

Unfinished

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The new face of the Church

Journey inside the cultures fast becoming centers for world Christianity

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Our vision: The Cross of Christ within arm's reach of everyone in the world;

Our mission: To facilitate obedience to the Great Commission by the Body of Christ;

Our strategy: To create self-reproducing, indigenous, discipling Christian communities by mobilizing cross-cultural witnesses for Christ in partnership with nationals.

Cover photo by Heather Mathews

BRISTOL HOUSE

Your Partner in Discipleship



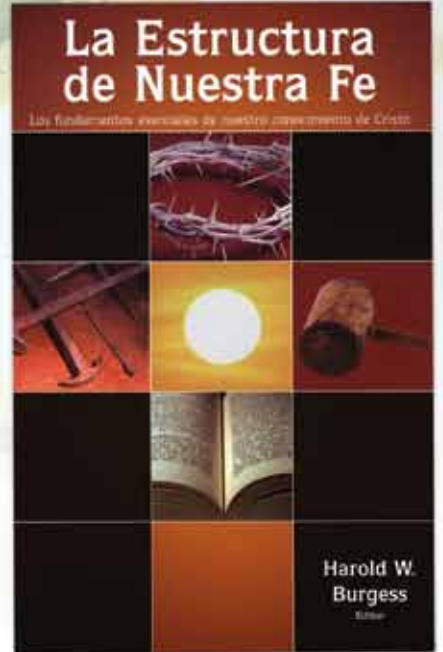
OUR FAITH TODAY
April 2006

Leading United Methodists Answer Your Questions

Q Why should Christians read the Old Testament?
A The simple answer to the same question that readers of the last chapter of Today's *Word and Power* need to read the rest of the book. We use the word *chapter* with enjoyment, but we skip the real meaning and significance of that last chapter only if we have read what leads up to it. The same is true for the New Testament: it is the conclusion to a book which begins in Genesis. The only church continued this when they came to call the post-Christ writings the "New Testament." They were saying that this was the second part of a nation—the second part of a nation—the "New Testament."

Q Why do we pray in Jesus' name?
A As the youngest child in my family (and the only boy) I didn't always get my way. In essence my older sisters, I could always say, "But Mom said so," then involving an authority my sisters recognized. But both out if ever I said "mom's name" in vain, choosing something shows her that was contrary to her character or her will for us kids. Dallas Willard in *The Divine Conspiracy* defines prayer as a conversation with God about matters of eternal concern. It's telling God what's important in our lives and listening to what God wants in our lives. To pray in Jesus' name is to proclaim that Jesus has the final authority over our requests and desires in our relationship with God. We are submitting to his authority and power because his name is significant to his character. It's appropriate to the person in the Lord's Prayer: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." When Jesus said out of 72 disciples, they reported that "even the devils submit to us in your name" (Luke 10:17). The name of Jesus is powerful in making God's Kingdom real in our world today.

Q Why is it so important to be a church?
A When we consider the New Testament we find that



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Harold W. Burgess

OUR FAITH TODAY

THIS MONTHLY BULLETIN INSERT answers questions about United Methodist practices, the Scriptures, personal and social holiness and more. A new section, written by **The Mission Society** staff, offers informative and inspiring stories from around the world.

Mission Society President and CEO, Philip Granger, says, "This bulletin insert is a way to minister to your congregation as you seek to offer the love and message of Jesus Christ in your own community and in communities at the ends of the earth."

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Becoming like little children

Under the Father's loving care, His children can do things that last

My wife, Sue, and I are blessed to have four wonderful grandchildren. Our son, Randy, and his wife, Susan, have two boys – four-year-old Austin and two-year-old Brandon. Our daughter, Candace, and her husband, Brian, have two girls – two-year-old Isabella and one-year-old Kaitlan. To say we love those four children is an understatement. Sue and I never miss an opportunity to tell them how much we love them and to give them big hugs and kisses.

I guess the message of our love is getting through to our grandchildren. Last week Candace was upset over something Isabella had done and put her in “time out.” Bella (as we call her) looked at her mom and announced that she was going to go live with “Pawpaw” (me). Now Candace and her family live in Akron,

Ohio, while Sue and I live in Atlanta, Georgia. Candace asked Bella how she planned to get to Pawpaw’s, and Bella said she would go in the car. When asked how she would go in the car since she couldn’t drive, Bella said very confidently that Pawpaw would come get her. Obviously, she had no doubt that her Pawpaw would be there for her no matter what.

All in the family

While this story touched my heart, it also started me thinking. Our God wants that same kind of relationship with all of His children. He wants all of us to know that no matter what we have done wrong, no matter what comes at us in life, He will be there unconditionally. When you read the biblical witness, you see time and time again how God wants us to be

in an ongoing relationship with Him. He wants to be our Father and each of us to be His children. Furthermore, much of the Bible is spent teaching how we should love and care for each other – how we should treat one another as family, regardless of our ethnicity, language, social position, etc. The picture of the new heaven and new earth in Revelation is full of images of all of God’s people joined as one (like a family) around the throne of God.

As I read my morning newspaper and listen to the evening news, I come face to face with the reality that the world does not understand nor experience the truth of God’s unconditional love and His desire that we should live together as one. And with each year that passes, I become more and more convinced that the

“Much of the Bible is spent teaching how we should love and care for each other – how we should treat one another as family, regardless of our ethnicity, language, or social position.”



solution to the world's problems is not found in politics, war, or money. The problems of the world will be solved only when the Prince of all creation sits on the throne of each of our hearts.

Often people ask me, "Why does The Mission Society do what it does?" "Why do the missionaries do what they do?" "Why do you do what you do?" It's because what we do collectively in the name of Jesus makes a lasting difference in this world. Remember Paul's words to the Church in Corinth: "Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (*1 Cor. 15:58, NRSV*). Power is fleeting. Wealth is fleeting. This world we hang onto and idolize is fleeting. The only investment that is worthwhile is the investment we make of ourselves in the Kingdom of God.

In this issue of *Unfinished* you will read about people in China and throughout Africa – members of God's family – who are making lasting differences in the name of Jesus. Thank you for the investments you make through your prayers and your gifts. Your labor is not in vain. It will last through eternity. ✠

The Rev. Dr. Philip R. Granger, *The Mission Society president and CEO, is an elder in the North Indiana Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.*

Join us in The Mission

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

INCARNATION

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

INTEGRITY

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

PASSION

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

PEOPLE

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

PARTNERSHIP

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

PRAYER

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



Eyes on China

Meet one of Christianity's newest superpowers

Olympic hopefuls are not the only ones with their eyes on China. The ancient Asian dynasty is today front and center, "striding onto the global stage and acting like a nation that very much intends to become the next great power," says *Time* magazine, which earlier this year declared this to be "China century." *Time* has plenty of company in its assessment. Projections have long been that the 21st century would belong to Asia, particularly China.

While China is increasing in prominence, so is the Church there. Some estimate that as many as 10 percent of China's 1.3 billion people are followers of the Christian faith. "If recent trends continue," observes journalist and professor Marvin Olasky, "the major religious story of the 21st century will be China's becoming the global center of evangelical Christianity."

The Mission Society commissioned its first missionary to this ancient nation in 1993. The following is an interview with one of our missionary couples there (unnamed for security reasons). "We ask people to pray that God will send a flood of His Holy Spirit over China," they offer. "We know He's already there." They share here about the signs of God's presence among the people of this increasingly powerful nation.



What has surprised you the most about China?

We've been here only 19 months, so our impressions are fairly new. But the biggest surprise for me was learning that life in Communist China is not the militaristic, fearful existence I thought it would be. I've learned that when you get to know the Chinese, you realize they are sweet, very humble people. They desire much of the same things we do. Most of their desires are simply to live a life, to get joy out of it and to have peace in it. They are probably most focused on peace, although those in the city now, who live in the midst of an increasingly capitalistic economy, are also looking for the "good life"; they're looking for joy.

You mentioned that the Chinese are very focused on peace. Can you say more about that?

The Chinese have a long history of upheavals, difficulties, and struggles. So finding peace is important to them. In fact, there are a couple of words they use. Their everyday word for peace is *ping jing*, and it basically means to them: If I can get everything in my external world

in a good place, then I can have internal peace. But the focus is on making sure everything is just right.

One of the things that is very important to the Chinese is "saving face"—making sure that they don't embarrass someone else, and making sure that they themselves don't get embarrassed in their relationships. Saving face is part of their trying to make sure that everything in their external world (in this case, relationships) is okay, so they can be at peace inside.

You see this same thing in the United States. We run here and there and everywhere, trying to make sure that the boss is happy, that the family is happy, that everything is going okay, so that at some point, we can take a deep breath and say, "Okay, now I'm at peace."

So Americans and Chinese desire the same thing, but their methods of attaining it are different. In situations where Americans would be very frank and blunt, the Chinese will bend over backward to avoid pointing out that you might have made a mistake, even a little mistake. In fact, I've talked with a businessman who came from the States and is working with the Chinese.

He told me that after a presentation, when he asks if there are any questions, no one will ask a question. They fear that in asking, they will be an embarrassment to themselves, or that their question will embarrass the instructor for not having taught well enough. The Chinese practice of "saving face" is so that there is not that embarrassment, essentially so that there's no emotional tension in relationships, because they are very focused on external peace.

The Chinese have another word for peace, but it's not a common word. It's more of a Christian word, so to speak. The word is *ping an*. You can find this in Scripture, wherever there is reference to peace that is internal, regardless of what is happening on the outside. It's the peace that the Apostle Paul had when he had been beaten, imprisoned, when nothing was going right. Still, Paul had such a peace that he sang praises. *Ping an* is the kind of peace that Peter had that allowed him to actually walk on water.

How do the Chinese pursue that type of peace (*ping an*)?

Again, I'm new in the culture, but from what I can see, the Chinese are so focused

Did Ancient Chinese know about Noah?



As in all ancient cultures, the Chinese too have a story of a great flood covering the earth. The Chinese character for “big boat” or “ark” tells exactly what happened during this great flood. The character is comprised of three

parts: the left side is the symbol for “vessel” (zhou); in the upper right corner is the character for “eight” (ba); and in the lower right corner is the character for “mouth” (kou), which also means “person” or “people.” So the implied meaning of this character is “eight people in a boat.” When the ancient

Chinese wanted to come up with a character to represent a big boat, they thought of the biggest boat that existed up to that time – and that was the boat that held eight people and pairs of all the animals. This correlates precisely with the biblical story of Noah: Noah, his wife, and their three sons and their wives were the eight people who survived the worldwide deluge (Genesis 6:18, 7:7).

– excerpted from *Faith of our Fathers*, by Chan Kei Thong with Charlene L. Fu, former Beijing-based foreign correspondent for the Associated Press.

on relationships, I don't think they do nearly as much thinking about themselves as they do about the relationships they're in.

Their heavy focus on relationships is partly because, as a culture, they have had to work together in order to survive – in order to raise enough crops, etc. In America, on the other hand, our history is founded on rugged individualism – on going out into the wilderness and cutting down enough trees to make a homestead. Since the next homestead might be miles and miles away, you had to figure out how to deal with your problems mostly by yourself.

In China, with a population of more than a billion people, there is no space to go off by yourself, to “go it alone,” so everything is associated with relationship. That means, historically, thinking about themselves hasn't been really much of a consideration for the Chinese.

That's one of the changes that is occurring as the cities become more international. People are becoming much more entrepreneurial. They're now asking, “How do I get ahead,” “How can I make a better living,” “How can I make more money,” “How can I improve my job

prospects?” But even so, their thinking is still steeped pretty strongly in relationships. In other words, their thoughts might be more like: “How do I help us out?” “How do we make a step forward, or keep from stepping back in our finances?”

The Westernization of China, then, might come with (or appear to come with) Westernized worldview (i.e., individualism). Is it causing other difficulties as the Chinese are taking on a different way of thinking about things?

It really is changing a lot about China and a lot about the Chinese culture. It's so new that I don't think that it's had a pronounced change on the people as a whole. But you are certainly seeing an international flavor moving into the cities. In many ways I don't care for that. And that's surprising to me. Before I moved to China, I would have thought, “Yes, the more American you can become, the greater it will be for you, because then you'll have freedoms, and you will have choices and can do what you want to do.” And some of that is true. But I personally don't care for the cultural changes that

are happening, because China's people are losing some of the value of family as they move into the cities and are having to focus on themselves and how to get ahead financially. Once they do this, then they begin to enjoy the “rewards” of that, so to speak – newer accommodations, cars, fancy restaurants, etc. Again, in the past I would have said, “Well, that's great; they're at a better level of living.” But now, having spent time there, it looks a lot like just materialism, and it isn't enhancing them as people.

You said earlier that Chinese are so focused on relationships that they're hesitant to ask questions, because they are afraid of shaming themselves or another person. I wonder how you respond to that. I'm sure you want people to feel free to ask questions of you.

When I'm teaching, I tell people at the very beginning, “God is really the teacher here; I'm not. I'm hoping that He works through me, but He works through all of us. In the principles that we will teach, you need to consider your culture and see what God is wanting to do within your

The future in China

In China today there are 16 million officially registered Christians; 40,000 Protestant churches waiting to be registered, and 30,000 Catholic churches waiting to be registered. If the Church in China continues to grow, writes David Aikman, "it is almost certain that a Christian view of the world will be the dominant worldview within China's political and cultural establishment."

– **David Aikman** is former senior correspondent for *Time* magazine.



Photo by Heather Mathews

culture with respect to these particular principles." (In other words, we want God to be able to work freely without being limited by my American worldview.)

So then I'll ask them, "Is there a tendency in your culture to want to save face?" And everyone nods. And then I say, "I'm going to ask you not to save my face." They look at me confused. And I say, "If God is really going to have a free hand here, you need to be able to question me, so we can get to His truth."

Because we're working with Christian brothers and sisters who are pretty mature in their faith, they are asking questions. And they are saying, "Here is how I see this principle happening in our culture." And then they're looking at their own culture and saying, "Is this the direction that we really need to go, culture-wise?" "Does this fit with the Truth?" And sometimes it doesn't.

It's a great thing to save face – to care for another person in such a way that you wouldn't want to embarrass them. But when it's done to the extent that it may cause greater problems, they're having to look at that and say, "Okay, maybe we're

going to have to look at this on an incident-to-incident basis to see what God is wanting to do in this situation: Do I 'save face'? Or do I gently bring out that maybe there's another way of doing things that may be a little more healthy?"

That's a lovely marriage of those two ways of thinking.

Yeah. There's some great things in the Chinese culture – things I wish we had in America. The Chinese people's treatment of their parents and their grandparents (with such great respect) is very biblical. "Honor your parents," the scriptures say, and the Chinese people have that down pat. In the United States, as a country, I think we've pretty much lost that. Not on an individual basis, but in general, we don't do a lot of thinking about our parents. We [Americans] think, "They're on their own. They know how to live life, and they've got retirement and social security, so they're fine." For the Chinese, in some ways, their children are their "social security," because their children will care for them in their old age, when they're not able to make a living.

And that gets into the whole issue of the one-child policy. The reason the Chinese want boys is because the boys are the ones who support the parents. So let's say you have a girl. She will get married. Then she and her husband will support his parents. And if the couple has the opportunity, then they might be able to also help the girl's parents. That means, if you only have a girl, you fear for your future. That's the traditional Chinese mindset anyway.

The situation wasn't that much different in America if you lived on the farm. It was believed that boys could handle raising crops, moving animals around, and doing all the harder labor. So if you lived on a farm, you certainly wanted to have a few boys.

With China's one-child policy, you get one shot (although there are some exceptions to that). And according to the traditional Chinese thinking, when you only get one shot, you want to make it count, and a boy counts more than a girl.

Is the one-child policy still pretty much intact, or is it changing?

I think the government is looking at how they can loosen or change that policy.

Signs of understanding of one, true God discovered in ancient Chinese texts

2006 book release touts that the Chinese worshipped a monotheistic, Old Testament-style God long before they encountered Buddhism or Islam.

The rapid growth of the Church in China is one of the startling trends in Christianity in the 21st century. But the millions of Chinese believers who are accepting the Truth of the Gospel are not embracing a “Western religion” planted by missionaries. Rather, says author Chan Kei Thong, they are rediscovering the story of God that has been a constant presence in China’s history and culture for more than four millennia.

Chan Kei Thong’s book, *Faith of Our Fathers: God in Ancient China*, is the result of research and study of the most ancient Chinese historical texts. In it, Thong establishes that the earliest Chinese form of worship was in veneration of a monotheistic God recognizable by His attributes as the God Yahweh of the Old Testament. This God, known as Shang Di, is the one for whom the famed Temple of Heaven in Beijing was built. It was here that Chinese emperors through the centuries offered the annual sacrifices in ceremonies that parallel rituals related to blood covenants in the Old Testament. These imperial ceremonies suggest an understanding of the problem of sin, of the need for salvation, and of the inability of any sacrifice to fulfill God’s judgment.

Through the retelling of some of the most significant stories in China’s history, the 2006 release *Faith of Our Fathers* reveals God’s guiding hand upon the Chinese people from the beginning of their existence. The Chinese language reflects knowledge of the first events of human history as told in the Bible. Even the early name the Chinese people used for their

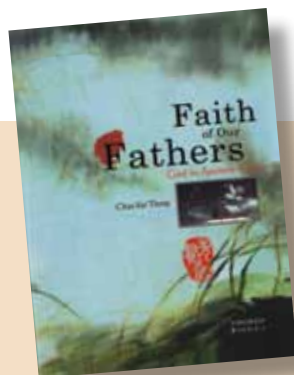
country is revealing: Shen Zhou, which means God’s Country.

David Aikman, former Beijing bureau chief for *Time* magazine and author of *Jesus in Beijing*, writes: “In *Faith of Our Fathers*, Chan Kei Thong reveals a persistent thread of Chinese theistic longing that parallels in a remarkable way the search of ancient Israel for a covenant with the true God. He also demonstrates that Chinese classical literature is entirely

consistent with Christian revelation. This book is already having a profound impact in China in a Chinese version. Everyone interested in Christianity in China should read it.”

Faith of Our Fathers: God in Ancient China, by Chan Kei Thong with Charlene L. Fu, Beijing: Dong Fang Publishing House/China Publishing Group, 327 pp., ISBN 7801865065, \$23.10 (This book may be purchased through the authors’ website.)

The story of a monotheistic God “has been a constant presence in China’s history and culture for more than four millennia,” says author Chan Kei Thong.



Faith of Our Fathers follows Chan Kei Thong’s own personal journey of discovery. He comes to realize that when he accepted Shang Di, the God of the Old Testament, as Lord (despite rejection from family and friends), he was, in fact, choosing to worship alongside China’s most venerated ancients!

Histories line up

Imperial Chinese astronomers logged interesting parallels to Jesus' birth and death

	Chinese History	Hebrew History
5-4 B.C	Comet in Alpha Aquilae recorded by imperial astronomers	Birth of Jesus Christ
A.D. 31	Major solar and lunar eclipse recorded by imperial astronomers, halo follows three days later	Death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

– excerpted from comparative timeline from *Faith of our Fathers* by Chan Kei Thong with Charlene L. Fu

China has a huge problem. They have 1.3 billion people. And there's no way that you can get 1.3 billion people to a moderate level of living – a middle class, so to speak. China has huge numbers of poor who go hungry and who do not receive medical treatment. It's not that the government doesn't want them to have that care. We have a problem with poverty in the States, too. If we can't end poverty with the population that we have, think what an issue China has.

So the Chinese government has tried to deal with their population issue through the one-child policy, but that's [led to] a culture of wanting boys versus girls. Now, we're coming to a time (during the next generation) when there will not be enough girls to marry the number of boys there will be. So it [the one-child policy] will create some pretty significant changes in the Chinese culture in the next couple of decades, because of the difference in numbers between boys and girls.

You have mentioned some things about Chinese culture that you admire (and wish we had in the United

States), specifically the high regard Chinese hold for relationships and for the elderly. Are there other things you immediately admire about the Chinese culture?

Yes. Generally speaking, the Chinese are very hard working. It doesn't matter if they are street cleaners or executives. Part of that, again, is culture. When you have 1.3 billion people, you have to work hard to make sure you have enough money to live.

The Christian brothers and sisters we work with – goodness, they work hard. They are very focused on learning, on studying, and they take Scripture very seriously.

If you asked Chinese Christians, "Where's your Bible?" 10 out of 10 would know exactly where their Bible is. Whereas in America, we might say, "Um, I think it's upstairs." (Of course, we have so many Bibles, we don't have to really keep track of one; we'll just pick up another one.) But the Chinese are very committed to knowing Scripture and to applying it in their lives. And that's one of the ways that the Chinese may be different from us. Again, I think culture has some bearing

on this. As Americans, we have a system in place to deal with almost everything in our lives, so our day-to-day dependence on God isn't very strong. But the Chinese Christians (the ones who are not internationalized) are very much aware of their day-to-day dependence on God. They're challenging me in that regard.

What contributions to our understanding of the Gospel do you think the Chinese offer to the global Christian community?

I would go back again to relationship. We were making plans to do a year of teaching about different issues (like anger, abuse, and addiction). The next year, we would teach how to apply those issues within relationships – marriage, family, etc. But one of the workers asked, "How can you teach about issues without relationships?" And I sat back and said, "Well, you know, in this culture, this would not make sense at all." So we're re-doing the plan so that we'll look at relationships, and then deal with issues within those relationships.

So the Chinese bring the component of relationship to the Gospel. And again,



Photo by Heather Mathews

“The Chinese government has tried to deal with their population issue through the one-child policy, but that’s [led to] a culture of wanting boys versus girls. Now, we’re coming to a time (during the next generation) when there will not be enough girls to marry the number of boys there will be. So it [the one-child policy] will create some pretty significant changes in the Chinese culture in the next couple of decades.”

I say this not to put down the American culture, because our culture has been designed around individualism – blazing a trail through the country. But it is very enjoyable to see a culture with such a strong emphasis on relationship. For the Chinese, the first filter a thought or decision goes through is, “How will this affect my relationship?”

What does God seem to be doing in China?

(Laughing) Well, with 1.3 billion people, it’s very hard to say. But I’ll speak about the little corner that I can see.

Generally, the Chinese Christians know how to do evangelism very well. Most missionaries who came to China early on focused on evangelism. And I am extremely humbled by the daily lives of Chinese Christians – their boldness, and how seriously they take evangelism. They get out there, sometimes at risk to their welfare. It’s very much like looking at the Apostle Paul, who, at times, preached the Gospel at great risk.

But there hasn’t been as much of an emphasis in missionary work on

discipleship. So when it comes to dealing with anger, or addiction, or alcoholism, or abuse, they’re really not sure how to apply the Scripture to those issues as well as they would with evangelism. So a Christian will come in with past habits or problems, and the leaders will sometimes struggle with how to respond, other than to say, “Stop,” or “Don’t do that,” or “That’s not right.” They know what’s right and what’s wrong, but they don’t really know how to help a person process through those things.

The Christians we work with are very hungry to learn. Most of them are leaders in their areas, so they’re the ones being asked the questions. They ask us questions like, “What does Scripture have to say about how a Christian wife should deal with an abusive husband and father, when he’s not a Christian?” or “How does a person in an abusive situation work to change that when the abuse has become habit?”

So we’re having a great time learning together how the scriptural principles work within the Chinese culture to answer the questions of their culture. †

Christianity: A major engine for China?

“China is moving towards having the largest Christian population in the world. ... We’re not only dealing with numerical expansion, but also cultural fascination. Considerable numbers of Chinese working in academic religious studies and social studies have become intrigued by, and sympathetic to, the Christian tradition, and particularly the interweaving of theology and culture in the history of Western Europe. ... After the collapse of a strongly isolationist and top-down system, post-Cultural Revolution, after the reconstruction that followed, many Chinese people seem to have become aware of a void of motivation. ... A great many Chinese people have said Christianity is one of the major engines for social motivation and we need ways of drawing that energy into the social enterprise.”

– Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, in *China Review*, Autumn 2007



An African Renaissance

The once-termed “dark continent” is lighting new direction for Global Christianity

An interview with missionary Michael Mozley, Ph.D. student of African Studies at Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture in Ghana, West Africa

It’s not news by now: the center for global Christianity has shifted. Today, Christian conversions in the global South and East vastly outnumber those in the West.

This means that onto the Christian world’s center stage, Africa – the continent that led the way in Christian expansion for the first five centuries – has made a comeback. Its primal religious beliefs, which had once been abandoned by the Enlightenment-influenced West, are being re-examined. The voids voiced by postmodernity are finding fulfillment in African understandings of Christianity. And mission scholars and theologians are eager now to see how ancient models of African Christianity (untouched by Western thought) can inform our contemporary understanding of the Gospel.

“The demand on the African Christian scholar has increased since the onus has fallen in Africa’s lap,” notes Michael Mozley, Mission Society missionary to Ghana, West Africa. “All the southern continents – Sub-Saharan

Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia and the Pacific Islands are the dominant Christian growth areas, and responsibility falls on them to now present an adequate and scholarly theology based on their worldview and no longer on Western or European ideas,” he continues, drawing from research from Andrew F. Walls. Walls, a former missionary to Sierra Leone, is professor emeritus of the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World at the University of Edinburgh. He also teaches at Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture in Ghana, where Mozley, a native of the state of Georgia, is pursuing his Ph.D. in African Studies.

Here, Mozley (with expressed gratitude for his professors, particularly Andrew Walls and Dr. Kwame Bediako), speaks to Africa’s return to Global Christianity’s center stage.



What are some of the ways the African Church is contributing to the Global Church and to our understanding of the Christian Gospel?

Using the term “African Church” is very broad. Sub-Saharan Africa is where Christianity is exploding. And the places where the Church is growing are often where the African indigenous churches were not disciplined by any formal, Western theological teaching. In other words, these African churches may have begun when a mainline denomination (maybe Presbyterian, or Methodist, or Anglican) brought in the basic message of Christianity, but once Christianity was introduced, it was fully embraced by the people as their own. Christianity is akin to African primal belief systems; biblical teachings and concepts are also primal

African concepts. For example, Africans have always believed in a supreme being; they’ve known about good and evil, about the importance of relationship and of community. Christianity took deep

Christianity in Africa
 1900 – 8.7 million Christians
 1962 – 60 million Christians
 1970 – 120 million Christians
 1998 – 330 million Christians
 2006 – 350 million Christians
 By 2025 – 600 million Christians

root, and the African Church has grown in places where there exists an indigenous understanding of the Gospel.

Primal is golden

Although the primal religions are often dismissed by the West as primitive, the primal worldview has affinity with the biblical worldview and plays a major role in the spread of the Gospel, says one of Africa’s leading theologians, Dr. Kwame Bediako. “We are living in a period in Christian history,” he offers, “when African Christianity is increasingly recognized as a most significant component of the Christian faith worldwide.” Bediako, one of Mozley’s professors, is the rector of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Ghana, West Africa.

It is significant for us to understand what Africa “brings to the table” with regard to our understanding of the Gospel. In the West, a postmodern person’s view of Christianity may likely have been influenced by television evangelists and others who, even though they may have done great work, may have also scarred Christianity and presented it as something it isn’t. So Christian terms that we use in the West to talk about our faith (like “born again” and “salvation”) may have lost their significance for people of our generation, especially if we’re trying to reach out to people of the Islamic faith.

How, for example, do we communicate our beliefs with Muslims, when they already think of Christians as infidels? A Muslim worldview is more

Mission Society missionaries serving in Africa

The Mission Society began sending missionaries to Ghana in 1985. Today, Mission Society missionaries serve in four African nations.



GHANA

Erica Beeles

Erica uses her background in child development to home-school Caylor Gongwer, daughter of fellow missionaries, and works in the local community in various ways.



Reid & Lola Buchanan

Reid and Lola coordinate the Community Health Evangelism (CHE) program in rural villages and provide mobile nutrition centers to areas lacking access to medical care.

akin to an African worldview. If we were to try to communicate with an African Muslim about the nature of God using terminology that comes out of various African traditional languages, the comprehension might be much clearer than if we just came in and said, “Are you born again?” “Have you been saved?” For example, the Akan word for “to believe in” literally translated means “to take and eat.” That’s more significant and relevant in a conversation with a Muslim (or even a postmodern) than some of the phrases we typically use.

What I’m talking about here is the translatability of the Gospel. Dr. Kwame Bediako emphasizes strongly the significance of the “translatability” factor, which is influencing much of the Christian growth in sub Saharan Africa. (Bediako holds two Ph.D. degrees, one in French, one in African Theology, so he understands relationships between language and theology.) The translatability of the Gospel is powerful, because there is richness in the indigenous translation that is lost in the Western belief system, but you begin to recapture some of this depth and richness as the Gospel is translated into indigenous languages and viewed through other cultures.

Can you talk more about why the “translatability of the Gospel” is so significant for the Global Church?

In Christian history, we view Hebrew and Greek as sacred languages. They are sacred in the fact that God used these languages to communicate His Gospel. But they are only cultural languages. I think we’ve missed this, and it is important as we look toward the future. The reason that Christianity spread from Jerusalem to Antioch and to the utter most parts of the earth was because Greek was prolific. God used Greek as the lingua franca – the most common and dominant language of the people – to spread the Gospel out from that area. But as the Gospel traveled out in Greek and Hebrew, it didn’t remain solely in those languages. Calvin translated the Old and New Testament into French and that is when the Christian faith exploded in the country of Gaul [modern France and Belgium]. Martin Luther translated the Scripture from Latin into German, which gave birth to the Protestant Reformation.

As the Gospel is translated into other cultures and languages, there are so many rich, gold nuggets that begin to emerge. I did a study about a woman in Ghana named Afua Kuma. She didn’t read or write, but she understood Christianity from the stories that were passed down,

Continued on page 16



Spiritual ranks first

Missionary Claire Mozley describes a gold nugget of Africa’s worldview enriching her faith

“Since I’ve lived in Ghana, many scriptures have come alive to me. For example, take the scripture, ‘Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.’ [Eph. 6:12, NIV] Being exposed to African Christians, I’ve really begun to understand that scripture. For African Christians, the spiritual world is primary, and the material world is secondary. So Africans know a reality that is spiritual, not material. ...I’ve begun to see that our [North American] so-called ‘rational’ way of thinking – based on the material world or empirical evidence – is not necessarily the truth, or the *whole* truth.”



Margaret Buell

Margaret uses her background in videography to document the work of the Ghanaian team and to raise awareness regarding the work of God among the people of this West African nation.



Cam & Anne Gongwer

Cam serves as the physician at the Ankaase Faith Healing Hospital, and Anne coordinates the local literacy training program and oversees the development of the first library in the area.



Charlie & Mary Kay Jackson

With backgrounds in engineering, Charlie serves as a professor at the Methodist University College in Accra, and Mary Kay works with the Methodist Church-Ghana Board of Social Responsibility and Rural Development to improve the sanitation of water throughout Ghana.

Post-colonial Africa's growing Church

Why Africa's independence from the West is triggering a great boom in Christianity

Africa, the world's second-largest and second most-populous continent after Asia, has 54 countries, most of which were colonized by European nations. When colonialism ended, an interesting shift in world Christianity began. "The seed that was planted during the colonial era was a Western form of Christianity," explains anthropologist and Mission Society vice president, Dr. Darrell Whiteman. "Today, however, the grandchildren of those early converts have begun to realize that their understanding of Christianity has been informed by the West, and they are learning to live out their faith according to their own cultural context. ...The Church is growing by leaps and bounds as Christians have discovered the relevance of the Gospel for their culture." "These countries now have their own identity on the world, and Christianity – held as their own belief system – has exploded," echoes Michael Mozley, Mission Society missionary to Ghana and African studies Ph.D. student.

and she communicated her Christian understanding using images that were distinctively Ghanaian. One of the phrases she used in her poems and her prayers was "Jesus, you are the sharpening stone upon which we sharpen our cutlasses." Every culture differs in how people understand what the center of their being is. In every language there are different expressions that impact the understanding of the Gospel. That's the beauty of the translatability of the Gospel.

You said at one point that we need to understand what Africa brings to the table. In your estimation, is the African understanding of the Gospel in some ways threatening to the Western Church (in other words, is non-Western Christianity in any way threatening to the Western understanding of the Gospel)?

I don't think the West is threatened, but Africa is leading the way in Christian growth – exceeding the West, Asia, and South America. I think the West might begin to take note as it becomes more aware of this explosion in Christianity among the African peoples, and as African Christianity is shown to be more and more relevant for today's world. So that's why we say the onus is on the African Church to not let this season

pass us by, but to go really deep into the message and implications of the Gospel.

Dr. Kwame Bediako has compared the ministries of two African evangelists, William Wade Harris and Philip Quaque. Harris was born in Liberia and was educated by Methodist missionaries but felt God asking him to abandon his European clothes and ways of thinking. Harris preached and traveled barefoot throughout the Ivory Coast and Ghana and saw more than 120,000 people come to Christ. Philip Quaque was an Anglican priest who held onto the traditional, Western mindset as he preached throughout Africa. During his ministry, he saw only 400 converts to Christianity. So this example shows the difference of the impact of the Gospel when Africans are presented Christianity couched in a Western mindset as compared to an indigenous African mindset.

We realize the significance of this, and we don't want this season (when Africa is embracing Christianity as its own indigenous religion) to be just a flash in the pan. We're asking ourselves, "How can we avoid the trends that could in the next 100 years make Africa post-Christian, like the West has become today?"

It will be a challenge. Western development is a huge influencer and, in



Andrew & Juliana Jernigan
Juliana serves as the medical superintendent at the Lake Bosomtwe Clinic, where Andrew works as the clinic's administrator and also as a local pastor for the community.



Michael & Claire Mozley
Michael works with pastors in the northern region of Ghana to plant churches and provide leadership development training. He also serves as The Mission Society's regional coordinator for Africa. Claire coordinates Bible Clubs for children and trains other ministry leaders in children's ministry.



John & Bess Russell
John, an ordained pastor, serves in Wa (a northern region of Ghana) as a pastor through planting churches, leading Bible studies, and preaching. Bess is trained as a nurse and also home-schools their two children.



Kirk & Nicole Sims
Both ordained pastors in The United Methodist Church, Kirk and Nicole work with the Methodist Church-Ghana to equip others for mission outreach.



some ways, the West is winning. When you come to Accra, Ghana or Lagos, Nigeria, people want to emulate Western traditions, Western styles of dress, and Western style of worship. The West can be threatening to the African cultures. That is why we see it so crucial to not lose African values and culture. They are essential to the Christian faith.

There is a sweetness about the African culture. Africans place great value on community. They have a sense of belonging, a sense of interconnectedness among human beings, and a respect for – and a willingness to listen to – the other. The African concept is, “Bring what you have to the table and let’s talk together, and see where we’re coming from, and then let’s go from there.” This is different from a Western attitude which is often

more like, “I’ve got the answer. I’m bringing it to the table. Take it or leave it.”

I think that this sense of community and respect is one way Christianity in Africa is much more akin to what Jesus intended. African culture reminds me of John Wesley’s holy clubs, where men gathered together and asked each other deep questions: “How is it with your soul tonight?” “Have you found yourself tempted?” “Have you spent frugally.” They held themselves accountable. In African community, the same is true. An African uncle will not let his nephew or niece to run amuck; he will rein that young man or woman in. African family ties run deep; respect for elders runs deep. That’s why we feel like the onus is on Africa to seek to preserve these values – which are not solely African but also Christian.

What would you want people in the North American churches to know about the non-Western understandings of the Gospel that might be coming their way?

To the American pastor and the American churches who are seeing non-Western people show up in their churches, I’d say, “Open your eyes and listen and see, maybe God wants to speak to you about something new. Learn to experience God from a different point of view.”

Since you have been a missionary in Ghana for the past eight years, you’ve had to learn how to do that. Did you have a big *aha* moment that helped you? How would you advise others who want to learn from other cultures to have a more full understanding of the Gospel?



KENYA

Michael Agwanda

Michael, a native of Kenya, founded and oversees “Life for Children,” a ministry devoted to assisting AIDS orphans physically, spiritually, and emotionally.



Julie Campbell

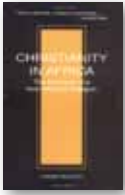
Julie, a former social worker, serves with Life for Children ministry to meet the needs of AIDS orphans in Kenya.



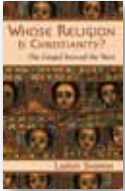
Don & Laura Dickerson

Don and Laura work with local churches to plant new congregations and to train Kenyans to serve as missionaries to other people-groups and countries.

For further reading:



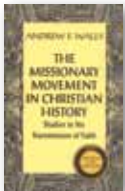
Christianity in Africa,
by Kwame Bediako



Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West,
by Lamin Sanneh



Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa,
by Kwame Bediako



The Missionary Movement in Christian History,
by Andrew Walls

My faith is strong, and how I believe in God is in many ways unshakable. For me, I think the *aha* moment has been the whole process of doing this doctoral study. I used to think that “never the twain shall meet” between Christianity and (what we’ve traditionally known as) pagan religious beliefs. But I think God wants us to find that the whole earth is full of His glory. I would say now that Christ is evident in everything that we experience – whether it’s going to a mosque, or going to a fetish priest, or going into a Hindu temple, or entering a culture that is non-Christian. God, in the person of Christ, will be evidenced if we look for Him. (This is what Wesley meant by prevenient grace. God has always had a witness in all cultures that prepares hearts for the Gospel.) So in entering a culture or new setting, I try to notice the ways in which God is already at work, and to use those observations to help introduce others to Jesus. There is only one way to God; it’s through Jesus, and Jesus can make Himself known to people in ways that we’ve never experienced. So my *aha* has been to learn to pray, “Lord, show me how you are moving among these people. Show me Yourself in the midst of this culture.” I’ve seen that God evidences Himself in cultures in many different ways.

Conveying the Gospel to people even as we walk into Wal-Mart in our own town, there’s so much to learn. I’m learning to ask questions and not give answers so quickly. I think this has been one of my lessons learned in Africa – learning to really listen to what’s being conveyed, to really hear the heart-felt cry that is being expressed, and to see how Jesus is already at work. He is the answer to that heart cry.

Since I’ve lived in Africa, my passion has grown to convey that message which is biblical, and true, and deep, and right in a relevant way to as many people as I can. I think that throughout history the Gospel has been sometimes told through the wrong filters; it has been misrepresented, often with good intentions. And I want to get it right. I think that’s why I’m in this African theological program: I want to really understand faith, to see Christianity in the context of history and where maybe we’ve missed the boat and not really understood what God intended. I want to get the message right, and I want my African compatriots to get it right as we handle this precious gift that we’ve been given to take to the world. I want that the message we offer would be the Gospel as God intended it to be conveyed. ✝



Rick & Debra Slingsluff
Rick and Debra partner with Nairobi Chapel to train pastors, reach out to the slum areas of the community, and work with children’s ministry.



Amanda Smith
Amanda, a pediatric oncology nurse, serves in Kenya through community-health outreach. She also mentors and discipled new Christians.



David Thagana
David founded Glory Outreach Assembly – a ministry which has planted 89 churches in six countries – ministers to AIDS orphans, trains ministry leaders, and discipled people in the Christian faith.



TANZANIA
Grant Miller
Grant coordinates the evangelical and medical outreaches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania among the Kami tribe, and he trains ministry leaders in the area.

Missionaries needed in new locations

Back to school: Educators, how is God calling you?

As students all over the United States are returning to school after the summer break, missionaries are returning to service in schools all over the world. Here are a few of the personnel needs at The Mission Society involving education. Is the Lord calling you to serve as an educator on the mission field? Contact us. We love hearing from you."

China

ESL teachers
Term of service: 1-5 years
Teach English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) classes at local universities in order to build relationships with national Chinese and share Christ. Previous teaching experience is not required.

Russian Far East

Pastors/theological educators
Term of service: 1-5 years
These positions offer opportunities to teach courses in the local seminary as well as seminars and conferences throughout Russia. Applicants should have pastoral experience and/or seminary-level training.

Paraguay

ESL teachers
Term of service: 6 months-5 years
Energetic, motivated self-starters are needed to teach English at a private, Christian school in a suburb of Paraguay's capital. In forming relationships with students, teachers will have opportunities to share the Gospel. Conversational Spanish would be helpful. No teaching degree is required.

Mexico

Teachers
Term of service: 1-5 years
Qualified teachers are needed for a bilingual Methodist School in Monterrey, Mexico, grades K-12. Spanish is required for some positions.

Chaplain/dorm resident assistant
Term of service: 1-5 years
The Monterrey Theology School needs a single male to serve as a chaplain and residency hall chaperone. Applicant should have prior ministry experience.

Ghana

Literacy teacher
Term of service: 6 months-2 years
Act as a teacher's assistant to missionaries teaching both English and native literacy. Students learn their own mother-tongue language's reading and writing skills while reading the Bible. Education majors and ESL teachers especially encouraged to apply.

Teachers
Term of service: 6 months-2 years
School teachers are requested for some of our missionaries' children in rural settings. Teachers will facilitate home schooling for children and assist in the missionary families' outreach through ESL or by serving in clinic or hospital settings.

Peru

ESL teachers
Term of service: 1-5 years
ESL teachers and coordinators are needed to work in a large, highly-acclaimed Methodist school in Huancayo, establishing an ESL program and leading classroom teaching.

Literacy teachers
Term of service: 3 months-5 years
Act as a teacher's assistant to missionaries teaching both English and native literacy. Students learn their own mother-tongue language's reading and writing skills while reading the Bible. Education majors and ESL teachers are especially encouraged to apply.

Theology professors
Term of service: 2-4 weeks a year
Persons capable of teaching theology courses to missionary students in a Bachelor of Arts program are needed. Intensive courses are taught during the months of January/ February and August/September in the cities of Lima and Huancayo. Master's degree is required. Classes offered include: Theology, Christology, Intro to the New Testament, The Gospels, Hebrew, and Greek.

If you are interested in these or other positions, please contact The Mission Society. Visit us at www.themissionsociety.org or call 1.800.478.8963, ext. 9025.





An incredible journey

From parliament to prison, this missionary family knows the secret of facing abundance and need

What would take the daughter of the president of Congo's parliament and the son of Congo's state treasurer along with their family from Congo to New England, then to Cameroon, then to Augusta, Georgia, and finally to Togo in West Africa? Esaho and Beatrice Kipuke would answer that it is simply the calling of God. When you submit yourself to God, there is no telling where He might take you!

When Esaho and Beatrice were married, her father was the head of the Congolese parliament. Esaho was a pastor, but also had a job as general secretary to the parliament. This exposed him to lots of goings-on in the government. He spoke out against injustice and corruption, which caused him to spend some time in prison. Even after his release, he found out that he was a marked man. So he fled to the United States and later was joined by his wife and four children.

After several years of living in New England and serving as a pastor there, the

Kipukes went to Cameroon to serve as missionaries. While in Cameroon, they heard of a student in a local seminary who needed help traveling back to his home country of Togo, West Africa. Esaho organized help, was able to get the student home, and soon forgot the incident.

The Kipukes had a successful ministry in Cameroon for several months before they had to return to the United States. That's when things became difficult. Now unemployed and living in Atlanta, they were forced to leave their apartment with nowhere to go. What a change from being so connected with the parliament in their home country! It reminds me of the Apostle Paul's statement that he was acquainted with both abundance and need (Phil 4:12).

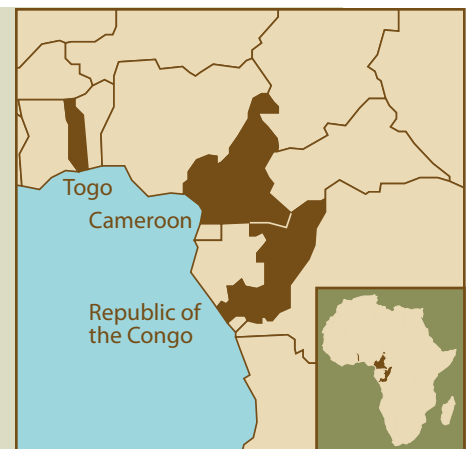
While exploring the possibilities for mission months earlier, the Kipukes had contacted The Mission Society. Now, with no one else to call and literally standing outside with all their belongings, they called The Mission Society for

help and were given a place to stay. They soon attended candidate week and were approved as missionaries. Lewis Memorial United Methodist Church in Evans, Georgia provided housing for them. Esaho later accepted a professor position at a college in Augusta, Georgia, in order to provide for his family.

Esaho and Beatrice explored various possibilities. During a visit to The Mission Society's work in Ghana, Esaho visited neighboring Togo, which, like Congo, is French-speaking. He found that the leader of the Methodist Church was the same student he had helped years ago in Cameroon. This relationship opened the door for Esaho to begin building a ministry in Togo. He was determined to establish a ministry prior to moving there, in order to demonstrate to potential partners his commitment to this effort. "As a native of Africa," Esaho observes, "it is a challenge to build trust within U.S. churches." Today, he has



Originally from the Republic of the Congo, the Kipuke family serves as Mission Society missionaries to Togo, West Africa, supported by churches in the United States.



helped initiate a church-planting movement in northern Togo. Recently his ministry was given land by the government to provide a place for training of local pastors and evangelists.

Esaho has continued to teach full time in Augusta while managing the ministry in Togo. Yet he knows that long term, he and his family will need to live in Togo among the people.

During their time in Augusta, the Kipukes became involved with Trinity on the Hill United Methodist Church, who took

a special interest in the Kipukes and the ministry in Togo. Trinity UMC continues to partner with Esaho and Beatrice by supporting the work in Togo, visiting the ministry, providing counsel and prayer, and introducing them to other potential ministry partners. The Augusta congregation is presently working with the Kipukes and The Mission Society to build the support-base needed to help Esaho and Beatrice move to Togo permanently by the end of 2008. (Readers interested in knowing more about the Kipukes' ministry may con-

tact The Mission Society at 800.478.8963 or www.themissionsociety.org.)

Like Esaho and Beatrice, all of God's people should be prepared to do whatever and go wherever God may ask. As we do, as we obediently surrender ourselves to Him, we experience the peace that comes from His faithfulness and His constancy in every setting. †

After 10 years on the mission field in Central Asia, **Jim Ramsay** now serves as The Mission Society's director of field ministry.



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Sudan Mission Outreach encounters nation's desperate needs

The Mission Society partners with a Kenyan ministry to reach southern Sudan



"A 24-year civil war, which claimed the lives of more than two million Sudanese and displaced an additional four million, ended just recently."

Glory Outreach Assembly (GOA), a Kenyan ministry and partnering organization with The Mission Society, recently sent a delegation to the town of Juba in southern Sudan. The six-day mission was designed as an outreach to Sudan, a nation that has experienced significant struggles in recent years. From July 26-31, 2007, the six-member team, led by Bishop David Thagana, explored rural parts of Sudan and ministered among remote tribes. The mission was made possible in part through a grant provided by The Mission Society.

The Sudanese people have faced their share of hardship. A 24-year civil war, which claimed the lives of more than two million people and displaced an additional four million, ended just recently. The conflict in Darfur, the western region of Sudan, began in 2003. It is the first crisis that the U.S. government has labeled as a genocide while still in progress. So far, as many as 400,000 people have been killed and an additional two million are displaced. Eighty thousand Sudanese flooded the refugee camps during the first two months of 2007 alone.

As millions of citizens reside in refugee camps, the economic and political situation in Sudan continues to decline. Basic necessities are scarce, even for those receiving government assistance in camps. Resources for refugee camps are reportedly dwindling. Many aid workers experience harassment, assault, hijackings, and have their offices looted by both government and rebel groups. They fear that as many

as 100,000 people could die each month if the current humanitarian aid system collapses.

Unreached tribes hear the Gospel

Kenya's Glory Outreach Assembly planned the outreach to Sudan to explore possibilities of future mission work in the area. The primary focus during the trip was to teach the Global Outreach Seminar (a curriculum developed by The Mission Society*) as a means of furthering leadership development among Sudanese Christians. In addition to presenting this seminar, the primary goals of the Sudan Mission Outreach included assessing the need for other leadership development training projects, expanding GOA's ministry outreach to southern Sudan, and exploring opportunities for Kenyan Christians to serve as missionaries in Sudan.

GOA has actively planted 89 churches in Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda in the past five years. Plans are now being made to plant churches in Sudan, as well as to provide other types of ministry there. The group witnessed a desperate need for schools, medical care, trauma counseling, as well as pastoral training.

Since Arabic is the primary language of Sudan, the English-speaking delegation from Kenya experienced communication issues in translating the seminar curriculum. However, God provided a translator who, after hearing the seminar,

Want to develop a mission strategy or plan a mission event in your church?

Mobilizing your church for greater outreach can begin with the Global Outreach Weekend. The Mission Society team is available to come to your church and present the six-hour **Global Outreach Seminar**, as well as to minister during your worship services on Sunday. This seminar is designed to cast a greater vision for outreach and to introduce effective means of mobilizing the entire congregation.

In addition, two essential strategies that are taught in the Global Outreach Seminar are now being presented in a more in-depth interactive workshop format:

Equipping Short-Term Mission Leaders

December 7-8, 2007

Norcross, GA

This interactive training will equip leaders to develop and execute an effective short-term missions plan, and to train and disciple the members of your short-term mission teams.

Cost is \$30 per person.

Conducting a Global Impact Celebration

April 11-12, 2008

Norcross, GA

This workshop will equip church leaders to plan, promote, and execute an annual high-impact missions celebration event in your local church.

Cost is \$30 per person.

For more information and to register online, visit us at www.themissionsociety.org or contact us at 1.800.478.8963 ext. 9046 or cm@themissionsociety.org.



volunteered to translate the material into Arabic in order for it to be taught in other areas of Sudan.

The GOA team ministered among the Tenet and Lopit tribes who have virtually no Christian witness among them. After preaching a sermon, Bishop Thagana offered an invitation to accept Christ as Lord, and 20 people responded. While many organizations label southern Sudan as “Christian,” only around five percent of the population of Sudan follows Christ. An additional 25 percent adhere to animistic beliefs. An estimated 70 percent of the population is Muslim and primarily lives in the northern regions of the nation.

Glory Outreach Assembly, with the help of The Mission Society, is working to provide ministries that meet the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of the southern Sudanese. Through organizing future mission outreaches, offering educational opportunities, and planting churches, GOA hopes to serve as a light in a nation that has experienced so much pain. ☩

*The Global Outreach Seminar is taught in dozens of churches in the United States and internationally each year. For more information, see adjacent sidebar (on this page) and pages 24-25.

Reed Hoppe is The Mission Society's online editor and a commissioned deacon in the Alabama-West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church.



Connecting local churches to the world

Our church ministry team discusses how The Mission Society serves local congregations

What is the history of The Mission Society's church ministry department?

Stan: We began in 2000. The Mission Society, which launched in 1984, has always partnered with local churches. More and more we began seeing the need for churches to realize their calling and to become more involved in missions. At the same time, we realized that many churches wanted to become more strategically involved in local and global outreach, but hardly knew where to start.

Global Focus (a ministry based here in Georgia) had a seminar designed to help churches better focus on outreach. So we became a ministry partner with Global Focus by offering that seminar to local churches within our constituency. In 2002, we saw a great need for this type of training internationally. Because we did not own the rights to offer this seminar internationally, we developed our own product, which we now call the Global Outreach Seminar. Shortly thereafter, we began using that as the basis for our own U.S. seminar. (It is the seminar that we currently teach.) In 2006, The Mission Society underwent a re-branding process, and the ministry that had been known as World Parish Ministries became simply the Church Ministry department of The Mission Society.

What changes have been most significant in the past seven years in this department?

Doug: As we taught the Global Outreach Seminar and listened to the needs expressed by local church leaders, we saw a definite need for training that

went beyond the six-hour seminar.

We have added to our offerings three workshops on the topics of how to lead short-term mission trips, how to conduct an annual missions conference, and how to develop a global outreach plan.

Roger: We have become more effective in serving the local churches in the Midwest by opening a regional office in Indiana in 2005. This intentional step to decentralize our Church Ministry staff allows us to build deeper relationships with more pastors and be closer to the local church.

Stan: In addition, I think our move into the international arena (led by Dick McClain, our vice president, and by Bill Johnson, a member of our advisory team) has been hugely significant. Local churches in other parts of the world that viewed themselves as receivers of the Gospel message are now seeing themselves as bearers of that same message to their people and to groups, tribes, and peoples of other cultures.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of partnering with the local church?

Doug: For me, it is seeing so many regular church members become personally involved and energized about their place in missions for the first time.

Roger: Without question, the most rewarding aspect for me, a missions mentor, is to watch individuals connect with their unique life calling/purpose, perhaps for the first time in their spiritual journey. To watch someone be transformed into a purposeful disciple who is passionate about life and serving Jesus in his or

her home and career is a great privilege.

Stan: Well, I am fortunate in that I often get to work up-close and personal with the local church in both a teaching and mentoring capacity. It is exciting for me to see churches experience phenomenal changes because of a greater focus on global outreach. For example, in one year's time, I have seen churches undergo a 10-fold or more increase in giving to missions. At the churches where we've helped organize a Global Impact Celebration, altars are packed sometimes eight or nine rows deep at the closing ceremony with people committing to serve on the church's mission team, or to serve in short-term or full-time missionary service. Many churches find that the impact of increased mission involvement influences the church in a variety of ways. In fact, I know of several churches that have seen their general budget go from red to black while missions giving increased. Some churches find the number of volunteers increase, not only for missions, but also in all other departments of the church. To sum it up, I would say what is rewarding to me is seeing God work in local churches as they align their priorities with His.

Are there any frustrations you experience?

Beverly: All of us would say that the reason we engage in missions is not because we work for The Mission Society. We work for The Mission Society because we have long been engaged in missions. So I get frustrated sometimes when other church programs squeeze out missions,

and when church leaders ignore, to some extent, the Great Commission and leave that up to someone else.

Roger: When I see leaders and churches caught up in a survival mode, thus, missing the fun and fulfillment of the biblical principle of “blessed to be a blessing” to others.

Stan: The real frustration for me is that there are still 1.8 billion people who have virtually no access to the Gospel. Local churches acting independently but with unity of purpose are the entities God has chosen to accomplish His mission in the world. That is why the Church Ministry department exists. We are committed to being a primary resource for the local church as it fulfills its God-given calling. †

Stan Self is the sr. director of church ministry.

Doug Cozart is the director of operations.

Roger Wright is the Midwest regional director.

Beverly Mancuso is the administrative coordinator.

Missionary itineration

Connecting churches with missionaries

Among the resources The Mission Society offers local congregations is its department of missionary itineration. Its purpose is to connect missionaries with local churches in order to (1) establish a support-base for prayer and financial provision for the missionaries’ ministries; (2) encourage the Body of Christ with reports of God’s work in the world.

To schedule a missionary or missions speaker, you may call **800.478.8963, ext. 9027**, email itineration@themissionsociety.org, or visit our website at

www.themissionsociety.org/go/itineration.

Debbie Finney is the itineration coordinator.

Mission representatives

Connecting people to The Mission Society

- “When they asked me to lead our mission committee, I thought of you.”
- “We are looking for a mission project for our VBS.”
- “How can we involve more members of our congregation in our mission efforts?”
- “How might we begin sending short-term teams?”
- “A member of my congregation feels called to serve overseas. How do I connect him/her with The Mission Society?”

Mission representatives are volunteers who assist the local church in finding answers to these kinds of questions, offering Mission Society resources designed to help with visioning, planning, and accomplishing the unique Great Commission ministry the Lord has in mind for each congregation.

Thirty-nine mission representatives currently serve in their local areas. The list includes homemakers and college professors, seminary staff, and business people, retired and active pastors, and former missionaries – all united by a passion to mobilize people and resources to reach those still waiting to hear the Good News.

Whether found at a conference by a display of The Mission Society, standing in a pulpit, visiting with a mission committee, meeting with a potential missionary, on the phone, or at the computer, the goal of the mission representative is to serve. Missionaries frequently rely on mission representatives to connect them with interested churches and individuals (and sometimes for overnight hospitality as they travel).

For many people, a mission representative is their introduction to The Mission Society. The nearest mission representative may be located (by state) on The Mission Society website: www.themissionsociety.org/go/MReps

Have a passion for missions?

You can serve the Lord through The Mission Society as a volunteer mission representative. Contact cm@themissionsociety.org for more information.

Johanna Stahl is the mission representative manager.

With the good news of Jesus, The Mission Society missionaries and their families minister in 32 nations around the world. We offer their names here. How we thank you for your prayers for them!

The Mission Society missionaries:

Michael Agwanda, Otto Arango, Ari Arfaras, Sandra August, Ed & Linda Baker, Jose & Audrey Banales, Hank Barkholz, Erica Beeles, Jim & Angela Beise, Mark & Leslie Benton, Rose Blank, Liz Boggess, Reid & Lola Buchanan, Margaret Buell, Debra Buenting, Doug & Brooke Burns, Julie Campbell, John & Sandra Carrick, Chris & Sue Champion, Charlie & Miki Chastain, Amantha Claxton, Jennie Clements, Cathy Coburn, David & Carol Cosby, Patrick Cummings, Adam & Jennifer Dalenburg, Tim & Daina Datwyler, Don & Laura Dickerson, Christian & Angelica Dickson, Caren Dilts, Billy & Laurie Drum, John & Colleen Eisenberg, Sue Fuller, Dan Godwin, Cam & Anne Gongwer, James & Barbara Gray, Dave & Beth Greenawalt, Alicia Grey, Rebecca Griffith, Justin Grogg, Florencio & Maria Guzman, Charlie &

Chris Hanak, John & Katheryn Heinz, Jill Henderson, Jon & Jeanne Herrin, Neal & Mari Hicks, Ron & Bonnie Hipwell, Ronnie & Angi Hopkins, Andrew & Margaret Howell, Arthur & Mary Alice Ivey, Charles & Becky Jackson, Charlie & Mary Kay Jackson, Andrew & Juliana Jernigan, Trevor Johnston, Wilson Kendrick, Melody King, Esaho & Beatrice Kipuke, Clay & Deborah Kirkland, Sue Kolljeski, Joetta Lehman, Ash & Audra McEuen, Steve & Shannon Mersinger, Grant Miller, Mike & Claire Mozley, Katie Nash, Dondee Nations, Doug & Becky Neel, Steve Nikkel, Ron & Michelle Olson, Donald & Carol Paige, Peter & Esther Pereira, Len & Betsy Phillips, Martin & Tracy Reeves, Leon & Vicki Reich, John & Rosalie Rentz, Ben & Jenny Reyes, Ruben Rodriguez, John & Bess Russell, Wendi Schambach, Michael & Jannike Seward, Kirk & Nicole Sims, Rick & Debra

Slingluff, Amanda Smith, Mike & Valerie Smith, Nancy Stelow, David Thagana, Ron & Belinda Tyler, Bill & Beth Ury, Mark & Johanna Waltz, Tate Welling, Bill & Linda Williams, Larry Williams, Steve & Heather Wilson, Dai & Neva Wysong

In addition to those listed above, 40 missionaries serve in areas where security is an issue for Christian workers. For that reason, they remain unnamed here. Thank you for praying for these dear brothers and sisters, as they face unique challenges.

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

May we pray for you?

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

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

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

