercultural marriages. In 2015, he started teaching with L'École de Théologie Évangélique du Québec (ETEQ) in the faculty of theology at Laval University in Quebec City. He is currently the senior pastor of the Alliance church in Gatineau, PQ.

that we organized for Cambodian refugees. They saw and submitted to the need in France. The Khmer people wanted them to return to help with pastoral care.

Norman's preaching and teaching ministry was not limited to the Cambodians living in France. His influence soon reached around the world with the use of audio cassette recordings, impacting multitudes for the kingdom of Christ.

We were able to use the Refugee Welcome Centre as a home base but it also became a church plant and a meeting place for the Cambodians. They trained a leader who became the pastor of that church and then the Enses moved to Marne la Vallée.

### Ruth Patterson

That same year another gifted person joined our ranks. Ruth Patterson had been a missionary in Zaire (formerly Congo). She compared the statistics of Zaire and Cambodia as they appeared in the *C&MA Prayer Directory*. It was evident to her that the need was much greater in Cambodia than in Zaire. She asked for a transfer and went to Cambodia in 1973. In 1975, Cambodia fell; Ruth then joined us in France with ministry focused on the Cambodian people that she loved.

### Shelly Ryan

Another valuable asset to the missionary staff in France was Shelly Ryan, a talented and qualified French teacher from Manitoba who did home service in Quebec. She first served as secretary to the board representative after her arrival in 1986. But her giftings and focus lay in church ministries.

Shelly began assisting the Boulogne French church with their youth ministry at the Pont de Sevres. Later, she became part of the team in the church plants (both international and French) at Paris, La Défense. With her fluency in French as well as her winsome personality, she was invaluable to the children's and women's ministries at the Trinity International Church in the heart of Paris. She served for 21 years in France.

### France Alliance Statistics



Churches:  
31



Ordained  
Pastors:  
19



Inclusive  
Members:  
1,780

Source: Alliance World Fellowship, 2015

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# PART B - THE WORKERS

## Chapter 13

### Caring for Bodies and Souls

By E. Joan (Foster) Sylvester

My pilgrimage in missions began in the little town of Beaverlodge in northern Alberta. My dad had come from Ireland when he was 19 and my mom was of Scottish descent. Though none of our relatives were believers, my family began our Christian journey when I was in elementary school. We attended The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) church where we grew in our faith.

While attending Bear Lake Camp one summer, I heard missionaries Ralph and Jean Balisky tell of their experiences in Nigeria, Africa. I felt God speaking to me about being a missionary nurse in Africa.

In grade nine, I first realized the importance of having my own devotions and to study God's Word in order to grow in my faith. These two great disciplines have helped me on my life's journey.

I attended Peace River Bible Institute and later Canadian Bible College (CBC) in Regina, Saskatchewan, where I was challenged many times by missionary speakers to keep pursuing the call of God on my life. At times I wondered if my childhood call was real, thinking others were better suited, but then I was assured that God's call on my life had not changed.

In my third year at CBC, I went before the C&MA Missions Board that interviewed and appointed students aspiring to be missionaries. That was scary for me! When asked if I had a



Joan Foster, 1958. Courtesy National Ministry Centre



Joan Foster, 1965.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

tendency toward stomach problems or ulcers, I replied, "I might have an ulcer by the time the interview is through!" We all laughed and I felt more at ease! I passed the interview and set about to become a nurse.

In 1960, I was accepted into a three-year nursing program at the Moose Jaw Union Hospital. I loved everything about the course and worked hard to get good grades. After nurses' training, I returned to Beaverlodge to work in the small local hospital and gained experience in many different areas of medicine. All of this was preparing me for what I would later face in Africa.

One day I received a phone call from Mr. Klein, area secretary for The Christian and Missionary Alliance. His question was simple: "Are you still interested in going to the mission field?" When I replied in the affirmative, he said, "Well, let's get moving then!"

My assignment was to work as a nurse in a girls' school in Guinea, West Africa. Although I had to look on the map to see where Guinea was, I was pleased. God gave me Psalm 91 as my life chapter and I've read it many times during my missionary career.

### Learning to be Flexible

The first step of the journey was language study in Paris, France. It was difficult to get my ear tuned to another language, and worse still, to get my words to sound anything like French! While difficult, in many ways it prepared me for the cross-cultural experiences I would have in Africa.

I arrived in Guinea to find my assignment had been changed. Instead of going to the girls' school, I would be school nurse in the missionary children's school in Mamou. I quickly learned that one needs to be flexible!

I loved missionary kids from the day I arrived at Mamou. They came from several surrounding African countries and I learned a lot from them. I had a fear of snakes and one day a young boy said to me, "Aunt Joan, if you are going to be afraid of snakes you are not going to have any fun in Africa." How profound! I kept my eyes open but I was not consumed by fear again. We had many adventures and difficulties together.

One of the hardest parts was watching the children with their parents, saying goodbye for a month or more. I would sneak away and shed a few tears too. One of my joys was helping the children on their faith journey.

During my second year at Mamou there was some turmoil within the Guinea government. We had to be ready to leave at a moment's notice. Because of the political unrest, many parents removed their children from the school and sent them to Ivory Coast Academy (ICA) in Bouake. As the Mamou school numbers began to dwindle, I was reassigned to Mali.

I was assigned to Ntorosso, a mission station with a Bible school and clinic, to study the vernacular language, Bambara, and to help with women's classes, primarily teaching illiterate women to read. The language was easier than French and the people wanted to help me learn. I developed many friendships and fell in love with the Bambara people. I passed all my language exams and in July 1970, I went back to Canada for my first home assignment.

After being away from Canada for five years, I initially felt like a stranger in a foreign land. I was blessed by the love, prayers and generosity of our churches. In between tour assignments, I worked as much as possible in the Beaverlodge Hospital to gain all the experience I could to help with the work I would be doing in my second term.

### A Healing Ministry

The second term, I went to ICA for two years, after which I was to return to Mali. I was the school nurse for all the children and staff with nothing more than a cupboard in my room for medications. I also assisted Bob and Betty Adams, the house parents for 40 children.

I was assigned to the children in grades 4 - 6. We did many activities, had devotions together, and I tucked each one in every night. They were great kids and full of adventure. I loved the outdoors as much as they did, so we often made trips to the swamp to hunt for frogs!

After two years, I returned to Ntorosso where I worked with a Malian nurse in the clinic. The clinic was old, made from mud bricks, and was white-washed inside and out. Dust was a never-ending problem. I was thrilled that we had pastors to preach five days a week and pray for the sick in our clinic. Our witness and reputation were far-reaching.

I helped teach Bible, health, and reading to the women. It was a good way to get to know them. They were very poor and found it difficult to look after the home and their children and attend classes as well. They did their best, and many of them received a Bible after they had finished all the reading requirements.

I was troubled by the lack of good health care for the Malians. A vaccination program did not exist; children suffered and died from easily curable diseases. One in five died before their fifth birthday. Maternal health care was also



Joan Foster with a malnourished three-year-old, unable to sit or walk. Courtesy National Ministry Centre

poor. Women in labour with complications had to be evacuated to the San hospital, 26 kilometres away. I was shocked when I heard women with complications start their death wail when we mentioned an evacuation. To those women, an evacuation meant death. Sadly, this was true in many cases.

One day a man brought his tiny newborn to the clinic telling us her mother and twin had died in childbirth. It was believed that if a mother died in childbirth, it was the baby's fault! He did not have the money to buy milk for this tiny girl, and worse still, the village women would not consider feeding the baby because of their beliefs. Saying no to this father would mean certain death for the baby and I knew there were Christians who would adopt her. The baby was not much more than four pounds and was sick with diarrhea. She was so small that, with her head in my hand, her feet just touched my elbow. I called her Button.

She was too weak to suck so I fed her with a syringe. I piled blankets on a rocking chair in my bedroom as a bed for Button for the next few weeks. She recovered from her illness, started sucking the bottle and then started to grow.

We found a nearby family who wanted a baby. Hawa (Eve) was not able to have children which, in many cases, was a cause for divorce in that culture. It was twelve weeks before Button was well enough to go to her new home. The day she was to go, I was bathing her and said, "Button, today you are going to a new home!" She smiled at me for the first time and it nearly broke my heart. She went to her new family and they named her "Elisabeti" after me. She grew up in a Christian home and loved the Lord. Years later, she came to us at Ntorosso for the delivery of her first child. What a joy that was for me!

After my second home assignment, where I again studied to improve my skills, I returned to ICA to be school nurse. By this time, they had built a lovely clinic. We administered vaccinations, patched up scrapes and bruises and sutured many lacerations. There were other tropical diseases which afflicted some children but, fortunately, we had a lot of medications to treat them quickly and the American doctors were just a phone call away. Some of the treatment the children needed most was simply TLC (tender loving care). Other children had psychological problems and some had a hard time being away from their parents.

After that time at ICA, I returned to Mali and to Ntorosso. I loved working in the medical clinic, especially doing prenatal care. We taught the women what was happening in their bodies and how to care for themselves. As the women began to gather, we also told them a story from God's Word and prayed for them. I never had a patient refuse prayer but it was sad to see so many women suffer and often succumb during childbirth.

On my next two home assignments I again studied at the University of Alberta and took an Advanced Practical Obstetrics course as well as the Nurse Practitioner course. I also took the International Health Course at Seneca College in Toronto. Out of this education grew a conviction that we needed to establish a separate building in Mali where we could focus on women's health.

I shared this vision with the Mission and my home church in Beaverlodge. The church raised the money for construction and sent a group to help build. In just a few months we had a beautiful building where we could care for pregnant women, aid in their deliveries, and care for their babies. We taught the women about childcare, including how to care for a sick child, the importance of using local foods, and the importance of immunizations.

We had Bible teaching, lessons on health, and prayer in our clinic but wanted to have even more influence and opportunities to share the Gospel by going to some of the surrounding villages. We invited the Ntorosso church district to join us. We would go to a designated village in the afternoon and teach on a subject relating to the health needs of the community. Men, women, and children attended. We stayed for supper and one of the pastors showed the *JESUS* Film and preached a Gospel message. It was an exhausting yet happy day for all of us because we knew many people had been given the opportunity to hear the Gospel.

One night in August 1983, two men drove up to my front door on their motorcycle. They were looking for medicine and when I stepped out the door to speak to them, I tripped over a spitting cobra curled up on the doorstep. I landed on the ground and it bit my leg. I had snake serum in my fridge, so it wasn't long before I had an injection. Word spread quickly and soon several Malian pastors, nurses, and missionaries gathered around me and prayed for a miracle. We all had seen or heard of many who died from snake bites. I had peace in my heart and confidence that God was going to answer their prayers. The venom from a cobra affects the nervous system and I had a few heart palpitations for a week but that was all, glory to God.

Shortly after the snake bite, I accompanied Jerry and Nora McGarvey back to the USA because Jerry was having chest pains. He was taken directly to

a hospital where he had open heart surgery. Dave Kennedy, area secretary for Africa, asked if I would like to go home and greet my family for a few days before returning to Mali. I readily accepted; it was the last time I saw my mother alive! I will always be grateful to Dave for his kindness.

### Nationalizing the Work

In the early 1990s, we began to think about nationalizing our medical work. The Mission leaders asked me to head up this program, so I became the medical director. With six rural clinics and six women's health clinics, the transition would take a number of years.

The most urgent need was for qualified Malian nurses to take the places of the expatriate nurses. We chose three fine Christian men who already had a few years of experience working in rural clinics. Daniel, Adoulaye, and Abel became the first men sponsored to complete a three-year nursing program in Sikasso. We found sponsors from Canada, USA, Holland, and Germany who were willing to help. In the next few years we were able to send 40 young men and women through various nursing programs.

We also made a plan to update all the clinics with potable water, solar lights, ambulances, and the necessary equipment to run the clinics well. For ambulances, we purchased second-hand Toyota trucks. The back of the truck was covered and we put a mattress down on the hard metal truck bed and attached an intravenous bottle to the roof. This is still the method of transporting patients today.

We progressively transitioned the Malian nurses to be the first line of contact with patients to transfer trust from the expat nurses to the Malian ones. We trained our head nurses in bookkeeping on solar-powered computers, a real task, since many didn't even know how to turn one on. We tithed from the clinic's income and used it as a benevolent fund for patients who could not pay for treatment. Spiritual retreats were held annually for our medical personnel and access was given to devotional material to support their spiritual growth.

As our goals were met one by one, I knew there was a great need for a Malian director to take my place. After much consultation and prayer, Daniel Thera was chosen. Daniel studied to be a lawyer but spent many years as a military commander in Mali. He was involved in the work of the Mission in a new area called Bako. Daniel helped us translate our handbook on Christian ethics for medical personnel from English into French. He also helped write job descriptions, labour regulations, and contracts for all the personnel. His knowledge of the law was very beneficial to us and he became the medical work's voice before the government of Mali.

### A Final Dream

While much progress towards nationalization was being made, I continued to be troubled about the loss of lives from mothers requiring caesarean sections. Hospitals in Mali were not well equipped to deal with emergency situations. The dream of a better hospital would not leave me. At one of our committee meetings, I presented the idea of a small hospital stationed in Koutiala, a central city to all our rural clinics, where patients could be brought for emergency surgery.

Daniel Thera agreed that there was a great need for such a facility. We prayed God would stop us if this was not His will. We only had \$1,000. We knew we couldn't build a hospital with that amount of money. Once again, we prayed.

The first step of faith took us to Koutiala city offices to explain our dream and ask for land to build a small hospital. They described a piece of property on the edge of Koutiala which we could buy for less than \$4,000. When we saw it we knew why the city didn't want it, but I could envision a hospital on this hilly, rocky, and unusable piece of land!

Daniel did all the paper work to purchase the property, and soon it was ours! CAMA services paid to have a deep well dug and it was a delightful day when we saw the water shooting high into the air. We now had potable water for the hospital!

It was during this time that Anne Coulibaly, the wife of the Bible school director, went into labour. There were complications and she did not survive. It was a terrible feeling as I mourned for this mother of six, including the



Hospital dedicated February 6, 2006. Courtesy Eric Persson



Mel Sylvester and Joan Foster  
were married in 2011.  
Courtesy Joan Sylvester

newborn, knowing that she didn't need to die. This affirmed the need for a better facility where we could have better outcomes.

Many generous people caught our vision and raised funds needed for construction. Progress was being made in the construction of the first two buildings.

By then it was 2003, time for home assignment and retirement from active missionary service. Before I left, Daniel wanted to dedicate the land to God. He invited government officials, pastors, and missionaries to join us for the dedication.

It was a special time as we looked back on all that God had provided and bittersweet because I loved what I was doing and the country I had called home for 39 years.

I had the privilege of returning to Mali in 2006 for the dedication and opening of the new hospital! Tears of gratitude rolled down my cheeks as I saw all that God had done. I thanked my heavenly Father for the provision of the beautiful maternity and pediatric facility where women could come and receive good care and where babies could be followed throughout their early years.

The hospital has grown and now has several other buildings. It is a beautiful campus and God is using it for His glory. To date there have been 495 conversions and many more heard the Gospel. Praise the Lord!

*Adapted from a bio written July 2013*

*Joan Foster was sent by the Beaverlodge Alliance Church, Beaverlodge, Alberta*

## Chapter 14

# His Ways Are Not Our Ways

By Dan Ibsen

We turned off the dirt road onto a footpath. For about 500 metres, our car herded 30 cows that could not escape because of the tall grass brushing the sides of the car. The Gueckedou district team in Guinea was heading to the remote village of Sangedou for a two-week evangelistic campaign.

This team conducted campaigns three or four times a year, often seeing 200-300 people make decisions for Christ at each one. However, when they went back to these communities a year or two later, they would be hard pressed to find a handful of believers who remained faithful.

The team leader invited me to provide training for the team made up of a few pastors and about 15 lay people. We studied Paul's methods in the Book of Acts, emphasizing that wherever Paul went, he left behind designated leaders for the developing church. Jean, our team leader, suggested that we fast and pray during the remaining three days of the training and ask God what team members should remain in Sangedou to enfold the new believers. An elderly layperson named André and his wife felt the call.

Two years later, I returned to this community where there was a thriving group of over 250 believers worshipping in their own building and André was still shepherding them. The district evangelistic team adopted a strategy of leaving someone in each area where they did a campaign, and in the next 10 years the district grew from 26 to over 80 churches.

### The Early Years

I was born in 1950 to C. Stuart and Edith Louise Ibsen. Dad was farming near Duffield, Alberta. Mom and Dad were both believers, and we attended a small Free Methodist church. When I was five, I was playing outside and remembered our Sunday school teacher saying we needed to ask Jesus into our heart if we wanted to go to heaven. I ran into the house to ask Mom, and she led me to faith in Jesus.

Dad's German hired man told how Hitler had gained influence through the school system. So, when I was eight, Dad sold the farm and became



a teacher. We moved to Spruce Grove where both Dad and Mom taught school until they retired. With this move, we began attending Stony Plain Alliance Church and their extension work in Spruce Grove.

Mom and Dad actively pursued relationships with people from other cultures. They opened their doors to First Nations friends from the neighbouring reserve. Visiting missionaries were always invited to our home, and family Christmas gatherings included international students.

We always attended the annual missions conference. When I was 11, a missionary spoke on how many peoples in the world participated in heinous practices because they had never had the opportunity to know the freedom Jesus offers. I sensed God asking me to take His message to such people. My calling and faith were strengthened through our local church youth group, Campus Life and Youth for Christ clubs and rallies, and summer church camps.

After high school, I started into the Amway business and got 14 representatives working on my team. My sales volume increased. I bought a car and decided I wanted to work in the business until I was 30, then I would retire and become a self-supporting missionary. I thought God would be pleased. However, after about a year, I went on a trip to Europe and when I came back all my distributors had quit. I tried rebuilding the business but to no avail.

I read about the missionary aviation program at Moody Bible Institute. Through Air Cadets I had obtained my private pilot's license, so I thought maybe God was calling me to the adventurous life of a missionary pilot. I was accepted for the course and moved to Chicago. I had to spend two years at the Bible school before going to the airport for aviation training.

While at Moody, a chapel speaker said that young adults from a church background frequently had problems with assurance of salvation—wondering if their decision as a child was real and often living a rollercoaster type of Christian life. That was me. He challenged us to give God our lives and make Him Lord and Master. That day I made that decision.

As I talked with missionaries and the faculty at Moody, I sensed that one of the greatest needs in missions was to train and teach the emerging church and its leaders. I got involved in teaching in the inner city ethnic churches and discovered that I enjoyed it. Furthermore, the head of the aviation department said I had the lowest mechanical aptitude of anyone they had ever allowed into the program. I transferred out of the aviation major into missions.

Upon graduation from Moody I went to the University of Alberta (U of A) where I got a degree in elementary education with a specialization in

reading and special education. While there, I met Melodie McCombs, who was also headed for missions. We got married and continued this journey together. I taught in a school for mentally handicapped youth in Edmonton while Melodie completed her degree. Our first child was born during our two years there.

Canadian Theological Seminary was the next step in our preparation for mission service with the C&MA. In our second year, our second child was born and we just could not see how we could ever send our kids away to a boarding school. I transferred to pastoral studies and applied for ministry in a church in Canada after graduation.

I became the first resident pastor in a church planting effort in Westlock, Alberta. We bought a home and settled into the ministry of that developing congregation. We enjoyed our work and within four years the church grew from 12 people to over 100 with maturing elder leadership. We also built the first church facility.

We had an annual missions conference, and each year the Lord tugged at our hearts to serve in missions. Finally, Melodie and I independently sensed that God wanted us to honour His calling. Our daughter was in Grade 1 and it was as if the Lord was saying, *“You are willing to entrust your daughter to a public-school teacher who does not even claim to know Me, and yet you are not willing to trust Me with your children?”* We said yes to the Lord, applied for overseas service, and were appointed to Nigeria.

### First Term

Shortly before our departure, we learned the Mission was unable to get us visas for Nigeria. The regional director asked if we would go to Quebec and learn French. We packed up the family, headed for Quebec, and immersed ourselves in French language study—not knowing if we would ever use it. In March, the regional director said he had not been able to obtain Nigerian visas for us, and then asked if we would consider going to Guinea, which had just re-opened its doors to missionaries after being closed for over 15 years. We knew nothing about Guinea but said yes as long as God could use us there.

Two weeks before our departure, we learned that the Mission had not been able to procure space for our two children in the boarding school in Côte d'Ivoire. We were given the option to teach our kids at home for our first year! This was a great opportunity for our kids to settle into Guinea and see



The Ibsen Family, 1985.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

it as their home. After their first year, they went to International Christian Academy. Corilee was in fifth grade and Charles in second grade.

Shortly after we arrived on the field in 1986, our director asked if I would be interested in developing a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program for the church. This is a strategy that uses programmed materials to bring Bible school type training to the local church level. For the next ten years, I poured myself into this ministry and had the privilege of working with my colleagues (both national and missionary) to train hundreds of lay leaders. Many of those we trained are still key leaders in their churches.

We were assigned to Maninka language study after our first year on the field. At the end of our second year, we were asked to move to the interior to continue the TEE ministry and to be “the experienced couple” on a new team of two couples being established in the Gueckedou district. We moved to Gueckedou, a predominantly Kissi area. The Kissi people knew Maninka but preferred to speak their own language. Since everything done in the church was in Kissi, we asked if we could change and learn the language.

No missionaries had learned Kissi for over 20 years and there were very few materials available to help. By now we were in our final year of our first term and still had not completed language study. We went back to Canada feeling like we did not want to return. However, Arnold Cook advised us not to make decisions during our first six months back in Canada. This proved to be wise counsel, as after six months, we began to see things differently.

## Second Term

We returned to Gueckedou to continue language study. However, during our home assignment, war broke out in neighbouring Sierra Leone and Liberia. Refugees flooded across the borders into our area. The Mission responded through CAMA services to establish a relief effort in conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international agencies. We now had opportunities to minister to refugees as

well as Guineans. We continued language study and completed our program near the end of the second year of our second term.

Guinea is predominantly Muslim. In the early 1990s, a team of international workers (IWs) in Conakry were seeking to develop a ministry to the majority population. They began to see fruit for their labours, with about 10 people accepting Christ as Saviour. After we completed Kissi language study in 1993, we moved back to Conakry and had the privilege of working with these new believers for the next two years.

## Theological Education by Extension (TEE)

While on home assignment prior to our third term, we were asked to return to TEE ministry and to transfer leadership of the program to a national. We returned in 1996, and it was about a year before the church designated a national to take up the mantle of leadership. We began working with Pastor David, turning responsibility for the program over to him.

In the spring of 1998, our field director indicated that he could no longer continue as field leader for health reasons, and indicated they wanted us to take on that role. We felt the TEE program would die if we left at that point.

We wanted to respect our leaders, but felt strongly that we needed the full four-year term to get TEE transferred to national leadership. Finally, we were advised that God had obviously been preparing us for this role: we worked closely with the National Church and with the team ministering to Muslims as we understood that aspect of the Mission effort in Guinea.

## Field Leadership

We began a ten-year ministry that was both challenging and fulfilling. TEE ceased to exist as a program; however, its students continue to influence and impact the church throughout Guinea. As field leaders, we were responsible for the vision and direction of the Mission in Guinea, pastoral care of the IWs, the relationship between the church and the Mission, as well as relationships with government, other missions and organizations. We also oversaw all administration of the Mission office.

During these years, we had many opportunities to experience God’s faithful protection and provision. We developed a team-based approach to our field structure, and piloted the Mission through several challenges and difficulties.

When war broke out in Côte d’Ivoire, our kids were pinned down in the cross-fire between government and rebel forces. They had to be evacuated and another satisfactory boarding school option was found at Dakar Academy in Senegal. During these years, Guinea was plagued by ongoing political turmoil. On



The Ibsen Family, 2001.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

one occasion things got so difficult we had to evacuate the missionary team to neighbouring Senegal for a six-week period. These experiences forged relationships with colleagues and nationals that are often as close as, or even closer, than family.

We also walked with the church through a very significant leadership crisis. These times were difficult, but God continually proved His faithfulness. In 2008, we felt we had made our contribution to field leadership, and it was time for someone else to take the reins.

### West African Vision Expedition (WAVE)

For several years, the Guinea team had been seeking to develop an internship/apprenticeship program for those interested in a career in missions. When we stepped out of field leadership, the team asked us to develop and initiate this ministry. We moved to Mamou, in the centre of the country where the Mission had a vacant property suitable for this program. West African Vision Expedition (WAVE) was born.

Our first task was to develop the program. We listened to all of our colleagues, checked other missions and agencies to see what they were doing and developed the basic structure and components of the program. In the fall of 2010, we had our first group of three participants. Since then, we have had 17. This has been a sweet spot in ministry for us. I was able to use my teaching and pastoral care gifts and Melodie thrived in the one-on-one mentoring and teaching.

A dream we have had since 1994 was to work with a local C&MA church to reach out to people from the majority faith. As we got to know and work with our pastor in Mamou, we discovered that he also had this vision. Five pastors from our cluster churches in Canada came to meet with our local church leadership and together we developed a strategy to reach Mamou for Christ. Just as we were ready to begin implementing the strategy, Ebola broke out. We were required to leave Guinea, along with our four WAVE participants. They had just completed their intensive language and cultural training and moved into the yards of their Guinean host families.

We all moved to Niger, and our participants got involved in ministry opportunities in that country. Instead of living in the yard of an African host family we, our four interns and our colleagues who worked with us in WAVE, all lived together in one house for eight months. That was a growing and stretching experience for all of us! But God used this time to mould and shape us. Three of our group have lived and served in Niger.

Prior to evacuation, I reflected on the need for someone to research and write an overview of the history of the C&MA's work in Guinea. In 2019, we will celebrate the centennial of this work. I sensed God had given me a unique role in the C&MA's work. We had the privilege of working with those who had served during the time the country was closed to new workers and thus could bridge these two eras of Mission history. I proposed this topic to my mentor and completed the project in May 2016.

Upon our return from Niger in the summer of 2015, we began to encourage our local pastor and church leadership to resurrect their vision to reach Mamou for Christ. In the fall of 2016, they were finally ready to do so. A group of 50 church people are being trained to reach out to their Muslim neighbours.

Throughout our thirty plus years in Guinea, and throughout my life, I have been amazed to see how often things did not go the way I had planned. God has turned what I thought was the best path to follow into something even better for His glory.



Dan and Melodie Ibsen, 2015.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

*Adapted from a bio written January 2017*

*Dan and Melodie Ibsen were sent by the Westlock Alliance Church, Alberta*

## Fruit That Will Last

By Eric Persson

### **The Call to Missions**

At the end of our twenty-six years in Africa, Gwen and I stood on the campus of Maranatha Bible College in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, as we prepared for our final return to Canada due to illness. Enoch, a young evangelist we had known since he was a boy, said to me, “We all plant trees knowing that we will never be warmed by the wood of their branches and we will never be refreshed by their fruit. The God of blessing has allowed you to plant a tree, to be warmed by its wood and to taste its fruit. Go in the peace that He alone can give!”

Neither Gwen nor I were likely candidates for missions; we were both raised in non-believing families. Still, there I was, as a pre-teen in Regina, Saskatchewan attending a boys’ club run by a couple of Bible school students, Arnold Cook and Lloyd Draper, praying for missionaries in New Guinea and hearing the Gospel for the first time. At the same time, in Ontario, Gwen’s United Church pastor shared the Gospel with his parishioners. In the following years, she was influenced by a single female missionary. God was putting us on the path to missions. As my life’s verse states, *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last...”* (John 15:16).

God’s path led us to Canadian Bible College in Regina, where we were immediately attracted to each other. God’s direction towards missions, particularly Africa, was a strong consideration in our relationship that led to marriage shortly after graduation. We pastored a small Alliance church in Hopeville, Ontario for two years before leaving with our first two children, Dana and Mark, for French language study in Albertville, France. God’s sense of humour was evident as I, who had failed French all through high school, was placed in the advanced class along with Gwen. His grace was also evident as we both fulfilled all the requirements by Christmastime.

## Church Planting

In 1970, we arrived in Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso, and were assigned to the undeveloped southern portion of the country, covering 2,000 sq. km and including 19 different ethnic groups. There were no other missionaries or national pastors in that area, so Mission leadership decided we should take the first year on the field to improve our French through ministry. We settled in Banfora, the commercial centre of the area. Walking for the first time from the train station up the hill into town, I prayed, "Father, we are not church planters. You are going to have to equip us in ways we have never experienced before! Grant that, through our obedience, this whole area will be filled with churches and throngs of people who follow You."

Early on, we thought about expanding our ministries beyond the Sunday services and Wednesday prayer meetings. Our home was across from an elementary school. Our yard had an open area large enough for a volleyball court. I got a couple of palm tree trunks to plant in the ground and metres of cord to make a volleyball net. For days, Gwen and I tied knots until we finished it. Once a volleyball was ordered from the city of Bobo-Dioulasso, we were ready.

As the kids were let out of school, Gwen and I would go onto our volleyball court and hit the ball back and forth with our young children. Some of the school children would stop and watch. With a little coaxing, some were



Establishing a presence, c. 1974. Courtesy Eric Persson

soon brave enough to come into the yard. Billows of dust filled the air as we showed them the basics of volleyball. In time, that led to a Thursday kids' club where we played volleyball, taught French choruses, and told stories with hand-drawn flip charts. Eventually we held a camp at the old Mission station at Siniena.

It seemed simultaneous with this small move we made, that God also began to move. People began to show up at our little church on Sunday mornings. They were educated people, disciples in other areas of the country where there were strong churches. They came to Banfora as teachers or business people or to work in the sugar cane plantation. Eventually they became leaders of the church in the city of Banfora and the surrounding area.

I was led to approach Yiranou Traore, speaker at the annual national youth camp. He was about to graduate from a Bible college in Ivory Coast. For four years, he travelled between his native Mali and the Bible College, passing through Banfora. During all that time, God spoke to him about the fact that there was no viable witness for Christ in that whole area. I asked if he might join our ministry. Although the leadership of his home church had paid for his education, they released him with their blessing.

In the past, missionaries in the area had tried to reach as many of the hundreds of small villages in the area as possible with the Gospel. God, however, seemed to be leading us to focus on the city of Banfora and four other urban centres. These centres served as the hubs for the networks of villages which would come in each week for trade in the larger markets.

Yiranou and I invited a couple of seasoned African pastors from other areas of the country to join us for a week or two in one of these urban centres. The days were spent visiting local offices and shops to talk about Christ. We sold Bibles, Christian magazines, and books to people who were hungry for something to read. At night, we used our generator to show Christian movies in French and then preach to the crowd who would gather. As individuals responded, the African pastors took the remaining days to teach them how to grow in their faith.

As often as possible, we met with the new believers on Sundays for services. Elders from the Banfora or Siniena churches were sent on a rotation basis to encourage them in the face of persecution. Eventually we built churches in these centres. The Alliance church in Mali loaned us pastors to lead the young churches. With these developments, we entered into a relationship with Wycliffe Bible Translators. Soon five teams were sent to work with the various ethnic groups in our five urban centres. These Wycliffe personnel were solid Christians and contributed greatly to the development of our churches.

It was during this term that our third child, Dee, was born.

As we finished our first term, we often felt like we had been spectators watching God build His Church in ways we never thought possible. It was a time of great joy but also significant difficulty. There were times of profound loneliness, as we were far removed from our fellow missionaries. Bouts of disease struck each member of our family. It was difficult to be where there was no medical help, seeing our young family struggle with malaria and other potentially fatal diseases unique to West Africa.

Sending our six-year-olds to school in Ivory Coast for three months at a time, tore at our hearts time and time again. God gave us practical ideas to ease these difficult times for our kids and His grace allowed us to do what we could never do on our own. Our kids all carry fond memories of their lives in Africa. God proved His faithfulness to our family in ways that matched the challenges that came our way.

### Leadership Development

Things changed dramatically as we moved to our second term. During our home assignment, a conflict erupted between Burkina Faso and Mali. All of the Malian pastors who had been working to develop our churches were forced to return home. Our focus on expansion shifted to a focus on developing lay leaders for ministry.

Two young men from Banfora felt called to ministry and were sent off to the Bible College in Ivory Coast. One eventually became pastor of the Banfora church and even studied at Canadian Theological Seminary. During their summer breaks from Bible College, they were able to help some of the distant churches.

To develop lay leaders, Gwen worked with a couple of French-speaking women. In the beginning, she prepared Bible studies and these ladies translated them into the trade language used in the urban centres. With time, they worked out the studies together and Gwen gave the study while they translated. The next step was to work on the studies together but have the ladies give the study themselves. Through the years that followed, these two ladies continued to be leaders of women's ministries.

My work with lay leaders followed a similar pattern. Since we moved directly into ministry, I was never fluent enough in an ethnic language to be able to preach; my ministry was always in French with the use of a translator.

An effort was made to prepare the elders and lay leaders to be able to preach in the new developing churches. I always tried to take one of these leaders with me wherever I went to minister. We talked about what we felt God was leading us to do. They assisted me as translators and finally we debriefed to determine what we thought God had done for the

church through our ministry. These practical experiences served as a great backdrop for the eventual classes I gave the leaders on how to prepare a message and deliver it in a way that would allow God's Spirit to bring change in people's lives.

As we began to transfer ministry to the lay leadership in the church, two things happened. First, churches continued to grow and people were grounded in their faith.

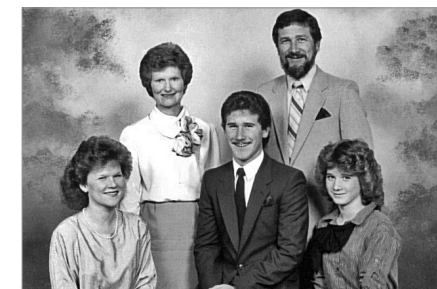
Second, instead of the churches being led by pastors alone, the laity viewed themselves as equally responsible for the ministry of the church.

During this time, there was also a change in our youth and children's ministries. Some of the young men, not yet at the point of becoming elders, became involved as leaders in these ministries. The children's ministry moved to the town of Nafona, just outside of Banfora. One of our elders was a teacher at the rural school there. As there was no school on Thursdays, we had an opportunity to impact the future of that community by reaching the kids early in life.

We started the school year by taking our mobile book truck to Nafona. It had Christian literature and magazines for sale but was also stocked with school supplies, so parents would not have to go to Banfora for them. We announced that there would be a kids' club held at the school on Thursdays. We developed a Christian Service Brigade format. Gwen bought material to make triangular red neck ties with borders of black, white and yellow like a "Wordless Book," explaining how the blackness of our sin was made pure white through the blood of Christ.

Through the young men who led that ministry, there are now similar ministries throughout the Alliance churches of Burkina. When I eventually moved into Bible school ministry, I had them come and teach future pastors how to develop youth and children's ministries. In a recent trip back to Burkina, a missionary told me about the evangelism pastor of a large church who had been one of the kids in that fledgling children's ministry. His whole approach to evangelism was based on what he had observed God do when he was a child at Nafona.

As we came to the third year of our second term in Burkina, we were suddenly faced with a choice. The C&MA in Mali was making a move into the capital city of their country, Bamako, and Yiranou Traore had been



The Persson Family, 1984.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre



Eric and Gwen Persson, 1995.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

chosen to lead that effort. Because of our work together in Banfora, the Alliance Mission asked that we be reassigned to Bamako.

At the same time, the Alliance in Burkina Faso had started a French language Bible College in Bobo-Dioulasso. They needed an experienced missionary, fluent in French, with the gift of teaching. While there was a great deal of pressure for us to accept the assignment in Mali, we had always believed that training Africans for ministry was much more effective than doing the ministry as outsiders.

It was finally agreed that we would return to Canada a year early so that we could begin our new ministry at the Bible school as soon as possible.

### Maranatha Bible College

As we began our ministry of training young men and women for ministry in Africa, we realized in a fresh way that, though this ministry matched our personalities and our primary spiritual giftedness, nothing of eternal significance would be accomplished without God's Spirit. We again asked God to equip us for the ministry He had for us. We witnessed God at work building His Church. Gwen moved from training students' wives to being the office manager, college president's secretary/accountant, and in charge of producing all the course materials for the college and our Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program. I moved from being a professor to college president and then to mentoring several African vice presidents until they were ready to become president.

Maranatha Bible College was a young ministry that in many ways went against what had been the norm for pastoral training in West Africa for decades. Previously, men with no formal schooling were trained in trade languages. This former process excluded the vast numbers of young men who were part of the country's expanding education programs.

Slowly, momentum began to increase as scores of young men with high school training, in the Burkina church sensed God's call and were sent to Maranatha for five years of learning. After a number of years and many conversations, the Alliance churches in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali began to

send many students from their regions as well. Soon other denominations and organization such as SIL (Wycliffe Bible Translators) and relief and development organizations also sent their students to Maranatha.

These progressively-minded young men entered ministry and... are moving into areas of impact on the Burkina society where western missionaries never dreamed possible.

God used the cross-pollination of the strengths of these diverse churches, ministries, and cultures to bring greater ministry insights to the graduates than the theological training alone could bring. These progressively-minded young men entered ministry and eventually become the leaders of a strong national Alliance church. They are moving into areas of impact on the Burkina society where western missionaries never dreamed possible. To have been part of that process is a very humbling honour.

In several areas of West Africa, the church has experienced rapid growth. Even with the numerous students graduating annually, many churches, filled with recent converts from animism and Islam, had no pastors to lead them. They were led by either the older men or by someone who had been educated and could at least read the Bible and try to explain passages as they understood them. Often, they would interpret Scripture through the filters of their Animistic or Islamic experience. Heresy was a constant threat. After further studies at Canadian Theological Seminary, I was named both the president of the college and director of a proposed TEE program which aimed to begin training the lay leadership of the church.

TEE seemed to those on the field as the best strategy for training lay leadership since many of the laity were already functioning as church leaders. It was a means of progressively enhancing their ability to lead effectively. We named the program "Maranatha Institute's Decentralized Education Program" (PEDIM for short, the acronym in reverse). To promote acceptance and national status, the national office for PEDIM was built on the Maranatha campus and the programmed texts were contextually written by our Maranatha professors to match our college curriculum as closely as possible. All the students were trained in the principles of TEE so that they could serve as PEDIM course trainers when they graduated. These God-directed steps have led to the strengthening of churches and their leaders in West Africa.

Today we are back in Canada but our sojourn in mission is not over. God has given us the opportunity to reproduce ourselves. First, I served as

missions professor at Canadian Bible College when it was still in Regina. Later, it was through our ministry at Marwayne Alliance Church in Alberta, where we saw two of our youth go to teach in MK schools in Malaysia and Africa. Next it was as missions pastor at Beulah Alliance where we sent dozens of teams around the world, with one couple choosing to go back as full-time international workers.

*Adapted from a bio written August 2013  
Eric and Gwen Persson were sent by Hillsdale Alliance Church  
(now Living Hope Alliance Church), Regina, Saskatchewan*

## Chapter 16

# He Will Give You a New Name

By Julie Fehr

The elderly lady stepped down from the back of my Land Rover truck, slipped on her heavy back basket, and looked me in the eye. "What is your name?"

"Julie Fehr," I told her.

"No, I mean a name for referring to people."

What could I say? I could hardly help it that the Tsogo language did not have a sound for any of the consonants in my name.

"That is my name. In my language that is a people-name," I told her. The look in her eyes told me she wondered how woefully inadequate some languages must be!

"From now on your name is '*Monyepi*'." She looked at me expecting a response.

I was travelling with a Tsogo preacher called Papa Enoch. He was the one who told me to give a ride to this elderly couple returning to the same village where we were headed. Papa Enoch asked me, "What do you say? Do you accept it?" What could I do but accept?

"Ah," said Otako, the elderly woman's husband, "That's a good name."

Otako went on to define the name, "There we were, my wife and I, struggling along the road with our baggage and wondering if we would be able to sleep in our own beds tonight. Along came this woman with her four feet under her and picked us up so that our own two feet could rest. She '*nyepeda*' the journey for us. That is a good name for her."

I mentally paged through my Tsogo dictionary cards, looking for the root word *nyepa*. What did *Monyepi* actually mean?

Papa Enoch was helping me find a place that would eventually become the translation centre for the Tsogo-language New Testament. He had explained that Otako was the same man he had hoped we could contact.

When we later met in Otako's house, I asked those gathered, "Will you give me words to say what God wants to tell you?" As other elderly men and women came in to discuss my request, I was introduced as *Monyepi*.



One man said, "Ah yes, *Monyepi* is a good name. Look at her." With his hands in the air he drew an hourglass figure! There was a nodding of heads and agreement! *Horrors! Is that what my name meant?*

We returned to the subject of words when another man asked, "What does God want to tell us?"

I quickly answered, "He wants to talk about life—*mony*. What is *mony*? You don't need to tell me all of it today— we will talk about it for many days to come."

They all nodded their heads. "Didn't I just say that her name is *Monyepi*? See how she understands the way we do things. This must be a serious issue. She is giving us time to consider before answering. That is the way a Tsogo does it. He thinks about it."

I too was thinking. I was visualizing my word charts. The *mo*-prefix and the *i*-suffix made *Monyepi* refer to a person, the *-eda* ending the elderly man had used earlier made it something I had caused to happen. But what did the *nyep* root mean? My mind drew a blank; not a promising beginning for my translator career.

### Unlikely Beginnings

It was astounding that I was doing translation work at all. My language learning experiences began in high school in Abbotsford, B.C. I dropped French part way through my first year as my grades were seriously damaging my overall average. "Besides," I told myself, "I don't plan on traveling to Quebec or France."

When I enrolled at the University of British Columbia's College of Education, I was short in language credits. An intensive summer course would solve that; but which language? I had no affinity for French so I decided to try German. After all, I had attended a good German-speaking church as a child and understood the sermons without difficulty.

I got serious about learning German but once again my average hovered in the danger zone. My professor assured me the situation was not hopeless as I was not majoring in languages. We came to an agreement: I would continue to work hard and, as long as I would not take any further courses in his department, I would receive the credits necessary to enter the teacher-training program in September.

### A Push Toward Missions

When I started teaching school in Kamloops, B.C., I began attending the C&MA. The warmth and exuberance of the college and career group, church family, and of Pastor and Mrs. Orlin Craig drew me back Sunday after Sunday.

They acted as if missions was the reason for a church's existence!

It seemed to me the church was crawling with missionaries coming and going throughout the year. They acted as if missions was the reason for a church's existence! I noticed quite quickly that each missionary referred to language study.

I sat smugly next to my friends who were squirming under conviction about offering their lives for missionary service. No problem! I could not qualify due to my language-learning handicap, so I listened with reckless abandon to the missionaries' fascinating tales. I listened in the same dreamy way a pauper scans travel brochures because I was not even walking closely with the Lord.

I really had no excuse for straying. In fact, the earliest memory of Mother is of her kneeling beside me at bedtime, teaching me to pray. We prayed that my father would commit his life to Jesus.

We were only able to attend church occasionally. However, each Sunday morning in our isolated Saskatchewan farmhouse, Mother taught the three of us older children Bible stories and songs. Then she turned on the radio to a church program from Saskatchewan by Rev. Willis Brooks. He offered a free Bible to anyone who would write in. I begged Mom for one. She finally wrote in, sending some of her precious egg sales money as a gift to the radio work. I don't remember that Bible, but I've been told I gradually loved it to pieces.

I received Jesus Christ as Saviour at school when I was eight years old. My older sister, Florence, had received Him as Saviour several months earlier. I was afraid she'd go to heaven without me and also, I felt naughty about being disobedient. So, when my friend Ruthie asked me at recess if I wanted to ask Jesus into my heart, I was ready. She knelt with me and two others on the skate-scarred floor boards of an abandoned hockey dressing room and prayed me into the Kingdom.

That night I told Dad what I had done. I asked him, trembling inside, "When are you going to let Jesus have your life?" He didn't answer.

I found out much later Dad had told Mom that same night, "Our Julie, she's going to be a missionary someday." Many years later, my father did commit his life to Christ.

Some years later, having withdrawn from God, I attended the Alliance church in Kamloops. During an evangelistic crusade, the Holy Spirit convicted me of my hypocrisy and I recommitted my life to Him. I surrendered my career plans and told the Lord I would do anything He asked of me. But please, Lord, let it make a difference that I've lived. I want to make a mark for Your Kingdom.

## The Preparations Begin

I read all I could about missionaries. The next one I heard speak was Mrs. G. Burnett talking about the Jivaro headhunters in the jungles of Ecuador. She and her husband would soon retire and replacements were needed. I grinned inside. I was sure I would become one! The Jivaro became my people.

I enrolled in the missions program at Canadian Bible College (CBC). I decided that would be the school to turn me into a missionary. I also knew that I needed to prove to myself that I could learn a language, so I enrolled in Greek.

I now had a purpose for studying a foreign language. I now knew about claiming God's wisdom as He promises in James 1:5. And yet, I sensed trouble coming.

Toward the end of the year, trouble arrived. My professor and I agreed before God in prayer that He would enable me to complete the year. We also agreed that when grading a student, one should consider the student's sweat, tears and effort.

The professor asked if I planned to continue Greek studies. "You're not planning on going into translation work, are you?" I assured her I would not. I received credit for my first year Greek, but inside I knew that I would never really learn a foreign language well.

One memorable day, I bought and read *Mission to the Headhunters* by Frank and Marie Drown. I felt I was beginning to get to know my people before arriving in their jungle. One day, Jake and Mavis Klassen, missionary candidates assigned to Ecuador, arrived on campus and asked if they could borrow my copy, as the school library did not have it yet. I went through an inner struggle as I loaned it to them. What if they would be assigned to the Jivaro instead of me? They were on their way "out" and they were a couple. I still had two years before going and was a single.

During my senior year, the C&MA tentatively appointed me to Peru. Peru was on the same continent as Ecuador, so I cried and prayed and said, "Yes." Several letters later, I was told my appointment to Peru was cancelled with no alternatives given. It was now time to be very serious with the Lord. I'd been hanging on to a special friendship, but he wasn't heading for the Jivaro. Nor was he aiming at South America for that matter! I'd been bargaining with God. It seemed as though God was saying, "Until you stop being stubborn, I'm just going to put you on the shelf." The awfulness of my rebellion registered in my mind and I recommitted my life to God. This time I told the Lord I was willing to go absolutely anywhere!

The next morning as I walked by the huge world map in the classroom building, an incredible sense of peace overwhelmed me as my eyes

moved away from Ecuador and the equator. I realized God could place me anywhere.

A few weeks later I received my appointment to the Republic of Gabon, Equatorial Africa. I didn't know where it was but wrote my letter of acceptance and then looked for an atlas to find my country! There was a slight catch. I would first spend one year in Paris learning French.

## A Language Student Again

That year in France was not my most phenomenal year, but it was a good year of plodding along with God in simple obedience. When the required language exams were completed, I continued on to Gabon.

Among the missionaries who welcomed me was fellow Canadian, Don Dirks, who said, "Welcome. You've been assigned to the Tsogo people. *Theirs has got to be the hardest language in this country!*" Something in me cried out, *Lord, are You allowed to do this? Have You forgotten what it is You've got to work with?* In retrospect, it was exactly because He knew who He was working with that He did what He did! What a God is our God!

As a language student again, I discovered that I did much better simply imitating people's speech than I did memorizing word lists and grammar charts. I studied the lessons, but also worked my way from village fireside to village fireside during two years of intensive Tsogo study.

One of those days when I was memorizing vocabulary while slowly pouring lamp kerosene through a filter, I found myself right on eye level with the equator on a world map hanging in the spare room. There in the isolation of Gabon's jungle, even the word "equator" seemed like an old friend. *I must be sitting right on it*, I thought as I located the west coast of Africa, then Gabon, and then tried to decide where the unmarked Guevede Mission station would be. On the equator!

My eyes followed the line on the map west to South America. There, on its west coast sat Ecuador. I thought of all the similarities between Ecuador and Gabon. I compared the Jivaro with the Tsogo people to whom God had sent me! A surge of praise welled up inside of me—what an incredible God! What a sense of humour He had! I could just hear Him say, "Julie, *we're going to do this My way, but I'll make it as close as possible to what you were aiming at!*" I was struggling with language learning, but I knew I was where God wanted me to be.

## A Serious Proposal

Shortly before my first home assignment, I was invited to be part of a teaching and evangelism team for a two-week venture. It came my turn to

teach. It was my first night ever to be in Papa Enoch's village. A dim lantern created a little hole of light around the pulpit. The rest of the darkened chapel was punctuated only by the sparkling eyes and white-toothed smiles of the believers when they responded to questions or statements in the message. In the quiet spaces between sentences, while I mentally lined up my words, the cicadas whistled at each other in the chapel's thatch roof. God was there! I worked my way through phrase after phrase of the message, imitating the sounds I'd been hearing for over two years. I revelled in the wonder of communicating and being understood.

The next day the village chief and our evangelism team members said they wanted to talk to me. *"God has given you our language,"* they said. *"He has given it so that you would become our translator and write the New Testament in our language."* I sat beside them without comment, just as they had taught me to sit. Inside I was screaming, *"Given? Given? What about the six and eight hours of study every day for nearly two years? Given? I earned it."* And then, gently, as only the Lord knows how, He nudged my memory by saying, *"Remember your track record? I've given you the ability to mimic. I have given the ability to listen and to absorb. Yes, I have given."*

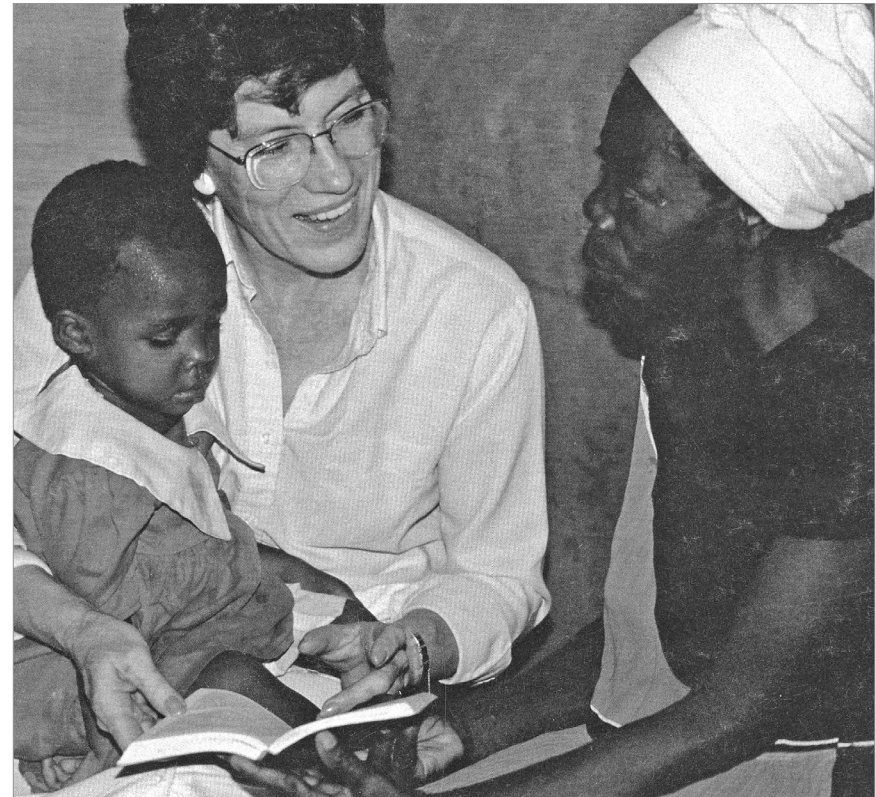
In that solemn moment, I remembered that I had practically promised my Greek professor that I would not translate. I remembered that I disliked paperwork. I remembered that I was neither linguist nor translator. I verbalized some of this to the Tsogo people. They heard me out and then said, *"We'll give you one year to think about it while you are in your country."* That was when I learned that you can gauge the importance of an issue by the amount of time you're given to think about it before responding!



Julie Fehr, 1983.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

### **Making God 'Beautiful'**

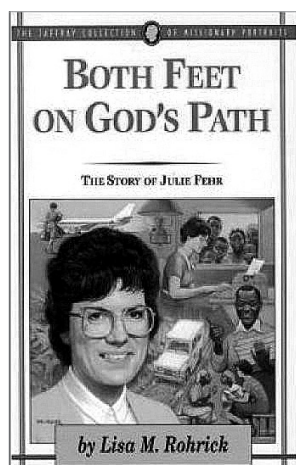
A year later I was at Otako's house which would be my place to research the language and begin translating. During furlough, God had confirmed in various quiet ways that I should do the work my predecessors among the Tsogo had begun. God had stirred excitement in my heart by asking, *"What if, ten or twelve years from now, the Tsogo people actually have the New Testament in their language? What if they have it because you, a high-risk language student, lived among them? Now wouldn't that be just the kind of thing your God would delight to do?"*



Julie Fehr in ministry, date unknown. Courtesy Alliance Archives

I recalled the day after that initial meeting with Otako when we were back at his house for a teaching service that Papa Enoch had eagerly arranged. It was my turn to teach! I held the mimeographed pages of John's Gospel and very simply spoke God's words to the houseful of people. At the end there was silence. Slowly Otako stood to his feet. *"Now I know what our child's name means. She has nyepeda God to us. When I look at those papers in her hand, they are the markings of a chicken who walked in mud. When she looks at those papers, she says, 'God has said....' And when I hear what it is that He has said, well, those words make God nyepa to us. We want more of these words in our village. We will help her find them."*

Otako eventually became a believer as did others in his village. In our nearly twelve years of word hunting together, God planted a church in their village and we worked together and prayed into being the New Testament in their language.



Lisa Rohrick, an international worker in Niger, shares the story of Julie Fehr in her book. Courtesy National Ministry Centre

Today, I develop and direct the field-wide Theological Education by Extension program, training pastors for the Lord's church in Gabon. I spend a lot of time holding Scripture in my hands, and I still hear Otako give the ultimate meaning to the name *Monyepi* when he said, "Those words make God 'beautiful' to us."

Those who teach the Word make God desirable to the hearers. Imagine making a distant, indifferent or vengeful tribal god become a desirable, beautiful and knowable Eternal God! What a way to leave a mark on this world!

*Adapted from Julie's story written in 1990 and first published by the C&MA-US as "The Julie Fehr Story."*

*Julie Fehr was sent by Sevenoaks Alliance Church, Abbotsford, B.C. She died in 1994.*

## Chapter 17

# Sold Out to the Lord

By Laurie McLean

I was born in 1941 at Ottawa's Salvation Army Grace Hospital. I was dedicated to the Lord to be a missionary in what was then Ottawa Gospel Tabernacle, by Nathan Bailey. My parents continually reminded me of this as I was growing up.

It wasn't until I was 12 years old that I responded to the voice of the Holy Spirit to give my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. God used a Messianic Christian Jew, Hyman Appleman, to open my heart to the Lord during special evangelistic services in Ottawa.

At age 16, I attended a camp meeting and answered God's call to dedicate my life to full-time service. I remember my father telling me at one point, "We never worried about you as a teenager because we knew that God had His hand on you." From the time I made that decision, my goal was to finish high school and go to Bible school to train for cross-cultural service.

### Following God's Leading

I attended Canadian Bible College (CBC) in Regina, Saskatchewan, and it was there that my faith flourished and my life took a specific direction. During my first year, at the annual missions conference, God reaffirmed in my heart that He wanted me to apply to missions. Never had I felt the leading of the Lord as clearly as I did during those meetings.

It was also there that I met the young lady who became my helpmate. Nancy Westcott was reared in a Christian home in Lethbridge, Alberta. We were both interested in serving the Lord as full-time, career missionaries. Psalm 118:24 spoke to us as we met together for prayer one evening on a "social privilege" (date), "*The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.*"

For many years Nancy had known that God was leading her to work in missions. Her godly parents had instilled in her heart that she could do anything for the Lord in Canada or on the mission field.

Just before graduation from CBC, I knew I needed to find employment before our wedding. In the wonderful ways of God, I not only found a good

job, but I also had the opportunity of serving at Banff Alliance Church in Alberta.

K. Neill Foster, a Canadian Alliance evangelist, spoke one Sunday morning. His message was on the filling of the Holy Spirit after conversion. At that time, I opened my life to the filling of the Spirit, allowing God to further prepare me for His service as a missionary. At the end of the summer, August 1963, Nancy and I were joined in marriage at the Alliance church in Lethbridge, Alberta.

### Preparing for Missions by Pastoring

I was first assigned as assistant pastor to Medicine Hat Alliance Church in Alberta. Working with the senior pastor in that church and having the oversight of a rural Sunday school in the small town of Elkwater gave us a good start to pastoral ministry. After only four months of ministry there, the district superintendent, Roy McIntyre, asked us to move to a newly vacated pastorate in the Peace River area of British Columbia.

We arrived in the village of Rolla, B.C. on January 2, 1964, to begin pastoring a small country church. We also had oversight of another rural church in Pouce Coupé, as well as two home prayer meetings in other areas nearby.

We loved that experience living in a small pre-fabricated house with no running water and “enjoyed” the services of an outdoor privy. Our drinking and wash water arrived once a week in a huge water truck and was pumped into a 250-litre container sitting in the corner of the kitchen. Sometimes, in winter, we put a big pot of snow on the stove to melt in order to have extra wash water. The house was insufficiently insulated for the harsh winters of the area, but we did manage to survive in temperatures as low as -40 degrees.

We had to stretch every dollar to the limit. The farmers of the church contributed eggs, milk, and the occasional chicken, as well as canned fruit. The events and struggles of those two and a half years in our early married life proved valuable later on for our work as missionaries. Our first child, Sharon Ruth, was born in Dawson Creek during our time in the Peace Country.

What a time of rejoicing we had on a cold December day in 1965, when the news came that we had been approved and appointed as missionaries for The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) to the country of Gabon, Africa. We departed from Canada in the summer of 1966 for a year of French language study in Paris, France.

### Bon Voyage!

Just before leaving North America in early July, we were requested to present ourselves to the Alliance headquarters in New York City for a time of prayer and consecration. I can still remember the powerful praying of W.F. Smalley as he had us kneel in the little chapel and receive the blessing of God through the men at headquarters.

Paris was another of many turning points in our lives. Through all the difficulties of learning a language, God was teaching us and preparing us for our future ministry in Africa. We made many new friends. We met new missionary colleagues who were also headed to Africa for service with the Alliance, and of course, the group of believers at the small Alliance church in Paris were a blessing to us.

### Off to Africa

Our first trip to Africa by boat from Bordeaux, France, to Libreville, Gabon, took seventeen days on a passenger/freighter ship that stopped at just about all the major ports of call along the West African coast. Limited language abilities, limited things to do on board, and virtually no means of acquiring books or snacks on the ship meant there were days of sheer boredom. Mixed in with the boredom were several days of seasickness. We were greeted in Libreville by the field director, Mr. Austin Parliman.

The roads to our station were full of long stretches of mud that wanted to swallow the 4X4 pickup truck. After crossing four rivers on small ferry boats, and after 450 km of bouncing around until we thought we would not only lose our last meal but our insides as well, we finally arrived at the field headquarters of Mouila at 10:00 pm.

Three days later, we were driven to our station a further 100 km into the jungle, to the Yileka mission station. *Yileka* is a local word meaning, “springs of water.” This name was given to the village by former missionaries who trusted the Lord for many people to come to know the Lord, who gives the water of life to all who believe.

The station was opened almost 30 years before we arrived, and already there was a growing church with a full-time pastor. Almost immediately, we started language study. The local language is called Yipunu and the people are known as the Bapounou. It took us two and a half years to get to a place where we could hear and understand and make ourselves understood.

It was during this first term of service that our son James Robert was born in Lambaréné, Gabon, about a five-hour trip by Land Rover over those same roads that needed improvement. Our second son, Andrew, was born during our first home assignment when we were living in Kingston, Ontario.



McLean Family, 1982.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

Several times during that first term, we were cut off from the outside because of mud slides during the rainy seasons and broken bridges just about any time of year.

Our first home was like a palace compared to the local houses. Built by earlier missionaries, there was no electricity and no running water and only a wood-fire stove to cook meals. We used kerosene-burning lamps in the evening to read or study. Millions of army ants invaded the house from time to time as they passed by in their search for food.

### In God's Hands

Most of our following six terms in Gabon followed a regular pattern of teaching, evangelizing, involvement in women's ministries, and helping regional pastors build chapels. God proved Himself faithful in answering the prayers of friends back in North America as He kept us in fairly good health considering the lack of medical facilities where we lived. We had to combat malaria and other tropical diseases several times during those years in the jungles.

God was with us, literally, in situations that put our lives in danger. He protected us from accidents on the roads and deliverance from evil. On one occasion, I was visiting a small town where we were holding evangelistic meetings with Clarence Shrier from Canada. One of the Christian families in the town gave me a small room where I could sleep during our stay.

One night, I was awakened and saw what I would call evil spirits watching me at the foot of the bed. I was sure that this was not a bad dream. It was so real that I could almost smell the foul odor of the demons. I could only call out loud the name of Jesus repeatedly until the evil spirits left the room and I could go back to sleep.

The angels of the Lord helped us one other time as we were driving and came upon a small log bridge. I had not driven on this particular road before, and I was on the bridge before I knew it was there. There were not enough logs on one side of the bridge to drive over, but God kept us from a terrible accident by holding up the side of our pickup truck as we crossed the bridge. We stopped to give praise to God for His help and were convinced that people back home had been praying for us at that moment.

As a missionary, I realized early on that I had to be completely sold out to the Lord. Everything I had was given over to Him, including our children. Our son Jim came down with a malarial fever one day and without adequate medical supplies close at hand. We could only pray that God would intervene. Jim's temperature kept rising until the thermometer reached 105° F.

At that moment I took my five-year-old son in my arms and presented him to the Lord. "Here is our child, Father, that you have entrusted to us," I prayed. "Please heal him now."

God was faithful, and almost immediately the fever started to leave our son's body. We gave praise to the Lord. "Great is Thy Faithfulness" is now one of my favourite hymns because it reminds me of His many blessings to our family.

I could relate many other occasions of God's faithfulness during our time in Africa. Not only did He provide miraculous deliverance driving on the roads, instantaneous healings, and provisions for our needs, but also many other situations where only God could and did intervene for us.

### Leading to Raise Leaders

One of my most interesting terms of service included four years as field director for the C&MA in Gabon. Nancy served as my office secretary and hostess of the mission station. Most of that time, I was travelling to visit our missionary team members or serving with the National Church president as we worked on programs and projects to help the churches expand into new areas and to become self-sufficient.

Many times, I called on the Lord for wisdom and understanding. To know the appropriate cultural responses to difficult situations demanded a great deal of prayer in order to discern what God would have us do. Interpersonal relationships and the attending problems that come with two or more points of view from two or more cultural backgrounds left us scratching our heads on more than one occasion.

The National Church was expanding throughout the country and continues to do so today; the C&MA of Gabon is the largest Protestant evangelical church in the country. It fully supports three missionary families in three different areas of Africa.

In 1994, my wife and I were asked to consider moving to the capital city of Libreville to help in teaching at the Bethel Bible Institute. We felt very



Laurie and Nancy McLean, 1986.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

inadequate to take on this responsibility, but we trusted God to provide for us. Teaching Bible courses, missions, pastoral theology, and other courses caused us to dig deep into the Word as we prepared for four classes each week.

### **Serving in Canada**

In December 2000, our regional developer informed us we would not be returning to Gabon after our home assignment year in 2001. We were disappointed and very much wanted to complete our final term in our adopted country before retirement, but the Lord had other plans.

We said our goodbyes with sadness and tears but with the confidence that we had completed what the Lord had given us to do. We had trained other men and women to carry on the ministry to the next generations of Gabonese who also needed to hear the Gospel message.

We did not feel that we were ready to retire after 36 years of service, so we requested to be assigned to Quebec to continue ministry for God. We came to the city of Gatineau, Quebec in 2002, just across the river from the nation's capital.

We were to work with an established church with a young French-Canadian pastor. Within the first few weeks of our arrival, one of the church members told us, "You know, you are an answer to prayer. We have been praying for another pastor to come, someone who could speak French but who also had years of ministry experience." This person continued, "We have asked many people to pray for this, even some Christian members of the Canadian parliament."

It was difficult to think that our many years in Africa were over. We were somewhat unsure of what our role would be in this new culture of Quebec. It was during the first service we attended that I noticed a young man sitting in the congregation. At the end of the service, I met this brother and found out that he was a Gabonese believer now living in Gatineau.

We served the church for five years and officially retired from active service in July 2008. Since that time, I have been serving at Cedarview Alliance Church in Ottawa in several capacities. The Lord has led me to serve on the board of elders, as interim pastor for seven months, and in other areas as well.

We give all the praise and honour to the Lord for His leading in our lives. But God is not done with us yet. What else is there? We will wait on Him and let Him show us what He wants us to do.

*Adapted from a bio written in July 2015  
Laurie and Nancy McLean were sent by Central Alliance Church  
(now Cedarview Alliance), Nepean, Ontario in 1966 and by  
Mission Creek Alliance Church, Kelowna, B.C. in 1986*

## Chapter 18

# How we Learned to Depend on God

By Jess and Ann Jespersen

I, Jess, was born in Spruce Grove, Alberta, into a Christian family where missions had a prominent place. Despite having family serving overseas and regularly attending our church's annual missions conferences where my parents consistently made generous financial pledges, being a missionary was not on my radar.

Farming was what I loved. My father owned a prosperous dairy farm that could someday become mine as the eldest son. I tried to quit school after eighth grade to take up farming, but since I was only 15 years old, I had to first finish Grade 9.

When I turned 18, my father suggested I attend a Bible school for six months to better serve as a layman in the church. This concurred with the advice of our pastor's wife who regularly encouraged me toward full-time ministry.

So I enrolled at Canadian Bible College (CBC) in Regina, Saskatchewan where I experienced a growing conviction that farming was not God's plan for my life.

When the spring session ended, I returned to the farm. All that summer, an inner battle raged as I wrestled with my personal desire to farm and the firm conviction that God's will was full-time ministry. When the time came to decide to return to Bible school, I declined. Immediately I knew I was living in disobedience to God's will. Three months later, I was hospitalized with a bad case of pneumonia and finally surrendered to God's will for my life, whatever it may be.

One month after leaving the hospital and just before returning to CBC, Roland Gray visited Stony Plain Alliance Church, Alberta, for a deeper life ministry. During that week, I was filled with the Holy Spirit. That night began a lifelong pursuit of allowing the Holy Spirit to lead and empower my life.

Upon returning to CBC, it became clear that surrender to God's will meant a call to overseas missions. Harold Catto had spoken about Baliem Valley in Papua and, that night, I said "Yes" to wherever God wanted me to serve.

I knew I would need the right person at my side. So began the prayers, “Where is she, Lord?” In my third year she appeared, but she did not think she was to spend her life at my side.

I, Ann, spent the first six years of my life in the little town of Briercrest, Saskatchewan. My parents, Al and Gen Blager, were part of a group that started the Briercrest Bible Institute. When the school moved to Caronport after the war, my folks moved to Moose Jaw where we joined the Alliance church. My mother and father were always involved in missions—they were part of the Summer Institute of Linguistics when it began in Briercrest and later my father was the Canadian representative for Wycliffe Bible Translators. I travelled to various churches with him to show the film, “O For a Thousand Tongues.” These repeated film viewings had a strong influence on my life.

When I was a teenager, a choir group from CBC presented a missions program in our church that included a call to dedicate our lives to God. I remember thinking that many people around the world did not have the same privilege to hear the Gospel. So, at the end of high school, I headed off to Bible school. My first thought was to go to Caronport since I had many ties there, but since CBC offered me a scholarship, in God’s providence, I decided to go there.

While at school as a young 17 year old, I met Jess who was in his third year. At first, I wanted nothing to do with him; nobody was going to say I came to Bible school to find a husband! *But God...*

After a summer of working in a hospital, God showed me I should begin nursing studies. My late application was accepted, and I spent the next three years at the Moose Jaw Union Hospital. I graduated as a registered nurse in 1961, training that would serve me well on numerous occasions.

We were married in July 1961 and spent the next few years completing training from CBC and Regina College and gaining experience by working at the hospital and in various churches in the area.

We completed our home service in Estevan, Saskatchewan and underwent all the interviews and evaluations prior to going overseas. During that time, a missionary from the Congo spoke at our missions conference. When we received a letter telling us our assignment was to be Guinea, West Africa, we were already prepared for Africa, although we had to look Guinea up on the map.

The following summer we went to Toronto for a month of linguistic training, which proved very helpful in the following years. In July 1965, we left for a year of language study in France. With two small boys, Greg and David, the year in Paris proved to be one of the most difficult and stressful years of our career. The regional director for Africa constantly reminded us that

failure to successfully complete the course at the Alliance Française would mean the end of our missionary service.

### **Guinea: Our Backside of the Desert Experience (1966-1967)**

We arrived in Guinea in September 1966. A veteran missionary drove us inland to Macenta, a town in the forest county, where we were to be stationed. He spent a couple of weeks helping us get settled, after which we were on our own.

We have often called our nine months in Guinea our “backside of the desert experience” because of its similarity to Moses’ experience, a time that completed a much-needed side of our spiritual preparation if we were to have a long-term fruitful ministry.

We were alone on a mission station, a nine-hour drive to the nearest missionaries. We had no phone or internet to connect with our friends. We felt isolated and missed speaking with others in our own language.

Our home was robbed, and we also had to give rabies shots to four-year-old Greg, almost lost two-year-old David to a scorpion sting, tried to learn the Toma language on our own, and walked everywhere. We learned to depend on God in a way we never had to before.

In May 1967, the president of Guinea expelled all foreign missionaries and a few weeks later we had to be reassigned.

After the strain of that month, we felt like giving up and returning home. One day, we tuned in our short-wave radio to a Back to the Bible program that focused on Jonah, the runaway missionary. All at once these words came out of the radio, “Young man, if God tells you to go east, don’t you dare go west.” East was towards other African countries, west pointed back to North America. God made it clear our missionary service was not over, but was just beginning.

### **Côte d’Ivoire: Language Learning and Concrete Blocks (1967)**

A few days later, we moved to Côte d’Ivoire where we began another two years of language study. The Baoulé language was not at all related to the one we had tried to learn in Guinea. Counting the year in France, during our first term that lasted five years, we spent four of those years in some form of language learning! The reward for this arduous task was a better understanding of the people and culture and being able to share about Christ or give a Bible study, albeit in a basic way.

God blessed us during this time with the birth of our third child, Lorilee Ann.

During the last two years of our first term, we were stationed in Toumodi. Even though there was a sizeable group of Christians there, the church



building was old and inadequate. For a number of years, the district leadership had hoped for a new building. With scanty resources in both money and knowledge of building with concrete blocks, I agreed to oversee the project. God provided for both needs in a marvellous way.

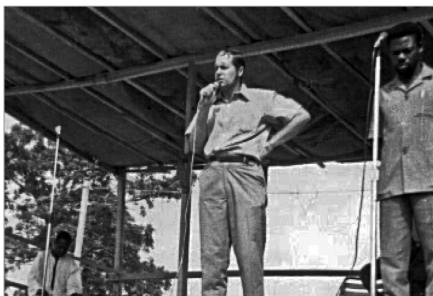
A Dutch engineer in town agreed to help with the structural requirements. Each Sunday an African committee member and I visited village churches asking the people to contribute from their meagre means. We used that money during the week to make more cement blocks and buy iron. By the time we were to leave for furlough, the building was finished, except for the doors and a few other minor details. We were sorely disappointed to not see the building dedicated prior to our departure.

Only a few weeks after arriving home, we were scheduled to be the missionary speakers at Nakamum Camp. Through the ministry of Bible teacher, Walter Boldt, God brought healing to our discouraged hearts.

Home assignment at that time consisted of two eight-to-twelve-week tours for C&MA missions conferences. While the separation from family was difficult, these tours served to rekindle commitment to giving and stimulated important prayer support for the next term of service.

### Second Term: Building up the Church (1971-1975)

During our second term we were called upon to fill a number of vacancies on the field. Our first assignment was to the second largest city in the area, Dimbokro, where we worked with a youth centre and taught Bible studies in secondary schools. Also, a chronic shortage of trained pastors in the area meant the thirty-some village churches were led by laymen with little or no biblical training. Each month we prepared four teaching lessons in Baoulé. We met with the lay workers in a village twice per month and taught them the lessons they used for the next four weeks. In this way, they grew spiritually and we were assured that each church received solid teaching.



Jess preaching. Courtesy Ann Jespersen

The following year, we were moved into youth work in Bouaké, the education centre of Côte d'Ivoire. This ministry consisted of Bible classes in secondary schools, youth rallies for evangelism, and discipleship training.

During 1973, an unusual moving of God began in Côte d'Ivoire when a French Assemblies of God evangelist held meetings in Abidjan,

the capital city. When healings took place, the crowds became so large the meetings were moved to the soccer stadium. Night after night, up to 30,000 people crowded in, including dignitaries and government officials.

The president asked the evangelist to hold meetings in all the major cities, four of which were in areas where the Alliance served. The follow-up work became our responsibility. The crusades in each city went on for several weeks with thousands deciding to follow Christ. These new converts needed teaching and preparation for baptism. The largest number baptized at one time was 485. This was the beginning of a mighty movement of God that produced unusual growth in the number of Alliance churches in Côte d'Ivoire.

In the last two years of our second term, I was elected field chairman. This was a time of healthy tensions and development in the relationship between the church and the Mission, which resulted in changes, including relocating missionaries from areas where the church was well established to new unevangelized towns. Implementing these changes presented tremendous challenges. Each day I claimed words Elmer Thiessen had shared with us the last Sunday before our return to Africa: *"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline."* (2 Timothy 1:7).

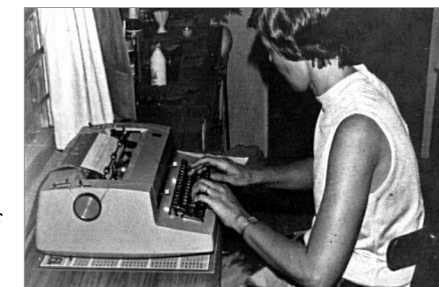
### Third Term: Evangelism and Hospitality (1976-1980)

Our third term began with being stationed again in Dimbokro. A new youth centre provided opportunity for outreach. We also continued village evangelism and lay training in both the Dimbokro and Toumodi districts. After that first year, I was once again elected field chairman, filling that position for the next three years.

During our time in Côte d'Ivoire, I (Ann) helped Jess in youth ministries, taught Bible classes in elementary schools, and had classes with young



Jess in his office in Africa, 1975.  
Courtesy Ann Jespersen



Ann preparing study materials, 1979.  
Courtesy Ann Jespersen



Jespersen Family, 1979.  
Courtesy Ann Jespersen

women, teaching them health principles, sewing and knitting, as well as Bible studies. I practised my nursing skills, not only in caring for my family and other missionaries, but also treating people who were sick or injured.

I was particularly interested in doing language work in Baoulé. I prepared literacy materials and translated Sunday school materials for ladies' classes. When Jess was

field chairman, I was station hostess and looked after the motel-like guesthouse. Because Ivory Coast Academy (ICA), the MK (missionary kid) school, was located in Bouaké where we lived, many people used these facilities when they came to visit their children. During our last year on the field, 4,500 people stayed in the guesthouse. I also taught piano to some of the advanced students at ICA.

### Quebec: A Move to Another Part of the Harvest (1980 - 2016)

In January 1979, the last year of our third term, we received a letter from Mel Sylvester, on behalf of the C&MA in Canada, asking us to consider leaving Africa to work in the Province of Quebec, one of the most unevangelized places in the world. Quebec was experiencing an unprecedented openness to the Gospel. There was a need for a French-speaking person who could give oversight to the multicultural Alliance churches with a view of creating a new French-speaking district in Canada.

Initially it was difficult for us to see how God could be moving us away from Africa after all the years of language preparation and our involvement in key ministries. We could not, however, escape the conviction that we needed to, again, discern God's will for our lives. To help us, we made a trip to Quebec that fall to meet with churches and those serving there.

Right from the start of our trip home, we wondered why we were going. Our flight from Bouaké was cancelled, meaning we would miss our connections. A small private plane offered to fly us and we barely caught our flight to New York. However, one of the tires on that plane exploded in mid-air and we were forced to land in an extremely dark airfield in Liberia. They were able to fix the problem, but this delay put us into Montreal quite late.

That weekend was crucial as we asked if coming to Quebec was really God's plan for us. On Sunday we were at a church dedication, where one

wall was painted with a harvest scene. As I (Ann) sat there, God said to me, *I am the Lord of the harvest. If I choose to move my reapers from one part of the harvest to another, that's my prerogative, so don't worry.* Jess received confirmation through a passage of Scripture.

We gave a positive answer before returning to Africa. The other missionaries did not want to see us leave, and our twelve-year old daughter, Lorilee, had a hard time, saying, "I was born in Africa, and this is my home, I don't want to leave here."

In September 1980, we began a whole new dimension of life and ministry. We once again experienced the marvellous care of God in providing the right house, a car, furniture, and schooling for the kids. It was a big adjustment as I (Ann) moved from a very active ministry on the field to being a stay-at-home mom, developing new relationships, and having Jess away many days and nights, visiting churches.

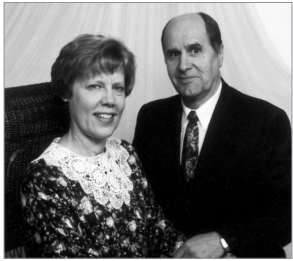
Gradually various ministries opened up for me. I became district Alliance Women's president, did Sunday school teacher-training, district bookkeeping, taught Sunday school and piano, and was involved in music ministry at church.

For the first three years, I (Jess) served as director of French ministries alongside the district superintendent (DS) for Eastern Canada. When the St. Lawrence District was formed in 1983, I was elected DS. Together, we sought to foster the development of an Alliance identity across a large, multicultural district and taught on the Holy Spirit and holiness. We were able to encourage Canadian Bible College to begin a French pastoral training program in Quebec. I also developed teaching materials and assisted in translating them and key books by Tozer and Simpson into French, which were used around the world.

The Lévis church, on the south shore of Quebec City, was going through a turbulent time during my last year as DS, and I was asked to help. I worked with the remaining leadership and when possible, Ann and I helped them on Sundays with music and preaching. We began to sense God was leading us to pastor this church.

We began ministry in Lévis in September 1995. Within three years, the congregation almost tripled as we worked through the principles in Henry Blackaby's book, *Experiencing God*. Prayer as a ministry took on a whole new meaning for me.

Since the number of Quebecois workers was still small, I asked God to call someone from the congregation who could become pastor when I retired. He called an elder and his wife from a banking career to full-time ministry. In January 2006, they and the congregation prepared to make the change, providing Ann and I stayed on as mentors.



Jess and Ann Jespersen, 2000.  
Courtesy Ann Jespersen

We remained active in the church and district serving in many capacities, and walked with our family through some challenging times, each day experiencing in a deeper way what began 47 years earlier in Guinea, namely to trust and depend on God.

*Adapted from a bio written in July 2015  
Jess Jespersen was sent by Stony Plain  
Alliance Church, Alberta; Ann was sent by  
Moose Jaw Alliance Church, Saskatchewan*

## Chapter 19

# My Life Among the Thai

By Dorothy Hubert

I must have been a sorry sight. Wearing my winter coat, I landed in Bangkok on a December day in 1962. The humid heat hit me like a blast from a sauna when I stepped off the plane. With great excitement, I looked around for the person who had come to meet me, but there was no one.

Disappointed but undaunted, I made a few phone calls, found a shuttle and headed for a hotel to meet Marvin and Flo Martin, the couple in charge of the Alliance guest home. The hotel van hurtled down the “wrong side of the street” through heavy traffic, dodging water buffalo crossing the street. Thus began my forty-one years in Thailand with The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA).

### Heritage

I was the only daughter of Peter and Amy Hubert’s five children. When I was young, they began attending Beulah Alliance Church, Edmonton, Alberta, under the ministry of J.D. Carlsen. At the age of eight, I accepted Christ as my Saviour.

I was taught as a child to give my money to missions. We regularly prayed for our neighbour’s two missionary daughters. At one missionary convention I went to as a child, George Constance showed pictures of his children walking on a dirt road in Colombia. His daughter Sylvia was about two. I told my father I wanted to send her a present. About a month later, I received a picture of the three Constance children with a thank-you letter. I still have that photo and love the way it illustrates how one missionary considered a young girl’s interest in missions important. I was called to missions when I was about ten years old.

At 18, I went to Canadian Bible College (CBC). In those days, there were two options: Missions or Pastoral Studies. I applied for missionary service and was accepted. After one year of internship in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, I received a letter inviting me to work in the finance department at C&MA headquarters, so in 1960 I headed to New York

City because, at that time, the C&MA in Canada was under the leadership of the U.S. office.

I wanted to be a missionary, but my feelings of inadequacy made me withdraw my application. After a year of struggling, one night I heard the Lord say, “*Be still and know that I am God. I will go with you, I will never leave you.*” I reapplied for international ministry, telling the Lord that if I were accepted, I would know it was His plan for me.

In September 1962, a few days after I had reapplied, I was asked to go for an interview. Three months later I left for Thailand.

### 1960s: Learning Thai

Though the Gospel had been in Thailand for 146 years, the Thai church remained weak, small, and church growth was slow. Thailand had not had any new missionaries for about eight years because of problems within the National Church. Finally, in 1962, four new couples were sent to Thailand on a freighter, while I had the distinction of being the first missionary to arrive in Thailand by plane.

Thailand only gave 200 permanent resident visas to Canadians each year. To ensure I got one, I left Canada on Boxing Day and arrived in Thailand on December 28.

After a few days in Bangkok, I headed to Khon Kaen to begin language study. Nowadays, a new missionary goes to an excellent language school; I was the last missionary to study with whichever tutor I could find. The tutor wasn't necessarily a trained teacher, although mine was. The Thai language has five tones and an alphabet of forty-four consonants and thirty-nine vowels (short or long). Learning it was extremely difficult. The word *khow* (cow), for example, could have five different meanings depending on the tone and whether there was a long or short vowel. A missionary not able to master the Thai language in a two-year period would be withdrawn from the field.

Following language study, my first assignment was in Korat as the mission bookkeeper. Although I would have preferred to be in church-related ministries, we had been taught that “*the will of the field leadership is the will of the Lord.*” After two years, I trained another missionary to do the job and I moved back to Khon Kaen to do youth work. From that youth ministry, five young people went on to full-time Christian work.

### 1970s: Tragedy and New Opportunities

During the 1970s, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia fell to Communism and refugees flooded into Thailand. By the late 1970s many refugees had gone to

The responsiveness of refugees to the Gospel was a bright spot in missionary endeavours in Thailand.

other countries, but well over 100,000 refugees remained in camps throughout Thailand. This tragedy proved to be a God-given opportunity to minister. The responsiveness of refugees to the Gospel was a bright spot in missionary endeavours in Thailand.

I was stationed in Korat to train another Mission bookkeeper as the Thai government would not allow foreigners to do jobs the Thais were capable of doing. While doing this, I also worked with youth in the Korat Gospel Church.

Across the street from the church was a technological college. Noi was a student there. He loved music, especially playing his guitar. He was invited to our youth group, accepted Christ, and I began to disciple him. He, and three others from the youth group, formed a band but needed electric guitars and a drum. God provided the instruments. They practiced at my house every day. I disciplined them and we spent hours together. God used their music for His glory.

Although missionaries served in Korat intermittently from 1933 to 1970, only one church had been established in this city of over 100,000. The Mission started evangelistic crusades once a month and our young men became the musical team for these events. One Christmas, they took their program to a jail where the prisoners arrived with their legs chained together to listen to the band as they sang the Gospel. It was one of my most exciting Christmases. Two of the youth in the band went on to become pastors.

### 1980s: Growth and a Big Setback

During this time, I was working with the Korat Gospel Church. Two girls from villages came to live with me while going to the teacher's college. One girl, Mali, was the daughter of the area pastor in Korat province. Her father invited us to go to Nong Ghee to visit a few Christians. We set up a day for outdoor evangelism and several people turned to Christ.

On my next home assignment, I received word that the Mission bookkeeper had stolen Mission money. I cut my home assignment short and headed back to sort out where the Mission was financially. This was the saddest time in my missionary career.

Within a few months we moved our Mission headquarters to Bangkok and started looking for yet another Thai bookkeeper. This was the last bookkeeper I trained before the accounting process was computerized.



Dorothy discipling a new believer in Nong Ghee. Courtesy Dorothy Hubert

Toward the end of the 1980s, it was the Mission's dream to start more C&MA churches in Bangkok. One of those new churches had a number of people from Nong Khaem who travelled about 40 km to get to church. A group of us began praying for a church in Nong Khaem.

### 1990s: A New Area of Ministry

In January 1990, Edna Hooper and I began work in Nong Khaem. We rented an unfurnished townhouse where we lived four days a week, sleeping on the floor on the second storey and using the main floor for meeting. We began with an evangelistic service, inviting people from the area to attend. Forty-two people received Christ!

When we visited a few weeks later, we found that many were no longer interested in following Christ. We thought there were at least six people who might want to worship with us instead of travelling the forty km to the mother church, but we were wrong. Five of them didn't want to attend any Bible study we had in their area. The one man who was interested soon passed away; our little group was down to zero.

*How could we build a church with zero members?* The leader of the Mission told us not to think about a church but just to aim to have a Bible study.

I was asked to head the team. We prayed, prayed, and prayed some more. We also surveyed the area and found, while there were twenty-five Buddhist temples and thirty factories that made Buddhist idols, there was only one Christian church where two women had worked for seven years, resulting in a congregation of thirty members. We told them we were starting a church and wanted to work with them. Every week we met for prayer. We also handed out gospel tracts and prayer-walked in the area.

One contact was 14-year-old Opat, who lived behind our townhouse. His father had just separated from his mother. Opat's mother was devastated, leaving Opat to care for his siblings. He came to us for encouragement. I helped him with homework and he became the first Christian.

Another young man, Preecha, had already accepted the Lord while living elsewhere, but for four years he had not been to church and was far from God. I visited him and he became one of the first members of our little church plant.

After we had passed out tracts, a few ladies came to visit us at the centre, heard the Gospel, and were interested, but first wanted to talk to their brother. If he showed interest, they would accept Christ as a family. Soon this family of five became Christians. It was an exciting day for us; our church attendance doubled!

We began discipling these new believers and within a few months they were ready to give up all their idols and follow Christ alone. When people become Christians in Thailand, it is a whole new way of life. If a person is the only Christian in the family, that person cannot remove the idols, but when whole families come to Christ, they are free to remove the idols and often grow more quickly as a result.

The church grew to twenty-one people. When it was time for a six-month home assignment, I asked Jumpa, a Bible-school teacher who had been doing some teaching at the church, if she would head the team. She agreed and joined the effort as the church's full-time Thai Christian worker.

Evangelistic efforts increased and more people came to saving faith in Jesus. At the end of August 1991, the church moved to a three-storey storefront that could seat approximately sixty people.

In April 1995, the church actually purchased the building and plans were made to buy the adjoining storefront in order to expand. The sanctuary was filled to capacity on Sundays. People came to Christ, got rid of their idols and led others to Jesus. God expanded their faith and enabled them to buy land in July 1997.

While talking to the Christian contractor about their plans, the committee said, "We don't have enough money; we are moving forward by faith, so will you take on this work by faith with us?" The contractor agreed to begin the first phase and then wait until they had enough money to continue. He never had to stop; God always supplied finances when needed. In June 1999, construction began on the new building that would seat 300-400 people and it was completed debt-free.

This new church is located just outside the Bangkok city limits. It is the first Protestant church in its district and is positioned to reach out to parts of Bangkok, Nakhorn Pathom, and Samut Sakhon. It is fittingly named Mahapawn Tri-County Church because Mahapawn means great blessing. To God be all the glory!



Dorothy Hubert, 1994.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

### **2000-2013: Retirement and New Beginnings**

In December 2000, we held the first service at Tri-County Church. There was a Christmas evangelistic campaign and, shortly after, a dedication service with a large attendance. It was an exciting time of celebration!

After that wonderful experience, Satan began his work. Two of our oldest families stopped attending and a heavy cloud hung over all those who came. God revealed the truth: one family had embezzled church funds and would not repent. The four involved had been in church leadership. Yet God continued to work and by May 2001 the church had baptized twenty-two new believers.

Before my retirement, Joel Van Hoogen, president of Church Partnership Evangelism (CPE) visited me. He cast a vision about the possibility of my bringing short-term missionaries to Thailand in order to participate in CPE. Although I was eager to come back to Thailand to visit my friends, I was unsure about doing evangelism with short-termers.

After retiring, while on home assignment and working as missionary-in-resident at Sherwood Park Alliance Church, Alberta, the church asked me to take a group of ladies to Thailand. I consulted Debby Vik who was working with short-term teams in Thailand and she recommended joining hands with Church Partnership Evangelism in Bangkok! Thus, I began to work with CPE, a work that continues to the present.

In March 2003, I took my first group. I had trained team members in a method of evangelism through dialogue, a method I wish I'd known more about it when I was a new missionary. In Thailand and Cambodia, it is especially effective since dialogue allows you to know what people are thinking so you can lead them into a fuller understanding of the Gospel.

The next year I became pastor of missions in Deer Park Alliance Church in Red Deer, Alberta and various short-term teams travelled to Thailand.

On one of our trips in 2007, we went to Phuket, Thailand, for ministry just after the tsunami hit. Over twenty people believed and prayed to receive Christ. A member of the church wanted us to visit her aunt, a spirit medium. During the presentation, this woman jumped up on the table and started screaming in a strange tongue which was a Chinese dialect recognized by the local pastor. She interpreted, "You have enough of your family with Jesus and you can't have any more." After much prayer and deliverance, she calmed down and the team left the house. This lady later became a Christian and is a faithful member of the church.

On my trips back, I had the joy of seeing that the Tri-County Church had grown to two hundred members and had two daughter churches.

In April 2011, I returned to Thailand to work with national pastors in an evangelism ministry leading up to the APAC (Asia Pacific Alliance Churches) conference. After all the groundwork was done, the conference began with training in Bangkok and then ministry teams went out to different places. More than 200 people prayed to receive Christ in Cambodia and 28 more in Thailand.

Looking back on my journey, I am humbled that God used me and am amazed at what He did through me. The only ability I needed was to be available. May all the glory go to Jesus Christ, my Lord!

*Adapted from a bio written May 2013*

*Dorothy Hubert was sent by the Beulah Alliance Church, Edmonton, Alberta*

## Chapter 20

# For Every Nation, Tribe, Language, and People

By Darlene Dreger

Clement was born in 1920 to Rudolf and Emma Dreger, German immigrants who had a dairy and grain farm south of Edmonton, Alberta. He was born in the farmhouse where he lived up to his early twenties.

Clem's first language was German, which was spoken at home. He learned English in first grade at Colchester, a one-room school for many grades. At age 12, he attended the Moravian Catechism classes and two years later he was confirmed. His mother taught him how to write at an early age, and in his adult years many remarked on his beautiful penmanship.

It was his father's dream for Clem to take over the Dreger farm as Clem was keenly interested in agriculture, had a love for the land, was exceptionally good with the horses, and was also mechanically inclined, keeping the farm equipment and vehicles meticulously maintained.

In his early twenties, Clem was in a serious farm accident. He was on the tractor with a bladed implement hitched to the back to cut up the furrows, when he was suddenly overcome with exhaust fumes and fell between the tractor and implement.

The tractor stalled at that very moment, keeping him from being killed by the blades. As he laid there, he heard God's call on his life, and realized the need for a personal relationship with Jesus.

Convinced that God had spared his life, he gave his heart in full commitment to the Lord, and as he recovered from a broken collarbone and other injuries, he became aware of God's call to full-time service.

It was through the radio broadcasts of J.D. Carlson, that Clem came to Christ and then strengthened his walk with the Lord. His older brother, Alan, worked in Edmonton and started attending Beulah Tabernacle (now Beulah Alliance Church). Before long, the rest of the Dreger family joined him on Sunday evenings in the packed church.

In 1941, Alan attended Western Canadian Bible Institute (WCBI) in Regina and had been in classes with a certain young woman. When he returned home, he urged Clem to attend WCBI to meet her.

Madalene Grace was born in 1922 in Pense, Saskatchewan to Ted and Ethel Pritchard, homesteaders who sailed over from Wales and traveled across Canada by train to the bald prairies and settled in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

As a young girl, Madalene was involved with all the farm chores along with her brothers. She grew into a fearless farm girl, chasing cattle for miles and skillfully managing a team of horses. She loved horses and became an accomplished horsewoman.

At age twelve, she was in a tragic farm accident. The horses were hitched to the hayrack. While she stood in front of them, holding them steady while her father loaded the hay, they got spooked, bolted, and knocked her over backwards.

In that split second, she grabbed the pole that separates the two horses. She wrapped her knees around the pole and as she hung low to the ground, they galloped aimlessly through the farmyard, their hooves pummeling her back, ribs and sides. They ran through a barbed fence with four rows of wire and that's when she dropped off and fell into the mud as the horses and hayrack thundered over her. Her life was spared.

She, along with her family, attended the United Church in Moose Jaw. In her late teens she attended a meeting at The Salvation Army and learned about a personal relationship with Jesus. She continued to attend meetings in Moose Jaw and grew in her relationship with the Lord.

She learned of the WCBI in Regina and wanted to further her studies in Scripture. She started in the fall of 1941 and shared classes with Alan. In the fall of 1942, Clem also attend WCBI, and met Madalene.

Madalene's kindness, beauty, sense of humour, and strong faith soon attracted Clem's attention. As the story goes, "one day they walked passed one another, their eyes met, and neither of them ever recovered." Following graduation, they were married on June 6, 1946 in Moose Jaw, eternally devoted to each other and their Lord.

### 1946-1947: Prince George, B.C.

Clem and Maddie served in Prince George, where there were no roads completed at the time. They were in an independent church for about a year. Their ministry included a weekly radio program called "Think on These Things," as well as a Daily Vacation Bible School (DVBS) program in July and August. They also travelled east of Prince George to the neighbouring communities of Loos and then further east to McBride.

They wrapped up their ministry in Prince George, helped with the harvesting on the Dreger farm, then headed to WCBI for one year of Graduate Studies.



Clem and Maddie, 1946.  
Courtesy Darlene Dreger

### 1948-1952: Abbotsford, B.C.

Clem and Maddie went on to serve in Abbotsford, B.C. in September 1948.

In an interview with Rev. Skitch, they were told of Sunday afternoon rallies being held at times, with music groups from the Alliance churches in Vancouver and Chilliwack, B.C. as well as Bellingham, WA, and by the combined efforts of their respective pastors: W.H. Brooks, Alf Orthner and E. Montgomery of Bellingham.

John Thompson, a university student from Vancouver, drove out weekly to conduct a Bible Study and prayer meeting in the Schmidt home and public services were begun in Eagles Hall on Sundays.

Rev. Skitch explained the situation and added that there were no funds in the district coffers to assist financially, but if Clem and Maddie would like to take up the challenge, he would appoint them to serve in Abbotsford. They assured him that they were willing and ready. With that, he pulled a ten-dollar bill out of his own wallet and said, "This will help to purchase your train tickets from Edmonton to Vancouver."

In the early days of their ministry, while meeting at Eagles Hall, chairs had to be set up for Sunday school and morning worship. It was not unusual to have to clean up the hall where the smell of spilled beer was strong, and empty bottles and debris were lying around from the parties the night before at the local community hall.

During the first few months there was an attendance of 35-40 people. Under God's blessing, and with much prayer and hard work, the church grew. The first missions conference was in the spring of 1949 with a missions pledge of over \$800.

As the congregation grew, they were soon able to start building their own church. They first completed the basement and met there until the upstairs sanctuary was finished for Christmas 1951, debt-free, built and paid for by their wonderful congregation.

Their Sunday school program and services started in the town's Eagles Hall where they planted a 'little acorn' which was blessed and grew into the large and thriving Sevenoaks Alliance Church of today. When they left for overseas service in 1952, the attendance was about 200. The record high for the Sunday school was 239.





Clem, Maddie and Darlene on the first leg of their journey to Thailand, 1952. Courtesy Darlene Dreger

In February 1951, they welcomed Darlene Grace into their lives and the congregation all claimed her as their own. Lifetime friendships were made during their four years of service in Abbotsford, and prayer warriors came forward as Clem and Maddie prepared for their next step in God's wonderful plan designed for them. They applied for overseas service under the C&MA and were appointed to Thailand.

### 1952-1972: Thailand

Clem and Maddie arrived in Bangkok on April 5, where they were hit with a blanket of muggy heat as they carried their baby girl, suitcases and heavy winter coats down the gangplank in the hottest, most stifling month of the year.

After orientation, they were sent 'upcountry' to settle in and begin their two years of language study. Even in the difficult times of learning, they were an encouragement to others who were also struggling with the five tones of the Thai language.

After completing two years of language study, they, along with others, were to be assigned to active ministry. They all attended the Annual Field Conference in Khon Kaen, northeastern Thailand, where the C&MA had the Central Bible School campus, and facilities for the annual 'conference' were available and comfortable.

Clem stated that he would go wherever the 'conference' sent them, as he and Maddie were strong believers in the chain of command, submitting to those over them in the Lord.

During the 20 years they served on that mission field, they were blessed with two sons, Daryl in 1955 and Douglas in 1961.

Their assignments took them to several different mission stations where they lived and served the Thai in many different walks of life. Early in their ministry they were sent up north and lived on the banks of the mighty Mekong River marking the border between Thailand and Laos.

With all this traveling to the towns and villages, vehicle upkeep and maintenance was imperative. Clem's mechanical background came in handy for maintaining his vehicle as well as those of other missionaries.

They were then assigned to Mahasarakam where they travelled to small villages scattered throughout the province with pockets of believers they taught and encouraged. Maddie also taught English classes, introducing

the Gospel to her students. Many were eager to learn English, especially government officials and their wives, doctors, and nurses, so the 'seeds of the Gospel' were sown in those times.

They were also involved with leprosy work, ministering to those who were outcast from society. Bandages and salve were prepared and Clem and Maddie would travel to different leprosy colonies delivering them, along with the message of hope.

Much of their time was served in Khon Kaen, where the Central Bible School was located. Clem held administrative responsibilities and he and Maddie taught many of the classes, preparing the students for church planting, teaching and preaching the message of Jesus. During the school year they arranged for witness teams to go out on Sunday afternoons and share the Gospel with those in the city and out in the countryside.

There was also a University in Khon Kaen with a large expat community including families from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the U.S., and the United Kingdom. Along with the Bible school responsibilities, Clem and Maddie started an International Church to reach and serve the international community. The congregation grew and Maddie's gift of warm hospitality was evident during this ministry.

Clem and Maddie were also stationed in the city of Roiet where they ministered to the local church and in the surrounding villages. There were also prison ministries with one of the elders in the congregation, youth work and teaching English to wives of government officials.

Even with all the work to do in their particular areas through the years, Clem also served on different boards and executive committees.

They spent 20 years in Thailand, yet when Laos was in special need they were asked to go there.

### 1972-1975: Laos

For three years, Clem and Maddie were in ministry in Vientiane, Laos. Clem led the Laos field during times of turbulent political chaos during the Vietnam War. Their communication signature was often, '*For this we have Jesus.*'

Clem and Maddie were also involved in the international community in Vientiane and participated in the Sunday services held for the International Church early on Sunday mornings, and then the Lao congregation would hold their service.

When Laos was ready to fall in the domino effect in 1975, Clem orchestrated and made sure all missionaries were out of the country. After the fall of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, Clem and Maddie were

assigned to Utrecht, Holland to assist in the final official inauguration of the C&MA in that country.

### **1977-1981: Holland - The Netherlands**

Clem and Maddie arrived in Utrecht in August 1977, where for four years they gave guidance and direction to the Alliance work. Many weekends were spent visiting various new pastors and their families in different parts of Holland, encouraging them in their ministry.

Because of Clem's command of the German language as a child, the transition to conversing and reading Dutch came easy for him. Most missionaries only learn one language and one culture during their days of service. Changing languages and cultures is not an easy thing to accomplish, yet the Dregers did it many times, and even though the languages were very different, they adjusted to each country and people and became well-loved and received into their new assignments.

### **1981-1993: Seoul, South Korea**

In 1981, they were assigned to Seoul, South Korea, and Clem began to learn his fourth new language, not counting German and English. While still in Edmonton preparing for their new assignment, Clem purchased tapes to learn the Korean language and all the pronunciations, plus he bought booklets where he learned the 'alphabet' and taught himself to read and write.

Clem and Maddie arrived in Seoul in September 1981 to take up their new assignment. They were able to go to the market and converse with the Korean people, although Clem never preached in Korean.

During their time there, Clem was instrumental, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, in bringing about a reconciliation, forgiveness and reunification between two denominations (one had joined with the C&MA) after 16 years of separation and broken fellowship. Many close friendships were made as he helped in the unification process.

Clem taught theology and various other classes in a seminary and other Christian universities and worked closely with Rev. Sohn and the Korea Holiness Church. He had a special rapport with the other professors and leaders at these schools and was always welcomed back for the following school year, as the students reported that he was a great professor who understood them and had great wisdom and knowledge.

Their home in Seoul was also a resting place, a stop-over for travelers, and a place open for fellowship with the Korean people, as well as expats who came over for fellowship and teaching.

After over a decade in South Korea, Clem and Maddie culminated their 50 years of ministry by serving in Krasnodar, Russia for over two years.

### **1993-1996: Krasnodar, Russia**

Again, it was time to get out the new alphabet books and tapes for another language as Clem and Maddie were home in Edmonton to prepare for their assignment in Russia.

They flew to Moscow in September 1993, and then took a long train ride south to Krasnodar, near the Black Sea. They were now in their 70s and taking on another new adventure. They were able to converse with the local farmers at the markets and owners of the bread shops, which made communicating and getting around much easier.

They were assigned to teach at the Lampados Bible School in Krasnodar. They taught in English and had translators for their classes. They had many wonderful opportunities for encouragement with their students and friendships were made that lasted their lifetime. Some of the married student couples who were preparing for pastoring back in their villages and towns even named some of their children after Clem and Maddie.

Clem and Maddie were the first Canadian Alliance missionaries to reach the 50-year mark in ministry and they still hold that record. They also have the distinction of serving in the most countries: Thailand, Laos, South Korea, The Netherlands and Russia.

They returned to Canada in the late spring of 1996 and took on the assignment of "Missionaries-at-Large," based in Edmonton.

### **June 1996-November 2010: Missionaries-at-Large**

The Dregers spent their twilight years in Edmonton, Alberta. They both loved to read and it was not unusual to see Clem kneeling by their bed with seven Bibles lined up side by side, all opened to the same portion of Scripture. He read the same portion out loud in English, German, Dutch, Thai, Lao, Korean and Russian.

As missionaries-at-large, Clem and Maddie served in various capacities, whether at missions conferences, missions emphasis weekends, or reporting on missions in churches. Clem's talent and love for photography was evident when he showed his slides on the many different cultures and countries where they travelled and served. They were also thrilled to be invited



Clem and Maddie, 1996.  
Courtesy Darlene Dreger

to Puerto Rico for a three-month missionary tour. Their passion for international work continued as they volunteered with the Edmonton international students.

Maddie went to be with her Lord on May 25, 2008 and her beloved Clem on November 9, 2010.

*Adapted from a bio written October 2016*

*Clem and Maddie Dreger were sent by Beulah Alliance Church, Edmonton, Alberta*

## Chapter 21

# Lessons Learned on the Mission Field

By Dave Peters

Here I was, a brand new missionary travelling through the jungle in Colombia, on my way to make my impact for God. I had prepared talks for the young people at a rustic camp, all of whom, I supposed, would be waiting eagerly for the spiritual insights I would offer. My two years of Spanish language study would pay off, and I would return home knowing that God had used me to bring about change in these kids' lives.

By the second day, reality set in. I was discouraged. The two Colombian pastors with me were discouraged. The young people were there to have a good time, not to listen to a 26-year-old Canadian offer spiritual truths while mangling their language. That night, the two pastors and I prayed that God would intervene and change the whole atmosphere in the camp.

During the night, I had a nightmare. I screamed, sending the wooden slats of the empty bunk bed above me clattering to the floor. The campers were awakened, certain we were under attack. I assured them it was just a nightmare, but they were unable to go back to sleep. They started to sing and then pray. Then they called out to God to forgive their sins. A mini revival broke out.

From that experience I learned that God wants to use us for His purposes, but it's not always going to be the way we planned.

### **1945-1962: Growing Up**

I was born in Tupper Creek, B.C., to parents who loved God and were radical in their desire to serve Him. At age five, with my Mom by my side, I asked Jesus to come live in my heart.

My parents' desire to follow God wherever He would lead, took us to Yarrow, B.C., North Battleford, Saskatchewan, and then to Coaldale, Alberta. They believed denominationalism was of the devil, so our family attended different churches each week, without putting down roots anywhere.

In grades 11 and 12, an aunt influenced me to attend an Alliance church in Lethbridge, Alberta. I decided the C&MA Bible school in Regina, Saskatchewan would be a good place to discern God's will for my life.

### **1963-1967: Bible School and Marriage**

My first year and a half of Bible school were challenging academically, but socially fulfilling. I did what I needed to do to pass and spent the rest of my time pursuing happiness. Then something took me by surprise. I was expelled. I had broken a number of rules, which left the school with no alternative but to ask me to leave.

At that point, I realized how much I had drifted from God through my teenage years. I spent the next few months working in Churchill, Manitoba. One day, while sitting on a large rock, Bible in hand, overlooking the chilly waters of Hudson Bay, God spoke to me, giving a definite call to ministry. Canadian Bible College accepted me back and I renewed my studies with a new sense of purpose. After a missionary meeting, I got down on my knees and told the Lord that if He wanted me overseas, I was ready to go.

During the 1965 Fall Semester, the Lord brought Arlene Dyck into my life. She was in her last year of Bible school, having previously graduated as a nurse. She, too, was preparing for overseas ministry. We had both committed our futures to the Lord, and this added a special element to our romance. On September 3, 1966, we were married in Prince George, B.C.

### **1967-1969: La Ronge, Saskatchewan**

Two years of home service were required before we could go overseas, so I pastored the small congregation in La Ronge, while Arlene worked as a nurse. Our son, Kurt, was born there.

In the spring of 1969, we were assigned to Colombia, and were to leave for language school in Costa Rica in late August. With a whirlwind of activity and emotions, we packed, visited area churches to elicit prayer support, and tried to learn as much as we could about Colombia.

San Jose, Costa Rica, the first stop in our 38-year missionary journey, had a wonderful Spanish language school. It was a great year of experiencing a new culture, learning a new language, and preparing ourselves for ministry in Colombia.

### **1970-1974: First Term - Colombia**

In August 1970, we arrived in Cali, Colombia, assigned to Ibaguè. Our ministry included serving alongside a Colombian pastor, overseeing a reading room ministry, and traveling throughout the region giving support to the

many churches in the States of Huila and Tolima. Our daughter, Karla, was born in Ibaguè.

The next year, the missionary assigned to our Indian Bible School in the town of Silva suddenly became ill and returned to the States. We were asked to take over and within a couple of weeks, made the move. This involved being director of the school and overseeing about 40 rural churches among the Paez and Guambiano tribes. The school, known as Ambachico, was located on a 50-acre farm close to town. Students studied the Bible and received training to be pastors and primary school teachers in the rural areas.

We were in our mid-twenties and the school was halfway through a semester, with three teachers, forty resident students, and two farm workers waiting for our guidance. The day after we arrived, I found myself in a staff meeting dealing with a discipline problem related to one of the workers. It was not the way I wanted to start my new job, but God gave wisdom and we managed to make it through those first few days of transition. Arlene and I both began teaching, while at the same time trying to solve many problems that arose because of the quick transition of leadership.

After a few months, we stopped to take inventory. Arlene discovered she had the gift of teaching. She loved preparing for classes, interacting with students, and watching them grow in wisdom and knowledge. She has been instrumental in the founding of Bible schools in Bogotá, Sao Paulo, and Mexico City. As well as teaching in those schools and other cities in those three countries, she has also been a guest teacher in Venezuela.

I discovered, much to my surprise, that I enjoyed the administrative aspects of my job. God had placed us in the perfect spot where we were able to discover and use the gifts He had given us.

**Lesson learned** – we don't always know what our gifts are, so we shouldn't insist on only working in areas where we feel comfortable – especially during our first years of ministry.

### **1976-1980: Second Term – Colombia**

Before our first home assignment, we had indicated that when we returned we would like to be reassigned to tribal ministry, focusing for at least 10 years on the Paez tribe, the larger and more responsive of the two tribes. It would involve relocating to a more remote location that would take us into the heart of the tribe. There we could immerse ourselves in the language and culture of the people we had grown to love.

After two years of home service in Regina, we headed back to Colombia. Home schooling was not an option for Alliance workers at that time, and since our assignment took us deep into a tribal area without schools, the

time had come to make a heart-wrenching decision. Could we entrust our kids to God and to those who would care for them, teach them, go to their school events, and put them on a plane twice a year to be back home with us? At the time it seemed like the right thing to do. We thank the Lord that both kids have grown up loving and serving Him.

One year into our 10-year plan, the Colombian government advised our Mission that there would be no more visas for Alliance workers unless we moved out of the tribe. At the same time, our Indian Bible School in Ambachico was left without a director and we were asked to return there. The next two years were spent working alongside one of our national workers training him to take over the direction of the school.

The fourth year of our term we moved again, this time to the large city of Cali to fulfill a new role as field director for Colombia. Our time of working in rural areas had come to an end, and our next four terms as missionaries would be focused on Latin America's large urban populations.

**Lesson learned** – we make our 10-year plans, but rarely do things work out the way we plan. God is still in control and we can rest in that.

### 1982-1986: Third Term - Colombia



The Peters Family, c. 1982.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

While on a two-year home assignment, the Mission in Colombia moved its headquarters from Cali to Bogotá. Lima's Encounter With God program in Peru was producing explosive church growth and we were anxious to see if God would do the same thing in Bogotá.

I was re-elected field director, so we moved into the Mission house in Bogotá. God gave us wonderful Colombian leaders in the little church plant, and four years later

there was a dynamic church of 400 people, which had a profound impact on the 200 other Alliance churches throughout the country. What had happened in Lima was a great inspiration to us, but we were constantly reminded that you cannot put God into a formula.

As we neared the end of our term, we were asked to consider moving to Brazil. A team of four new missionary couples were assigned to Sao Paulo, and we were asked to coordinate a church-planting project.

**Lesson learned** – in church planting there are certain principles that seem to apply across the board. Methods, strategy, and programs, however, are a different matter, and usually the Lord will surprise us in the methods and people He uses to build His church.

### 1987-1996: Fourth and Fifth Terms – Brazil

We were again reduced to babbling and gesturing as we tried to assimilate the Portuguese language.

Sao Paulo, a city of 18 million, was our new home and after the initial struggles to adapt, we found ourselves immersed in the work to which God had called us. New missionaries were being appointed, a small Methodist chapel had been rented, and an experienced missionary couple was serving as pastors.

By November 1987, the church had moved to larger facilities, our language abilities were improving, and our newly formed team was anxious to see the church grow.

Growth came slowly, however, and once again we were reminded that God has a different plan for each city and each church. What worked in Lima hadn't always worked in Bogotá, and what worked in Bogotá was not necessarily the key for church planting in Sao Paulo. The constants, however, in all three cities, were evangelism and discipleship.

The Airport Church, as it came to be known, experienced its ups and downs as it moved from one rented locale to another, but it continued to thrive. It now has its own building close to Congonhas Airport and has become known as a missionary-sending church.

The eight years we spent as pastors in Sao Paulo, were some of the best of our lives. What surprised us was the passion the church developed for missions. While Arlene and I focused on church growth and discipleship, a number of our church members developed a burden for reaching out to other areas of the world. Soon the church had sent missionaries to a Peruvian slum, the Amazon jungle, and to India. Today, they also have missionaries in Portugal. They have helped plant churches throughout the District of Sao Paulo and provided leadership for our Alliance churches on a national level.

In 1996, God indicated through our Mission leaders that it was time to change countries once again. Although we were at peace about the move, we sensed that Mexico would represent the most difficult and painful phase of our ministry.

**Lesson learned** – Missionaries sometimes forget that our overseas churches have tremendous potential as sending churches. It needs to be part of their DNA from birth.

### 1997-2006: Sixth and Seventh Term – Mexico

Much of our time in Mexico was a tremendous struggle, but there were also many bright spots. We were thrilled to get the news that our son and daughter-in-law had been appointed as Alliance missionaries to Mexico. Having them share in ministry with us and having grandkids living in the same city, instead of a continent away, was an unexpected blessing we had never dreamed would happen.

I had heard stories of Mexico being very difficult, of the shortage of qualified leaders, of the high turnover of missionaries, and of a National Church that was antagonistic to the Mission. But had we not faced those same difficulties in Colombia and Brazil? And hadn't those difficulties been overcome through right strategy, wise leadership, and, especially by the sovereign working of a God who was building His church in spite of our weaknesses and failures?

Things started well enough. Due to a large donation from a Canadian businessman, our team was able to rent and renovate a locale on a main avenue in the Cuauhtémoc area of downtown Mexico City. The Cuauhtémoc Alliance Church immediately began to show potential as a model for other church plants. In a few months, it had grown to over 100, a pastor from Lima was appointed, and a discipleship program was firmly in place.

By the end of the second year, attendance declined, many were unhappy with the lead pastor, and factions were formed. By the end of our third year, the church was without a lead pastor, people were discouraged, my leadership was being questioned, and the church was in crisis.

The church board asked if I would lead the church for a year, while they looked for a pastor. After much prayer, we accepted. It was a year of great stress, as there were other serious matters I was also dealing with in my role as field director.

By the time we left Mexico in the summer of 2001, we were burned out. The gifts of administration and team leadership I had so much depended on in Colombia and Brazil didn't seem to work there. Arlene's gift of teaching had been put to good use in Mexico City, but she was discouraged by the struggles the church was going through.

During this time, the Lord gently reminded us that we had come to depend more on the gifts of the Spirit than on the Spirit who gives the gifts.

The Cuauhtémoc Church continued to cause heartache, new church plants continued to struggle, and the Mexico work seemed to be facing the same challenges it did when we arrived nine years earlier. The one bright spot for me was that the relationship between the Mission and the National Church had greatly improved.

In looking back, our time in Mexico was when we grew most in our relationship with the Lord, when we learned the greatest lessons of faith, when our relationship as a couple was tested and grew stronger, when we came to the greatest understanding of God's grace in our lives. To God be the glory.

**Lessons learned** – Sometimes, when “success” in ministry becomes elusive, we are driven to a deeper relationship with God, and begin focusing more on faithfulness and less on results.

### 2006 to Present - Canada

Semi-retirement has taken us to Prince George, B.C., where we are enjoying family and are involved in different ministries.

In looking back over our ministry, we are reminded that God is Lord of the Church and that while He loves to use us to accomplish His purpose, He is not tied to our strategies or programs.

### Additional thoughts and observations

- Tribal Ministry in Colombia: Revival among the Paez was sparked by the visions of an illiterate woman. In God's sovereignty, we were there at a time when there was a lot of wildfire along with the true fire, and we were able to give some biblical guidance to the revival.
- Bogotá Church Planting: Our plan was to plant a church among Bogotá's unreached middle-class professionals. Our team was prepared to spend at least four years to reach an attendance of 50 people. In three months, we still had only ten people. One young man we believed would be the future Colombian pastor of the church died after a tonsillectomy. Several young Christian men and women, who had developed a strong discipleship program among university students, were present at this funeral. They became leaders of the church and four years later, attendance was closing in on 400.
- Sao Paulo: I assumed God would use the same strategy He had in Bogotá—bring in key, young, university graduates who could quickly take over leadership of the church. That didn't happen,



Dave and Arlene Peters enjoying retirement, 2017.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

but God still raised a dynamic church with incredible Brazilian leaders, one with a unique influence in the missionary vision and in the growth of the Alliance in Brazil.

- Mexico: Individuals I was sure would be key to growing the church are no longer part of the Mexican Alliance. Not only that, but Cuauhtémoc Alliance Church no longer exists. But God is slowly building His Church. A team of faithful international workers continues to serve there and, together with Mexican leaders, are trusting God for a breakthrough in one of the world's largest cities.

*Adapted from a bio written July 2013*

*Dave and Arlene Peters were sent by Rosewood Alliance Church, Regina (1969-1980)  
and Sevenoaks Alliance Church, Abbotsford, B.C. (1981-2004)*

## Chapter 22

# Running the Race Set Out for Us

By Marilyn Klassen

The teenage girl turned as I tapped her shoulder. “Marlene, would you care to join us for a study on the Life of Christ?” I asked in my best first-term Spanish.

“How do you know my name?” she asked, impressed I cared enough to find out. It seemed her mother had dragged her to church, but she still agreed to come and try it out. I needed a Spanish tutor and since she looked like she needed a friend, I asked her to note my mistakes from class and then work with me on how to say things correctly. So began my first ministry as a missionary.

### **Beginnings**

I remember kneeling at my mother's side as a 4-year-old and inviting Christ into my life. At five, I wanted to give Him more. I wanted to become a missionary and tell other people about Him.

I grew up in a home where missionaries were always welcome. Every week we put money in the box on the kitchen counter for missions. My dream was to go with my brother to Africa—he, as a missionary doctor and I, as a missionary nurse.

Planning to be a missionary did not win many friends in high school. I was a shy, skinny long-distance runner, which kept me busy and isolated. When I started breaking records, my track coach talked about training for the Olympics. At first I was thrilled; I could be somebody important. God quickly challenged my motives and my calling. I gave up competitive running so I wouldn't be distracted from my goal.

### **Finding My True Identity**

After graduation I followed my older brother to Canadian Bible College (CBC) in Regina, Saskatchewan. It was 1969 and each night, I would cry myself to sleep. I was finally popular, I was funny, I could have a good time, but I was miserable. My grades were in the basement. I felt empty. Who was I really and what about my life dream of missions?

Near the end of that first year, revival broke out on Asbury College campus in Wilmore, Kentucky. A professor from CBC was there when it happened, and he flew several of the students back to Regina with him. The day these students spoke in chapel, God spoke to me in no uncertain terms. It was now or never; my future was hanging in the balance. *Would I follow Him at all cost, or look for acceptance and popularity?* I was at the front without hesitation.

A professor sat next to me and within seconds had put his finger on my problem. I was living the Christian life in my own strength and had no idea about the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. He led me in a simple prayer asking the Holy Spirit to fill, control, and empower me. I walked out of chapel knowing God had done what I had asked Him to do.

Two weeks later, however, when the revival fires had grown cold for many of the students, the usual criticisms began to circulate—it had all been emotionalism, it wasn't real. I cried out to God—had He really filled me or was it just a good feeling that would fade? After chapel that day, the dean of women called me over. I had been in her office on many occasions and they had not been pleasant. What had I done this time? She calmed my fears and said that the faculty had seen the evidence of God at work in my life. They were willing to take a second chance with me. That was the first I knew that the administration had been about to kick me out of the school. I was saved just in the nick of time.

### When God Says Wait

The next challenge was to be accepted as a missionary candidate. I filled out the forms and went through all the interviews. The answer was not a definitive “no,” but it wasn't hopeful either. With a heart murmur and scoliosis, it seemed I was too fragile for single life overseas. *Not strong enough—what were they talking about, God? What about all the long distance and record-breaking cross-country running I did?*

The quiet voice within me, that I soon recognized to be God, said this was not “no” but “wait”. In my final semester at CBC, there appeared a tall, dark-haired man. Having started in January, he stood out as a new student. We met in the halls and immediately I knew I wanted to marry this kind of guy. He talked openly and freely to anyone who would listen about what God had taught him in his morning devotions. Though shy, he could talk about God with the greatest of ease and enthusiasm.

When graduation came, we were still just friends. I chose to stay in Regina and work. My prayer as I waited for further direction was to learn well the lessons God had for me. I became certain that Ernie Klassen was the life-partner God had for me, but Ernie's nose was still stuck in the books. I

prayed that God would open his eyes and, by the end of that year we were going steady. Two years later when Ernie applied for missions, I decided it was time to reapply. The night before the final interview, I had it out with God. Ernie and I were still going steady, we were both going into missions, but I was applying to Europe and he stated a preference for India. Why had he not talked about marriage and going together? What was I supposed to do? God clearly reminded me that night that I was not going alone. He was going with me and He was enough.

With confidence, I answered the tough interview questions the next day. Yes, I was dating Ernie Klassen and had been for almost three years. No, we had not talked about marriage, and yes, I was applying to go as a single woman. Peace! God was going with me, I would not fret. Two weeks later, Ernie asked me to be his wife. Why then? God needed me to get my priorities straight. I was not going to be Ernie's wife because of his call; I was going because God had called me.

### Waiting on God: Struggles with Infertility

Home Service brought a new challenge. We wanted to start a family but I had endometriosis and the first surgery showed extensive damage. In fact, as I went into surgery, the doctors asked permission to do a full hysterectomy, if necessary. I had been willing to go into missions single and now I had to release my dream of having a family. But God again gave me peace. I came through surgery with only a partial hysterectomy, so children were still a possibility.

Language school brought our struggle to light once again as each professor used family issues as the topic for many of the discussions. Why didn't I have children—did I want to keep my figure? Who had the problem, my husband or me? There were many painful questions and many times I left class in tears. Finally, Ernie and I set aside a day for prayer and fasting. God reminded us we had a future and a hope and that we would see our children's children around our table.

As language school finished and my thirtieth birthday approached, I began to doubt God's promises. He reminded me He speaks through His Word and if I wanted to hear Him, I had better read what He said. I had been reading Hebrews 11 and realized immediately what God was saying. Sarah was barren and Abraham was too old. I guess I could wait a little longer.

My faith wavered as the wait turned into years. Again, I was reminded to re-read what I had already read in my devotions. I turned back to Numbers 23:19, “*God is not a human, that he should lie, not a human*



*being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"* That was the last time I needed to ask God to confirm His will for us in regards to children though the answer was still years away.

It was during this time of waiting that I met Marlene, mentioned above. In the SEAN course, *The Life of Christ*, I led six young people. Together they committed to pray that God would give us a child. Two weeks before leaving Piura, in the north of Peru, at the end of our first term, God brought the response for which I waited. It had been eight years. At our farewell celebrations, tears turned to joy as the people we had learned to love sang and danced and praised God for His faithful answer to our prayers. Daniel Nathan, our first son, was born during our first home assignment. David Michael followed 16 months later.

### A Challenging Season



Ernie, Marilyn and Daniel, 1985.  
Courtesy National Ministry

While there was much joy at expecting our first child, that joy was tempered by the fact that Ernie had gone into a deep depression. During our first term as we worked in the far north of Peru, a natural disaster took place. What had been a hot, dry desert was deluged with torrential rains from the El Niño phenomenon. The torrential rains came every afternoon, washing out bridges, turning the airport runways to mush, wiping out roads, and turning whole areas of the city into seas of green algae. Mold was growing on our ceilings and walls, rats ran everywhere, and people were dying from lack of good water and food.

During this time Ernie became ill with hepatitis. Most of the doctors had left the city to relocate their families to safe ground. A kind lady in a market close to the house put away 10 lemon candies a day for Ernie so the citric acid could help clean his liver. He improved rapidly and went back to work half-time.

However, Ernie soon began experiencing an excruciating headache. Even the sound of traffic would make him ill. The doctor was unable to come to the house. Ernie was getting so dehydrated that I began fearing for his life. The dentist next door used some of his military connections, and I used the little gas we had in the car to look for someone to come to our house. A doctor came and prescribed intravenous medications. I had to

go to multiple pharmacies to complete the list. Then began the search for someone to administer the IV; many of the phone lines were underwater and most vehicles were without fuel. Eventually an obstetrician came. That night I sat with a flashlight trained on the IV line to make sure there were no complications. Ernie turned the corner during the night and began to recuperate.

We planned to evacuate him as soon as the first plane could land at the airport. After a precarious trip, we arrived in Lima. We went to headquarters where our colleagues were gathered for prayer. When we arrived, their gasps were audible; we were walking skeletons.

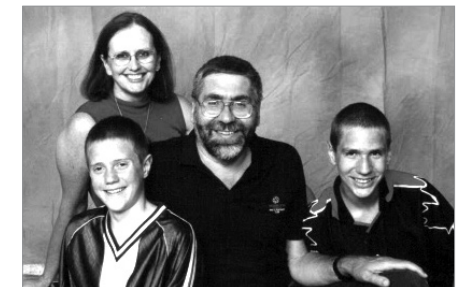
After a short recuperation time, we headed back to Piura and back to the headaches. Almost immediately, we jumped back on the plane and back to the Lima doctor before Ernie became too sick to travel. He had encephalitis, a swelling of the lining of the brain that put tremendous pressure on his head. Ten days later we returned again to Piura to finish our first term.

I was glad I knew God had called me to that place or I would have had a very hard time going back. What we did not realize at the time were the long-term effects of both hepatitis and encephalitis. Chemical imbalances in the brain meant that, for several months, Ernie would struggle with depression.

### House Hunting

Our second term was divided between Lima and Trujillo, a coastal city seven hours to the north. Our mandate in Trujillo was to relocate an inner-city church to a main avenue location. Ernie was to lead a team of pastors in the Encounter with God movement, one of the most rewarding and challenging experiences of our six terms of ministry. We prayed and searched for a suitable, highly visible, and affordable property on which to relocate the church.

One day we received a call about a property. We had seen this house from the street—old, structurally unsound and unfit to renovate. Out of courtesy though, Ernie went to meet with the owner. An hour later he came flying through the door almost too excited to speak. Behind the house, hidden from view, there was a school building, two floors on one side and three on the other,



The Klassen Family, 2000.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

with bridges connecting the buildings on the second floor. Putting tarps between the buildings would create a roof for a provisional meeting place for approximately 120 people. An architect and the field director flew to Trujillo the next day and approved the purchase.

The old house in the front soon came down to make way for a 650-seat sanctuary and the school now houses Christian education facilities and a Bible seminary. Marlene, who had graduated from seminary, joined our team in Trujillo and later followed us to Lima to work in another church as the Christian education director.

### Breaking New Ground

Our subsequent terms led us back to Lima and several exciting and very challenging projects. Each term we were asked to break into a new area of the city that had little or no witness. One area was San Isidro, where many people came from aristocratic families whose money had run out. Their lives and houses were shells of what they used to be. After ten months of living in the area, walking the streets every day, and praying and researching, we met Julia. She was a San Isidrina Christian who opened her home and invited her friends. For the next eight years we worked with many of her contacts. So far only two more ever accepted Christ into their lives.

Eventually, we were no longer needed in Peru. The National Church was strong and healthy. All the churches in the city of Lima had teams of national pastors. Peruvians with master's degrees or doctorates led the seminaries. The time for us missionaries to teach or lead had come to an end. With mixed feelings we started the process of leaving.

We had watched the churches grow and develop just like a parent watches and releases an adult child. We were proud to have been part of God's movement in a country we had called our own for 22 years and proud, too, that we could walk away knowing our job was done. At the time of this writing, there are 63 churches in the city of Lima; six are considered mega churches. The 12 seminaries and Bible institutes around the country have a total of 771 students. The National Church has sent out 43 missionaries to countries as far away as Russia, Japan, and India.



Ernie preaching in Trujillo, 2016.  
Courtesy Ernie Klassen

### New Beginnings

We have had the privilege of working under and alongside one of these families in our next

assignment to Spain that started the summer of 2013. Juan, a student of Ernie's in the Lima seminary, heard the call to missions in Spain, and is now rector of INFORMA, Leadership Training Institutes in Madrid and Barcelona, Spain and President of the National Church. That is what mission is all about!

*Adapted from a bio written August 2013*

*Ernie and Marilyn Klassen were sent by McDiarmid Drive Alliance Church, Brandon, Manitoba in 1980 and by Quinte Alliance Church, Belleville, Ontario in 2013*

## In the Pool of Ministry

By Richard Reichert

### **Coming to Stay: Coming Undone at the Seams in Cuba**

Our world changed when we were asked to consider an assignment to Cuba after twenty years of conventional missions in Ecuador. Nothing we had studied or experienced prepared us for the radical reality of the Cuban revolution.

The experience that best illustrates the paradigm shift we experienced was living in community with a young couple, Leslie and Elier. Everything, including marriage, was up for grabs in Cuba in the economy that flattened the social dream of the 1980s. For Leslie, “re-solving” the situation as a teenager in the nineties meant joining the band of thousands of young, attractive, Cuban girls being preyed on by foreigners. It gave her all the adventure a young person craves, including a ticket to Italy with her new boyfriend. But Leslie’s experiment with a foreign affair did not satisfy. When the fling in Italy soured, she was back in Cuba again.

A friend invited her to a gathering in the home of a backwater preacher in a marginal sector of Havana. When he invited people to put their faith in Jesus Christ, Leslie stepped forward. The next day she got up to dress as a daughter of the King for the very first time, and found she had nothing suitable to wear.

When Leslie met Elier, he had also made a decision for Christ. They began to work together in cell ministry (small groups) that Cubans call “missions.” They were married, and when we first met them in 2001, Leslie and Elier were pastoring their own house church. A year later, they were out of the picture. Elier had an affair and their marriage ended in divorce. Elier’s desire to return to Leslie tested all the grace and forgiveness she could muster. But she agreed and they were remarried.

When they called us to come over for marriage counselling, they wanted to learn how to have a better marriage. They were leading a small house church again. The church grew, we saw them through the challenges of married life, the birth of four children, economic challenges, building a new

home, and then the agony of seeing a family member steal the space they had guarded for a church building. We watched them mature as leaders, take on national leadership roles, and Leslie blossomed as God's child. She consistently reaches interdenominational gatherings of women as she ministers healing and recovery of identity to women who have been wounded all across Cuba.

Elier and Leslie are not only building the kingdom of Christ but have been blessed as a family with an incredible gift of love and solidarity...their own home, something beyond their wildest dreams before they met Christ.

### Biographic Handles

Hope was born and raised in Windsor, Ontario, the daughter of a Chrysler plant tool and die maker. From her father's love of the outdoors, Hope gained a keen enjoyment of gardening and the outdoors in general. Her creativity and adaptability to physical challenges were her strongest assets in our cross-cultural life style during the years in Cuba.

I was born and raised in Outlook, Saskatchewan, the son of a farmer and later, small business retailer. I owe my work ethic and enjoyment of things well done to that heritage. I'm an avid sports fan, having pursued a hockey career until committing to ministry full-time. I met Hope at Canadian Bible College in Regina, Saskatchewan, in 1965. We went on to graduate from the University of Saskatchewan and Canadian Theological Seminary, and I hold an M.A. in English Literature from the University of New Brunswick.

In 1979, after a four-year pastoral home service in Luseland, Saskatchewan, we served in Ecuador with The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada (C&MA). Our experience in leadership training and church planting included a term in rural missions, four years on the founding team of the Guayaquil North church, a third term on the pastoral team of the oldest evangelical church in the capital city of Quito (a replant/relocation of a traditional congregation), and a fourth term on the pastoral team of the new Republic church, a cell-based impact church that grew from 400 to 900 in six years with more than 200 small group cells.

I completed a D. Min. at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in 2002. The studies in the area of "Ministry in Complex Urban Settings" matched my passion to develop leadership in Latin America, tuned to the complexities of urban church planting. For the next seven years, we developed a theological training program for lay house leaders in Cuba. Leaders emerged who were able to manage and move the vision forward on their own. I created an alliance with other international ministries that enabled Cuban writers and translators to hone their skills and maintain a livelihood through translation.

During the final period of our international ministry, we focused on mentoring the next generation of cross-cultural kingdom servants. We lived in Mexico City and worked at developing modules and delivery systems for producing leadership development in the complex urban context of Mexico City.

Besides pastoral duties, I continued to pursue my passion for writing and published two books in English, *Daybreak Over Ecuador* (a history of the dawning of evangelical missions), and *Missions is a Contact Sport* (a survival manual for short-term missions), as well as co-authoring in Spanish with Cesar Mendoza, *Un Siglo de Avance, (A Century of Advance, the 600-page centennial history of the C&MA in Ecuador.)* I recently finished a book called *Escombros (Out of the Debris of the Past to Something Better)* aimed at the professionals of Mexico.

### A Call to the Nations

Four impulses that moved me towards cross-cultural engagement included missions events, cultural contact, reading, and a cross-cultural short-term experience. The idea of a missionary career was first verbalized at eight years of age when a member of a visiting singing group met me at the door; Gordon Fowler asked, "Young man, what do you want to be when you grow up?" I had the feeling I wouldn't get out the door if I didn't come up with the right answer, "Who me? I want to be missionary," I heard myself say, to my own surprise.

The second impulse was direct cultural contact. I had my first cross-cultural exposure through a visit to a First Nations village when I was 15. It was a ten-day exposure to indigenous people in my own home province. The Vacation Bible School opportunity did more for me than it could have ever done for the boys and girls of Deschambault Lake. They spoke another language and lived another lifestyle just six hours from the doorstep of my subdivision!

I saw the need and inequality. Pelican Narrows had no road back then and it took three more hours to get there by canoe. Here was a whole new community without a single Christian witness. I was shaken by the incredible need and the disparity of what I had at home in terms of opportunities.

I also met a couple who dedicated their lives to career missions in northern Saskatchewan. This was a level of commitment I had never considered. The experience with hands-on contact with another culture at age 15 was a life-changing experience. This enriching connection created an appetite for something I never knew existed. I couldn't wait for more.

A one-year hiatus to Newfoundland as a school teacher was an added encouragement that crossing cultures was for me.

The third impulse toward global engagement was through reading the autobiography of a missionary martyr to Ecuador. Jim Elliot was an all-American athlete and scholar who willingly gave up the abundant possibilities for a successful career open to talented young men in the postwar boom years.

He went to Ecuador and he went to stay. He never came back. His body was buried in the Amazon jungle near where he and four other twenty-something men died trying to make contact with a stone age tribe...the Aucas...or Huarani. When I was able to see the very house, and the corner radio room where their wives, some with young children, others expecting, waited to hear a radio report from the contact site that never came, it helped me to say, "Here am I, send me!" It was Elliot who wrote these unforgettable words, "*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.*"

Reading can help. That's why *Missions is A Contact Sport* was born. I call it a survival manual for short-term missions. Out of the experience of observing many groups in action over the past 30 years, came the urge to help people do it better. In its broadest sense, it is a manual toward multicultural engagement, but at its heart is the goal to help a person get the maximum impact from a short-term contact.

The fourth impulse to missions came with the opportunity to actually do a short-term trip. My first international trip was on a motorcycle to California, disguised as a beach witnessing trip. In the dedication to *Missions is a Contact Sport*, I wrote these words to my father: "Dedicated to Dad who let his teenage son drive five thousand miles on a motorcycle for a short-term missions trip. As with many short-term 'ministry' experiences there was more 'motorcycle' than 'ministry', which, of course, Dad knew all along, but had the good sense to say nothing, because he also knew there would be just enough 'ministry' to whet my appetite for more."

In the summer of 1968 came the opportunity to see Ecuador for myself. I learned that I could love these people, that missionaries are ordinary, and that language skill is essential. Above all, I learned that relationships are the main thing in ministry and that the key to a call to missions is not about ability, but availability.

### Career Turning Points

I remember Peter Dyck, my high school teacher and principal in Outlook, who kept me focused during high school when many competing offers were available to me in the social and sports scene.

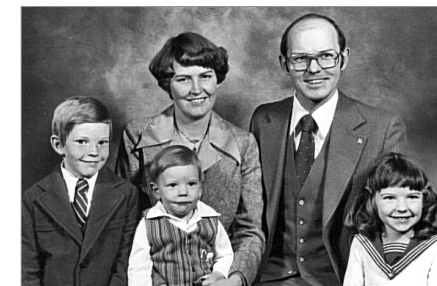
Jake Andres, the Co-op grocery manager, told me after church that he felt God had a place for me in ministry. I remember the example of Pastor Les Hamm's ministry life. I remember older youth like Don Rysavy and Gordon

Bucek going ahead of us to Bible school...and the visits of Canadian Bible College tour groups and the annual Youth Conference in Regina, spurring me on and fanning the flame.

In incremental ways, God taught me He can be trusted with my life. When I was about eight, I lost a wallet containing \$1.85 in the pasture. All winter I prayed fervently for that wallet. Walking through the pasture one afternoon after the earth had thawed, my toe stubbed on a clod of mud containing my wallet with \$1.85 inside. God had not lost a penny. I knew right then that God could be trusted with bigger things.

One year into Bible school, the phenomenon of Canadian Bible Seminary was born and I was off to university with other young men to get Bachelor's degrees under the careful tutelage of Sam Stoez and Rex Boda. The seminary program was delayed a year and I continued for an honours degree, and opted for another year of a Master's program. What I thought I was giving up educationally, God gave back, in abundance.

It was excruciating sitting in Costa Rica in 1979 waiting for a letter from our Mission leaders and praying we would be assigned to Quito where our four children could be with us as we ministered. Then came the dreaded letter... "assigned to Loja," the farthest point from Quito that was still in the country. We wondered if God could be trusted with the loves of our lives. We were sending our oldest son and a daughter, not yet six, to boarding school.



The Reichert Family, 1979.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

Later, Hope's surgeries in Guayaquil and Quito were added opportunities to demonstrate that God can be trusted.

The last test for me came rather late in my missionary career. I had told stories of two men who both wanted to go to Ecuador a century before me. Will Mitchell drowned in a Kansas lake the afternoon after he made his commitment to serve God in Ecuador. Homer Crisman made the same commitment at that same conference but survived rock wielding crowds, revolutions, and yellow fever to rack up 70 years of missionary service in Ecuador.

I knew that God could be trusted with my life itself, but in January 2012—two heart attacks and a stroke later—I learned that lesson on my own. I now see things so much more clearly. It is not about me. It never was. This has given rise to a new zest for living and a new sense of destiny.

## The Mentor Edge

Unlike the real estate slogan, location is not everything. I did my first short-term trip in Saskatchewan. You can fall in love with other cultures right where you live. You can be called to missions right where you live.

For me, the indispensable ingredient to a successful short-term experience is a mentor. When I went to northern Saskatchewan, I was not thinking of having one, but a lady from my home church, a missionary to India, invited me to be part of experiencing missions. She had been my Sunday school teacher; she had been mentoring me years before I figured it out.

She was the one who passed me a copy of Elisabeth Elliot's *Shadow of the Almighty* in high school. The passion was fuelled by reading. The urge to explore the frontiers of cross-cultural exchange grew with every page I read and I knew I had to open the next door.

She's still mentoring. In the spring of 2013, after my heart attacks, I reconnected with Gloria in Saskatoon. "God wastes nothing," she reminded me. One more succinct and timely intersection with a youth she has been mentoring for 50 years. She is still caring for me. She is still engaged. The job did not stop, just because I became an international worker.

Another valuable ingredient is a culture of missions that is home-bred. My parents seeded the appetite for missions and it was watered over time. A pastor spoke into my life, an elder affirmed my gifts, and influential people enlarged the sense of call. Men like Arnold Cook and Mel Sylvester were instrumental in my life, though we never had an intentional coffee or conversation about the matter. Much of fanning a flame for the nations is only indirectly intentional, but the tangents are being orchestrated higher up.

## Redemptive Relationships

If there is one lesson I learned over the length of the journey, it is about redemptive relationships. Most of my ministry seemed to be just about standing around...and it seemed like a lot of waste at times. During our rural ministry in Loja there were hours of sitting around lamplight family services, long into the night. Sometimes I wondered if it was all necessary. The answer to me lies in the incarnation. Jesus had to live here.

It was not just a matter of a redemptive act that was required. There was redemptive living to be done. Incarnation is, by definition, relational.

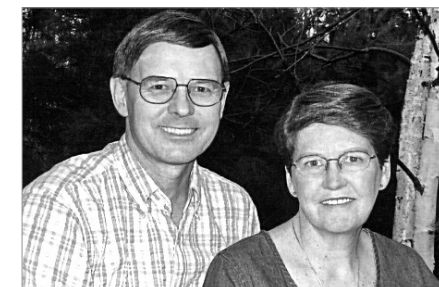
The real question is not why Jesus had to die, but why He had to go through all the pain of living. With all that is instant and fast-food oriented, would it not have been more efficient just to parachute Him in for the cross, and then whisk Him comfortably back to heaven? What was the 30 years all about? Wouldn't a short-term rescue mission have been just

as effective? Jesus had to live here because incarnation demanded redemptive relationships as much as it required a redemptive deed.

My personal ministry vision is to develop a life message of servant leadership characterized by a love of the Word, a passion for the Body of Christ (the Church), and a life commitment to unreached peoples.

I have found my focus for ministry in the words of the Apostle Paul,

*"...that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith."* (2 Thessalonians 1:11).



Richard and Hope Reichert, 2002.  
Courtesy National Ministry Centre

## Satisfaction is a Pebble in a Pool

Tossing a pebble in the pool of my world and watching the ripple effect of lives being changed by God has been my greatest joy. We had the privilege of doing a closure tour in Cuba and Ecuador and came to the mind-boggling realization that God had kept on building into people, families, churches, and nations long after we had left. All He asks is that we toss our lives into the pool of ministry, and He will take care of multiplying the ripples.

*Adapted from a bio written February 2014*

*Richard and Hope Reichert were sent by Outlook Alliance Church, in Saskatchewan and Heritage Park Alliance in Windsor, Ontario. Richard went to be with the Lord on June 26, 2017.*

# PART C - THE SENDERS

## Chapter 24

### Toronto: The Spark that Ignited a Missionary Movement in Canada

By Jim Foster

*“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* (Matthew 6:21). These words of Jesus lit a spark in my heart during my formative years—that God partnered with those producing treasures for eternity, with eyes focused on reaching the unsaved at home and abroad, a passion regularly modeled by the spiritual leaders of my childhood church, First Alliance Church in Toronto, Ontario.

#### **Founding Vision**

The Canadian Alliance church movement began in the late 1800s, in the hearts of men and women who served the poor and unsaved in the slums of Toronto. The fourfold gospel message they proclaimed was Jesus as the Saviour of the spiritually lost, the Sanctifier of the servant of God, the Healer of those sick and broken, and the Coming King to those longing for the Kingdom of God. Out of this vision and passion the roots of First Alliance Church began to grow in Toronto.

John Salmon, a ministry partner of A.B. Simpson, began public church services in Wolseley Hall on Gerrard Street, in Toronto. In 1887, they called people to Jesus Christ and His power to change lives. The church community became known as Bethany Tabernacle, and eventually associated with the Christian Alliance based in the United States, becoming its first Canadian Auxiliary. It is now known as the First Alliance Church, located at Finch Avenue East and Bridletowne Circle in Toronto.

Rev. Salmon and his founding partners in ministry—people like William Howland, the former mayor of Toronto and the first president of the Canadian branch of the Christian Alliance—established a lasting legacy of love and service to the poor, of sound theology and gospel teaching, and a passion for the indwelling power of Jesus. This lit the spark that spread a missionary fire in the early days of this family of churches.

### Missions Movement

The values that drove the local outreach of Bethany Tabernacle also drove its engagement in global missions. It was a church committed to outreach to the needy and those who did not know Christ. They founded a home for physical and mental healing, an orphanage, and a mission for those on the streets due to addictions and broken mental health. They started a Bible college to prepare people for outreach at home and abroad.

The untimely death of William Cassidy in 1888, the first Canadian Alliance missionary, was another spark in the early Alliance missions movement. Mr. Cassidy, a school principal, was studying to be a medical doctor when he accepted a call in 1887 to go to China as a missionary with the newly established C&MA in Canada. His death from smallpox en route to China shocked many in the Canadian Alliance. His life and sacrifice became an inspiration for many to dedicate their lives to the foreign fields to preach the Gospel.

One of the more famous Canadian Alliance missionaries, Robert A. Jaffray, also came from Bethany Church. He took up where William Cassidy left off in his vision to reach China with the Gospel. In doing so, Robert Jaffray left a promising future in his father's business as the owner and publisher of *The Globe*, now *The Globe and Mail*.

At the Jaffrays' commissioning service, A.B. Simpson prayed for God's blessing on them, asking that they be filled with the Holy Spirit, that they quickly learn the new languages, and that they would always have the passion for souls and divine ambition to evangelize the lost. Robert Jaffray and his wife spent 49 years of outstanding service in South China, French Indochina (now Vietnam), and the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) before Robert died in a Japanese internment camp during the closing days of World War II. Robert Jaffray's Spirit-filled leadership was a significant catalyst, both inside and outside the C&MA, for considerable growth of missions work in Asia.

### The Tabernacle Churches

First Alliance Church in Toronto also traces its origins to Parkdale Tabernacle. When both facilities at Bethany and Parkdale closed for various

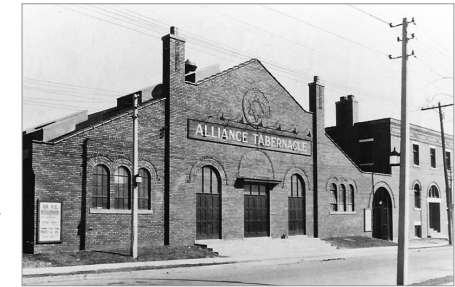
reasons, their members transferred to what became The Alliance Tabernacle, or later, the Christie Street Tabernacle. The Parkdale Tabernacle's members provided 21 years of service to Toronto communities, and saw several of its young leaders become pastors, evangelists, and at least twenty became missionaries. (Reynolds, 1987, p.18)

Many of the members joined with their pastor, Oswald J. Smith when the Christie Street Tabernacle opened in May 1922. The large but basic structure seating 2,500 became the base for a ministry revolving around special evangelistic speakers and large missionary conferences. Many outreach ministries were established, such as the Wayside Mission that sent missionaries to remote areas in Western Canada, becoming the first expansion of the Alliance church into the western Canadian provinces. Members of the Christie Street Tabernacle also established a mission to the Jewish people in Toronto.

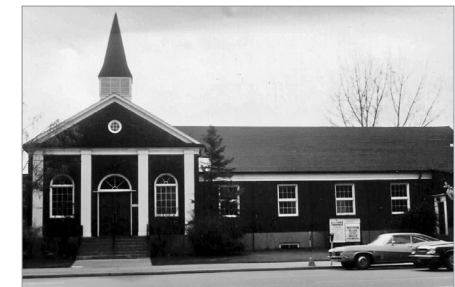
In order to expand the reach of the teaching and beliefs of the fourfold gospel and Alliance missions, a number of periodicals were regularly published, such as *The Alliance World*, *The Canadian Alliance*, *The Prophet*, and *The Tabernacle News*. Many of the founding leaders, such as A.B. Simpson and Oswald J. Smith, were regular contributors.

In the 1920s, the focus was the unreached in Toronto and abroad. At the time, The Christian and Missionary Alliance had 350 missionaries serving around the world, with 46 of them from Canada working in 19 foreign countries.

Although the Alliance Tabernacle was built to hold over 2,000 people, it was a plain and inexpensive structure, just adequate for the needs of large gatherings. This was purposefully done because they believed God had called them not to build beautiful buildings, but to evangelize the world.



The Alliance Tabernacle, 85 Christie Street, Toronto, Ontario, 1922-1948. Courtesy First Alliance Church



The Alliance Tabernacle on 2026 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario, 1949-1975. Courtesy First Alliance Church



## Sacrifice in Missions

In Isaiah 54:2 the prophet encourages the people of God to: *"Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes."* The senior pastor of The Alliance Tabernacle, William H. Lewellen, quoted A.B. Simpson on a challenge that well represented the vision of this church and its leadership.

"We want a larger faith. We want to lengthen the cords of our expectation and our spiritual vision. We want to see the new things which God has for us, and then to claim them with a faith that will not let them go. We want something more, that faith that reaches out both its hands to the souls that are sinking around us. We want the faith that takes the deliverance for others, that fights the battles of the Lord, that claims the salvation of men, that ventures on the hardest field and the most hopeless task, that dares the impossible, that sets its foot upon every yet unconquered land and claims the victory for God, nor rests until the battle is won." (*The Tabernacle Evangelist*, official monthly newsletter of the senior pastor of The Alliance Tabernacle, January 1943.)

Rev. Lewellen wrote a booklet called, "Twenty Days on a Raft." It recounted several amazing experiences of Mrs. Ethel Bell, a missionary from the Tabernacle to French West Africa (1924-58), including when she and her two children spent 22 days at sea on a raft after a shipwreck. It became a powerful global missions tool throughout Canada and the United States. (Booklet, *Twenty Days on a Raft*, by William H. Lewellen. The Alliance Tabernacle.)

Many families within the Alliance Tabernacle sent their children to missionary training school and then off to the foreign field on their missions. Miss Marion K. Grobb was one of these children. R.A. Jaffray, regional director in Asia at the time, wrote a touching letter to her parents expressing his own sense of loss and sacrifice at leaving his wife and daughter at home to return to China to serve. He wrote, "I know that you have also suffered something of the same pain in giving up your daughter to come away out here for Him. God so loved that He gave His only Son, and it is a love akin to His, yea, the same love in us that leads us to be willing to thus sacrifice and give up our own for His sake." Many believed the lost must be found at all costs and thus sacrificed their loved ones and finances to fulfill this mandate.

## Home Missions to Train Workers

Apart from this strong commitment to overseas work by the early Alliance Tabernacle family, there was also great attention to the need to preach the Gospel to the unreached in Toronto and the province of Ontario. In 1925, they supported an ex-Rabbi, Henry Bergman, in his work among the 35,000 Jews living in Toronto at the time. He preached the Gospel in open-air meetings three times weekly, and also wrote and published many tracts in Yiddish that were used in Toronto and distributed around the world.

The training of Canadian ministry workers for mission advancement at home and abroad became a priority. In 1924 the Tabernacle built an adjoining structure to house the Canadian Bible Institute. The combined structure increased the sanctuary capacity to 2,500. The school opened with 26 students, with John R. Turnbull as the first principal and has had a Canada-wide impact.

It eventually moved to Regina and became Canadian Bible College and Theological Seminary, and eventually to Calgary to become the current Ambrose University.

At the time, the pastors at Christie Street Tabernacle were supported by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. There was no membership, and the work focused on growing and promoting the work of missions around the world and across Canada, and through an interdenominational character and partnership in everything. After 26 years of existence, many missionaries were sent out, many pastors and evangelists called and equipped for ministry, numerous home missions ventures launched, and millions of dollars given to missionary endeavour among the unreached. (Reynolds, 1987, p.20)

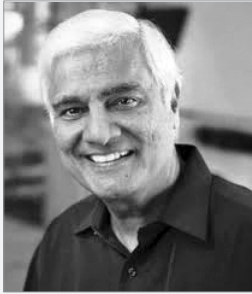


Young Peoples Rally at Christie Street Tabernacle, 1935.  
Courtesy First Alliance Church

## Global Values

A new building was constructed in 1949 on Yonge Street near Eglinton Avenue, with the church renamed Yonge Street Tabernacle. From the 1952 *Annual Report* of the Tabernacle, the pastor, E.J. Bailey, wrote that the "year once again has been a wonderful missionary year." For a church that grew from only 95 to 108 members over the previous year, their giving to missions was almost \$11,000 while their General Fund offerings that year were just over \$17,000. That means almost 40% of their yearly giving went

### Ravi Zacharias



Ravi Zacharias arrived in Toronto, Ontario in 1966 to work in hotel management. Ravi met Mrs. Ruth Jeffery at Yonge Street Tabernacle, the wife of Ivory Jeffery and daughter of renowned missionary to China, Jonathan Goforth. They were long-term missionaries to Vietnam, sent from Parkdale Tabernacle. Mrs. Jeffery persuaded a friend to sponsor Ravi to go in the early 1970s to Vietnam to preach for the summer.

Before Ravi left for Vietnam, Ray Deitz and the elders at the Yonge Street Tabernacle prayed for him as he knelt before a chair. One of those who prayed that night was retired Alliance pastor Edgar Lorimer, who said: "That young man is going to go far. When he got up off his knees after he was prayed over, there was a puddle of tears on the chair."

During that summer in Vietnam, Ravi most fully realized God's call on his life for evangelism. About 3,000 were saved in a revival that broke after he left, just before the fall of Vietnam. The Zachariases developed and maintained many close relationships with Alliance missionaries to Vietnam, including Franklin and Doris Irwin, George and Harriet Irwin, Dave and Helen May Douglas, all from Yonge Street Tabernacle or First Alliance church.

to the support of global missions efforts. (Annual Report, First Alliance Church of Metropolitan Toronto, 1952, p.4).

A growing shift in the cultural demographic of Toronto's population greatly impacted the Yonge Street church. In the 1960s, the multicultural nature of the church began to grow, and some of the first new immigrants to Canada who made the church their home were Ravi Zacharias and his brother Ramesh. A contact at Youth for Christ had directed them to The Yonge Street Tabernacle when they had asked about a good evangelical and missionary church. During his time in fellowship there, he met his future wife, Margie Reynolds, the daughter of Lindsay Reynolds, who authored several church history books, among them, *Footprints: The Beginnings of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada*.

For many years the people of Yonge Street Tabernacle lived out their global values through their giving and prayers. Nine of its members became missionaries, and several others became pastors and home workers. However, due to the poor location choice and years of steady decline in the 1970s, the church moved to Scarborough in 1977. It was in Scarborough that the church became known as First Alliance Church. (Reynolds, 1987, p.23)

### A Cultural Mosaic

My wife Sharon and I met at First Alliance Church. Her parents had emigrated from India to the United States of America and in 1964 moved to Canada. Sharon was born and raised in Toronto and Peterborough, and her family was representative of an ethnic diversity typical of the 1960s and 1970s in Toronto and in First Alliance Church. Our pastor, Ross Ingram, frequently highlighted this diversity during public services with welcoming words and invited them into leadership roles in the church body.

In our formative years at First Alliance Church, both Sharon and I were inspired by the Alliance missionaries who visited to share their courageous stories. Ross Ingram, like other Alliance pastors, faithfully visited our missionaries, spending weeks every year teaching, mentoring and encouraging the teams.

After years of service in Africa with his wife Donna, Bruce Edwards became the senior pastor at First Alliance Church in 1999. He and the elders guided the congregation to become a more globally minded community in recognition of the growing diversification of cultural values in the fellowship. The church underwent a significant transition as the ministry refocused on the immediate community in Scarborough, a community now predominantly populated by new Canadians from the Caribbean, the Philippines, China, Sri Lanka, India and other nations. Due to local outreach and relationships forged, many new believers made First Alliance Church their spiritual home.

One Sunday, while preaching, Bruce Edwards talked about fried plantain that he had enjoyed during their years in West Africa as missionaries with the C&MA and how difficult it was to find it in the grocery stores in Toronto. About a week later, two large bags full of plantain arrived at his office from an unknown sender. Although there weren't many West Africans in the church, there were a number of Caribbean families who also loved plantain, and who knew where to buy it in Toronto! (Author's interview with Bruce Edwards, July 2017)

By 2005, approximately 70% of the congregation considered another country to be their country of origin, with over 30 different nationalities represented in the church. (First Alliance Church, Congregational Survey, 2005). The ministries to a multicultural community led many at First Alliance Church to grow up with a heart for the nations of the world.

### Missions is What the Church Does

One of the most storied missionary families from First Alliance Church is the Irwin family. Franklin Irwin, now in his eighties and living in Toronto, still leads a house church of approximately fifty Mandarin Chinese immigrants that he and his wife Doris began out of their home. Rev. Irwin, son of Alliance Tabernacle members, Edwin Franklin and Marie Irwin, grew up in Vietnam where his parents ministered just after Robert Jaffray opened the country to the C&MA. Edwin Franklin Irwin wrote an important book called *With Christ in Indo-China: The Story of Alliance Missions in French Indo-China and Eastern Siam*, a history of the earliest work in Vietnam. (Christian Publications, 1937.)

Franklin Irwin received his call from the Lord to service during high school in Asia but asked the Lord not to send him to serve in Canada, because his people and his home were in Vietnam. He returned to the USA to study at Nyack College in New York and met his future wife Doris there. He then served in ministries in Western Canada for some years before getting married and going with the C&MA as missionaries to Vietnam during World War II.

They spent one furlough at the Christie Street Tabernacle and what Rev. Irwin saw and heard was very similar to his father’s heart and vision for the world. He was quite moved that the Christie Street Church had sent out over 40 adults into missions up to that time. The Christie Street church leaders said this was normal and was really the purpose that the church existed. (Author’s interview with Franklin Irwin, July 2017).

After leaving Vietnam during the fall to Communism, Franklin and Doris Irwin moved to the Philippines for seventeen years of ministry before finally returning to Toronto in 1991. They began an outreach to Filipinos in Toronto, which led to establishing

Pastors of the Alliance Tabernacle and First Alliance Church, Toronto	
1922 - 1926	Rev. Oswald J. Smith
1924 - 1929	Dr. Ralph E. Hooper, Associate
1927 - 1928	Rev. Dr. Ira E. David
1928 - 1930	Rev. F. Noel Palmer
1931 - 1934	Rev. George M. Blackett
1935 - 1940	Rev. David Mason, Acting
1937 - 1939	Rev. F.W. Hollinrake, Assistant
1940 - 1946	Rev. William H. Lewellen
1940 - 1941	Mr. Edmund Perkins, Associate
1946 - 1948	Rev. L.J. Pyne
1949 - 1951	Rev. Gordon Wishart
1952 - 1954	Rev. E.J. Bailey
1955	Mr. Willard Wilson, Interim
1955 - 1964	Rev. L.L. Brooker
1964 - 1974	Rev. Ray Deitz
1975 - 1980	Rev. Melvin Shareski
1981 - 1983	Rev. Paul Edwardson
1983 - 1999	Rev. Ross Ingram
1999 - 2014	Rev. Bruce Edwards
2013 - Present	Rev. Timothy Berends

a Filipino church that still meets in the First Alliance Church facility as an independent congregation. Then some Mandarin-speaking Chinese began to attend the church for the English as a Second Language ministry there. Doris, born in China to missionary parents, had always hoped to go to China as a missionary, but ended up marrying Franklin and going to Vietnam instead. She told Franklin, “I wanted to go to China but was not able to go in the end. But now God has sent the Chinese to us here in Toronto. We have to give them the Gospel.” So, they started a Bible study that led into the small house church that Rev. Irwin continues to lead today. (Author’s interview with Franklin Irwin, July 2017)

### Church and Missions Leadership

Soon after Ross Ingram became the senior pastor at First Alliance Church in 1983, he announced that one of his main goals as our pastor would be to prepare and send out our own C&MA missionaries. During the following years, under his leadership, members of First Alliance Church were called, trained and sent on missions among unreached peoples. For example, Stephen and Annette Ford left for Hungary in 1994, and we left for Lebanon in 1996.

In the 1980s, missions conferences at First Alliance Church were week-long grand affairs with excellent speakers, and mission booths and décor that exposed participants to the culture and religion of unreached peoples. The prayer meetings, Women’s Ministry, and the Children’s programs all focused on the needs and ministries of our missionaries.

Sharon fondly remembers some missionary visits to First Alliance Church, including the Snowsells, with special appreciation for the impactful personality and ministry of Ann Snowsell. She remembers hearing Eugene Kelly talk about the many churches being planted in Latin America and recalls him telling the story of an Alliance missionary who was still learning the local language.



Christie Street Tabernacle missions conference, date unknown. Courtesy First Alliance Church



Christie Street Tabernacle missions conference, date unknown. Courtesy First Alliance Church

In one of his first sermons he accidentally used the word for “old lady” which sounded similar to the word for “lost sheep”. All the missions conference attendees had a good laugh when they realized the missionary newcomer had said in his message, “The Good Shepherd left the 99 old ladies in the fold and went in search of the lost old lady. When he found her, he threw her over his shoulder and carried her home...!”

These stories helped us love missionaries as amazing story tellers, as people of great faith, but also as ordinary people just like us. These faithful servants and their testimonies of dedication and sacrifice lit the fire that produced in us a heart for the world and for the least-reached peoples of the earth.

### Treasures in the Heart

The First Alliance Church community continues to treasure in their hearts the needs of Toronto, the nation and the world. The current Vision Prayer of First Alliance Church is,

“O God, make us a body of believers so empowered by your Word and Spirit that our communities, nation and world will see and know Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

Under the current leadership of Timothy Berends, a leader who has spent over a decade in Central Asia as an international church pastor, the congregation continues to support the work of missions through committed prayer, consistent missions offerings, and local outreach to new Canadians. They presently have three adults serving with the C&MA overseas - Albert and Elaine Lu and Lisa Brown, while also closely supporting some of their own people working with other home and global missions organizations. They are presently sponsoring and resettling thirteen refugees in the Toronto area.

Stephen Ford, who grew up at First Alliance Church and left for Hungary in 1994 with his family, recently shared an illustration. He filled an empty vase with four large stones and then asked the audience if the vase was full. Most answered in the affirmative. Then he took a cup of much smaller stones and poured them in, and afterwards a cup of sand, and then poured a cup of water till the vase was truly full. This demonstration showed that if you do the most important things first, there would always be room for other things later. Doing “first things first” will shape who you are and what you will become known for.

By making the love for God, a deep commitment to the unreached, and the preparation of apostolic missions workers their priority, First Alliance Church leaders have revealed through the many years of their history, where their treasure lies.

Missionary Appointments		
Laura G. Beecroft (Hamilton)	Palestine	1912
Laura Sheppard (Davis)	China	1912
Alfred E. Loose	Fr. West Africa	1913
Mrs. Iver C. Wickware	Congo	1913
E. Franklin Irwin	Indochina	1914
Mrs. Harry Stoddard	Congo	1914
Emmanuel A. Prentice	Argentina, Ecuador	1916
C. Percy Green	Japan	1917
Grace Zimmerman (Green)	Japan	1917
D. Ivory Jeffery	Indochina	1918
Grace M. Morrison	Ecuador	1923
Marian Grobb (Duncan)	China	1924
Ernest P. Howard	Fr. West Africa	1924
Ethel G. Roffe (Bell)	Fr. West Africa	1924
Lenore Fulton	Congo	1925
Nora Bassingthwaite	Africa	1926
Harriet F. Cutler (Capps)	India	1927
Ralph M. Emery	Ecuador	1928
G. Edward Roffe	Laos	1928
Frederick W.E. Roffe	Fr. West Africa	1928
Laura Smith (Smith)	Indochina	1928
Franklin Grobb	Laos	1929
W. Ernest Presswood	Indonesia	1930
Margaret Jaffray	Indonesia	1934
Roy Northcott	Haiti*	1940
E. Dorothy Northcott (Carlsen)	Tibet, Thailand	1947
G.M. May Northcott (Persons)	Thailand	1947
George and Harriette Irwin	Vietnam	1947
Franklin and Doris Irwin	Vietnam, Philippines	1951
Norton Coons	Jamaica*	1951
Helen May Irwin (Douglas)	Vietnam	1958
Paul and Rene Forrest	Zaire	1971
Stephen and Annette Ford	Hungary, Central Asia	1994
Jim and Sharon Foster	Lebanon, Arabian Peninsula	1996
Albert and Elaine Lu	Taiwan	2013
Lisa Brown	Asia	2017

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## Chapter 25

# Edmonton: Eyes Open, Leaning Forward, Deeply Rooted

By Josie Vance

A posture of expectancy and curiosity has propelled the mission of Beulah Alliance Church for close to a century. Eyes are open, continuously watching for new challenges and opportunities. Though her past is rich, Beulah continues to lean forward with innovation and ingenuity. Beulah's missional impulse has always been deeply rooted in a rich history of prayer, spiritual integrity and earnest desire to see those near and far come to faith in Jesus.

Beulah was born out of missions and her first words and first steps were missional – *to and for the unreached*. Bringing the Gospel in both word and action to a province that did not have a vibrant witness was her forming purpose. This call was expressed first in Western Canada and would later extend to the furthest reaches of the earth.

### **Seeds of Beulah Planted in Edmonton, 1907-1921**

The seeds of Beulah Alliance Church were planted by Miss Maude Chatham, who founded the Beulah Mission in Edmonton in 1907. Miss Chatham focused her entrepreneurial energy on serving those affected by alcoholism and homelessness. Early records indicate that “within the first two years of the mission's existence about 13,000 meals had been served and 5,600 men had been lodged overnight” (Rosenau, 1987, p. 1). In tandem with this outpouring of practical service was a proclamation of the saving message of Jesus, with regular gospel meetings happening at the hall and on prominent street corners in Edmonton.

Thus began the Beulah story of gospel expansion and multiplication in the name of Jesus. Just a few years after the opening of the Edmonton Beulah Mission, the Beulah Home for Women was launched in 1910, ministering to single mothers, abandoned women and the unemployed.

When many of the men at Beulah Mission transitioned to military service as World War 1 began in 1914, the Beulah Mission, still directed by Maude Chatham, refocused to establish the Edmonton Bible Institute. This interdenominational school operated from 1915 to 1919, preceding the Great West Bible Institute. The school expanded both in staff and in the programs of study offered, until Miss Chatham became ill and unable to lead the mission. Subsequently, Chatham relocated to Vancouver for her health's sake, and both the mission and the institute were discontinued.

Remaining were a small group of fervent believers who continued to gather and pray for growing Christian impact in Edmonton. This faithful community contacted the district superintendent of the Canadian District of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), Rev. A.W. Roffe, to express their need of a pastor to join them in Western Canada, specifically in Edmonton. Several years later, on March 4, 1928, Maude Chatham would return to visit Beulah Tabernacle, a thriving congregation and gospel outpost of the C&MA.

### **A Christian and Missionary Alliance Church Planted in Western Canada, 1921-31**

Superintendent Roffe presented this request for pastoral leadership in the Prairies to a young couple about to venture overseas to South Africa to engage in missions work. After much prayer, 26-year old John H. Woodward and his wife, Flossie, responded to the call to Western Canada to establish the Beulah Mission, which was later renamed the “Beulah Tabernacle of The Christian and Missionary Alliance.” This first official Alliance branch in Western Canada was formally founded on November 20, 1921 and was destined to find great opportunity for evangelism on the Prairies, where so few had heard the gospel message. Beulah Tabernacle would foster the ministry of the Great West Mission, launching a pioneering and innovative gospel movement spanning much of Alberta and the other prairie provinces.

Beulah Tabernacle was established on the heels of a major wave of settlement in the prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. With only 250,000 living in these provinces in 1891, the increase in population by 1921 was remarkable, propelled by the completion of the Trans-Canada Railway and the availability of free land to homesteaders. During this time period, the population on the prairies grew to around two million people—over half of whom were immigrants who had spread out across the vast landscape.

Present-day Western Canadian District Superintendent, Brent Trask, observed that “the pre-existent church was completely overwhelmed and under-resourced to meet the need” (Trask, 2017). And so, this land of opportunity in the West also became a ripe mission field.

### **The Mission Field of Western Canada**

The early days of Beulah were strongly influenced by her first pastor, Reverend John Woodward. After seeing the absence of Christian faith among the general population, with no churches and limited Christian presence across 2,500 school districts on the Prairies, Woodward was burdened by a call to discover compelling ways to reach those who were settling all across the land. The West needed missionaries!

One day, soon after his arrival in Edmonton, he asked a group of children about their knowledge of Jesus. The response was, “He doesn't live in these parts!”

The story is told of Woodward riding on horseback near Edmonton and meeting children and some adults who had never heard of Jesus. One day, soon after his arrival in Edmonton, he asked a group of children about their knowledge of Jesus. The response was, “He doesn't live in these parts!” The astonished Woodward would make it his mission to make sure the name

of Jesus was well-known in all parts of the Prairies. His sense of call extended beyond that of a local church pastor; he was fervent in exploring new and creative methods to spread the Gospel far and wide in Western Canada. Innovation and the willingness to take bold measures characterized Woodward's leadership; he was motivated by a sense of urgency to spread the hope of the Gospel, even in a challenging and often unforgiving landscape.

Initially, this Prairie context was best suited for missionaries on horseback! Young students from the Bible Institute in Nyack, New York, made the long journey to Edmonton, eager to share the hope of the Gospel in this then-foreign land. They were somewhat unprepared for the vast, wild landscape they would encounter and the challenging task that would await them.

When students arrived for their four-month summer experience as “pioneer missionaries,” they were given a horse, saddle, blanket and a map, and sent off to share the message of Jesus wherever they would find welcome. “The strength of the project was that each student quickly learned what trusting God meant, and hundreds of homesteads heard of Christ for the first time” (Reynolds, 1992, p. 109). And so, with these pioneer horseback missionaries enlisted, the Great West Mission was established in 1922.

Among these students was a young woman named Muriel Owen, who was interviewed about her experiences at the time. Miss Owen expressed that each student “was given a horse, saddle, and blanket plus five dollars and sent off in different directions ... totally responsible for [his or her] own horse” (Reynolds, 1992, p. 113).

These students sent by the Great West Mission covered a great expanse of territory in their gospel-planting endeavours, returning to Edmonton monthly to share and to pray together. Owen recalls one journey that was particularly challenging:

The homesteads were sometimes separated by such great distances that one might ride for hours on end without seeing anything but vast stretches of prairie. On occasions I was very lonely, and even fearful. I had to learn, step-by-step, to trust my heavenly Father. I recall one day it was late afternoon, and seeing nothing, I began to fear that I would have to spend the night in an open field, without shelter of any kind. I rode on, trying to exercise a faltering faith. In a short while I spotted a windmill in the distance, and I knew that I would soon see a farm house. By the time I reached it, darkness had fallen. I knocked on the door timidly. It opened and I was greeted by a cheerful German lady, who spoke good English. Having introduced myself and my mission, she invited me in and made me feel ‘at home.’ (Reynolds, 1992, pp. 113-114).

The next summer Beulah’s Great West Mission was reinforced by a visit by Woodward to the Nyack Bible Institute campus in New York, where six more men and four women were selected to serve (Reynolds, 1992, p. 111).



Dogsled to Bonnyville,  
date unknown.  
Courtesy Beulah Alliance

The exploits of the Great West Mission reached faraway communities, and also reached the surrounding towns of Devon, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, and Barrhead.

In the bitter cold winter of the Prairies, workers went out by dogsled through a thick blanket of snow to bring the message of Jesus to remote areas such as Bonnyville, Alberta. Woodward is remembered well for his stated conviction that

“every possible effort and method that we could devise to get the message out to those who were in need, we had to use.”

In 1924, a vehicle coined “The Gospel Car” was purchased to bring the work of the Great West Mission to surrounding towns in Alberta— new territory utilizing new methods. The Gospel Car provided sleeping space

for the travelling missionaries, as well as a tent that was expanded to hold meetings.

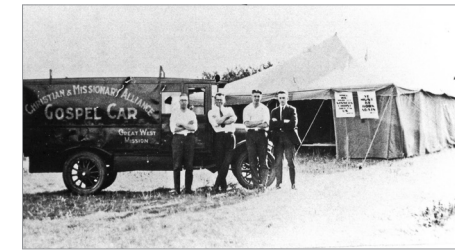
The first community to benefit from the Gospel Car was Gwynne, Alberta where Ed Cross and Gordon Skitch arrived to launch a six-week revival. Many came to faith in Christ and were baptized in the town of Gwynne during those weeks. Using the Gospel Car, Beulah and the Great West Mission actively took the gospel message to the smaller outlying communities, while regular street meetings were being held on popular corners in downtown Edmonton (Rosenau, 1987, p. 9).

Alongside these novel outreaches, Beulah Tabernacle held annual missionary conventions to hear from workers in mission fields around the globe, and to raise awareness and funds in support of global missions. In the first convention alone, eleven people answered God’s call to missionary work and more than \$2,800 was raised toward missions, which was a substantial gift in 1922, followed in 1923 by offerings of \$4,000 (Rosenau, 1987, pp. 4-5)!

The next year, Beulah sent out her first official international missionaries under the banner of the C&MA, George and Muriel Moffat (nee Owen, of the “horseback pioneer missionaries” mentioned above) (Rosenau, 1987, p. 9).

Recognizing the need for formal evangelism training in the West, the Great West Bible Institute opened its doors to students in Edmonton in the fall of 1924 under the supervision of John Woodward. Woodward served as the president and dean of students.

Miss Margaret Connor joined the staff as a teacher and dean of women. Connor had sensed God’s call to come to the West, and after preaching



Gospel Car, tent and workers, 1927.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives



Gospel Car with Ed Cross and Gordon Skitch in Gwynne,  
1924. Courtesy Alliance Archives



Gwynne baptismal service, 1924.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives



Great West Bible Institute's first class, c 1924.  
Courtesy Beulah Alliance



J.D. and June Carlson, 1940s.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives

independently and starting four churches in four towns on the Prairies, she “offered to unite her four churches with the Alliance... and she continued her ministry as part of the C&MA.” (Reynolds, 1992, p. 119). Miss Connor also joined the staff of Beulah Tabernacle, first as pulpit replacement for Woodward in May 1924, and then becoming the first female assistant pastor in December 1924, and likely the first female pastor in Edmonton (Rosenau, 1987, p. 7).

As the ministry and mission of Beulah expanded, so did the methods utilized to communicate the Gospel. Beulah’s second pastor, Charles Jackson, arrived in 1927. In partnership with the Great West Bible Institute, Beulah launched the

radio station, CHMA. The radio waves would reach thousands, both in the city of Edmonton and for great distances beyond the city. Beulah became a church home to many listeners who could not physically attend, including homesteaders, lumberjacks, ranchers and railway workers. The radio station would later be sold to CFRN, which would continue to reserve five hours weekly for Beulah’s broadcasts. Well-known musician and speaker, J.D. Carlson, had come to faith as a honky-tonk nightclub entertainer and was now a charismatic catalyst of the radio station. The radio ministry of Beulah Tabernacle impacted Northern Alberta for nearly 20 years.

Beulah celebrated the opening of a new downtown mission, Hope Mission, on September 22, 1929, a hope-filled Christian organization still closely connected with Beulah and thriving today. During this season of ongoing growth and development, John Woodward would take on the role of first district superintendent of the Western Canadian District of the C&MA in Canada in 1925. As Beulah’s founding pastor and the C&MA’s gospel pioneer to the West, Woodward is remembered as “a pragmatist par excellence, he made himself knowledgeable of every means being used to spread religion in Western Canada” (Reynolds, 1992, p. 203).

## Tough Times, The 1930s

With the onset of The Great Depression in the 1930s, many new challenges arose affecting the ministry of Beulah and the C&MA in Western Canada. The collapse of the economy and plummeting farming incomes plunged families, businesses and other organizations into extreme financial and practical hardship. As a result, the Gospel Car was sold due to the cost of fuel, the Great West Mission was discontinued, and the Great West Bible Institute closed its doors. In the midst of this hardship, however, Beulah Tabernacle, along with the radio ministry, continued to grow with a persistent desire to reach the city and surrounding communities with the Gospel. This grew in tandem with her desire to spur on awareness and encouragement of the global mission.

As these financial realities were burdening the wider C&MA community, with leadership then based in Nyack, New York, there developed a variance of opinion about the role of Beulah, as well as the role of the Western Canadian District (WCD) and her affiliates in the C&MA. The Alliance Board in New York decided to discontinue the role of WCD superintendent and instead, provide leadership to the West from Nyack. Woodward’s position was discontinued. Although congregations in the West protested this removal of local leadership and the notion of taking direction from so great a distance, it would be several years before the WCD would have a district superintendent who also lived in and focused on Western Canada.

In summarizing the pioneering leadership of Woodward as the C&MA’s first pastor and the West’s first district superintendent, our present district superintendent noted, “Woodward had a great vision for bringing the Gospel to Western Canada. But much of the early activity he spearheaded was not sustainable, in part because of external factors like the Great Depression, in part because of institutional priorities that caused the denomination to view Western Canada as a source of missions funding rather than a mission field, and in part because the immensity of the task caused the few resources available to be expended in too many directions.” (Trask, 2017).

## Growth and Gospel Expansion, 1940-1980

While local mission and gospel-spreading initiatives continued to grow and develop through Beulah as new pastors gave leadership to the church, Beulah’s heart for global missions also grew. The well-established congregation would carry on the Beulah story of gospel expansion and multiplication in the name of Jesus, continuing to influence both the surrounding communities and international missions work. In the 1940s, Beulah sent out many missionaries, even while her own tent was expanding with a new addition that would seat more than 800.



The tradition of an annual missions convention, started in 1922, continued on through the 1940s and 50s; international workers would be invited to speak, sharing their experiences and spurring on the early “Pray, Give, Go” impulse at Beulah. Beulah gave much to global missions work, while also supporting local missions, including church plants in surrounding communities.

In the 1950s, a growing congregation at Beulah Tabernacle led to the construction of a larger facility at 124th Street. In 1956, Beulah relocated to this strategic location “with good connection to every part of the city” under the leadership of Paul Currie (Rosenau, 1987). Beulah then changed her name from Beulah Tabernacle to Beulah Alliance Church.



Beulah Tabernacle on 124 St., date unknown.  
Courtesy Beulah Alliance



Beulah Alliance bus ministry, date unknown.  
Courtesy Beulah Alliance



Beulah Alliance bus ministry, date unknown.  
Courtesy Beulah Alliance

The 1960s and 70s were greatly influenced by the ministry of David Anderson. New initiatives emerged with aims to reach the city with the message of Jesus; this included the genesis of the Beulah bus ministry, which transported hundreds of children to Sunday school on five buses each week. Beulah’s present pastor, Keith Taylor, remembers serving as a driver of one of these buses during his teen years at Beulah Alliance Church.

Children came by bus for Vacation Bible School in the summer, and the post-war baby boom also contributed an influx of babies in the nursery.

On Beulah’s 40th Anniversary with the C&MA in 1961, the church was again nearing capacity. That year, Beulah’s Vacation Bible School had over 1,000 children enrolled from the Edmonton area!

In 1967, Beulah would make extensions to her facility, but not without addressing the need for expansion in other parts of the city, as Beulah helped launch other churches in Edmonton, giving support financially and also sharing

the ministries of beloved assistant pastors like Dave Tjart with pioneering efforts in other parts of Edmonton and surrounding area. Extension of the church’s property and buildings continued on into the 1970s at the 124th Street location.

By the mid-1980s, Beulah had again reached facility capacity and needed additional space and parking. Beulah began to explore opportunities on the far west end of Edmonton, and in 1990 the congregation relocated to its present home near West Edmonton Mall. Since then, Beulah has grown five times over, with additions to her West Campus, and expansions to two other campuses in Edmonton under the leadership of her current lead pastor, Keith Taylor.

### On Mission and For Mission, 1990 Onward

Keith Taylor has been part of the life of Beulah since his infancy in the nursery at the Beulah Tabernacle location on 98 Street and 107 Avenue. Taylor grew up at the 124th Street location and carries many memories of World Missions Weeks. He recalls that, “there was a service for at least five nights, for the whole family.” Sunday evening gatherings were filled with missionary speakers, like L.E. Maxwell, Stuart Briscoe, L.L. King (C&MA president in the U.S. at the time), and missionaries from various fields. Taylor notes that in his formative years in the 1950s-1970s, he could see that missions was an integral part of the fabric of Beulah; supporting missions, and the encouragement for God’s people to “Pray, Give, Go” has always run deep at Beulah.

Taylor attended Canadian Bible College and then went on to pastor in Vernon, B.C. for several years, with his wife Jacquie. When Taylor answered a call to Beulah in 1991, the church was supporting a wide variety of people in places around the world. In the ensuing years, Beulah would narrow her collective emphasis to C&MA projects and fields, while still welcoming and supporting other initiatives. While the idea of a World Missions Week did not fit the changing family structure of the day, Beulah engaged in a quarterly missions emphasis in the 1990s, where the congregation continued to hear regularly from missionaries and speakers on the topic of global missions.

By 2005, Taylor sensed the need for people to have first-hand experience of global mission, and a vision was cast encouraging all adults to have a cross-cultural missions experience. When their hearts were touched as they engaged cross-culturally, they became lifelong supporters of missions—financially in prayer, and some as long-term missionaries.

After some years of having “Missionaries in Residence,” Beulah had also hired a missions pastor, Eric Persson, in 2003, dedicated to envisioning

and facilitating global missions through Beulah, as well as initiating and monitoring several Seamless Links and other partnerships with C&MA missionaries. In efforts to build longer-term partnerships with communities and missions workers around the world, Beulah engaged and still engages in multiple ongoing projects. These include works in the Desert Sand Region, Mexico, a church multiplication project in Vietnam, leadership development initiatives in the Caribbean Sun Region, and most recently a social justice project in Phuket, Thailand. There were also numerous justice and relief projects around the world with the C&MA and other partner organizations. Eric Persson notes that the Christmas Eve offerings that commenced in 2004 often yield more than \$80,000 toward projects around the world, and that our contribution to the Global Advance Fund remains strong. He asserts that this “is not just because we are big, but because we care!” Truly, the generosity of this congregation and her heart for the nations is strong.

In recent years, Beulah has continued to provide many diverse short-term missions experiences to the congregation. While some trips are general in scope, others offer opportunities for willing members to use their special skills in construction, medical practice, teaching, evangelism, children’s ministry and

more. These personalized—and highly impactful experiences—generate a deeper awareness of what God is doing around the world within the congregation.

Also spurring forward this call to the congregation to pray, give and go is Beulah’s ongoing connection with missionaries (now referenced as “international workers”) who have been sent out from Beulah and who share their stories with the congregation through newsletters, video updates, and personal contact.

Beulah also believes strongly in building global partnerships in support of community development and the tangible, meaningful impact that comes with ongoing relationship, as well as empowering local leaders to

Remembering the Faithful - Beulah's Pastors	
1921 - 1926	Rev. John Woodward
1927 - 1928	Rev. Charles H.C. Jackson
1928 - 1937	Rev. Gordon A. Skitch
1937 - 1939	Rev. Archie M. Carmichael
1939 - 1944	Rev. Joseph D. Carlson
1944 - 1946	Edward F. Mapstone
1946 - 1947	Rev. J.D. Carlson
1948	Rev. Harry D. Stoddard
1948 - 1952	Rev. Hugh J. McVety
1952	Dr. Walter Fox
1953 - 1959	Rev. Paul Currie
1959	William Goetz, Interim
1959 - 1973	Rev. David T. Anderson
1973 - 1976	Rev. Raymond W. Schenk, Jr.
1977 - 1979	Rev. Harvey Town
1980 - 1991	Rev. Albert Runge
1991 - Present	Rev. Keith Taylor

influence positive change and a gospel presence in their communities. Beulah is committed to growing both in the understanding of and practice of holistic, sustainable missions and joins with other organizations to influence constructive change in our world and to share the Good News of Jesus in word and in action.

When reflecting on missions over past decades, Taylor notes that the call of the Great Commission, along with the Matthew 24:14 conviction that “... *this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come*” has been significant for Beulah’s congregation. The message persists: this really matters. It is a biblical imperative for the Church, yesterday and today, to bring the Good News to the entire world.

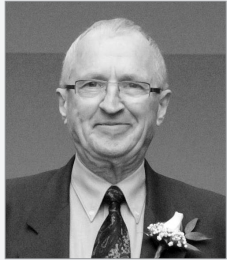
New realities have put a different face on what ‘to all the world’ looks like today. With the growing diaspora around the world, the nations are coming to us. Beulah’s congregation, mirroring our changing city, is growing in her ethnic diversity. What an opportunity! So, while Beulah continues to fervently encourage global missions beyond Canada, we recognize that global mission is also landing on our doorstep. The immigrant population of Edmonton continues to increase dramatically, and Beulah desires to be a place of welcome and warmth. “...*I was a stranger, and you invited me in...*” (Matthew 25:35). This finds expression in Beulah’s programming for new Canadians, including classes in conversational English, assistance with settlement and citizenship, and more.

Similarly, Beulah’s recent re-launch of International Student Ministry is thriving, with more than 28 Christian families serving as hosts to more than 45 international students in Edmonton; numbers continue to grow. So then, to the international community—be they students, refugees, or the otherwise displaced in Edmonton—we offer Jesus, who Himself “experienced the vulnerability of the homeless infant, the child of refugees, the adult with no place to lay His head, the despised convict...” (Pohl, 1999, Loc 220). Immanuel, God with us—we share the invitation for all to know His presence.

### Next Steps

Our pastor, Keith Taylor summarized his hopes for the future impact of Beulah at home and abroad in this way: 1) that Beulah would “continue to be a light to the nations as the nations come to us,” embracing our potential impact to the diaspora; 2) that we would have “a mindset toward discipling global Christians who have an eye to the world;” and, 3) that there would be “a reawakening to a Great Commission mindset”—the compelling call for all believers to live life on-mission, to live a life that matters. These three

**David Tjart**



Dave Tjart first came to Beulah Alliance as the assistant pastor in 1962. He was one of a two-man team—he and the senior pastor, D.T. Anderson—and so he had opportunity to be involved in many aspects of Beulah’s ministry. These included: missions outreach, the large Vacation Bible School, which drew hundreds of children, and the establishment of two daughter churches—Beverly Alliance and Southgate Alliance. He then transitioned into Education, and continued to serve, mainly in the music ministry, as a layperson. Upon his retirement from teaching and counselling in the County of Parkland, Tjart accepted a role as pastor to seniors, in which he served until 2006.

enduring hopes can be best realized, says Taylor, as we “do our best to shorten the distance from the Beulah attendee to the mission field.”

As younger generations find their place in the church, a new way of thinking about mission may be required. Taylor insightfully notes that, “Millennials don’t just want to support a ‘fund’; they want to support a person and a cause they can personally identify with; the relational connection really matters.” We see this in the important work of Darren and Naomi Herbold as they fight sexual exploitation in Phuket, Thailand, as one example.

These hopes for the future will also be realized as we keep the priority of mission—and *each one living on mission*—in the forefront of our minds. So, with eyes open, leaning forward, and being deeply rooted, Beulah continues in the posture of expectancy and curiosity that first inspired forerunners like Maude Chatham, John Woodward, and the first “pioneer missionaries” of the C&MA in Western Canada.

Today around Beulah, there is a strong sense of mission that continues to impact both the City of Edmonton and the world. The congregation, characterized by bold generosity and commitment to live on mission continues to pray, to give, and to go as God leads. Today, reflecting on the 40-or-so daughter and granddaughter churches in Alberta that can trace their DNA to Beulah, we continue with gospel expansion in our city as we launch new campuses and congregations, including Arabic and Spanish congregations.

Today, instead of a Gospel Car, Beulah sends out a Block Party Trailer that explodes into an experience of fun and food, as groups from the congregation

show hospitality and love in their communities in Edmonton. Today, instead of a dedicated radio station, Beulah broadcasts the Good News via live-stream services around the globe and across multiple campuses in Edmonton.

Whether it is with those we live, work and play at home, or as we welcome the stranger new to Canada, or as we send workers to far-off fields where the name of Jesus is not yet known, the desire of the congregation and leadership of Beulah Alliance Church is that we would heed our collective call, showing and sharing the love of Jesus everywhere. Today, and tomorrow.

The Beulah story—as part of the greater story of the pioneering churches of the C&MA in Canada—is one of adventure and innovation, glorifying Jesus and what He accomplishes through His servants. Beulah’s story reminds us that generosity—an *intentional outward focus*—is expressed in part by giving practically and financially to resourcing God’s work, and in the sacrifice of prayer.

That generous spirit is also reflected in the countless stories of self-sacrifice in service to our King, with unwavering zeal to see the name of Jesus lifted high. Those who have gone before us willingly faced great personal risk and met many challenges for the sake of the Gospel. These we remember with great admiration, and are also spurred on, inspired to continue to reach, teach and equip people to know, love, and serve Jesus—in our own backyard and to the ends of the earth.

<b>Missionary Appointments</b> <b>Beulah’s international workers, including, but not limited to:</b>		
George and Muriel Moffat	Ecuador	1924
Ella Hildebrand	Africa	1927
Robert and Esther Patterson	China	1935
Henry and Vera Miller	Ecuador	1942
H.W. Edmonds	Philippines	
A.M. Loptson	Philippines	
Rev. and Mrs. Perret	India	1949
Maxine Craig	Vietnam	1959
Pearl Fustey	Taiwan	1962
Tim and Brenda Tjosvold	Ivory Coast	1980
Petr and Celst	Desert Sand Region, Silk Road Region	2004
Bob and Anne Marie Pagee	Malaysia	2007
Darren and Naomi Herbold	Thailand	2014
Barry and Geri McLeod	Mexico	2016

## Bibliography

The author would like to extend thanks to those who have contributed to prior historical writings, including Terry Rosenau, Western Canadian district superintendent, Brent Trask, and the many others who have contributed to the writing, editing, and preserving of Beulah's historical records.

Special thanks to those who gave their time to meet in person to share memories, including former missionary and Beulah Missions Pastor, Eric Persson and Beulah's current lead pastor, Keith Taylor.

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## Chapter 26

# Regina: God at Work in the Queen City

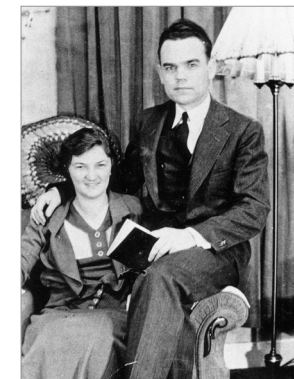
By Arnold Downey

In 1928, Myrtle Bradley, a young female evangelist from Ohio, began holding services in Regina, Saskatchewan, a city with a population of under 50,000 people. No one could have imagined what God would do through those humble beginnings to establish the Alliance in that city. Before long, Gordon Wishart joined Myrtle. They were married, and together served the infant church until 1930.

That church has celebrated over 90 years, and in its lifetime has had five different names: Alliance Gospel Hall, Alliance Chapel, Alliance Tabernacle, Hillsdale Alliance, and Living Hope Alliance. Each of these names indicates relocation to new facilities.

Even from its early days, this church had two strong emphases. The first was evangelism, the second being a strong focus on missions. The first person to take up the missions challenge was Theresa Millin (Byzick). Theresa was converted under the ministry of Myrtle Wishart and, in due course, she and her husband left for China to serve Christ.

The Wisharts' strong evangelistic emphasis resulted in the conversion of Mr. Johnston. Some months later, his wife and two of his daughters also accepted the Lord. One daughter, Kae, went overseas to serve for many years in Pakistan. In 2016, she passed away in Regina at the age of 100 years.



Gordon and Myrtle Wishart,  
date unknown.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives



Johnston family, date unknown.  
Kae (r), Ruby (middle), and Dot (l).  
Courtesy Alliance Archives

### Alf and Arlene Orthner



Alf H. Orthner grew up in Raymore, Saskatchewan. He came to Christ at 21 years of age, in Regina, through the evangelistic ministry of the Wisharts. After graduating from Simpson Bible College in Seattle, Washington, Alf and his new American bride took their first church in Kindersley, Saskatchewan in July 1938. Alf and Arlene went on to serve in several Alliance churches including Assiniboia, Tilley, Revelstoke,

Chilliwack, Moose Jaw and Regina.

In 1964, Alf was elected superintendent of the Canadian Midwest District where he served until 1975. In October 1974, he became the first president of the newly formed Canadian Corporation which eventually led to Canadian autonomy and the birth of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada. He was elected general director in 1975.

Another daughter was Ruby. You can read her story on page xxxi.

A.H. Orthner was another early convert; he lived just around the corner from the Gospel Chapel. In the spring of 1935, the Wisharts returned to the Gospel Chapel to hold evangelistic meetings. Alf Orthner's cousin was a new convert and he convinced Alf that he should come with him to the meetings.

After the first service, under Mrs. Wishart's convicting preaching, Alf could not sleep and returned the second night and gave his life to Christ. Shortly after that he went to Simpson Bible Institute in Seattle. There he met his wife Arlene. They wanted to serve as missionaries, but Arlene's health would not allow for overseas service. Subsequently, Alf went on to pastor a number of churches in Western Canada and in each church, he had the joy of seeing many young men and women respond to the call to go out as missionaries. His last church was back in Regina at Hillsdale Alliance Church (now Living Hope Alliance Church) prior to his service as the district superintendent.

The early years saw a large number of missionaries sent out from this new congregation. Since our own Bible school had not yet been established in Regina, many of the early missionaries served with other mission boards.

My parents, Stan and Janet Downey, moved to Regina in 1937. In looking for a church home, they followed up on a suggestion that they "try" the little

Alliance chapel that was meeting in a converted storefront on Victoria Avenue. Gordon Skitch, who was then the district superintendent, was preaching. From that Sunday, their search was over and they became lifelong members of the C&MA.

I was born in 1939 and have great memories of the Sunday night services at the Alliance Tabernacle, as it was then called. I will never forget the thrill of seeing people responding and weeping their way to Christ. I recall one Sunday evening; the church was so full that some folks were seated on the altar. The pastor had to ask them to move to the side so that those coming for salvation would have a place to kneel and pray.

### Strong Emphasis on Missions

One of the highlights of each year was the eight-day Missions Convention. The slides, curios and, most of all, the amazing stories told by the missionaries had a powerful impact upon my life. The convention always included a call for those who were willing to go and serve Christ overseas.

On the last Sunday of the convention, when the missions pledge was taken, someone would stand at the pulpit and read off the individual amounts pledged. The missions treasurer would sit to the side at a small table and tally the total on his antique adding machine. I would sit there listening for my little amount to be read off my pledge card, excited to be able to be a part of the worldwide missions program of the C&MA.

Something that added to the missions emphasis in our church was that, in 1941, the new Bible school, Western Canadian Bible Institute (WCBI), began holding its classes in the basement of the tabernacle. As a result of this, we had many missionaries who came to speak to the student body and stayed on to speak in the Sunday services.

In addition to this, the Bible school put on a yearly missions production in downtown Darke Hall. The drama and music were so powerful that, even after more than 70 years, I can still recall some of those presentations.

Something that cannot be overlooked when reviewing the ministry of the Alliance in Regina is the significance of the radio ministry. Starting with W.H. Brooks in 1938 and carrying on for many years, this ministry reached out across the Prairies into rural homes where countless people were exposed to the Gospel and to the Alliance.



Willis Brooks (far right) and the Haven of Hope choir, c. 1939. Courtesy Alliance Archives

One such home was that of Frank and Mary Scarrows who lived in Griffin, Saskatchewan. After listening to W.H. Brooks on the radio, they began travelling by train as often as possible to Regina on Saturday afternoon, staying overnight in a hotel so that they could attend the services at the Alliance Tabernacle. They considered it their “home” church and even though they lived quite some distance away, they became lifelong members.

One of their children, Don, recalls “It was the Missions Convention at the Alliance Tabernacle with Gordon Smith of Indochina in 1945 that God used to begin my call for overseas service. This was furthered by contact with scores of missionaries during the next twelve years that came to minister at the Griffin Mission Church, many of whom were guests in our home.”

Following high school, he registered as a student at the Bible school in Regina. It was there he met his wife Faith, and together went on to serve with the Alliance in Peru for 40 years.

As the torch passed, all three of their children have gone into Alliance ministry with two of their children going overseas to serve as Alliance international workers.

Their daughter, Jessie, who married Jonathan Richey, went to serve as Alliance international workers in Guinea. Then, in 2005, they were asked to transfer to Latin America where for the last 12 years they have developed a program of member care for workers being sent out from Latin American Alliance churches.

Following graduation from Canadian Theological College, their son Stephen, together with his wife Andrea, began ministry in Mexico doing church planting, Marriage Encounter and theological training. During that time, Stephen was instrumental in establishing seminary studies in Guadalajara. Since completing their ministry in Mexico, they now pastor an Alliance church in Georgia.

Another result of the radio ministry was that of Marion Samoila. Marion grew up on a farm in a Greek Orthodox home in the Avonlea area. As a little girl, she listened to the radio broadcasts that came from the Alliance Tabernacle. In particular she was an avid listener to the Saturday morning “Children’s Hour.”

Because of this, when the family moved to Regina in 1949, Marion looked up the Tabernacle and began to attend. One Sunday evening, under the

It was the Missions Convention at the Alliance Tabernacle with Gordon Smith of Indochina in 1945 that God used to begin my call for overseas service.

ministry of Rev. T.J. Speir, she went forward and trusted Christ. Later her parents also came to faith.

Marion went on to attend Bible school and there met Melvin Sylvester who came from Beaverlodge, Alberta, which was a smaller church, but has sent a large number of workers into the harvest field both here at home and overseas. Mel and Marion were married and together went on to serve churches in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. Later, Mel became a district superintendent and, in 1980, was elected as the first president of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada. While never serving overseas, it is hard to overestimate the impact the Sylvesters have had upon our Canadian missionary endeavor.

Another name that should be mentioned from that era is that of Esther Heagy (married to “Chick” Burke after retirement). Esther came from a large farm family in southern Saskatchewan. With the passing of her father in 1936, she moved to Regina so that her younger siblings could have a place to stay in the city while attending high school.

While in Regina, Esther became an active member of the Alliance Tabernacle. She had a great desire to go overseas but that was not where the Lord wanted her. Instead, she was asked to work in the “Foreign Mission Dept.” (now known as the Division of Overseas Ministries) in the International Headquarters of the C&MA in Nyack, New York. She served there for 28 years. When the Canadian Alliance became autonomous in 1981, she moved to Toronto to assist in the Canadian missions program under Arnold Cook.

Starting around the 1960s, a new wave of missionaries went overseas from what was now known as Hillsdale Alliance Church. One of the first of these was Esther Lutzer. She grew up in rural Saskatchewan and went to Briercrest for two years of high school and stayed on for Bible school. In 1958, she enrolled in the nursing program at Regina General Hospital and, because the family had been introduced to the Alliance through the radio ministry, she chose to make the Alliance Tabernacle her home church.



Mel and Marion Sylvester,  
date unknown.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives



Esther Burke, date unknown.  
Courtesy Alliance Archives

Esther had, years earlier, felt God's call to foreign missions. The annual missions convention at the Tabernacle continued to challenge her. Dr. A.B. Simpson's hymn was a constant reminder to her of that call:

*Lord, Thou hast given to me a trust.  
To tell the world, and tell I must  
The story of Thy great salvation...  
Let me be faithful to my trust.*

Esther was grateful that even though she had not graduated from an Alliance institution, she was appointed in 1966 to serve as an Alliance missionary nurse to Gabon, Africa where she ministered for 31 years.

Another family that made a contribution to Alliance missions were the Mathesons. In 1955, Lloyd and Kay moved from Moncton, New Brunswick to Regina and began to attend the Alliance Tabernacle. Eventually six of their seven children ended up in the ministry and two of the six served as Alliance missionaries.

Joyce Matheson (Grunau) tells of a missions service she remembers when she was only 13 years of age. "The leader asked anyone to stand who was willing to go into overseas missions if God would call them. I did not know what God would call me to, and I had no great desire to go overseas, but I knew it would be stupid to say 'No' to God, so I stood. I meant that commitment."

Joyce's sister, Mora Matheson (Bundy), remembers that at Hillsdale "we had a week-long missions convention each year. It wasn't just 'meetings'. A lot of planning went into it and it was exciting! There were displays of all kinds, stories told of what God was doing around the world, food from different countries, having missionaries in our homes, etc. There was always an invitation to partner with God in what He was doing around the world. My heart was deeply moved."

Both Mora and Joyce went on to attend Canadian Bible College and there met their life-time partners. Joyce married Floyd Grunau and Mora married Craig Bundy. Both of these couples served as career missionaries with the Alliance, Floyd and Joyce in the Philippines and Indonesia; Mora and Craig served in Argentina.

Another couple that went from the Hillsdale church was Eric and Gwen Persson. When Eric was about 11 years of age, he, together with his older

brother John, started to attend a boys' club conducted in a private home by two Bible school students, Arnold Cook and Lloyd Draper. Eric and John accepted Christ as Saviour and, as a result, the family eventually started to attend what was then the Alliance Tabernacle. After some time, both parents were converted and became active in the church.

Eric will tell you that his call to missions was greatly influenced by the missionaries that spoke in the church, particularly in the missions conferences.

While attending Bible school, Eric met Gwen Longhurst who had come to the school from Ontario. She also felt a call to missions, so following home service, they served as Alliance international workers to what is now known as Burkina Faso until 1996. Due to health issues, they returned to Canada and served in a number of churches before retiring in 2016.

In 1973, David Wintemute arrived in Regina from Ontario to attend Canadian Bible College (CBC) and made Hillsdale his home church. While at Bible College, he met Donna Wilson and they were married in 1976. Both Dave and Donna received their missionary call while in the Alliance Youth Corps, a short-term missions program at CBC. They actively served at Hillsdale and then went on to serve as Alliance international workers in Colombia, and later in Mexico.

Dave and Donna remember that "Hillsdale was not only a great training place for the ministry but a strong missionary church that would stand behind them in prayer and financial support." After serving 32 years overseas, they retired in Regina where they are still active members in what is now Living Hope Alliance Church.

As a boy of 13, Doug Tiessen moved from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan to Regina where his widowed mother had taken a job at CBC and Hillsdale became their home church. Very quickly, Doug became involved in the Christian Service Brigade (Boys Club) and the youth fellowship. Over the next few years, the teaching in the youth group and the strong preaching of Richard Siple began to impact his life for missions. He remembers being involved in dramas that the youth did during the yearly missions conferences. Doug writes, "It was during one of these missions emphasis weeks that I went forward to commit my life to become a missionary."

In 1988, Doug married Julie Cairns who came to CBC from Stoney Creek, Ontario. In 1992, Doug and Julie completed a joint Missions Research Project on the former USSR. At that time, the C&MA were considering starting an initiative into this area of the world. Therefore, in 1993 they were appointed as the first Alliance missionaries to Russia.

For their second term, Stoney Creek Alliance Church in Ontario became their home base while in Canada. However, the people in what is now Living

Hope Alliance continued to keep in touch with them. Tragically, while in Russia, all four of the Tiessen family contracted Lyme disease. Once again, their Regina connection came alongside to support them, holding a fundraiser to help provide treatment for the family in Florida.

Another couple with a unique background is Ashraf and Heidi Atta. Heidi Anderson was from the Nipawin Alliance Church. Her husband Ashraf was from Egypt. They met and married in Switzerland and then went on to attend Bible school in that country. Following that, they moved to Regina so that Ashraf could earn his M. Div. at Canadian Theological Seminary while Heidi got a Bachelor of Religious Education degree at Canadian Bible College. While there, they made Hillsdale Alliance their home church.

In August 2009, they moved back to Egypt where they now serve. Ashraf is able to make ministry trips every year into Switzerland, Germany and Austria. They are encouraged by the fact that Living Hope Alliance Church considers them as their missionaries and that the women's prayer group continues to remember them in prayer.

The life and ministry of every international worker should be told but time and space does not allow for that here. They went out from a church that maintains a strong missions emphasis to this day. This Regina church sees the ministry of these international workers as an extension of their ministry.

### Reliance on Prayer

One final thing that needs to be said about this church was their reliance upon prayer. As a child I remember attending the "adult" Wednesday evening prayer service in a church basement room filled with people on their knees in earnest prayer. Their intercession was for more than their ministry in Regina. Fervent prayers were offered for those from their fellowship who had gone into ministry within Canada and those overseas, thus impacting the world for Christ.

When I was about 10 years of age, Kae Johnston, who was home on furlough, took the children apart from the adults where we had our own prayer service. She taught us how to pray, and especially how to intercede for our missionaries. She then appointed a group of four or five who would go with her the following Sunday to visit a shut-in. One of us would have the responsibility to pray with that person. Another would be assigned to lead in the singing of a hymn, while another would read Scripture with Kae leading a short devotional. The shut-ins loved it, but more than that, it became an integral part of my spiritual formation. These missions prayer concerns were taken home and became a part of our daily family devotions.

This chapter has focused mainly on the international workers sent out and supported by this Regina church. However, it must be noted that there have been a substantial number of men and women, who were also commissioned and sent out into North American ministries. District superintendents, seminary professors, pastors, and leaders of other Christian organizations have made a significant impact. Only eternity will reveal how God has honoured those humble beginnings and faithfulness of His people beginning in those early years.

One cannot recall these past 90 years without thanking God for the great pastoral couples who so faithfully and, many times sacrificially, shared God's Word with a passion for the lost both here at home and overseas. We must also thank Him for those who went from the Regina church to take the Gospel to where Christ was not known. What a difference their lives and ministry have made. Finally, and just as important, we thank God for the men and women who made up this congregation. They gave their children, their time, their talents and their financial resources. Only in eternity will the full story be known.

As I conclude this chapter, my cry to God for this 21st century is that He will enable our present Canadian leaders, together with the people that make up our congregations, to be faithful to our trust. The challenge will be to find new methods and ways that will enable us to reach today's world for Christ.

### International Workers from Regina

As best we know, these were the missionaries that were sent out, some with other Christian agencies:

- Mabel Johnson - Angola
- Helen Ashdown - Mexico
- Margret Hall - India
- Kae Johnston - Pakistan
- Beth Allinger - India and Nepal
- Kay Tullis - Liberia
- Ken and Olive McVety (Archer) - Japan
- Aileen Reid - Mexico
- Therea Millin (Byzick) - China
- Ray and Vi Downey - Republic of Congo (Zaire)
- Riley and Bronwyn - Philippines, Silk Road Region
- Jan Ross - World Vision
- John and Wenda Persson - Colombia
- Calvin and Bev Ross - Chile



- Randy and Rebecca Dirks - Peru
- Derek and Karla - Silk Road Region
- Curtis and Tricia - Caribbean Sun Region
- Murray and Michelle Derksen (Petrescue) - Caribbean Sun Region
- Dave and Brenda - Desert Sand Region
- Don and Val Kinnie (Orthner) - Ecuador
- Wally and Bev Albrecht (Walker) - Indonesia

## Chapter 27

# Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association (CCACA): Our Story

Compiled by Anita Leung based on the work of Solomon Chiang and Francis Tam

*Who can grow one church to eighty-nine churches in 50 years? Our God can.*

Almost a century after our founder, Albert B. Simpson, was burdened to reach the Chinese overseas, God put a burden on the heart of a shy and quiet lady in the Prairies to reach the Chinese immigrants at her doorstep. Her name was Ruby Johnston, the mother of Chinese churches. She helped establish the first Chinese Alliance church, Regina Chinese Alliance Church (CAC), in 1961.

Ruby Johnston wrote about the history of Regina CAC, “We were much in prayer for a Chinese pastor, and in the fall of 1957, the Davao Chinese Church in the Philippines heard of our need through Rev. Paul Bartel and offered to help support a pastor for at least a year with \$100.00 a month. God was also working in the heart of a man in Hong Kong who was working for the First National City Bank of New York, and proceedings were started to get him as pastor. It was not until June 1960 that Rev. Augustus Chao arrived in Regina, and what a day of excitement that was!”

Even before the official organization of the first Chinese Alliance church, Rev. Chao had the vision and faith to ask God for 50 Chinese Alliance churches in Canada. Within his six years with Regina CAC, he had started churches in Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and a preaching point in Swift Current before he left for Vancouver in 1966. The four pastors of the four newly established Chinese Alliance churches, together with one church leader, agreed to organize a Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association (CCACA) in 1967 to share the same call, burden, and vision, and to care for and exhort each other, and also to inspire love and enthusiasm. That has been the spirit of CCACA to further the kingdom of God in Canada.

The growth in the Canadian Chinese Alliance churches has been impressive. During the 50 years from the founding of the first Chinese Alliance church in Regina in 1961 to 2010, 80 new churches were founded. According to the 2010 statistics from the CCACA, there were 237 pastors, 21,446 church members, 1,751 new believers and 962 people baptized. The total annual offering received was about \$30.9 million, including a transferred offering of \$2.38 million to the Global Advance Fund at the National Ministry Centre in Toronto.

Almost all major cities in Canada have a Chinese Alliance church. These churches have not only expanded in Canada, but overseas as well. In earlier years, the expansion was to South America and the United States. In recent years, the expansion has been to mission fields including Australia, New Zealand, Central and South America, Europe, France, the Netherlands, and Japan where the Gospel has been spread to Chinese people.

### Chinese Missionary Conference



First missionary conference hosted by CCACA at Canadian Bible College, Regina, 1982  
Courtesy Anita Leung

Once every four years the CCACA plans and organizes a missionary conference for all Chinese Alliance churches in Canada. It contributes greatly to the efforts of evangelizing Chinese in the world. It first began with a proposal by the CCACA. The first conference was convened in 1982 at the Canadian Bible College in Regina. About 800 people attended. Thereafter, the plan was to have the conferences jointly organized by all

the Chinese churches in Canada. However, after 2 more conferences, it stopped.

Almost ten years later, the Canadian Chinese Alliance Church Missionary Conference was organized again by the CCACA. It was held in 1997 at the Canadian Bible College in Regina, with over 800 in attendance. In 2001, over 800 attended the conference held at the Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, Alberta. The 2005 conference held at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, was a grand occasion with an unprecedented attendance of almost 1,700, with representatives not only from all Chinese Alliance churches in Canada, but also from Chinese Alliance churches in other parts of the world. It fully embodied the missionary spirit held by Chinese Alliance churches around the globe. It had far-reaching significance by instilling missionary fervour and injecting new vitality to missions.

### Joseph and Helen Lee



Joseph Lee was born in China, grew up in Hong Kong and came to Vancouver in 1968. Helen immigrated to Vancouver from Hong Kong in 1967. In 1981, senior pastor Augustus Chao of Vancouver Chinese Alliance Church sent Joseph and Helen to Lima, Peru to help plant a church with Belinda Kwok. The Lees spent a total of 34 years as international workers, serving in Peru, Guatemala and then as Caribbean Sun Chinese Team Leaders until 2015. In their retirement in Vancouver, they mobilize workers using the Kairos course.

In 2009, the conference was again held at Brock University, with about 1,400 attendees. Chinese Alliance churches in the West requested a conference location closer to them. In 2011, the conference took place at Ambrose University in Calgary, with about 400 people in attendance.

The history of missionary church planting by Canadian Chinese Alliance churches can be roughly divided into the following eras:

1. **Embryonic Era:** In the 1960s, the first Chinese Alliance Church was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, followed by church planting of Cantonese-speaking churches in central and western Canada. During this era, five Chinese Alliance churches were founded in central and western districts.
2. **Stable Development Era:** In the 1970s, Cantonese-speaking Alliance churches began church planting in eastern Canada. Two important external factors were the large wave of Chinese immigrants as the result of the 1967 riots in Hong Kong and the open-door policy of the Canadian government. In 1973, the government implemented the amnesty program resulting in large increases of refugees from Indochina (including those from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). During this period, pastors were mostly from Hong Kong. They emphasized evangelism and many people became Christians. Churches founded at this time were mostly influenced by the culture and church traditions from Hong Kong. Chinese churches usually began by renting schools for Sunday services and many churches were founded in various cities. There were 13 Chinese Alliance churches founded in Canada.

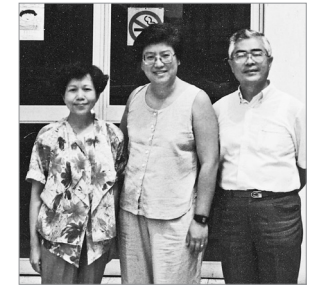
3. **Rapid Growth Era:** During the 1980s, Chinese Alliance churches, mainly Cantonese-speaking, were founded in all large cities in Canada. The large wave of immigration in 1984-1997 was a response to the 1997 return of Hong Kong to China. With this wave, many mature Christians and pastors immigrated to Canada. All denominations and independent churches grabbed this golden opportunity to plant churches. There was a vast and continuous increase in the number of churches, pastors, and financial resources. At this time, the English ministry in Chinese churches began, but they lacked co-workers to pastor the English-speaking members. There were 18 Chinese Alliance churches founded in Canada during this era.
4. **Maturing Era or Golden Era of Cantonese-speaking churches and Embryonic Era of Mandarin-speaking churches:** During the decade from 1990 to 2000, many churches had constructed their own buildings and developed multicultural ministries, especially Mandarin-speaking ministries. Many developed into mega-churches. Ministry was concentrated in large cities while ministries in remote smaller centres decreased.

### Past Ministries of the CCACA

The continual founding of so many Chinese Alliance churches is a result of great assistance provided by local Alliance churches, the National Ministry Centre, and district offices. After the establishment of CCACA in 1967, pioneering church planting was promoted. After the founding of new churches in Victoria, B.C. and Edmonton, Alberta, CCACA started focusing on eastern Canada for gospel ministry. In 1977, CCACA established a working relationship with the National Ministry Centre and district offices. It is regarded as similar to other churches, independent and self-sufficient, and needing to contribute to the C&MA. The focus of CCACA ministries in the past (1967-1995) were:

1. **Focus on domestic evangelism, and open new churches in Canada** - CCACA assisted with the founding of Chinese Alliance churches in Lethbridge, Alberta, North York, Scarborough, and East Toronto. Later, it assisted many gospel-station type churches, like the Halifax Chinese Alliance Church. The planting of all these churches was greatly assisted by the cooperation of member churches and the assistance of district offices and the CCACA.
2. **Support new fields in the United States** - In earlier years, there was a close relationship between Chinese Alliance churches in Canada and those founded in the USA. For the first three years, the funds for Detroit

Chinese Alliance Church were provided by Montreal Chinese Alliance Church. The church in Vancouver, B.C. provided support for Chinese Alliance churches in Wheaton, Illinois and San Diego, California. Currently, the CCACA and their U.S. counterpart meet every fourth year in different cities in Canada or the U.S. Besides joint conferences, they learn from each other, share ministries, discuss missionary matters, and maintain good interaction.



Anita Leung (L), Helen Lee (C) and Joseph Lee (R) in Peru, 1993.  
Courtesy Anita Leung

3. **Missions in South America** - Overseas missions first started in Surinam, South America. In 1977, Peter Poon was invited to Surinam to evangelize local Chinese people. In 1979, Gabriel Tsang moved his family to stay in Surinam for one year, establishing the church. Later workers included Vincent Cheung, Louis Shum, Kwok On Lee, and Andrew Leung. Later, the gospel ministries extended from Surinam to Guyana where Emmanuel Tso was the worker.
4. **Missions in Australia** - In 1982, churches in Australia sent a letter to CCACA asking for help. In 1985, Jonathan Kaan was appointed to found new churches, travelling there in January 1986. He worked in Perth in western Australia for one year. After the church was founded, he passed the work to Kephias Wong who was sent by Hong Kong Hebron Church's missionary department. Rev. Kaan



Guatemala Chinese Alliance Church youth, 2008. Courtesy Helen Lee

then opened a new field in Sydney. From then on, the ministries in Australia were established. In 1989, the Australian Chinese Alliance Churches Association was formed. There were already seven member churches in 1993.

5. **Missions in Europe** - In 1990, there were about 200,000 Chinese in England. Most of the early Chinese were Hakka people from the New Territories of Hong Kong, most of them in the restaurant business. In the 1980s and 1990s, immigrants from Hong Kong increased significantly. There were over 20,000 Chinese immigrating to England in 1997 alone. The number of Chinese attending Sunday services in England was about 3,000.

In 1990, Thomas Chan travelled to England during his sabbatical.



Anita Leung (L) with Paul and Lucinda Ma in London, UK, 1994. Courtesy Anita Leung

He encouraged the Hong Kong Christian Fellowship there to establish a church. Later, John Wong became the first pastor of London Chinese Alliance Church. Rev. Wong left in July, 1992 and Jonathon Kaan travelled to England to become the interim pastor until the arrival of Paul Ma in September, 1993. The church in Harrow district of northern London was founded. In the summer of 1994, Kam Kee Lee arrived as the pastor. The first Sunday service at the Harrow church was held on January 8, 1995, aiming at evangelizing local people and students.



Caribbean Sun Chinese international workers at Field Forum in Mexico, 2015. Courtesy Helen Lee

6. **Great effort in promoting missions by the CCACA** - In 1977, Philemon Choi became a missionary partner and was sent back to Hong Kong. Elisha Cheung and James Chuang were also sent respectively to be a teacher in Hong Kong and an international worker in Taiwan. In order to promote missionary education, the North American Chinese Missionary Conference was organized in 1982.

In recent years, the CCACA has also organized missions conferences with international workers on some fields, including Paris, Panama and a Creative Access Country in the Silk Road Region. They invited pastors, co-workers, elders, deacons, and those who support missions to attend. Without seeing what happens on the fields, pastors may not have a burden for missions, which is why we always encourage member churches to send pastoral co-workers to the mission field.

Because of God's faithfulness, and Ruby Johnston's prayer, the number of Chinese Alliance churches has grown. The total is now 89 according to the Pastor Directory published by the CCACA in 2016.

The total number of Chinese Alliance international workers (IWs) sent between 1978 and 2017 is 100, with a few serving under other Christian agencies.

#### 1. Canadian Pacific District - 19

- Burnaby Alliance Church: Tom and Sally (Asian Spice Region); K. and E. (Creative Access Country)
- Richmond Chinese Alliance Church: Jose and Jocelyn Reverente (Guinea, Niger); Henry and Mary Cheung (Jamaica); Winnie Ting (United Kingdom)
- Vancouver Chinese Alliance Church: Joseph and Helen Lee (Guatemala, Peru); Kwok Wah and Cecilia Chan (El Salvador)
- Vancouver Westside Alliance Church: N and W (Creative Access Country)
- Westwood Alliance Church: Ming and Cindy (Asian Spice Region), Joe and Cora (Asian Spice Region, to be deployed in April, 2018)

#### 2. Western Canadian District - 38

- Calgary Chinese Alliance Church: Gabriel and Rebekah Tsang (Surinam); Louis and Rosaura Shum (Surinam); Janet Sing (France)
- Edmonton Chinese Alliance Church: Joseph and Liza Ng (Philippines); John and Vivian Moy (Australia); Hans and Ruth (Silk Road Region); Augustine and Annie Fung (United Kingdom)
- Lethbridge Chinese Alliance Church: James and Esther Chuang (Taiwan)
- Medicine Hat Chinese Alliance Church: Peter and Rebecca Yip (Australia); Edward and Amy Ng (Thailand)
- North Edmonton Chinese Alliance Church: Lydia (Asian Spice Region); Gabriel and Iris Li (Aruba); Paulo and Phoebe (Silk Road Region)
- South Edmonton Chinese Alliance Church: Jacky and Anne (Silk Road Region, Global Ministries); Ace and Cecilia Cheung (Niger);

Dan and Darrah (Silk Road Region); Albert and Melonie Tam (Taiwan); H. and P. Chau (Asian Spice Region)

- Westside Calgary Chinese Alliance Church: Nick and Polly Tsang (Panama, CCACA); Jeff and Klara (Asian Spice Region)

### 3. Canadian Midwest District – 6

- Saskatoon Chinese Alliance Church: Vincent and Sylvia Cheung (Surinam)
- Winnipeg Chinese Alliance Church: Paul and Flora Siu (Taiwan); Brian and Gloria Cheng (Guatemala)

### 4. Central Canadian District – 4

- Guelph Chinese Alliance Church: John and Irene (United Kingdom)
- Hamilton Chinese Alliance Church: Johnny and Jenny Li (Surinam)

### 5. Eastern Canadian District – 27

- Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church: Anne Louie (El Salvador, Netherlands); Barclay (Asian Spice Region)
- Markham Chinese Alliance Church: B. and L. (Creative Access Country)
- New Covenant Alliance Church: Manjohn and Christina Wong (Venezuela, Netherlands)
- Ottawa Chinese Alliance Church: Dick and Karin (Silk Road Region); Christal (IW Apprentice)
- Ottawa Mandarin Alliance Church: Jonathan and Ruth (Silk Road Region, Global Ministries)
- Scarborough Chinese Alliance Church: Albert and Elaine Lu (Taiwan); Pomen and Amy (Asian Spice Region); Edmond and Anne (Silk Road Region, Asian Spice Region, Caribbean Sun Region)
- Toronto Hebron Chinese Alliance Church: Stanley and Rosa Leung (Venezuela)
- Toronto Jaffray Chinese Alliance Church: Victor and Betty Chin (Mexico); Paul and Christina (Asian Spice Region); Ivy and Glen Milanowski (Norway).
- Toronto Chinese Alliance Church: Henry and Wendy Chuang (Japan)

### 6. St. Lawrence District - 6

- Montreal Chinese Alliance Church: Emmanuel and Dorothy Tso (French Guiana); Stephen and Esther Fong (Gothenberg); Paul and Lucinda Ma (United Kingdom)

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## Calgary: A Loving and Sending Family of Faith

By Terry C. Young

The year was 1964.

As a nine-year-old boy, I sat in the sanctuary of First Alliance Church in downtown Calgary, Alberta and there I received my first introduction to the reality of frontline missionary work. This introduction was an abrupt wake-up call to the question, “What does it really mean to take the good news to every tribe, tongue and nation?”

I heard about a young couple from First Alliance Church, Chester and Dolena Burk, who were serving in the country of Congo, Africa. Their story woke me up to the high cost of the mission service continuum. I remember well Dolena Burk returning home from “the Congo rebellion,” without her husband.

My parents sensitively told me the story of what actually happened to Chester on that fateful day in 1964. To this day, I remember my imaginings: Dolena’s husband showing up on some given Sunday morning or evening, surprising everyone with the good news that he was still alive. That day never came. The Congo Simba Rebellion story involved Simba rebels taking seventy-two missionaries captive on August 4, 1964. After four months of captivity, Olive McCarten recalls that day the “high cost” of service was realized:

We were locked in a small room where already all the Catholic missionaries, seven priests and eleven nuns were being held. There followed three days of reviling and humiliation. On the third day, Simbas fleeing from Stanleyville brought the order that we were all to be killed. We were taken out in groups and marched towards the river along a road lined with Simbas baying for our death. I was overwhelmed by a feeling of peace, knowing that whatever we faced, His grace would be sufficient. Inexplicably, halfway to the river, Louis, Dolena, and I were

turned back. Presently, the eleven nuns returned. We heard gunfire in the distance and were told that all the others had been killed. We could only silently commit them to the Lord. Those of us remaining were marched to a mud hut in the forest. There we were held for a further three weeks until a group of mercenaries rescued us and flew us by helicopter to safety and eventually home.<sup>1</sup>

I never had the privilege of meeting Chester Burk or any of the other men who perished on that November day, but their lives and their death made an indelible mark upon my heart regarding the serious and sacrificial nature of missionary service in the world. As I grew up in Calgary and in the setting of Alliance churches, I came to discover that the sending work of a local church is far more than a discernment of calling, a commissioning prayer, and a fond farewell; it is a deep participation in the mission of God, the cost of which can be the ultimate price of a life, but the purpose of which is the glory of God for the sake of the nations.

In the year of my sadness at the loss of thirty missionaries in the Congo, First Alliance Church (FAC) in Calgary was approaching her thirtieth birthday, having been planted in the pioneering soil of Calgary in 1938. As a local church of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, the early seeds of a heart for the world were spread and the story of sending would be a rich one that has extended to the present day.

In 2018, FAC marks 80 years of her involvement in the frontline of taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Her story is one that has migrated to multiple sending congregations throughout Calgary and surrounding communities and, today, this family of churches continues to send, pray, and support the ever-changing work of the C&MA in the world.

The story of sending of people for global work from FAC and then from the many other churches in Calgary is a part of the rich legacy of The Christian and Missionary Alliance. It is a story of open hands and fervent prayer. Sending is a wide construct in this story and includes more than a prayer of commissioning and a word of blessing. It implies heart ties, and prayerful coverage; sacrificial giving and practical supports linked to the real life sending of men and women to the far reaches of the globe. In the spirit of William Carey's words, the sending story of Alliance churches in

<sup>1</sup> McCarten, O. (2014, Autumn). "Remember - Return - Rejoice - Reflect". *4 Corners, Magazine of UFM Worldwide*, 8-9.

Calgary and surrounding area has consistently been one of lengthened cords of service made possible by strengthened stakes of support.

### Open Hands

The story of the early work of the Alliance in Calgary is one of a pioneering spirit joined to a conviction that the work is more than local. From the early days of FAC, or The Alliance Tabernacle as it was named until the late 1960s, there was one personal story of a heart for the world and a collective portrayal of such a heart through giving. The Alliance Tabernacle's earliest *Annual Reports* contain a few lines that tell the story.

The personal story was that of Abe Schellenberg, the first pastor of the Calgary work, who in his first year of service (1938) sensed the call of God to overseas ministry, specifically the region of Arabia. Rev. Schellenberg received a call from the Alliance headquarters in New York, left to take on this assignment, but was unable to go due to the mounting war in Europe and North Africa. He then made his way to Brandon, Manitoba where he served for a number of years. From the first days, there were eyes on a wider world and this early DNA has continued to the present day.

The collective story is one of immediate support of missions through giving. The start-up church, in her first few years, pledged between four and six thousand dollars annually to foreign and home missions. The full sending story cannot be understood without an acknowledgement of this story beginning at the place of giving, generosity, and the place and priority of missions support.

In 1950, we discover a total pledged giving to missions of \$6,200. If we skip ahead to 1970, there was a total giving of \$64,000. By 1990, the total giving to missions was just shy of \$500,000; twenty years later, in 2010, the giving to Alliance missions was just above \$600,000. Through the years, generosity continues as a key element in the overall sending



Missions Conference 1997. Courtesy Terry Young



Missions Conference 1997. Courtesy Terry Young

## Lowell Young



Lowell Young was commended to First Alliance Church in Calgary by Nathan Bailey of the U.S. Alliance and was initially drawn to the work of the C&MA because of her worldwide focus and posture. During his time in Calgary he also travelled to many fields to encourage missionaries, including South America, Indonesia, Japan, Africa, and Vietnam. He was a passionate and effective Bible teacher, a lover of poetry, and a master of Bunyan's

classic work, *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Throughout his ministry (1960-1995), Lowell believed firmly in the adage, *as we take care of God's business abroad He will tend to our business at home*. Sacrificial giving to global missions does not go unnoticed in heaven.

picture. Sending is not possible without this complementary thread of support. Where their treasure was placed was where their hearts were, and it follows that the rest of the story would honour these heartstrings primed by way of faithful and sacrificial giving.

## Kneeling Forms

If sending stories require generous hands, they also require kneeling forms. Such is the story of FAC and the extended family of churches in Calgary where praying people were weekly lifting mission frontliners to heaven without abeyance. Though small in number, these groups were mighty in faith. Through faithful intercession for those sent from their locale and from many other places across the country, the praying forms were the backstory of much sending. In the early days, the Missionary Women's Fellowship was a key expression of this weekly prayer support. In more recent days the kneeling forms of youth, men's ministries, small



Calgary First Women's Missionary Prayer Group, date unknown. Courtesy Terry Young

groups, and extended concerts of prayer provided the essential backdrop and cover for those sent and supported through the years.

## Sending Churches

When we trace sending points of people into the work of the C&MA, we see a partnering work of a family of churches in Calgary. Up until the 1960s, First Alliance Church was the only C&MA work in Calgary. In 1966, Foothills Alliance Church was born, with Southview and Strathcona Alliance being birthed on the same weekend in 1979. From these churches, and through district church planting efforts, Calgary is marked by longer established works such as Harvest Hills, Rockyview, RockPointe, River of Life, The House of Prayer, El Encuentro, Calgary Vietnamese, Westlife, NorthPointe, Airdrie, and Okotoks congregations.

In more recent years, new church plants are extending the sending potential of the Calgary area churches through the sending points of Encompass Partnerships, The Exchange, Capstone Church, Horizon Church, The Arabic Christian Church, and The Calgary Punjabi Christian Church. Collectively these local expressions of our family life have continued to send, support and pray for the international work of the C&MA in profound ways.

The First Alliance sending history began with the commissioning of Don and Glenna Anderson to the country of Dutch New Guinea and Kay Thompson to the country of Mali in West Africa. Clem and Maddie Dreger were also a part of the early history of FAC and served in many fields throughout their tenure with the C&MA. Ardyce Blough, who grew up at FAC, married Pat Worsley. Their start in international service began in 1974, living in the interior of Irian Jaya where they worked with the Ekari tribe. They later relocated to Jayapura and served as field directors until 1986. By the early 2000s, they were team leaders for a growing group of expatriates from many nations in a creative access country.

In the 1970s, Marilyn Dyck enrolled in Canadian Bible College, and then met and married Dennis Maves. They were sent to the Philippines in the 1980s where they served for twenty-five plus years before concluding their international work service in the city of Darhan, Mongolia. They retired in 2014.

Myrna Ellergodt, who also called FAC home from childhood, married Buzz Maxey, and they were sent and supported by FAC in their work in Papua, Indonesia. Buzz and Myrna accepted an appointment in 1989 to the region of Buzz's childhood home, working tirelessly to assist the people of the Baliem Valley to become economically self-sufficient while teaching and encouraging them in their walk with God. Their later work took them to



the province of Aceh following the devastating tsunami of December 2004, and a later return to the work in Papua in the spring of 2006.

Myrna's brother, Bruce Ellergodt, and his wife Julia, were sent to a creative access country. Becky Ellergodt, who also grew up at First Alliance, married Harvey Matchullis. Together, they ventured to Indonesia, then returned to Toronto, Ontario where Harvey joined the staff at the C&MA National Ministry Centre. They then moved to Kuwait where they were on staff at an international church. Harvey now serves through Encompass Partnerships in Calgary and Becky is involved with life and executive coaching.

Miriam Charter, who called Foothills Alliance and First Alliance home, served in Eastern Europe for a number of years before teaching at Canadian Theological Seminary and then Ambrose University until 2016.

In more recent years, Kaura-lea Dueck has been commissioned to work in Thailand, and the Webers, who served on the staff of FAC, have been engaged in service in the Asian Spice Region since 2016. This partial roll call of C&MA workers is but part of the larger sending story of FAC, and these join with at least 24 other couples and individuals who have been sent, prayed for, and supported through the seventy-nine years of this church's history.

Foothills Alliance, the second Alliance work in Calgary planted in the mid-1960s has had more than a fifty-year history of sending. Diane Jabs married Bill Finnemore in the late 1970s and they made their way to the Congo, later serving in Poland. Jim and Carole Elliott made their way for a first term of service in Guinea, then three years in Quebec, before returning to Africa.

In 1985, Larry and Pixie Charter were assigned to Guinea and later served in Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa. Rick and Patti Love were sent to the Philippines, and Ben and Kari Elliott went for a term of service in Indonesia. Doug and Anne Snowsell served in both Chile and Spain, while more recently, Kim and Kurt Peters served in Mexico and then Spain.

The most recent sending stories from the Foothills congregation include Karissa Gilbertson serving in Germany; Dan and Melissa Skitch engaging in service in Thailand and Darren and Minako Polischuk venturing to the land of Cambodia. Paul and Janelle attended Foothills for close to six years before making their way to the Desert Sand Region. Though Foothills is not their official sending congregation, the people still hold them in their hearts through prayer.

As the eastern edge of the city grew, Rockyview Alliance, the new work in the 1970s, extended their influence through the sending of Brem and Donna Frentz to Bandung, Indonesia. Rick Kilbrai and his wife Susan (from the Central Canadian District) went to Central America, and then Nathan and Sandra Kliewers entered the field of Mexico.

Rick and Patti Love went to serve in Manila, Philippines. After language study in Quebec, Paul and Chantelle McIver ventured to Africa and the country of Niger. This sending work was bolstered by a prayerful group of people who hit their knees often for these who were sent, but they also sacrificially gave over the course of these years to strengthen the work of these hands.

To the northwest, Harvest Hills Alliance began a vibrant ministry in the 1980s at the growing edge of Calgary. In the past three decades, this church has partnered with the global Alliance family in missions team ventures, giving, and prayerful support. In more recent years, Bob and Karin, who pastored at Harvest Hills and then took on the new NorthPointe church plant, were sent to an International Church in the Asian Spice Region. This is yet another story of a church in Calgary, releasing and sending a pastoral staff member to the work of the Alliance abroad.

In the south of Calgary, Southview Alliance and Strathcona Alliance began on the same weekend in the fall of 1979. The Southview congregation sent out close to twenty people through the years. Brent and June Jespersen made their way to Malaysia and then Germany to support the work of missionary children's schools in these respective countries. Also, Brian and Sonja Delamont went to Germany. Ron and Myra Brown were first sent by Foothills to central Africa; this was followed by a time on staff at Southview Alliance Church during the 1980s, and then Southview sent them to West Africa.

In the mid-1980s, Lynda Berlin served on staff at Southview, and later married Perry Friesen. Perry and Lynda were among the first wave of Alliance workers arriving in Russia in the fall of 1994. After two years of extensive language training, they were assigned to Krasnodar where they taught and assisted with two church plants. During their second term in Maykop, they developed a youth ministry training school and published a unique resource for youth ministry. Perry and Lynda had the privilege of seeing over 100 people follow Christ and enter the waters of baptism during this four-year term. Today, they serve the English-speaking congregation of the South Calgary Chinese Alliance Church.

Other sending stories include Drew and Destiny, sent to the Asian Spice Region, and Bella Smid who invested her life in the work in Thailand. The country of Mexico received Dan and Jenica Van Essen. Ernie and Marilyn Klassen were supported by Southview for their time in Mexico. The Russells were sent to the Asian Spice Region.

In the 1980s, with the launch of RockPointe Alliance, came another significant sending point in the Calgary story. It must be noted that the

Strathcona Alliance church family would be a part of this sending story as they later merged with RockPointe in 2007. For RockPointe, the sending work was extensive. The 1990s witnessed the sending of Lovine Erhardt to Indonesia and Bruce and Fran to a creative access country. In the early years of the 2000s, Kristi Hopf began her work in Niger.

The second decade of the 21st century marked the sending of Ken and Melanie Driedger from RockPointe into creative access work and a focus on strengthening international churches across the globe. Katie Bowler went out as a Global Ministries apprentice to Guinea, and in November 2017, she was appointed to Senegal. Rachel made her way into a creative access country in the Desert Sand Region. Blake and Cathy, although originally from Saskatoon, were more recently sent to Mexico to engage in frontline work in this country and they also engaged in the work of strengthening the church in the surrounding countries of Central America. To the other side of the globe, Dan and Ruth were sent to a creative access country in the Asian Spice Region.

To borrow the words of our president, David Hearn, these men and women “walked past the known into the unknown, the familiar into the foreign, and the safe into the risky,” but they knew they did not do so alone. The RockPointe family was, and is, with them on this wonderful walk.

In surrounding areas of Calgary, Okotoks Alliance has contributed to the global reach of the Alliance by sending Tim and Rox to a creative access country in the Desert Sand Region. To the north, Airdrie Alliance, under the long-term direction of Sandy Isfeld, began their giving, praying, and sending story in 1982. This ever-renewing congregation has, in the past three decades,

partnered with the global Alliance family in mission team ventures, giving, and prayerful support.

To the west, Cochrane Alliance Church sent Mark and Paula in the early 1990s to work with CAMA Services in a creative access country. Mark directed a team of people engaged in varied projects; an English vocational school, community health, clean water, silk production and marketing, cattle projects, CAMA crafts, as well as facilitating Theological Education by Extension. Paula served on the

Senior Pastors - First Alliance Church, Calgary	
1938 - 1939	Rev. Abe Schellenberg
1939 - 1943	Rev. George Magnus
1943 - 1948	Rev. D.T. Anderson
1948 - 1952	Rev. Gordon Ferguson
1952 - 1955	Rev. John Cunningham
1955 - 1960	Rev. J.D. Carlson
1960 - 1975	Rev. Lowell Young
1975 - 1995	Rev. Wendell Grout
1978 - 2009	Rev. Terry Young
2009 - 2014	Rev. Scott Weatherford
2015 - Present	Rev. James Paton

frontline helping street children throughout the region. In 2002, they were redeployed to Thailand, and in 2013 were appointed as regional directors to the Asian Spice Region where they have served ever since.

Cochrane Alliance Church commissioned their former pastor, Steve Zub. Steve and Audrey were appointed to Hungary in 1994 where they served their entire missionary career. Steve developed an itinerant preaching ministry and was asked to preach regularly in Hungarian churches of various denominations. Audrey was involved in hosting home Bible studies, youth and singles groups. In the early 2000s, Steve developed an interdenominational training program and an evangelistic radio program in Hungary. For health reasons, they returned to Canada in 2003, but received medical clearance to return to Hungary in 2005 where Steve took on the role of field director. Westlife Church sent one of their pastors, Ray and his wife Kathy, to the Desert Sand Region.

As the Chinese Alliance churches have grown from the mother church in the north, the Westside Alliance, Blessed Calgary Chinese Alliance and the South Calgary Chinese Alliance have engaged in giving, praying, and sending through short-term mission efforts. You can read more about their efforts in chapter 27.

In similar fashion, The House of Prayer, El Encuentro, and The River of Life in Calgary have been praying, giving, and are short-term mission centres for Alliance missions.

When I look back on my own journey with the Alliance in Calgary, my heightened awareness did not begin until that dramatic wake-up call in 1964. The better news is that the Body of Christ, expressed through The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Calgary, was awake and alert from their founding days in 1938. It is a story of open hands and kneeling forms in sending churches. Yet, it still required the open hearts and ears of men and women who were willing to walk in the way of Abraham.

The Abraham story, the most important pivot in the human story after creation, lays out the promise of God to bless the nations of the earth. The human dimension is the willingness to “leave” what is known in order to “bless” the nations. There is no blessing without movement and these catalogued above have been a part of the mission of God to bless the nations through the good news of that One who came from the seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ. The “alliance” is the full story and this legacy is ours. May it continue until He returns!

# Afterword: I Was a Stranger and You Took Me In

By Brent Trask

There is a word I love in the Psalms, often placed between refrains. *SELAH*. It's there 71 times. It means, *pause, breathe, reflect on what has just been said or sung; before you press on, slow down and press in*. So, you have just finished reading, *The God Made Known*. Before you close the cover and deposit this book on a shelf somewhere, can you pause with me to reflect on what you are feeling, thinking and what the Spirit may be saying to you? In these pages we have looked backwards to our past history in missions. Now, how do we in the Alliance need to move forward? Or better yet, 'So what, Lord? What does this all mean for me?'

We have a saying in the Alliance: *On mission. Everyone. Everywhere. All the time*. It's a call to action. It's positive and cheerful. It even sounds melodious rolling off the tongue. Perhaps though, we have failed to realize the magnitude of these words. They represent a huge shift in how we think about the mission of God and how we participate in the Great Commission. Can you see it?

First of all, is it really possible for *all of us* in the Body of Christ to be engaged in God's marvelous plan to redeem all things and reconcile all people to Himself? We know we can't all go to the least-reached people. Some stay. Some go. Some offer prayers, give money, write letters and rub shoulders. Others are called to grand sweeps – quitting jobs, going back to school, learning

The world is changing  
in radical ways and so,  
also, the opportunities  
and methods with which  
we engage in the Lord's  
glorious rescue mission.

languages, moving across oceans. A few are at the frontline, while everybody else plays a role on the supply line. That's the way it's always been.

Perhaps.

Perhaps yesterday or yester year—before globalization, mass migration and immigration; before the seismic shift of Christendom's centre from the west to the global south and emerging east; before the digital revolution of all things in communication and how relationships work; before the rise of terror and the scattering of hundreds of millions of people fleeing pain and seeking a trade up somewhere else in the

world. The world is changing in radical ways and so, also, the opportunities and methods with which we engage in the Lord's glorious rescue mission.

So, in today's reality, do some stay and some go?

I want to underscore that this book is filled with stories of people who simply and repeatedly said yes to God's voice and leadership – “*Yes Lord, I am willing and ready to engage in your redemptive mission wherever and however you may so choose.*” I don't think that has changed. And sometimes the Lord asked very small things and other times the call to engage required great faith, sacrifice and change. That, too, has not changed. But what is changing, is that the mission field itself is on the move.

We want to reach Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and each of the remaining 6,900 or so least-reached people groups on earth (such as the Wolof, Fulani, Yazidi), and increasingly God is arranging to send these very people away from their natural homeland to other nations, including Canada. As a result, the Spirit is mobilizing His people into mission from everywhere to everywhere, including within our own country—to the foreigners, strangers, marginalized and newcomers in the very places we live, work, eat and play. It follows that the majority of us, when we pause to *selah*, will be compelled by the Spirit to engage the nations right where we live, as never before. Of course, many are still needed and called to go overseas and we must prayerfully listen in this regard. But nowadays, the call to stay is a call to play.

As I read *The God Made Known*, I felt such wondrous gratitude well up in my heart for all that He has done; *Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father*. And the biographies and church-sending stories inspired me to lean in and engage more deeply in our commission. But then, the unexpected happened—I was reminded afresh of the missionary that God sent to find me.

For me, it all began on September 3, 1974. That was the day God threw a small pebble into my pond named Terry Dyck<sup>1</sup>. My family had just moved to Edmonton, having lived the previous eight years in England and Holland. I was 13 years old and it was the first day of school and the first day of junior high. Like many boys at this age, I was appropriately frightened and insecure to face this day. Added to that, I didn't know a single person at this school. I knew the language, but in other ways I was like an immigrant. What to

<sup>1</sup> Terry and Sandy Dyck, who are still dear friends, went on to pastor in Alliance churches in Alberta and B.C. and are now leading Bandung International Church in Indonesia. Ed and Delores Dyck mentored scores of youth like me to know and follow Jesus. They are now in their 80s and serve at First Alliance Church in Calgary.

wear, where to go, how to act—the routine systems, expectations, customs of local culture all seemed very foreign to me. I was a stranger in a strange land.

But along came Terry.

He was just being himself, navigating his first day of junior high as normally as possible, which for Terry meant noticing what was going on in people's lives around him. Through the morning, he had noticed me. He saw that I was new, disoriented and that I wasn't tracking with what was happening in math class. And then he did something amazing. Actually, it was a very simple thing, but in retrospect I can see it was the genesis of the gospel revolution that was about to take place in my life. He came over and sat with me at lunch time and asked, “Do you need some help with your math?” Never before in all of history did so much good spawn between teenagers on the basis of such a question! Beyond the question, though, was an offer of Christian hospitality and an act of compassion.

Terry was the first peer I ever met who carried the aroma of Jesus. He was godly. He was pure in heart and even though he was in his early teens, God used him as a messenger to awaken my spiritual sensitivity. Terry invited me into his life and became my first Canadian friend. Afterwards, he invited me into his family. Then he invited me to his church youth group (led by his father Ed) and introduced me to his other friends.

After Terry's mom Delores heard my story, she made some muffins, walked down the street and cold called on my mother saying, “Our sons are friends. I've heard your story. You must be lonely; can I come in?” Delores ended up inviting our family to come to church with them. That church was Southgate Alliance, and over the course of the next year or so, my brother and I came to faith and my parents reoriented their lives around Christ. That was 40 plus years ago now and, by His grace and for His glory, each has gone on to serve the Lord faithfully.

We want to get more knit into the great Gospel mission, but how? Perhaps one of the most important verses that will inform our missiology on national soil going forward will be Matthew 25:35, “*I was a stranger and you took me in.*”

Sometimes it's the small acts of charity, kindness and faithfulness that end up making the biggest difference in the world. What we do, and the motive and passion with which we do it, really matters. Needs are met. Lives are touched. Hearts are changed. It's called the *ripple effect*. Faith, hope, and love—delivered in simple ways—may seem very inconsequential at the time, maybe even mundane, yet often in retrospect we realize, *that is where it all began.*

The Spirit is mobilizing everyone to be on mission. Are you ready to make a radical departure from your past missiology? How about choosing to wake up every morning with an outward focus, asking, “*Lord, into whose life do you want me to bring a lift today?*” As we do, I think we will end up discipling the nations amongst us.

Together in Mission,  
Brent Trask  
Superintendent, Western Canadian District

## Glossary

### A

**Agreements:** Alliance missiologist, Dr. Louis L. King, developed a framework to evaluate, realign, and reinforce the strategic intent between The Mission and The National Church. Every five years, both parties sit together as equals, generally for a week, to talk through plans and purposes for the following five-year term, and both sides commit to achieving their components of the agreement. These formal agreements are the defining document of working relationships in most Alliance fields.

**Animism:** The deep awareness of the spirit world in everything, with this spirit world playing a real part in all of life. Often used as a synonym for traditional, folk, primal religion as opposed to major world religions.

**Asian Spice Region:** A Canadian C&MA defined region that encompasses South East Asia to East Asia.

### C

**CAMA Services:** The compassion arm of the C&MA-US and used now as Compassion and Mercy Associates.

**Canadian Bible College (CBC):** The undergraduate ministry training

school for the C&MA in Canada, located in Regina, Saskatchewan, which later became Ambrose University in Calgary, Alberta.

**Canadian Theological Seminary (CTS):** The official graduate theological school of the C&MA in Canada, which later became Ambrose Seminary in Calgary, Alberta.

**CANAL Project:** A partnership initiated in 1996 between the C&MA in Canada and several national Latin American churches with the intent of creating cross-cultural ministry teams.

**Caribbean Sun Region:** A Canadian C&MA defined region that encompasses Central and South America and the Caribbean.

**Church plant:** Birthing a new faith community.

**Comity Agreements:** A principle that said mission groups shouldn't compete with each other on entering a new country. This resulted in greater efficiency of resources as agencies respected territory or people groups already being evangelized by one agency and established themselves where the Gospel had not yet gone. Double occupancy, with the exception of large cities, was to be avoided.

**Creative Access Countries (CAC):** Countries that do not allow open

mission work and require creative means to gain entry.

**D**

**Deeper Life:** A term used by Alliance Founder A.B. Simpson to indicate a fuller, more intense walk with Jesus.

**Desert Sand Region:** A Canadian C&MA defined region that encompasses West and North Africa.

**Diaspora:** A scattering of people from their original homeland to other places by forced movement or immigration.

**Disciple:** A follower of Jesus.

**Discipleship:** Involves the nurturing, equipping, and releasing of Christ-followers into God's mission.

**E**

**Elect:** Those who God has—in His mercy, love, and wisdom—chosen from all eternity to be in relation with Him and in whom His grace will be effective, preparing and enabling them to respond positively to the Gospel.

**Encounter with God:** An evangelistic movement to plant churches characterized by a program of continuous preaching, evangelization, and edification, primarily in Latin America. It is combined with a program of effective discipleship.

**Evangelistic campaign:** An organized Gospel outreach event.

**F**

**Five-Year Agreements:** See Agreements.

**Foreign Missions:** The activity of taking the Gospel to other cultures.

**Fourfold Gospel:** A C&MA expression of focussing on Jesus as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King.

**G**

**Global Vault:** A missions resource website *globalvault.ca*.

**Great Commission:** The command given in Matthew 28:19-20 in its fullest, and in the other three Gospels and Acts 1:8, to go into all the world and make disciples of every ethnic group.

**H**

**Home assignment:** A period of time, often months or a year, that international workers spend back in their passport country between overseas terms of service.

**Home Missions:** Gospel activity and outreach in the homeland of the worker.

**Home Service:** A two-year evaluated ministry period usually in Canada prior to overseas missions deployment.

**I**

**Incarnation:** A theological term referring to God becoming man and living on earth in the person of Jesus.

**Islam:** A major world religion founded by the prophet Muhammad in the 7th century.

**L**

**Lay leadership:** Non-ordained church leaders.

**Leadership development:** Training and equipping leaders.

**Least-Reached People Groups (LRPG):** Are defined by distinct language, culture, and/or identity where less than 2% are evangelical in faith and less than 5% have any expression of Christian faith.

**M**

**Minister-at-Large:** An unassigned minister in a denomination.

**Mission, The:** This term is used to refer to the foreign sending agency in a particular country. The Mission brings resources into a country, both human and financial, for its Kingdom purposes.

**Mission (foreign) field:** A specific target area of gospel engagement.

**Missions Board:** A denominational committee overseeing missions work.

**Missionary-at-Large:** A category for unassigned missionaries (licensed international workers).

**Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF):** A mission agency that provides air service and communication technology in isolated parts of the world, primarily to serve the church and missions.

**Missions (or Missionary) Conference (Convention):** A church-hosted series of meetings focussing on missions, with reporting and challenge to engage.

**MK school:** A boarding school for the children of international workers. MK stands for “missionary kid.”

**N**

**National Church, The:** A term used to describe the local in-country body of believers that The Mission has brought into existence through Holy Spirit inspired evangelistic and church planting strategies.

**Nyack College:** A missionary training school founded by A.B. Simpson, in Nyack, NY.

**P**

**PEDIM:** The theological education by extension program of lay training in Burkina Faso. Maranatha Institute's Decentralized Education Program (PEDIM for short, the acronym in reverse).

**Prayer Walking:** The practice of praying while walking through a neighbourhood.

**S**

**SEAN Program:** An acronym for Seminario Anglicano, later changed to Studies by Extension for All Nations. The SEAN program is a series of non-formal educational manuals on the Book of Matthew, originally developed

in Argentina and Chile by evangelical Anglican churches, and used by Theological Education by Extension (TEE) programs in Latin America and now in over seventy countries.

**SIL:** Summer Institute of Linguistics; a ministry of Wycliffe Bible Translators

**Silk Road Region:** A Canadian C&MA defined region that encompasses Europe, Middle East and Central Asia.

## T

**Term:** A period of time that an international worker is on mission somewhere; often this is a four-year term, but it can also be a one-year or two-year term.

**Theological Education by Extension (TEE):** A non-formal theological training methodology that brings the teacher, usually weekly, to a group of lay leaders out where they are in ministry. TEE appeared in the mission world in the early 1960s as a response to rapid church growth and the need for leaders. It became an alternative to centralized, residential theological education.

## U

**Unreached People Group (UPG):** Are defined by distinct language, culture and/or identity where there is no access to the Gospel and no internal adherence or expression of Christian faith. The

C&MA prefers the term least-reached people group with a statistical description because of the confusion as to when a people group is considered reached.

## V

**Vision tour:** Usually a trip to a mission field or country to learn about and understand mission work in that environment.

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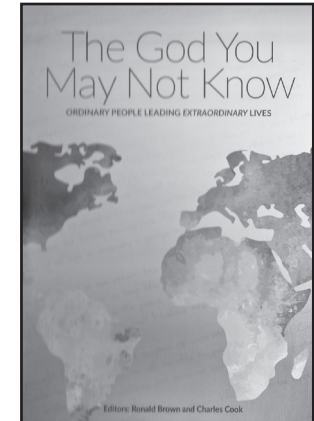
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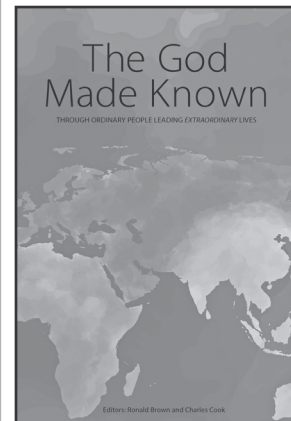
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