

On **mission**

STORIES OF THOSE WHO WENT

Dirks * Bundy * Albrecht * Scarrow * Stephens * Zub
Petrescue * Irwin * Hunt * Smith * Toews * MacKinnon



VOL. 1

Compiled by Ronald Brown

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Introduction

by Ronald Brown

Sometimes it was the bedtime stories about missionaries. Sometimes it was a missionary visit to an Alliance church. A couple of times, it was a call to missions in the chapel at Canadian Bible College (CBC) in Regina, Saskatchewan. In numerous ways, God got through to these Canadians living on farms, small towns, and cities. In one case, it was the visit of our Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) Founder, A.B. Simpson, to a Toronto church that had a lasting effect. So, from all over Canada, they obediently went.

- from Regina to North Africa
- from Red Deer to Congo
- from Moncton to Argentina
- from Belleville to Ecuador
- from Saskatoon to Papua
- from Arcola to Peru
- from Toronto to Vietnam
- from Moose Jaw to Indonesia
- from Dalmeny to Gabon
- from Brockville to Vietnam
- from Mississauga to the Philippines
- from Assiniboia to Hungary

Central to most of these stories is the role of CBC, where most went for theological training. Several went on to graduate studies in other places. It is worth noting that in those days, CBC became the meeting place for young people; it was where many found their life partner with whom they would journey to the ends of the earth.

In these stories, you will also see the role of sending churches across Canada. These workers did not need to spend years raising their own personal support; they immediately qualified for funding from the central fund to which Alliance churches across Canada contribute. Today this is known as the Global Advance Fund, providing funding for travel to the venue, living allowance, children's education, etc. In a way, this book provides some accountability to both donors and those who faithfully prayed for what God did through these international workers.

We must note some vocabulary has changed over time, and so some authors will refer to their “furlough,” but today, furlough is more likely termed a home assignment designed to help them engage with local churches in their sending district. The word “term” refers to the usual four-year cycle in their country followed by one year of furlough or home assignment back in North America. Some writers have intentional vagueness if they are in creative access countries (CAC) where they cannot be precise about their activities and locations.

When most of these international workers went out to their countries of service, they were under the North America Christian and Missionary Alliance office’s mission administration in the United States. It was not until 1998 when Global Ministries of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada began administering and caring for Canadian workers.

So, what are the stories in this book trying to do? Why do people go on mission? Ultimately, it goes back to the Great Commission’s call (Matthew 28:19-20). The Church is being obedient to the heart of God, which is to see people in nations around the world given the opportunity to respond to God’s invitation to become a follower of Jesus. So, we do not tend to go where there are already many Christians and a viable church; instead, we aim to go to the least-reached peoples of our world where there is not yet a church.

Like those in this book, many went as missionary church planters; today, many go as professionals into various global marketplaces. Missionary tasks, of course, vary, as you will notice. Some missionary assignments were to evangelize, disciple, establish, and plant churches; for others, their main task was training leaders for the new churches. There were specialized ministries such as compassion and medical work; someone had to teach missionary children, and some were mission administrators. Some worked in rural areas while others were in urban centres.

The goal ultimately is to see the nations of the world worshipping their Saviour and Redeemer. God would get to hear His favourite song of all.

Thank you for your service.

Acknowledgments

This book has been a team effort. I am so grateful for the editing expertise of Shelby Keith in taking the original writings from a variety of missionary authors and transforming them into more readable chapters for us all.

I am grateful to my “fellow African” Dan Nel, who did the design work for our cover (<https://www.marula.ca>).

Gladys Thompson previously worked at The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada’s National Ministry Centre (NMC) in the Communications Department and was the project manager for the trilogy I worked on with Charlie Cook. I was thrilled when she agreed to come “out of retirement” to bring her considerable talents and experience to consulting and the formatting of the e-PDF.

The Communications Department at the NMC placed the book on their website and did promotion <https://www.cmacan.org/resources/>.

Alexis Tjart and I previously worked together for three years in the same office. She is behind the organizing and uploading of books in three languages to the Global Vault Mission Books website and has prepared this book’s formatting. <https://www.lulu.com/spotlight/globalvault>

To Shelby, Dan, Gladys, Alexis, Jared, and Matt, my sincere thank you. I love working with you.

Preface: God's Favourite Song of All

by Ronald Brown

I was driving my blue Land Cruiser along a dusty road in the Congo, on my way to visit several villages where we understood the Gospel had never yet been preached. I was with a Congolese pastor friend, and on the night I'll always remember, it was my turn to preach. The roofed shelter was crammed with about sixty people seated on benches and others standing at the back. As I spoke, one man was staring at me, listening intently.

With the Holy Spirit's anointing, I explained, as best I could in the local language, the story of Jesus coming to Earth to redeem lost people. At my invitation, he began weeping and walked quickly to the front. I was privileged to pray with him, and he entered the Kingdom of Christ. At that moment in Heaven, God's favourite song of all was being sung—a newly redeemed Congolese man started to worship his Saviour.

I began to understand God's favourite song of all some years later when I was an international worker in Brazzaville, the Republic of Congo, from 1994-1997. During those years, the Phillips, Craig, and Dean trio was popular, and one of their songs stayed with me, *Favorite Song of All*. The truth of their lyrics has now seeped into my very soul, becoming the foundation stone for this book.

The picture painted in the song is of God enjoying the sounds of His creation worshipping Him. He loves the heavenly choirs praising Him, but there are times when He asks His singing angels to tone it down, to be quiet for a while, as a newly redeemed soul begins to sing the song of the redeemed. That particular song is God's favourite song of all.

In honour of God's favourite song, this book has been put together. God has called Canadians born in places like Newfoundland, Arcola, Dalmeny, Red Deer, and beyond, who, in obedience to the call, moved to the ends of the earth to announce the good news of Jesus. Then from those places, newly redeemed women and men began to sing His favourite song of all. I can only try to imagine the grand, joyous celebrations in Heaven as lost people in Peru, Zaire, Ecuador, Egypt, Argentina, Hungary, Papua, and Vietnam heard about Jesus in their own language and responded to the redeeming message of Christ.

These twelve authors tell their stories. From Canada to the ends of the earth, they were sent by local Alliance churches, prayed for, and supported with funds

and encouraging communications. They were resilient through multiple changes and transitions caused by the ever-changing circumstances of global living. Many managed their missionary careers while raising their third-culture kids in new territory.

And during those years, God was frequently having to ‘shush’ the worshipping angels for a while as the newly redeemed peoples began to sing. You are about to read these inspiring stories.

So many times, I have listened to this recording by the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, often with tears in my eyes—God’s favourite song of all.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDsAGdPBvug>

Foreword: Pressing On

by Donna Frentz

During my first trip to North Africa in the spring of 2015, I found myself standing at the edge of a rooftop balcony overlooking a city of over a million people. The commentary provided echoed deep into my soul. “We think there may only be 20-25 local believers in this city.” I was totally overwhelmed, filled with deep sorrow. As we gazed across the landscape, minarets were visible everywhere.

Later in the day, we had dinner at the home of a worker family from Holland. As we enjoyed rich fellowship together, my eyes were drawn to the beautiful orange tree growing in their yard. It was lush and green, bearing incredible fruit affirmed by the sweet juice we drank with our meal. The words of Paul to the Galatians spoke loudly to my heart “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).

The remarkable stories you are about to read reflect Paul’s very words. People who did not become weary pressed on through challenges to be beacons of light where there was little or no gospel presence. The adventure of travelling rugged terrain, both physically and spiritually, will captivate your heart. You will also read with great joy about the harvest in many places.

Reading from the treasured journals of God’s children is thrilling. From humble Canadian roots, these servants kept taking the next steps to the farthest corners of the world. What is most incredible to notice are the people who were on the journey with them—parents, siblings, grandparents, youth leaders, pastors, prayer warriors, Sunday school teachers, and you! As part of the Alliance family, you have been intricately woven into the fabric of these God-stories through your commitment and sacrifices over the decades. Thank you. Thank you for bringing honour and glory to the Triune God, who is worthy of all praise from all nations.

I consider it an incredible privilege to witness our past stories and pray with fresh fervour into the stories being written today. There are still places in our world that need the Light of the world to shine. With deep appreciation, thank you for continuing on this journey together.

Chapter 1

Miracles in Ministry: Don and Elma Dirks

by Don Dirks

It happened on the last Sunday of October 2019. Due to unforeseen circumstances, I missed my flight out of Vancouver for Montreal on Thursday, from where I was planning to fly into Brussels and meet my son Robin the next morning. We were then going to fly together to Kinshasa, Congo. Robin went on ahead, as there were no Brussels flights I could take until Sunday. I texted Robin from Brussels; he answered that he and Pastor Phillip would meet me in the Kinshasa airport baggage area at nine in the evening.

My flight landed on time, and I hurried off toward the terminal. I was first in line to go through passport control. A kind lady greeted me, and I responded, adding, “My name is Papa Donald, I am eighty-seven years old, and I have come again from the west of Canada just to greet you,” after which I gave her a big smile. She looked at me and then down the row of customs workers at different stations, saying out loud, this man is eighty-seven years old “regardez” or, “take a look.”

Though she held my passport in her hand, she never opened it. Instead, she shook her head, making sure that some of her co-workers were seeing what was happening, and handed me my passport, saying, “Monsieur, vous êtes le bienvenu chez nous, TOUJOURS,” which means “Sir, you are ALWAYS welcome here.” I thanked her kindly and headed for the baggage area expecting to see my son in a few moments. He was nowhere in sight, and I later learned the airport’s new rule only allowed passengers in that area.

Because I had three suitcases, including several small computers, I got a baggage cart and took my place beside the baggage carousel, not at all prepared for what happened next.

A kind-looking man, who I assumed was Congolese, came into the area, looking for someone. When he saw me, he came straight towards me. Stopping right in front of me and speaking in French, he asked, “Are you, Don Dirks?”

I glanced back to the conveyor belt and did not see my bags. By the time I turned around to my new friend, he was holding a sheet of paper with my name printed in bold block letters. I responded, “Je suis papa Donald, from the west of Canada.”

Then I shook his hand; it was real flesh and blood. He said, “Je suis militaire,” which means I am a soldier or warrior, although he was nicely dressed in

civilian clothes.

I thanked him for helping me, and he instructed me not to touch my bags. “Just show me your bags, and I will handle them. That’s what I am here for.” Shortly, I saw my bags and pointed them out. He loaded them on the cart, which I pushed toward the big scanner through which all bags had to go. The conveyer belt was not running, so he put my top bag on the belt, looking behind the scanner to see who was operating it.

He recognized the person, and when they had exchanged greetings, the scanner operator signalled my bags were cleared to go. My helper quickly replaced the bag on my cart. We were now just a few steps from the exit doors. I might have taken two steps when I turned to thank my helper, but he was gone, nowhere to be seen! The only visible door was the exit where I was standing, and there were no other passengers nearby. I never got to say thanks, nor do I know what his real name was, but I believe that day I shook the hand of an angel.

I believe that day I
shook the hand of
an angel.

As soon as I exited the terminal, Robin and Pastor Phillip were right there. Phillip told me he had not been able to arrange for someone to meet me. So, God did!

The Early Years

From the Canadian Prairies to Gabon’s jungles, to Paris’s cafés, my journey began the day I surrendered my life to the Lord at age fifteen. A grandmother’s prayer before I was born awakened my passion for missions, and my family’s devotion to God started a lifetime of service.

Along with my six siblings, I was born on Saskatchewan’s prairies, twenty miles north of Saskatoon, in a small town called Dalmeny. It was during the depression, so life was hard, but my God-fearing parents faithfully took our family to church every Sunday and led us in a daily devotional time of Bible reading, singing, and prayer. Mother played the guitar while we sang. My earliest recollection is singing at my mother’s knee.

By the time I was seven years old, my family had moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba, so my father could find work. The Alliance church in Winnipeg was four miles from where we lived. We walked there every Sunday, never skipping a service. Church was fun, especially Sunday school; I loved memorizing scriptures and competing for awards. The verses I learned in those early years have stayed with me through life, being a rock and a shelter many times.

Due to my oldest brother’s poor health, we moved to British Columbia when I was ten, settling in the beautiful Fraser River valley. A few years later, my mother developed Parkinson’s disease. With my father’s consent, I dropped out of high school at fifteen to take care of her. For the next three years, I took complete care of

my mother during the daytime, doing the laundry, housekeeping, and cooking for a family of eight.

Though I did not realize it then, those years began to shape my life and prepare me for the missionary world God would lead me into. Mother never complained. She suffered silently; she prayed, and her faith in God never wavered. Her love for her family and her Saviour shone through brightly and became a model for me. Those years spent serving my precious family taught me a lot about *compassion*. It is an action word with no boundaries, and it can help heal the hurt in others.

At twelve, I made a commitment to the Lord by inviting Jesus into my life to be my Saviour. Three years later, during the Missionary Convention week at Chilliwack Alliance Church, the Lord spoke to me about giving my life to Him for missions. My mother told me that when I was a young boy, as soon as I could talk, I told her someday I would go to Africa. I'm sure she wondered where that came from.

I attended the Western Canadian Bible Institute and met a Montana beauty, Elma Toews, who became my wife. We married in 1955 when I still had one year left of my Bible school training. Elma, too, had made a commitment to God to serve wherever He would lead. By the time I graduated, we had applied to The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) to become career missionaries.

The Alliance required two years of home service, so I became the associate pastor at the Regina Gospel Tabernacle as soon as I graduated. We stayed two years. My job description was a full-time assignment; I became the choirmaster, the youth pastor, and the Sunday school superintendent.

The first year there, I also registered at the Regina college to earn my high school diploma after the Mission asked me to do so. During our second year, the church board asked if I would be the foreman for our church basement renovation. We had it dug out to pour concrete floors, which allowed us to build walls, partitions, and Sunday school rooms. We then learned our work in Regina would not be accepted as "home service" to qualify us for foreign service. In the late summer of 1958, we moved to Hythe, Alberta, to pastor the church there for seven months.

One happy day we received our marching orders to leave for Africa via France to start one year of language study. My family came to the train station in New Westminster to see us off. While saying goodbye to my grandmother, she started crying and told me, "When I heard your mother was expecting, I dedicated the baby to the Lord to become a missionary. I want you to know that before you leave."

On July 4, 1959, we sailed out of Pier 89 in New York; passing the Statue of Liberty, we crossed the North Atlantic, which took nine full days.

Reaping the Harvest in Gabon

We spent a hectic year in Paris; our son Robin was born in October, and full immersion language study filled our days. Then we flew to the Republic of Gabon

in Africa. We did Ynzebi language study six hours a day from Monday to Friday for the first two years. There are forty-three tribes in Gabon, each with its own dialect. We were assigned to work with the Banzebi tribal people, of which there were twenty-six thousand people.

Missionaries had been pioneering in Gabon for over thirty years before our arrival, planting and watering the seeds of Christianity. We were there to reap the harvest from their efforts. I baptized over five hundred people our first term.

I baptized over five hundred people our first term.

After our first home assignment, we returned to France in response to a request by the executive committee in Gabon to take advanced French language courses because the Church in Gabon wanted the Bible school taught in French. Gabon was a former French colony granted independence in 1960 with French as the country's official language. It was used by the government, commercial industry, and schools.

When we returned to Gabon in 1967, we took over the Bible school, changing the teaching language from the local language to French. The first year Elma and I were the only teachers at this Bible Institute, with more missionaries coming to help the second year.

In 1968, we had an excellent start to the school year, but by the time we got into November, we noticed the students were becoming restless and were often distracted. Due to cultural problems and traditions, several of the young couples were married just before coming to this school, and now the pagan parents were putting on pressure for more dowry payments. My wife and I began to fast and pray. God showed us what to do. We would not close the school, nor would we continue teaching the courses.

One morning when we had our usual 8:00 am chapel time, I announced to all the students, starting that day, classes would not be taught; instead, at eight every morning, I would come, not to teach, but to pray. They were free to go home or to stay and join me. Every one of the students stayed, and every morning they all came to pray. A day and a half later, God moved in, and the Holy Spirit began a mighty work that turned to conviction and deep repentance.

We saw and felt the presence of God in our midst, and we did not want it to stop. Soon our morning prayer times expanded to full days. By the end of the first week, every student had met God in a new way. Some began to share, and the exposition of the Word they spoke was obviously revelations the Holy Spirit had shown them. We continued this regime until the Christmas break.

During this time, we received a letter from a French evangelist concluding his crusade in a neighbouring republic, offering to come to Gabon if he could serve our church. We invited him to come for two weeks and planned to begin nightly public services in the big Bongolo church. Before long, we filled the church every evening

with a thousand people. The revival went on for several months. Soon the services became longer and went on until eleven or twelve every night.

We also set up a meeting platform across the river in the “Sous-Préfecture” in the centre of Lebamba. Every morning we would first meet for prayer with the church full of people. Then in the afternoon, trucks loaded full of workers came from the nearby mining and forestry camps. The young Bible school men preached with power and authority.

As in the Book of Acts, many were healed, and many demons were cast out in Jesus’ Name. One morning a man came with an urgent invitation, “Please come to my home. My daughter is writhing and foaming at the mouth, and we have to tie her to her bed. She hasn’t eaten for days.” One of the youngest men in our Bible school, Mark, usually the timidest, took the lead when we came to the home and prayed to expel the demon. The demon left with shrieks and audible protests. When the girl was set free, she asked for food.

We stayed and sang praises to God as the food was prepared and while she ate. Then we all formed a procession and marched back to the church, singing and praising God. The unbelieving pagans watched with amazement and wonder; many were added to the church in those days. What began as a revival among the Bible school students before Christmas was transferred to the local population centre. There is nothing as convincing for unbelievers as God’s obvious work setting people free, bringing healing, and transforming lives.

Another time in prayer at the Bible school, I asked the students to pray for five days to discern God’s choice regarding where to go with the revival message. They were not to discuss it with anyone else, then write the option on a piece of paper and put it in a box. When we opened the box, every student had written the same



Bible school men on tour to spread the revival. Courtesy Don Dirks.



Don baptizing a believer. Courtesy Don Dirks.

region; none of our students were from this particular region. When we went, we saw the mighty works of God. The news of the revival was being talked about across the country. Doors were opened to us in the public schools, and in some towns, the whole student body assembled to hear the gospel witness. In several instances, every child prayed to receive Christ.

Several months later, after the regular revival services had stopped, the Bongolo church had hundreds of people asking to be baptized. Discipleship teaching took place, and the church elders met with scores of candidates. One Sunday

morning, I stood in the Louetsi River at six o'clock, waiting for the first new believer to come and be baptized. I baptized one hundred and forty-nine between six and nine o'clock that Sunday morning; forty-nine of them were high school students. It was in those days when the other missionaries started calling me "Don the Baptist."

We served in Gabon for fourteen years. In 1973, we returned to America for a home assignment and were asked to transfer to France. The Mission asked me to accept an appointment in France as acting Board representative to lay the tracks for an ambitious church planting mission. This was a big decision, so Elma and I prayed to be sure in discerning the Lord's leading. It would be a massive change for us to leave Gabon and start a new mission advance in a nation as religious as France.



Prayer Card, 1980. Courtesy Don Dirks.

Church Planting and Refugee Ministry

Elma and I were the first C&MA expat missionaries to be appointed to work in France. We went from revival and harvest in a land where many people were uneducated and steeped in Animism to a desert full of educated and enlightened people. Picture going from the jungles of Africa and the simple lifestyle of the Gabonese to the streets of Paris teeming with the chic, urbane multitudes wearing fashionable designer labels. We spent twenty-five years in Paris working with the Lord to plant twenty churches.

I first pastored the Boulogne French church for seven years while serving as the C&MA field director and helping to organize a Union of French Alliance



Elma and Don Dirks in Paris where they were field leaders.
Courtesy Don Dirks.

Churches. Then God sent a mission field to our doorstep. French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) was crumbling after the war in April 1975. Refugees poured into France at a rate of fifteen hundred every month, and sixty boarding homes were established throughout France. The churches of the Alliance union opened a refugee welcome centre.

We saw miracle after miracle. One evening as I listened to the TV news on “*Antenne 2*,” the mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, who later became the president of France, said on national television that the French people had a moral obligation to help the refugees. He also made a promise, “We (City Hall) will help in any way that we can to help all associations who take action.”

When I heard this pledge, I decided to ask for an audience with his excellence, the Mayor. After meeting with me in his ornate City Hall office, he put me on his classified mailing list, which told us where all the refugees were being sent. This opened the door for us to visit boarding homes scattered all over France for the next seven years while our refugee centre was open. Today some of the vibrant churches in the Alliance Union of churches are ethnic groups, such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian (or Hmong).

Computers and Mission Trips

Elma was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in 1990. We finally left France in 1997, returning to Canada for medical treatment. For five years, I was able to care for Elma at home. Then she moved into a nursing home until she went home to be with the Lord on March 13, 2007.

After Elma had gone to Heaven, I began praying and looking for ways to still serve the Lord and move forward. My health was good, and my burning heart was nudging me to keep going. When we accepted the Lord’s call to move to France, I left a



Our Hmong church summer conference - 500 strong.
Courtesy Don Dirks.

part of my heart in Africa. Those years in Gabon were unforgettable.

In the summer of 2007, I heard about the University of the Nations (U of N) from friends and staff members Ralph and Dottie Meurer. They told me about the Kona, Hawaii campus and said my computer knowledge would certainly be welcome. My hobby for the last thirty years has been to tinker with computers. I prayed and felt led by the Lord to start March 10, 2008, for a three-month term. I went as a Mission Builder (volunteer) and did a second term for five weeks from early August to September 11.

The two trips to Hawaii were just a beginning. While Elma was in the assisted living home, I received several invitations to go to West Africa, but my priority was to be near Elma. So, in 2008 after my first trip to Kona and the U of N, I squeezed in a three-week trip to Burkina Faso, West Africa. It was a total success for me. I had gone to train nationals to rebuild, repair, and update equipment in a computer classroom at the Maranatha High school in Bobo Dioulassou. The church assigned seven young people to work with me so I could train and show them how to maintain and fix computers. We repaired hundreds of machines. In fact, my strategy was to have my helpers do all the hands-on work. They were amazed at how quickly they could restart many of the older computers. I had the time of my life and could not have been happier.



Computer repairing at Maranatha Bible Institute, Bobo Dioulassou.
Courtesy Don Dirks.

Then came a telephone call from a vast state-run Lycée (high school) where all the computers had quit working except for the new computer in the director's office. The Internet connection had been lost. We dropped everything and went over to the school. Eventually, they brought us a pickup load of non-working computers. We were able to get over ninety percent of those old machines to work. Afterwards, the State business college called and wanted help, so we repaired all but two of their devices.

Then the Muslim colleges, which had two campuses, called and asked if we would help them. Etienne, my chauffeur and guide, took the call in French. I heard the whole conversation. He greeted the rector cordially and then asked, "how can we help you?" The director said, "We hear that *papa Donald* has come to train and help schools with their computers. Would you be willing to come and help us?"

Etienne looked at me for a sign; I answered without any hesitation, "let's go." It was about ten in the morning, so we packed up our tools and equipment and drove across town. I divided the team and stayed at the first campus while sending the other half to the next site. I knew they would do fine with what I had shown the students, but I promised them I would come to help if needed. After about three and a half hours, the other team called to say that they had all the computers running. By five-thirty that evening, all the computers on the two campuses were functioning.

We drove back that evening to work on the machines at the offices of the church. A little later, the rector of the Muslim colleges called Etienne again. His greeting was very cordial, saying he was calling to thank us. But he went on to say, and I heard every word, "Why did you do that? Papa Donald came to help you and your schools, but you left that to come and help us." Etienne's answer was priceless.

"Monsieur le Rector, you are my neighbour, aren't you?" The response was affirmative. Then I heard Etienne say, "We are followers of Jesus who teaches us to love and serve our neighbours, so that is why we came." I thought to myself, "This is payday; this alone makes my trip worthwhile."

I made eleven mission trips through the next ten years—Burkina Faso and Guinea in West Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). On our second trip to the DRC, Robin and I stopped over in Libreville, Gabon, where I had begun my missionary career in Africa. Unforgettable! My hobby got me to those countries to help fix computers, but I was invited to preach, teach, or share my life story everywhere I went. Knowing the language's culture and fluency were huge assets, and my hobby did the rest.

On my first visit of five trips in Guinea, we stopped for several days at the Telekoro Bible Institute. Arriving late in the day, we were billeted in the guest house. At eight in the evening, the director came to see me and to ask if I would be willing to speak in the chapel service at eight the next morning. He mentioned the service began with all the students and their wives and usually lasted thirty minutes; then he said, "but for you, it will be a ninety-minute service." On every one of my visits to follow,



In 2016 when Robin and I stopped over in Gabon, this man came to greet me and to show me his certificate of baptism that I signed in 1989. He was one of the 49 college students that I baptized after the revival. The certificate was clean and new like the day I gave it to him. Courtesy Don Dirks.

it was the same. A Swiss Mission worked in the same city; some of their leaders and people also came for the chapel services.

Five years ago, I was asked by the leaders of the C&MA churches in the USA to go to the DRC and install computers in the offices of their home base. This is one of the most prominent evangelical Churches in the Congo. They have seven hundred churches and one million and six hundred thousand members. Kinshasa, the capital with about thirteen million souls, has seventy Alliance churches. Even so, the National Church offices still had no computers.

I was invited to go and install computers in their offices and connect them to the Internet. They bought the equipment in Kinshasa and then brought all the boxes to Boma, the seat of the association, to store them in a safe place. They would not let anyone touch those boxes until I arrived four months later. My son Robin had a long wait to get a visa, so we were delayed almost two months. By the time we left, they had six offices equipped with brand new state-of-the-art equipment and a good Internet connection.

On this trip to the DRC, God reminded me once again of what the Great Commission includes. More or less, we all get the part about, “Go into all the world...” and “Go preach and teach ... go and make disciples.” But our work assignment comes with an enormous and unlimited promise, “I will be with you always.”

So, when we arrived and went into the Kinshasa airport baggage area, Pastor Phillip welcomed us. He had promised to meet us. A few minutes later, a man

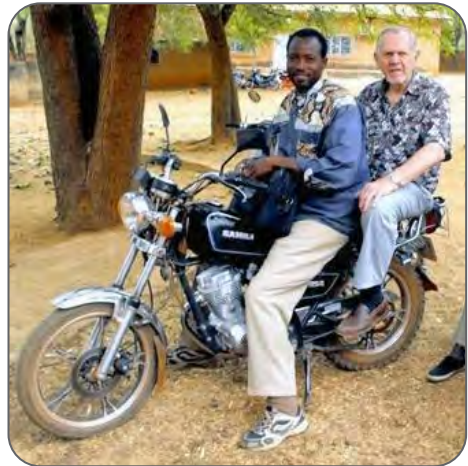
walked up to greet and welcome us and then walked us through the formalities. He was wearing a badge and came from the Presidential Palace with orders to help us. He took our passports, health cards, and tickets, saying, follow me. We noticed everyone on duty to check passports, baggage claims, and scanners for arriving passengers were very careful to greet him like a palace worker; we walked through all the security and never said a word to even one official. When we left the DRC after our visit, he was there again.

It was the same for the whole trip. In the lower Congo, the deputy for the entire region, a member of the church, drove us around in his new chauffeur-driven vehicle. In Kinshasa, a prominent city lawyer and church member took time to haul us around to our appointments. On the first day after we arrived in Boma, we had a one-hour meeting with the mayor. Before we left his office, the church president with us asked me to pray for the mayor and for the city of Boma.

A few years ago, Robin, who has been a missionary with the C&MA for thirty-five years, travelled with me to Conakry, Guinea. I was flying out of Vancouver to Chicago, where I would meet Robin for our continuing flight to Brussels. But our Friday flight from Brussels to Conakry had been cancelled. The airlines had connected with Robin at his home in Columbia, South Carolina, to book him through Paris on Air France, but I was not informed. So, I flew to Chicago and was met by Robin, who took me to the Delta counter where I was put on the flight with him to Paris. After a three-and-a-half-hour wait in Paris, we boarded our flight to Conakry.

So far, so good. Eight hours later, as we walked into the Conakry terminal, Robin remembered he had not sent word to Steve Albright, who was to meet us. Our Air France flight arrived more than one hour ahead of the Brussels Air flight we were originally booked on. Since Robin had lived many years in Conakry, he decided we could take a taxi, so he called Steve and told him to turn around and go home. What we did not know at the moment was our taxi was already on its way to meet us.

We cleared customs formalities quickly and went to the baggage area. Robin's bags arrived without delay, but mine were taking more time. Then something strange happened. I saw a Guinean man walk into the baggage area and look around, and it seemed to me like he was looking for Robin. When



Steve, my taxi man, drove me around from job site to job site on his motorbike, 2011.

Courtesy Don Dirks.

Robin saw him, he went over, and they greeted each other with hugs, a real show of friendship.

Robin brought his friend over to introduce me. This was the man who used to haul water to Robin and Donna's home in the years they lived in Conakry. But what he shared next made me sure God is in the business of meeting missionaries. This man was now a taxi driver with a Land Cruiser. He awoke from a deep sleep early in the morning, and something kept telling him he needed to meet the Air France flight from Paris that evening. The only problem was he could not remember who had told him. We assured him we knew *exactly* who had told him. He used to haul loads for the mission headquarters, too, so he knew exactly where to deliver these untimely missionaries. As we drove through the crowded streets, the words of Isaiah 65:24 ran through my mind, "Before they call, I will answer."

When we show up for work, God shows up too. It's true. God always keeps His promises. "I will be with you always."

And the story never ends.

Adapted from a biography written May 2008

This life story of Don Dirks was first published in May 2008 on the ywamconnect.net website. It is used here by the kind permission of the chief editor and Director of the Communications office at the University of the Nations in Kona, Hawaii, where the article was first published. The original reporting journalist was Beverly Thomas.

<https://dondwafrica.wixsite.com/drc-africa>

More Stories of Those Who Went



My French Connection by Don Dirks

Don and Elma Dirks' autobiography is a fascinating account of God's faithfulness throughout their lives and missionary career. From Don's humble beginnings in Dalmeny, Saskatchewan, to the far-off warm climates of Gabon, Africa and then finally to Boulogne, France, "My French Connection" reads as it came right out of the pages of the Book of Acts. Get ready to hear of revivals, healings, miracles, freedom from evil spirits, as well as many other astounding works of the Holy Spirit. Your heart will be challenged and encouraged as you see anew that God is still alive and at work in the world today.



Both Feet on God's Path: The Story of Julie Fehr by Lisa M. Rohrick

Missionaries are usually the last ones to claim super-human or super-spiritual status. In fact, they often readily admit to battling feelings of insecurity, weakness, inadequacy and failure. Julie Fehr would have been the first to acknowledge all of the above. But God stepped into her life and took a reluctant young school teacher, who barely passed high school and college language courses, and made out of her a Bible translator and

director of Theological Education by Extension for all of West Africa. In 1993, in what appeared to be an opportunity to become a missionary to the world, she was chosen to be the missionary-scholar-in-residence at the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton Graduate School. Within months, however, she suddenly faced the final call of her Lord.



The God Made Known: Through Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Laurie McLean has written a chapter on Gabon entitled “Three Aspects of Missionary Work,” and Don Dirks has a chapter on France entitled “A Witness to the Nations.” You will find a biography on Gabon missionaries Julie Fehr and Laurie and Nancy McLean in this same book.

Chapter 2

From the Prairies to Peru: Donald and Faith Scarrow

by Donald J. Scarrow

A powerful sense of God's presence pervades the Lince Alliance Church's lower auditorium in Lima, Peru. Four hundred and fifty chairs are occupied while people stand shoulder to shoulder against the side and back walls. The evangelist's message is unemotional, brief, and straightforward. As he moves to the side of the pulpit and invites people to come for salvation, the convicting presence of the Holy Spirit becomes intense, overwhelming the gathering. People hurry to the altar; some are crying. This profoundly moving moment is etched forever upon our memories, for we have seen the power of a divine visitation born in the intercession of committed men and women. The experience is the highlight of forty-five years of ministry.



A group of new believers being baptized, Lince Church, 1976. Courtesy Don Scarrow.

It is October 1974. Faith and I have travelled to Lima, Peru, from our mission station at Huánuco in the Peruvian Andes. The evangelism program started in 1973 is exploding as the Holy Spirit brings hundreds of lost people into the Kingdom. That meeting was our introduction to LED (*Lima to an Encounter with God*).

The Early Years

I was born June 27, 1937, in Arcola, Saskatchewan. It was a special day for my parents as I was one of the first positive things to come into their lives amid the Great Depression, following the loss of twins in 1934. Bolstered by their faith in God, they had begun to build their life at Four Winds, a wheat and cattle farm near Griffin, Saskatchewan.

My father was a born innovator who built some of his own machinery and later, through self-study, became a journeyman electrical contractor. My mother was a graduate of the Regina Teacher's College and taught for several years until her marriage to my father in 1933. She was an avid reader, student, author, and poet, serving as a newspaper reporter for over 30 years. My father was patient and caring, a true "people person" who enjoyed studying and teaching God's Word. Both loved the Lord and invested a significant amount of their means in overseas missions, a Bible camp, and a small evangelical church in the town of Griffin.

Faith was born at Morristown, New Jersey, where her parents, Dr. and Mrs. Harold Ronson, pastored the Alliance church. She found Christ as her Saviour at the age of 10 and immediately discovered a strong desire for God's Word. One of her household responsibilities as a teen was to dust and care for her father's study. After her work was done, it was not unusual for Faith to be found reading one of her father's study books.

Not long after she accepted Christ as her Saviour, the Holy Spirit spoke very clearly to her about serving overseas. She embraced this opportunity wholeheartedly, and from that point onward, this calling determined the life choices she made. As a child, she had contracted rheumatic fever, which affected her heart. She had been told by a doctor that she must never have children and would have limited strength throughout her life.

Seeing the firmness of her commitment to serve the Lord overseas, her parents, together with Faith, trusted the Lord for physical healing to remove the limitations that the damage to her heart had caused. She became aware of new strength, and when the time came for her pre-departure physical in 1962, the doctor could not find any problems with her coronary system. She has served the Lord in many locations—some at high altitudes—but always with an awareness of divine strength for each situation.

My comprehension of God as a living person came at the age of ten. I had disobeyed my mother, and she recognized the time had come for me to understand my need for salvation. She led me to a time of sincere repentance and prayer for forgiveness, resulting in Christ becoming my personal Saviour.

When I was ten years old, a Bible camp was organized on a farm near Weyburn, Saskatchewan. I attended every year, and in July 1951, during the invitation at the close of the Sunday afternoon meeting, I dedicated my life to full-time service. I was fourteen; it was a significant moment because it was clear that God would determine what I would do in life from that time on.

Ever since the small Griffin evangelical church had begun in the 1940s, our home served as a place where missionaries, pastors, and ministry groups came for a meal or to stay the night. So, from an early age, I was exposed to numerous people involved in ministry, some of whom left a deep impression on my life.

I followed the work of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) for ten years, and by the time grade twelve was completed, it seemed that aviation was how I would be serving overseas. In March 1956, I began the Department of Transport training program at the Estevan Flying Club. I received my private pilot license on July 16, having received top marks in ground school and acquiring a reputation at the club for having a natural flying talent. Flying, however, was not what God had in mind for me.

Dr. David Tarr, Head of the Music Department at Canadian Bible College (CBC), was on his way from Regina, Saskatchewan, to Winnipeg, Manitoba with several CBC students when his car's engine failed. He and the CBC choir were scheduled to participate in The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) Annual Council that evening. I suddenly found myself designated by the Dean of Men to rush them a backup vehicle. A subsequent decision to continue with them to Winnipeg, rather than find a way back to Regina, turned out to be life-changing.

A subsequent decision to continue with them...turned out to be life-changing.

Rev. Ben de Jesus Sr. preached with anointing at the closing service of Council. His message went directly to an unresolved aspect of my overseas call. I would not be doing what I enjoyed or felt most comfortable with; instead, the future was placed in His hands, and assurance came that He would supply gifts and strength for tasks far from the world of aviation.

In 1956, both Faith and I enrolled at CBC. The day I left for Regina, my father asked me if I was sure this was the right choice. Although it was what he and my

mother wanted above all else, he felt an obligation to be sure I had thought through this next step. We both knew I was not a natural student; my skills were in other areas. The farming operation could be mine because Dad was also an electrical contractor; the transition would have worked out well for both of us. But he was relieved to see that the die was cast; his son was going to be a missionary.

The first year at CBC brought some significant struggles, but my course was set, and I graduated with a Missions Diploma in 1960. At the college, I met Faith, a lovely, spirited pastor's daughter from Ontario. We began to correspond in the summer of 1957 and were married in Lumberton, NC, on June 25, 1960. God blessed our home with three children: Jessie Lynn, born in Rosetown, Saskatchewan in 1960; Stephen Francis in Lima, Peru in 1964; and Daniel John, born in Lima, in 1970. Faith's deep love for her Saviour has been a great blessing and encouragement to me in our years together.

I was incredibly blessed during the time at Canadian Bible College to sit under the teaching of Drs. Murray Downey and Raymond Kincheloe. Dr. Downey had been a longtime friend of the family, and I knew of his unusually sacrificial spirit regarding ministry. His love for the Lord and his enthusiasm for reaching the lost continued to significantly impact me during the time at Canadian Bible College.

Although I had inherited my mother's tendency for order and neatness, it was the example of Raymond Kincheloe which brought important changes in my lifestyle. He modelled what it means to give one's best effort to every task.

In the fall of 1960, we were assigned to pastor the Rosetown Alliance Church. From the beginning in the pastorate, the blessing my wife Faith has brought to our relationship has proved to be a significant and ongoing source of spiritual encouragement during our 61 years of marriage. She frequently has an inspiring word when it is most needed, and the joy that she demonstrates for her walk with Christ is a constant stimulus for me to press in and know Him better.

During our time in Rosetown, as a young pastor, I found myself in a situation that, at times, was somewhat frustrating. However, in the congregation was a dear brother who, although physically afflicted and mistreated, was a beautiful example of what it means to be Spirit-filled. He spent his days in prayer and meditation; from time to time, he would receive a word for me from the Holy Spirit and come to the church to share encouragement and counsel just when it was most needed. I can still see his face and hear his oft-repeated query, "Are you pressing in, Brother?"

Following our two years of pastoral ministry at Rosetown, on July 26, 1962, we said goodbye to my parents and sister, Sandra, at the Regina airport. Our travels took us to New York City for yellow fever shots and a visit to the C&MA National Office. There President Nathan Bailey and other Alliance leaders laid hands on us

and commissioned us for overseas service. After a few days in Lumberton, NC, to bid farewell to Faith's parents, we left on August 23, 1962, travelling to San Jose, Costa Rica, for language study.

The year in language school passed quickly. While there, a latent interest in ham radio was revived. Following our arrival in Lima, Peru, on August 23, 1963, God orchestrated a chance meeting with a Peruvian ham radio operator, which led to my being licensed in December 1965.

First Term: 1962-1967

For the first 15 years of our missionary service, we lived in a provincial centre in the Peruvian Andes. Telephone communication over the nearly 200-mile single wire circuit to Lima was difficult and sometimes impossible. Radio played an essential part in our ability to have contact with our field headquarters in Lima and family in North America.

On August 30, 1963, Faith wrote, "Here we are in our little place which is going to be home for a few weeks. Until our boat freight arrives and our rental house is finished, we will be living in the guest room here on the grounds. It is a bedroom, a kitchen, and a bathroom. Just right for the things we have at the moment."

Writing my parents, I noted, "We live in a valley at the 6,000' level with mountains up to 12,000' all around. The hills are barren, and most of the year, nothing but the odd cactus grows on them. The nights are cool, the mornings bright, and the afternoons windy and dusty. The mission compound itself is beautiful, with flowers next to the walks and gardens along the walls. Our first meal was in the Bible Institute—yucca, soup, rice, mutton, and carrots. I'll be seeing more local cooking after September 19, when we teach our first rural institute up at Jacas Grande, a day's trip by truck and a half-day by mule from here. I am to teach two 11-hour series, one on the Life of Christ and the other on Colossians."

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rural institute up at Jacas
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truck and a half-day by
mule from here.

In August 1963, we began our missionary work at Huánuco, a city in the Central Peruvian Andes. Faith, well into her second pregnancy and the second-year language program, taught several courses in the Alliance Bible Institute. Alongside a seasoned missionary, I was assigned to present a ten-day Rural Bible Institute program in villages within a hundred-mile radius of Huánuco.

After a year and a half travelling by truck and mule among the Alliance congregations in the high Andes, I arrived at a point of ministerial and emotional crisis. It seemed the work the missionaries performed at a considerable physical cost was mostly ineffectual. Most people remaining in these towns had little motivation for anything, including Christianity. Looking back, I see how a natural impatience to get things done quickly had clashed head-on with the Andean people's laid-back culture.

With little apparent interest and limited results, this frustration led to a point in 1965 where I seriously re-examined the validity of serving as a missionary. But God is faithful. Into our lives came David James Morse, a Welsh missionary with the Regions Beyond Missionary Union. David had gone through an identical crisis three years before.

Thus, began a friendship spanning the decades. David's Bible ministry and wise counsel were used by God to give me an entirely new perspective on the task at hand. No sooner had I affirmed my willingness to continue when God opened the way for ministries in the Alliance bookstore and the Alliance Bible Institute in Huánuco. This new balance made the village trips by truck and mule more palatable.

Twice during the first term, death loomed over our family. A doctor had prescribed a medication for Faith that contained sulfa, which she is severely allergic to. In the middle of the night, without adequate medical help, we threw ourselves on the Lord and pleaded for His healing power to save her life. Shortly after, she stabilized and was well the next day.

Sometime later, an epidemic of paratyphoid came to our mission station. Little Stephen was very sick and continued to get weaker. We laid hands on him and asked God to spare his life. Just as had been the case with Faith, by morning, Stephen was on his way to a full recovery. Praise God that His promises are true!

Second Term: 1968-1971

August 1968 marked the beginning of perhaps the most challenging aspect of our missionary service. We sent Jessie, age seven, to the Alliance Academy in Quito, Ecuador. It was the only schooling option available, and our hearts were torn. The pain of those twice-yearly partings did not lessen with time for the children or for us. As a first-grader, Stephen followed Jessie to Quito three years later, as did Dan in 1978. And although difficult memories remain, today, each of our children is in ministry, serving God with blessing and dedication.

Circumstances on the field resulted in my being named director of the Alliance Bible Institute in 1968. Perhaps as fruit of the recommitment made in 1965, gifts I did

not know existed also emerged. The student body grew, and some changes were made to the short-term program as well. I found great satisfaction in teaching students and administering the two programs. Faith carried a full course load in both programs.

In October 1968, we awoke to find that a Marxist military coup had removed the elected president and taken over control of the nation during the night.

Third Term: 1972-1976

Our first year of the third term was spent in the city of Chiclayo on the coast. This was a church-planting assignment, and we found that the ministry, and the coastal culture, brought significant challenges. The house next door was occupied by Far Eastern monks in orange robes who burned incense and chanted for hours in their back garden. Periodically, a cloud of oppression descended upon our home, and it was necessary to plead the blood of Christ over ourselves and the house in order to carry on. When we cried out to God, His glory replaced the oppressive atmosphere.

In 1973, we returned to the Alliance Bible Institute ministry in Huánuco. God continued to bless the institute as many new students came to study. The Marxist



Students and teachers at the Huánuco Bible School in the early 1970s.

Courtesy Don Scarrow.

military government increasingly made demands to use Mission and National Church buildings “for the common good of the people.” The Peruvian Investigative Police (PIP - Peruvian equivalent of the KGB) visited us with veiled threats and unusual demands. What did they really want? Was it an excuse to observe us? But God had set the limits of this pressure. A march by Marxist university students against the institute property was stopped by police before coming to our part of the city.

Tensions continued to build. By June 1976, while on our way to the Lima airport for home assignment, we found ourselves confronted several times by armed military squads who, pointing sub-machine guns, demanded our papers and intentions. Later that year, a coup within the coup installed General Morales Bermudez as the new Peruvian president. We left Peru anxious to return to Huánuco and the Bible training program, but it was not to be.

Fourth Term: 1977-1981

During our third furlough, the Peru field director, Merle Sluyter, suffered a heart attack while on a trip in the jungle. A subsequent coronary event while he was on tour in New York State led to his death. The 1977 Field Conference asked me to serve as field director for one year. This twelve-month assignment eventually ran continuously, excepting home assignments, for the next twenty-four years.



Pueblo Libre Church.
Courtesy Ernie Klassen.

One Sunday, the 2,000 seat Pueblo Libre church simultaneously baptized 70 new believers in their two baptismal tanks—35 to a side.

My mother was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 1978 and passed away in July 1980. We sensed the loss of her prayer support and her faithful letters. In 1979, our daughter Jessie graduated from the Alliance Academy and entered Toccoa Falls College.

In addition to duties in the field office, during this term, our residence doubled as the Alliance Guest Home, for which Faith and I were responsible. We also taught several courses in the newly-founded Alliance Bible training program in Lima and ministered in the churches. Faith hosted a Bible study in our home and spoke at many women’s gatherings. Over the years, she also did the job of office secretary several times during the home assignment of the person assigned to that role.

We ended this term physically and emotionally exhausted. We were learning



Don and Faith Scarrow at their daughter's wedding, 1984.

Courtesy Don Scarrow.

that unless parameters were established, more and more would be loaded onto our schedule. We would have to establish our limits; nobody else would.

Fifth Term: 1983-1987

During home assignment, we recognized more fully the toll our fourth term had exacted from us. Late night and early morning trips to the airport to receive a seemingly endless stream of pastors and visitors who wanted to see the Lima to an Encounter with God program first-hand had worn us down. I recall falling asleep at the lunch table, much to the amusement of two visiting C&MA pastors. During

our home assignment, the field requested a couple to look after the guest home; they were in place by our return in 1983.

Born initially from the need for a more extended recovery, we requested an additional year of tour ministry in the USA and Canada. In November 1982, my





The dedication service of a renovated theatre financed by believers, La Victoria Alliance Church. Courtesy Don Scarrow.

father was killed while engaged in his electrical contracting business. As executor of his estate, I was kept busy for the next six months closing out his two firms. How providential it was that we were still in Canada at that time. Now we understood why God had provided such a quick, positive response from C&MA leadership when we requested to extend our home assignment.

Once back in Peru, we lived in a home a short distance from headquarters, continuing with field

leadership, Bible institute teaching, and home studies. We joined the pastoral team at the La Victoria Alliance Church, one of several daughter churches of Lince Alliance.

The guest home was now capably handled by a lay couple from Canada, and the LED program was growing by leaps and bounds. Hundreds were born again each month and enrolled in the new believer

At one point, there were more new Christians needing training than there were either facilities or people to teach them.

Bible training courses. At one point, there were more new Christians needing training than there were either facilities or people to teach them.

Begun in May 1980, the Shining Path Marxist guerilla movement steadily grew stronger, increasingly dominating the nation. While Lima remained mostly unaffected, pastors and missionaries in mountain and jungle locations regularly dealt with death threats and saw their churches burned or destroyed. The Shining Path leader boasted that he would exceed Mao's atrocities to indicate his own commitment to pursuing what he called "The purest form of Marxism."

Sixth Term: 1988-1992

Shining Path's control of Peru was almost complete, and the terrorists were moving closer and closer to Lima. In the city, car bombs caused massive destruction, as did smaller explosive devices planted in markets, gas stations, public buildings, and churches. Power outages and threats to poison the water supply were frequent. A C&MA pastor was taken hostage, and threats were made against his wife,

children, and church. Another pastor was approached by a guerilla demanding aid. This pastor countered the guerrilla's threat of death by telling him that death held no personal fear for him but, "How about you," he said, "what if you are killed? Are you ready to meet God?"

During this time, I attended secret meetings of Peruvian evangelical and mission leaders. A contingency plan was put together if Lima should fall to guerrilla control. Alliance leadership in North America gave our field leadership team full autonomy to determine if our staff should stay or leave. Staff was told that if the tension was more than they could manage, they were free to go with our full blessing, support, and understanding. We recognized that the terrorist threat loomed large for some, while it seemed less traumatic for others.

In 1990, a Japanese Peruvian was elected president of Peru. He quickly captured the Shining Path leader, restored financial order to the country, resolved a border conflict with Ecuador, and defeated a second Marxist group that had taken hostages in the residence of the Japanese ambassador to Peru.

Seventh Term: 1993-1998

During our seventh term, we were informed of the C&MA's long-range plan to close out operations in Latin America and invest Alliance resources in areas of the world where the Gospel was less known. Peru was one of the first countries slated to be closed. Some felt missionary resources should continue to be invested where the harvest was greatest, and the return per dollar highest to assure that nationals were adequately prepared to later become a strong missionary-sending force.

As a staff, we prepared the National Church for the Mission's departure.



Congregations changing at Lince when seven Sunday services in the 1,200-seat building were required. Courtesy Don Scarrow.

The farewells given by our Peruvian colleagues were characterized by an abundant expression of love we will never forget. When each missionary's home assignment came due, they were re-assigned, retired, or released for another type of ministry.

Meanwhile, the churches continued to snowball. For example, in Lince, seven services were held each Sunday. To make the best use of time, those coming to the next service formed a long line to one side, leaving the other side free for those

attending the previous service to exit rapidly. The next congregation was seated in just a matter of minutes.

Eighth Term: 1999-2001

During our final two years in Peru, street violence, carjackings, and home invasions became more frequent. Through it all, God protected us. Faith mentored pastor's wives, spoke at various church functions, and joined a second church team. In addition to my administrative role, I continued to preach and teach on the deeper life.

Our appreciation for pastors, pastor's wives and Alliance leaders reached a new level. We saw these dedicated people shoulder the load and prepare to go on without the missionary staff.

I often felt at a loss on encouraging the missionary team as we became fewer and fewer. Staff attrition was especially hard for those whose ministries clearly needed more time to be completed, a situation quite evident with the women involved in Christian Education and Sunday school staff training.

While repairing the top of a 14'-high security fence at the Lima headquarters in 1999, a ladder slipped; a length of 3/8" rebar entered near my right elbow, penetrating almost to my wrist. An initial attempt to pull my body high enough to free myself from the rebar failed. I cried out to God, and a force, not mine, suddenly raised my 205-pound body up and free of the fence. The miracle was further evidenced when we found my arm suffered no internal damage; only God could have lifted me, and only God could have guided that 10" piece of metal around vital arteries and nerves. He cares for us, believe me, He cares!

Latin American Regional Office: 2002-2005

We returned to Toccoa, Georgia, in July 2001 to retire. Forty years of overseas ministry had come to a close. God had given us the privilege of serving in Peru longer than any other couple. Two speaking tours remained, and then we looked forward to enjoying the home God had provided for us in 1992, becoming active at First Alliance Church in Toccoa.

Instead, on September 8, the International Ministries Department asked us to accept a three-year assignment as the regional leadership couple for Latin America. Based in Guadalajara, Mexico, we assumed the care of 208 missionaries in 14 countries.

The years of leadership duties in Peru were an asset in understanding the needs and circumstances of the Alliance staff in Central and South America. It fell our lot



The Scarrow Family, 1999. Courtesy Don Scarrow.

to resolve some difficult staff problems, but God supplied grace and wisdom as well as good support from the leadership at International Ministries.

Conclusion

What stands out? Above all, God's unfailing blessing and faithfulness are abundantly clear. He gave

Faith and me three beautiful children. He permitted us to be immersed in a genuine twentieth-century visitation of the Holy Spirit, in which thousands came to Christ and scores of new churches were planted. He gave beauty for ashes; cherished personal aspirations were replaced by opportunities and experiences beyond our dreams.

Adapted from a biography written May 2013

More Stories of Those Who Went



A.B.: The Unlikely Founder of a Global Movement by David P. Jones

This book not only gives us a glimpse into one man's remarkable transformation of mind, body, and soul but also reminds us that the same loving Father longs to do the same in us—to shape us into exactly who He made us to be and prepare us for the unique work He's called each of us to do.



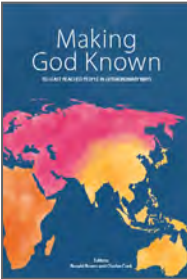
The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

In chapter seven, entitled "The Encounter Initiative: Passionate About Evangelism," Dr. John Healey tells about the life of Eugene Kelly who was involved in the Encounter with God project.



The God Made Known: Through Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Marilyn Klassen has written a chapter on “Peru: Watch and See What God Will Do,” as well as the story of her and her husband Ernie, “Running the Race Set Out for Us.”



Making God Known: To Least-Reached People in Extraordinary Ways edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Joseph and Helen Lee’s biography, “Blind Obedience,” is found in chapter 38.

Chapter 3

Following His Will is So Worth It: Anne Stephens

by Anne Stephens

Just before coming home on home assignment in June 2013, a man came to see me. "Mama Anne, I'm your disciple. I have burden for the people in my village. I want them to know God's Word. I want them to learn what I learned. I want you to come to my village and teach the Master Life study."

I looked at this man and said to him, "Maloye, you can do this. You are my disciple, and you can disciple the people in your village. His smile threatened to divide his face in two. "Do you really think so?"

"Yes," I replied, "As Christians, we are meant to be disciples who are to disciple others. You are my disciple, and now you need to disciple others."

My Journey

I was born to Graham and Ruby Stephens in Red Deer, Alberta, in April 1949, the second of three daughters. My Dad wanted us all to be involved in sports, so he flooded our garden, and at the age of three, I started to skate, pushing a chair around the home-made rink. When I was five, I joined a speed skating club and started skating in competitions. This led to travelling and competing all over Western Canada and Montana, where I earned my share of trophies and medals.

My most significant skating achievement was being chosen to participate in the 1967 first Canada Winter Games in Quebec City. I was one of the youngest skaters and placed in the top twelve female skaters in Canada. Winter was my favourite season, but that was about to change.

We were a church-going family, and at a very young age, I knew Jesus Christ died for my sins. When I was thirteen years old, while at a mission's meeting in our church, I went forward to accept Christ. Although I was sincere in my desire for Jesus as Saviour, while in high school and later nurses training, I felt my life did not measure up to other Christians. Why was I not experiencing what I thought I should be in my Christian life?

My first job as a nurse took me to Newfoundland and then to Nova Scotia.

During this period of my life, I remained dissatisfied with my Christian life. I then moved from Nova Scotia to Edmonton, attending the University of Alberta, to become a nurse-midwife. My favourite part of training to become a nurse was sitting with women in labour and helping them through the miracle of birth. I absolutely loved it!

When I finished the midwifery course, my friend, Marion Dicke, and I went to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, to work in a hospital. We found a good church there with lots of young people who were very serious about their faith. I got into Bible studies and started to grow spiritually.

During my stay in Yellowknife, I received news my mother was in the Intensive Care Unit in Red Deer, where she died the day after I arrived home. It was a tough time, but I will never forget the peace God gave my sisters and me. It was like my sisters and I were comforting everyone else. Of course, we were sad, but deep inside our hearts, we felt such peace; it was amazing.

During my Mom's funeral, I decided to go to Bible school, thinking maybe there I could learn more about this God who could give me such peace amid such difficulty, and also perhaps I could find out why I was not experiencing more in my Christian life.

That fall, I went to Canadian Bible College (CBC) in Regina. I was so overwhelmed in class! I had gone to church all my life, but I found there was so much I did not know. What really blew me away was how the pastors and professors talked about the importance of making Jesus, Lord of my life. It was not enough just to accept Him as Saviour. I had never heard that! They kept saying when you accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour of your life, you need to give everything over to Jesus and let Him rule in all areas. They also taught that when you do, you could ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and He would help you live your life in a way pleasing to God.

I went to my dorm and knelt down, giving Jesus control of everything I could think of—my family, friends, career, single or married, my future, and on and on it went. Then I asked for a filling of the Holy Spirit, and a new life started as God began to transform me.

Not long after, I got a strong feeling God wanted me to be a missionary. I think I am rather a slow learner because He seemed to make it abundantly clear this was what He wanted me to do. On Friday nights, we had compulsory missions meetings; every week, it was as if the speaker talked directly to me! I was not a happy camper; I did not want to be a missionary. It was crazy, I had given everything over to Jesus, and then I took things back when I felt like I could handle them better than He could. I told Him I was a homebody; I did not like travelling. I am directionally challenged, and my favourite season was winter. Could I ever fit into a different

culture or climate? Could I learn another language? Was I prejudiced? Could I live that far away from my family?

I was chosen to go with Alliance Youth Corps to Thailand. I thought this experience would answer some of my questions. While trying to work through this, I told the Lord that if I was going overseas, and that was a big IF, I did not want to go single. I wanted someone right for me to lean on. I had a good friend at the time, and I decided this must be the person God had for me. I almost wrecked a good friendship because he studied to be a pastor with no interest in missions. Finally, one night in Regina, I went for a walk and just told the Lord He would have to break off that relationship if He wanted me to be a missionary.

I continued to prepare for my trip to Thailand. For the first time, I saw God provide for my financial needs. God did use this short-term missions trip to help answer some of my doubts about the missionary calling. I lived with a single missionary who ran a youth centre in Bangkok. Through her ministry, I could see that God could even use single missionaries. I loved watching God use her with those young people.

During the trip, God put me in ministries I could never have done in my own power. I taught English to Buddhist young people using the Good News Bible, and three became Christians. It was not

God put me in ministries
I could never have done
in my own power.

me, but the power of God's Word! I led a Bible study with the missionaries, asking the Lord what could I possibly teach missionaries? Following the study, a couple of them came up and told me they were touched by what was said. It was amazing!

While there, I got a letter from my friend to tell me he had become engaged to the girl next door and, though it was hard, it was like a big weight was lifted off my shoulders. God had a plan for me! When it came time to leave Thailand, I cried all the way to the airport, not wanting to go.

I returned to CBC in the fall and started the application process to become a missionary, with God continually opening doors. My application was open for any location, but really, I wanted to go to Southeast Asia or Africa. God opened these doors for me. I did not tell them I knew anyone else who was a missionary. I really wanted His will, not mine. Instead, I told them to send me anywhere they needed me. I ended up in Zaire and on the same mission station as my good friend, Marion Dicke. God has a great sense of humour.

In August 1977, I left Alberta and studied French at Albertville in the French Alps. The area was gorgeous, while French study was difficult and challenging. I then went to Belgium, where I took a university-level course in tropical medicine in

preparation for my work in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). To say this was challenging is an understatement. Exams were both oral and written, so my newly-learned French was tested continuously. I could see God's hand in all of it, though, as He surrounded me with French, Swiss, and Belgium friends who let me study with them. I passed with distinction, which says so much about the God who enables me to do what He has called me to do.

Nursing Ministries, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) 1979-1993

When I arrived, one of the first Zairians I met was the president of the Alliance, Rev. Kuvuna. He asked me if I was ready to love this country, its people, and its language. His question was one I will never forget.

My first term at the hospital in Kinkonzi was a huge learning curve. Fortunately, Marion and the other missionaries were a tremendous help. I started learning another language, Kikongo, which occupied six hours of my day for the first year. One of the most traumatic moments of my first term was when my Zairian language helper, Lelo, suddenly got very sick and died of hepatitis. We went to his funeral, where I was really taken aback by his family's hostility; they believed his death was our fault. They thought we had eaten his spirit and sent it away to another country. It was hard to accept their anger and the belief causing it, but it became so clear to me why God had called me to Zaire; to tell the Good News of Jesus Christ, loving them enough to die for them and reconcile them to God.

Besides my language study, I taught some courses at our nursing school. I also went with Marion when she was called to help during a difficult birth. Time and time again, I saw God help us as we prayed through the almost impossible situations, and each time to see the miracle of a new baby. It was hard, but I really loved it.

I had assumed making friends in Zaire would be the same as in Canada; it turns out that was not the case. It took a while for people to trust us foreigners. It took me coming back for my second term for people to see I was serious about being there, loving the people and the country enough to go back.

The decision to come back for my second term was much more difficult than my decision to go in the first place. I knew if I went for my second term, it could mean I would never marry. Ultimately, I so wanted God's will for my life; if His will meant being single, so be it.

I had seen God give me the ability to do what He had called me to do. I saw how God had put me in families, both Zairian and those of our missionaries. I really enjoyed teaching at the nursing school and preparing students to become



Anne with Congolese women.
Courtesy Alliance Archives.

midwives. I helped at countless births and grew in my dependence on God to help me in all areas of my life. Some of the deliveries were difficult, and it was my responsibility to call the doctor to do a C-section.

During my second term, I also started to teach Theological Education by Extension (TEE) in a couple of villages, which I really enjoyed. We, nurses, held weekly Bible studies with our students and were also responsible for having devotions in one of the patients' wards.

During my third term, I continued to teach at the nursing school, conducted my TEE classes, worked with other missionary nurses on World Vision, and financed community health projects in several villages. It was great to get out into the villages and discover

how we could help prevent some of the illnesses we saw at the hospital. We did TEE classes in some of those villages too.

After my third term, I found myself in Marion, Indiana, attending Indiana Wesleyan University, where I received my Master of Science with a major in Community Health. It was great to see the Lord continue to work out the details. He surrounded me with missionary nurses and like-minded people. While I was studying, all our C&MA missionaries were evacuated from Zaire due to severe civil unrest. It was a difficult moment being so far away and thinking of my Zairian family, the people I had worked with so closely. God brought fellow students, who had also experienced the necessity of leaving a country they considered home, to surround me. God is so good!

Everything was up in the air during those months. Would I be able to go back? Would I be going back to Kinkonzi, where I had worked sixteen years as a nurse? After many tense months, I received the news I would be returning to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), specifically not to my bush hospital at Kinkonzi.

Bateke Plateau Leadership Development, DRC, 1995-1998

It was a huge adjustment to leave the bush and work in a city of eight million people. Not only was the driving scary, but I had to learn the Lingala language. I started on a new missionary team composed of Stan and Connie Hotalen, Marion Dicke, and myself, working with the Bateke, an unreached people group. Although I lived in a vast city, my work happened in the villages where the Bateke people lived.

Our team, which also included about five national pastors headed by Pastor Niosi, was training leaders who had become Christians but had had no formal Bible training. We would travel by boat on the Congo River or use four-wheel-drive vehicles to navigate the often treacherous roads. Our mandate was to train all evangelists and pastors in the area, including some from other denominations and leaders living across the Congo River. Little did I know at the time, eventually, I would move again and find myself working in Congo-Brazzaville.¹

Along with Bible-based seminars, we also talked about health issues and practices. We assisted clinics in the area and provided the people with safe water by digging wells. I will never forget all those evenings spent around small fires discussing just about everything. These times brought us so close as a team, brothers and sisters, with our Congolese counterparts. I have never met anyone so committed to reaching the lost as the team leader, Pastor Niosi. He had a real heart for the young evangelists. Seeing a young man with a heart for serving God, he would say, "Come and work with me on the Bateke Plateau." These young evangelists became disciples under his mentorship. He was amazing and such a hard worker.

In 1997, while working on the Bateke Plateau, war came to the Congo, and we were evacuated to Brazzaville. Being removed from the civil unrest² presented difficulty. How could it be right that we were taken to safety while our brothers and sisters, with whom we worked, could not leave? The Congo River separates the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo-Kinshasa) from the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), making these two cities the world's closest capitals. The war noises in Kinshasa could be heard while we were safe in Brazzaville. It was not easy. We prayed for our colleagues on the other side of the river, and we kept busy teaching at the Bible school in Brazzaville.

¹ There are two separate countries in Central Africa that are separated by the Congo River. The larger is to the south and was colonized by Belgium and has had various names such as the Belgian Congo, The Republic of Zaire and today The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) with capital Kinshasa (formerly Leopoldville). To the north is the Republic of Congo with capital Brazzaville colonized by France. Both received their independence in the 1960s. The countries are sometimes referred to as Congo-Kinshasa and Congo-Brazzaville.

² Civil unrest often occurred between regional private militias and government forces within one country.

An eight-minute flight had taken us out of a war situation into a city recovering from war. When we returned to Congo, things were still tense, living in an unstable country even after the war was technically finished. It was now difficult to travel into the Bateke Plateau due to the numerous military barricades we encountered leaving Kinshasa. Some villages told us we were the first people to travel through the area since the war began. We continued to train leaders on both sides of the river for another eight months. It was now time to depart for a three-month home assignment, travelling to see our families and visit supporting churches.

At the end of three months, the war had re-started in the DRC, and we could not return. I do not know any way I can express how hard that was, but I felt joyless. DRC was the place I considered home.

Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, 1999-2001

Because of the DRC situation, I was assigned to Côte d'Ivoire, where, for the next two years, I became an assistant dorm parent for nineteen kids from several different African countries. I love kids! I had wanted a whole other ministry to heal from the trauma of leaving the DRC. This ministry was undoubtedly foreign; I have never worked so hard in all my life.

I have a whole new appreciation for mothers after having all those 19 children under my care. It was fun helping with homework, having devotions with the grade five kids, helping them learn to cook meals of their own choosing, setting the grass on fire when we barbecued, listening when they were upset about something, loving those hugs I got from them, and making them snacks. It was a great two years; I am glad I had the privilege of being involved in these students' lives. It was hard to say goodbye.



Anne in Brazzaville with her friends,
Pastor Etienne and Marie Therese,
2012. Courtesy Anne Stephens.

Brazzaville, Republic of Congo 2002-2015

From Côte d'Ivoire, I joined the missionary team in Brazzaville, the Republic of Congo. It was good to return to Central Africa; knowing French and Lingala smoothed the transition. At the time of writing, I have spent twelve years there involved with leadership development, heading up TEE, short-term missions, finances, and member care. I love these ministries, and



Anne with Sylvie's two children in Anne's home in Brazzaville. Sylvie's husband was killed on the Bateke Plateau, swept away by a current, 2005. Courtesy Anne Stephens.

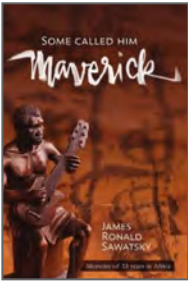
daily I see God giving me the ability to do what He has brought me here to do.

I have been so blessed by Alberta churches partnering with the Congolese church and me to find land and build a church in Kinsoundi, a Brazzaville suburb. We are working on buying a second piece of property for another church. It is incredible to see how these two churches' congregations in Brazzaville pray for their three Alberta church partners. When I come to Canada and see how the Alberta churches are praying for these Brazzaville churches, it is so thrilling!

Through all these years in ministry, I can assure you that God will enable you to do what He has called you to do. He never leaves you alone but promises to be with you forever. Following His will for your life is so worth it!

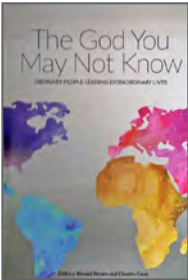
Adapted from a biography written October 2013

More Stories of Those Who Went



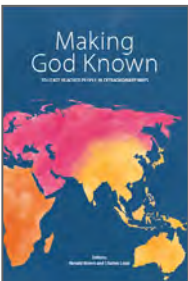
Some Called Him Maverick by James Ronald Sawatsky

As God captured the heart and imagination of young Jim Sawatsky, the dream began to take form. Together with his wife and three children, they followed God's compelling call to the Congo (DRC). Over thirty-three years in the heart of Africa, Jim saw this vision grow through the reach of media to influence a nation for God. As word spread of what God was doing in the Congo, seeds of hope were spread to other African countries as well...and the dream kept spreading. The stories and memories noted in these pages reveal God's expansive heart and describes the amazing adventure that unfolds when one dares to follow Him.



The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

In the first chapter, entitled “Congo: From Strength to Strength,” Dr. Ray Downey describes in full the one hundred years of missions in the first Alliance mission field, Congo. In this same book, you will find biographies of Ruth Stanley, Ruth Patterson, Mabiala and Lau Kenzo, and Ray and Vi Downey.



Making God Known: To Least-Reached People in Extraordinary Ways edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Chapter 35, entitled “Life’s Pauses,” tells of the ministry of Jim and Dawn Sawatsky in Africa.

Chapter 4

Encounters with God: Craig and Mora Bundy

by Craig and Mora Bundy

Our Early Years

Mora:

My parents came from farming backgrounds in Nova Scotia. Their parents followed Jesus, and one of my grandmothers led the missionary society at her Presbyterian church. When they got married, Dad worked for an extension program out of a university, and Mom was a nurse. Dad had accepted Christ as his Saviour as a teenager. Evangelistic meetings in their local church led Mom to make the same decision four years after they were married. By then, they had two children. I am the third child out of seven, meaning they were both committed to Christ when I was born.

Shortly after my birth, Dad changed jobs and began work at an insurance company, moving us to Moncton, New Brunswick. A neighbour of ours was leading Youth for Christ in the area. These neighbours, along with our local church, stimulated our family's spiritual growth.

After one particular Sunday evening service at our Baptist church, I came home, went to my bedroom, confessed my sin, and accepted Christ as my Saviour. I was seven years old. Shortly after that, we moved to Regina, Saskatchewan, again due to Dad's job. Friends of ours were attending the Alliance church and offered to give all nine of us a ride since we did not have a car yet. They made a couple of trips to accommodate all of us!

At this point, my spiritual life really began to grow. One occasion had a significant impact on me as a child; our pastor challenged the congregation to give a Thanksgiving offering. The challenge was to give a month's salary and see how the Lord would provide. Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

It was an exhilarating Sunday evening service on the first of October. The treasurer was on the platform with an adding machine entering in all the pledges

that came in. It was a time of celebration. But the real celebration came four weeks later when it was testimony time. One after another, someone would stand up and say how God had supplied ALL their needs that month. I was in awe! Dad was one of them; remember, there were nine mouths to feed in our house! I was overwhelmed with God's goodness, His provision, His faithfulness, and His love. He was totally worthy of my trust!

When I got to high school, my relationship with Christ really deepened. Living in Regina, Saskatchewan, where the Canadian Bible College (CBC) was, meant their students were very involved in our church. They were my leaders in Sunday school and youth group. The youth conference was a highlight each year at the Bible college. These students were wonderful role models for me and had a significant influence on my life. They challenged me in my Christian walk, encouraging me to become a leader with Christian character.

Youth for Christ in Regina had an active quizzing program, which involved memorizing entire books of the Bible. I remember having my Bible open on the kitchen counter, memorizing portions of Scripture. It got God's Word into my heart.

A highlight of the church calendar as I was growing up was the weeklong missionary convention. I loved listening to their "God stories" and seeing their pictures; I could not imagine a more exciting, fulfilling life.

I could not imagine a more
exciting, fulfilling life.

When I was in high school, Mom was diagnosed with bowel cancer. This period was a considerable faith journey for our entire family. She felt God was going to heal her. She shared her testimony with the doctor but also told him she agreed to have surgery. Miraculously the surgery removed all the cancer, though she did have a colostomy for the rest of her life (almost fifty years). Mom's faith and trust in God spoke volumes to me.

As a teen, during a youth conference, I told the Lord I would do anything and go anywhere He led me. I wanted to follow Him wholeheartedly. I felt my natural next step was to attend Canadian Bible College, and I loved it!

During my third year at CBC, I was on the missions committee, leading the "prayer bands" for different areas of the world. The committee conducted Friday's mission meetings, where attendance was compulsory for students, faculty, and staff. Missionary Victor Oliver was our faculty advisor, and he had a considerable impact on many of our lives. He was full of energy and totally committed to reaching the nations for Christ. Craig was the president of the missions committee, so we worked closely together. He was a leader, committed to God, and a lot of fun. Our relationship began to blossom.

Following graduation from CBC in 1969, I went on a two-month summer mission trip to Colombia, South America. This was my first experience in another culture and language setting. I was out of my comfort zone. I had to depend on God and not on my own abilities, another huge step in my commitment to God.

Upon returning, I began nurses' training in Regina. I was president of the class for those two years and was chosen as valedictorian for graduation. As I look back, I feel God was guiding me into leadership roles, but I am now more of a "collaborative" leader. I lead better from "behind" as a support person, an encourager.

Craig graduated from CBC in 1970, and we got engaged the same weekend. He returned to the Seattle area to work, so we were separated for our entire engagement, briefly seeing each other twice over the year. Phone calls were expensive, so we learned to write letters! The week following my graduation from nurses training, we were married.

Craig:

I have no idea where, how, or when the thread of God's grace first became visible in the fabric of my family, but those who knew us best would agree that it was freely given and most definitely unmerited.

My father was seventeen, and my mother nineteen when they married early in 1945, just months before World War II came to an end. My only sibling, Dianne, was born late the same year, and I came along in 1947.

My mother came from a Methodist and farming background in western Kansas and went to Burns, Oregon looking for work. There she met my father, who grew up on a ranch in southeast Oregon. His parents had moved to Burns so he could go to high school. They met, got married, and Burns is where I spent the first eleven years of my life.

My father was an 'all-in' kind of man. His philosophy was if it was worth doing, it was worth doing it in-depth and wholeheartedly. When he connected with Christ at the small Nazarene church in town, it radically changed our family schedules and atmosphere. I was about three or four when it happened. Suddenly we were up early every morning for family devotions and at church whenever the doors opened.

Our small church had testimony opportunities every Sunday evening service. Even when I was about six years old, I remember wondering whether those testimonies were really indications of God at work or mere coincidence. A critical incident in my life soon brought things into sharp focus.

My dad had a prized red-handled pocketknife, which he always kept razor-sharp for carving. It was strictly 'hands-off' for me. One day I borrowed it while he was at work and somehow lost it. Knowing that I would be in serious trouble from my

dad, a strict disciplinarian, I decided it would be a perfect time to test the power of prayer. I would diligently search until I heard the mill whistle blow at the end of the shift, which would be at least ten minutes before my dad arrived home. Then, if not found, I would do some serious praying for Divine intervention.

When the whistle blew, I was traumatized by my lack of success in finding the knife. I sat down on the small patch of grass in our yard and fervently prayed that God would help me. When I opened

my eyes and looked down, I spotted that red-handled knife in the grass right at my feet! I had not yet committed my life to Christ, but I knew then and

there several vital things about this God of grace. He heard my desperate prayer, He cared, and He was powerful. I was deeply impressed! I gave my life to Christ a couple of years later due to the influence of the Sunday school teacher assigned to our rowdy boys' class.

He heard my desperate prayer,
He cared, and He was powerful.
I was deeply impressed!

On my eighth birthday, I was given the book *Little Pilgrim's Progress* by Helen Taylor, and it captured my imagination and heart. I read it many times and later to our children. Years later, I read the original, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written by John Bunyan some 350 years ago, and still marvel at his pastoral insights into human character.

The summer I turned eleven, our family passed through Seattle on a summer road trip. One of my great-uncles worked for the Boeing Aircraft Company and suggested my dad apply for a job. He was hired on the spot, and we quickly returned to Burns to sell the house and move. No one was interested in buying. God provided in an unusual way when the owners of the house my parents wanted to buy near Seattle offered to take the Burns house, sight unseen, as a down payment. This extraordinary provision was a great faith-boost to our family!

I graduated from high school in 1965, when the war in Vietnam was ramping up. All male students in my class had to register for the military draft (conscription). Since I liked the water, I naively decided to join the navy rather than the army. I went to the recruiting station, passed the physical and other exams, but because I had a good job, they suggested I wait until my draft notice arrived before entering. I had heard if one stayed in the military for twenty years, he could get out with a pension, so I decided to make the navy my career.

Our family had migrated to a small Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) church by this time. The volunteer youth sponsor called me one day and suggested that I consider applying for a one-year student deferment from the draft and take a

year of Bible college somewhere. He thought it would be helpful before entering the military. I said I would pray about it but did not expect a favourable response from the draft board. I decided a good test of God's leading would be to tell them I wanted to go to a Bible school in Canada. Some who tried to avoid the draft were crossing into Canada to hide from the military. I was sure my application would be rejected.

A few weeks later a letter arrived which genuinely shocked me. My current draft card rated me as '1A' (Healthy—Approved for military service). I had applied for a one-year student deferment card, which would be a '2S' rating. What arrived in the letter was a new draft card rating me as '4D'. The military draft board had decided I was already an ordained minister and so ineligible for the draft! I was not even interested in vocational ministry.

When I told the youth sponsor the draft board had ruined my career plans, he asked, "Did you pray about it?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, go to Bible school for a year, and if you still want to join the navy, you can apply for a change back to '1A' status, and I'm sure they will be glad to accommodate you." In the Fall of 1966, I began studies at Canadian Bible College (CBC) in Regina, Saskatchewan.

At the end of that first year at CBC, I received a note from the Seattle draft board telling me to go for a second year. The same happened a year later, telling me to go for the third year. During my third year at CBC, my priorities and life goals changed while serving as president of the student missions committee. I applied to be an 'approved candidate' for missionary service with the C&MA and was accepted. Following my decision, I never again heard from the draft board, who had classified me as an ordained minister five months before I ever set foot in a Bible school.

Mora Matheson was on the third-year student missions team and responsible for the student prayer groups. Victor Oliver and the student team worked very hard planning missionary services every Friday evening for faculty, staff, and students. I was very impressed with Mora, who had also been accepted as an 'accredited missionary candidate' with the C&MA. Our first date was to a hockey game at Briercreech. I have no idea who won the game, but I already knew she was the woman I wanted to marry. It took her longer to come to the same conclusion, but it was a decision I always thank God for! We were married Labour Day weekend in 1971, a week after her nursing school graduation.

Our joint faith journey began immediately after our wedding, but the joy of facing it together made it much more fun. King Solomon was right when he said an excellent wife is far more precious than jewels! The goodness of God combines perfectly with his sovereignty and power.

A year of grad-level mission studies was required before deployment, and preferably a master's degree. So, a week after our wedding, we headed to Trinity

Evangelical Divinity School near Chicago. During our three-day honeymoon, we made a decision that continues to affect our lives fifty years later.

We were confident that God was directing in the move, but we had only enough savings for about one month of living expenses. God would need to provide in very unusual ways for us to survive the cost of driving down, renting an apartment, paying for tuition, books, food, and utilities. Mora needed to get a working visa in addition to rewriting her nursing exams in the States. Who knew if she could get a job?

We reviewed Malachi 3:8-11 together and decided we would accept God's challenge to "test me in this" and begin married life by giving a double tithe of anything God provided. We were determined not to go into debt. If we started to go into the 'red,' I would quit school, find a job, and conclude we had misread God's leading. The whole enterprise seemed so risky we would need unusual provisions to even get started. We also decided that if things got worse economically, we would increase our giving to make sure we were listening carefully.

Within twenty-four hours of our honeymoon, God began a series of such unusual, surprising provisions we were left stunned. We started to take notes! Not only did God provide in unexpected ways, but He also eliminated expenses, and He never stopped.

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Within the first year of grad studies, we decided we needed to increase our giving because of God's generosity rather than worsening financial condition. We have had to do that several times, and God has never ceased to amaze us all these years. Our faith's growth resulting from one critical decision enabled us to take many other seemingly risky choices, but once we knew God was leading, we also knew that He would enable and provide. It alleviated many concerns.

One year of studies expanded to three while I completed my M.A. in Missions along with a Master of Divinity degree. I became the youth pastor at Edgewater Baptist Church in Chicago. The senior pastor was Erwin Lutzer, ordained by the C&MA in Regina. This irregular arrangement was approved by the C&MA district superintendent, so I ended up being ordained by the C&MA in a Swedish Baptist Church. My job evolved to being an assistant pastor and then interim pastor before we went overseas in mid-1977.

Mora got a nursing job almost immediately, providing us with some income; she took some classes on her own, typed numerous papers for me, and helped in ministry with student wives as well as at church. Our first child, Timothy, was born in 1976, a year and a half before we deployed to Costa Rica for a year of Spanish language study and then on to Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Argentina

Our initial assignment in Buenos Aires was to assist with a new church plant in a high-rise apartment complex in Villa Lugano. Six months into that assignment, our second son, Peter, was born in 1979; one week later, Mora nearly died from a massive hemorrhage at home. She had no blood pressure when we finally got her to the hospital. They had to do surgery to locate a vein to give her blood. Our missionary careers came within minutes of ending right then, but God intervened and delivered her from death. Once the bleeding was stopped and she received several transfusions, she regained strength quickly but sustained some organ damage due to blood starvation.

I was teaching classes at the Buenos Aires Bible Institute when the missionary who served as academic dean and field director left for home assignment. I was asked to step into those roles for the remainder of our first term and quickly discovered overseas learning curves can be sudden and steep. One often gets to experience tasks that would never be considered back home.

Argentina was in turmoil during our first term. The right-wing military dictatorship waged a 'dirty war' on any suspected left-leaning subversion, and an estimated 30,000 people were murdered. The economy was in ruins, with inflation spiking as high as 5,000 percent. To get peoples' minds off the internal problems, the military invaded the British-held Falkland Islands, which Argentina claimed as their own (Malvinas). This brief but bloody war with England created further tragedy and ended several days after we left for our first home assignment in 1982. The people were hungry for change, any change.

Mora was expecting when we left for home assignment. Her Argentine doctor was ecstatic because he was confident that this pregnancy would repair latent organ damage caused by massive blood loss three years earlier. Sara was born in Regina in 1982, and the doctor was right; symptoms of the earlier organ damage disappeared.

The urban-focused Encounter with God movement of the C&MA in Lima, Peru, was exploding with church growth during the late 1970s and 1980s. Argentine evangelists who saw few results at home were amazed by the response to ministries in Lima and wanted to transplant the focus to Buenos Aires. Upon returning for our second term in Argentina, I was asked by the C&MA in Canada to coordinate an Encounter with God program for Buenos Aires, which they would support financially. A team was formed to implement an aggressive strategy of mass evangelism and church planting.

In the Fall of 1984, our son, David, was born in Buenos Aires and our family was complete.

That second term of four and a half years seemed 'frenetic on steroids.' God



Vincent Lopez Church, Buenos Aires, 1990.
Courtesy Craig Bundy.



Craig preaching at Vincent Lopez Church,
ca. 1987. Courtesy Craig Bundy.

demonstrated His power in changed lives, providing properties for church planting, leadership development, and ministry vision growth. The primary focus of our ministry was evangelism and church planting while attempting to disciple the new believers. This culminated in planting the Vicente Lopez church, which eventually gave birth to several daughter congregations, a student internship program, a 24/7 radio program, and other ministries.

Home assignment came due again in mid-1988. When we returned to Argentina for our third term, we continued to lead the Encounter with God program and focused on the Vicente Lopez congregation. During this term, Tim, our eldest son, went to the Alliance Academy in Quito, Ecuador, for high school. I finished a Doctor of Missiology degree in 1991.

During the following home assignment, we returned to Regina to become the missionary-in-residence at the Canadian Theological Seminary (CTS) from 1993 to 1996. We were relatively confident that we would not be returning to Argentina at the end of those three years at CTS, but we had no idea what would follow. My CTS role ended in the Spring of 1996, and we remained in Regina for an additional year until Peter graduated from high school. I filled in as missionary-in-residence for the Canadian Midwest District for the year.

John Piper's book, *Let the Nations be Glad*, came out in 1993 and radically adjusted my motivation for missions at a critical transition in our lives. Before this, my reason revolved around two valid and adequate reasons—the lostness of humankind and obedience to the Great Commission. Piper's focus was to do missions, not so much because people need God but because God is supremely worthy of their worship! This elevated vision was a sustaining anchor in ministering among the unresponsive and antagonistic.

The CANAL Project



Remains of an ancient church in North Africa.

Courtesy Craig Bundy.

The General Assembly of the C&MA in Canada was held in Regina in 1996. During Assembly, a decision was made, which became our primary ministry focus for the next 15 years. A joint venture with a sister national church was mandated to focus on a new least-reached region. The partner chosen was the C&MA of Latin America, and the selected new focus was the upper Sahara region of Africa. The initial title given to this venture was the *CANAL Project*.

Neither partner had experience in that region, putting both on equal footing.

Mora and I moved to Quito, Ecuador, with Sara and David in mid-1997 to prepare a Latin team for the project. God designed the move down to the last detail. Sara and David enrolled in the Alliance Academy in Quito, and God gave us a place to rent two blocks away.

For some reason, the frequency of observable ‘God moments’ took a quantum leap upward, as did elements of spiritual opposition. The only explanation I can think of is God was delighted for someone to focus on the least-reached of North Africa, so He did all He could to encourage the process! The stories of unusual provision, protection, rescue, and other surprises are too numerous for this space, but they became frequent.

We worked with the Latin American wing of the Alliance World Fellowship (AWF) to: identify quality candidates throughout Latin America, secure training for those candidates, assist their national churches in figuring out how to finance and send their candidates, and how to support their international workers once deployed. This was the ‘launching pad’ aspect.

The first candidate to be deployed was a single woman from Venezuela who was already a translator in Spanish, French, and English. She quickly began learning Arabic. Highly qualified candidates were numerous in the C&MA churches of Latin America, but financial support was a huge challenge.

We spent six years working on solidifying the sending base from Latin America. During this time, both Sara and David graduated from the Alliance Academy. When a married couple from Colombia was ready to deploy, we turned the files over to the AWF Latin American leadership, disbanded the temporary CANAL entity and moved to North Africa to lead the Canadian/Latin team spread across that upper region.



Craig and Mora, 2010. Courtesy Craig Bundy.

Before relocating from Quito, I spent several weeks each Fall and Spring in North Africa trying to prepare the ‘landing strip’ for incoming personnel. The task included identifying visa options, language schools, living quarters, budget estimates, safety nets for potential emergencies, partnership and employment options, medical facilities, etc.

Although fear and chaotic conditions are endemic in the region, the unusual ‘God moments’ kept piling up! Our son Tim was getting out of the U.S. Marine Corps as I began one of the survey trips, and he travelled with me for the month. He was curious about these ‘God moments’ he kept hearing about and wondered if he would get to see one. He did, and it was focused on him!

God provided an ideally located apartment for us in a large North African city, which served well as a travel hub for connecting with team members scattered across the region. We lived there nearly seven years; provision turning into a blessing not only for us and the many who visited but also for several other international worker families who followed us. Team and ministry attrition in the region is high for numerous reasons, but the ‘toe-hold’ that God provided evolved into additional ministries we never expected.

While we were there, Tim graduated from Azusa Pacific University, Peter graduated from the University of Calgary, Sara graduated from Azusa, and David



A Bundy family photo, 2017. Courtesy Craig Bundy.

graduated from the Annapolis Naval Academy. They all worked very hard, and God provided for each of them uniquely, so none had student debts when they finished. That was a family miracle considering the high costs of university training in today's world. God also provided each of the four with a wonderful spouse, for which we continue to praise Him! They, in turn, have provided us with thirteen grandchildren!

Continuing Ministry

In 2010, Mora's parents, Lloyd and Kaye Matheson, were in their early nineties and needing help, so we moved from North Africa to Calgary looking for a house where they could live with us. God provided an ideal bungalow close to First Alliance Church, where her parents attended. We moved in one day, and they moved in the next, remaining with us until they went to be with the Lord.

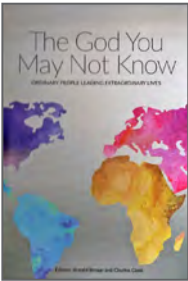
The sudden change of focus, culture, location, and ministry for us was brusque but timely. Mora was transformed into a full-time caregiver, which she managed with love and grace. I was invited to join First Alliance staff as missions pastor and team leader of outreach ministries, where I continued until retiring in June 2019. The provision of the role was a huge blessing in multiple ways and was a very

helpful ramp into new relationships in Canada.

Many times we have felt our journey has been more of a blessing for us personally than for those we ministered to. God has taught us so many valuable lessons about Himself and about trusting Him. He has displayed His multi-faceted attributes in undeniable ways as He patiently directed our path. Every time we thought we were stepping way out on a limb, we discovered He was already there waiting for us.

Adapted from a biography written December 2020

More Stories of Those Who Went



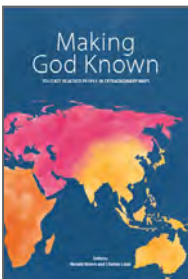
The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Chapter 22, “The Best Teaching Happens Outside the Classroom,” is a biography of Jack and Jean Shannon’s mission in Argentina.



The God Made Known: Through Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Dr. Craig Bundy has written Chapter 9, “Ashes and Burning Coals,” describing the Alliance ministries in establishing the Gospel in Argentina.



Making God Known: To Least-Reached People in Extraordinary Ways edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

This book tells the story of what The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada is currently doing to provide access to Jesus for the least-reached peoples of our troubled world.

Chapter 5

Breaking Up Dry Ground: Steve and Audrey Zub

by Steve and Audrey Zub

The year 1994 was significant in the life of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). Both Canada and the United States jointly discerned a clear and compelling call to send international workers into the countries of Russia, Poland, and Hungary with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We were one of the many couples who went. We had a message of hope to articulate verbally as well as by our committed presence to these people who had been oppressed by Soviet Communism for well over forty years.

Five years earlier, the Iron Curtain imposingly dividing the continent of Europe came tumbling down almost unexpectedly, not unlike the walls of Jericho centuries before. The Soviet Union, along with its satellite nations in Central Europe, had disintegrated before the eyes of a watching and waiting world. Communism had collapsed under the immense weight of its misguided ideology. It was difficult for many in the West to believe the Cold War had actually come to an end after forty years. But it had, though not without drama.

Hungary is situated in the heart of Europe. It was one of these Communist satellite countries, along with Poland and Czechoslovakia, trying to find its way through the fallen rubble while desiring to build a better nation, free from the shackles of Soviet rule and domination.

Many Christian mission agencies and churches from America, Canada, and Western Europe saw a wide-open door to reach lost souls for Christ and began pouring workers and money into this part of the world. Figuratively speaking, harvest time had come, and workers needed to be sent. The C&MA was one denomination that committed itself to go in the summer of 1994. The three mainline/dominant churches, Roman Catholics, Reformed, and Lutheran, did not seem pleased nor welcoming. We were often asked, “Why did you come?” followed by, “We don’t need you here.”

In July 2011, the C&MA closed its ministry efforts in Hungary after serving there for seventeen years. We wondered: Did our ministry have any significant impact on Hungarian people? Did we faithfully bear witness to Jesus in the power of the Spirit

of holiness? Did our children ever regret going with us and being educated at Black Forest Academy (BFA), a boarding school in Germany, in their formative years...away from their parents for extended periods? If we had to do it over again, would we?

Looking back, we believe the decision to be a verbal witness and a dedicated presence for Jesus to the Hungarian people was indeed worth the commitment, effort, and time invested. As for our children, they never once regretted their formative years being spent on another continent. They were exposed to many different European cultures and unique experiences while becoming fluent in Hungarian. BFA in Germany provided an outstanding education, while the friendships they made with other “missionary kids” have been fulfilling and long-lasting.

Our Calling (1992-1994)



Audrey and Steve Zub, ca. 2010. Courtesy Audrey Zub.

Two years before leaving Canada for Hungary, when Steve was pastor of the Cochrane Alliance Church in Alberta, he received a clear and strong impression from the Lord that now was the time to leave the pastorate and pursue overseas ministry among the Hungarian people. God used an advertisement in a missions magazine sponsored by another denomination looking for English teachers willing to teach in Hungary.

Even though Steve was born and grew up in Canada, he had European blood flowing in his veins—his mother had immigrated from Hungary and his father from Ukraine. After his conversion to Christ at the age of fifteen, Steve nurtured a heart-felt, God-given premonition that one day he would go to Hungary to minister and bear witness to Jesus, particularly to unsaved, unbelieving family members.

Steve had been married to Audrey for two years after the passing of his first wife, Wynelle, in a car accident. He now had to share with Audrey what God had put on his heart. Would she agree and come alongside? He wasn't sure, but to his pleasant surprise, Audrey listened attentively, and within a few days, decided to follow God's call on their lives.

Audrey always had an adventurous spirit, not being averse to taking risks and embracing challenges. Since her conversion to Christ in 1988, she had taken many large steps of faith. After quitting a very successful business career with Xerox for Bible College in 1988, only two years later, she became a pastor's wife and a mother

all at once by marrying a widower with three young children. Brendon was five, Jonathan three, and Stephanie only one year old. All three warmly welcomed their new mom into their lives. A new family chapter was about to be written, but it would mean leaving Canada for Hungary.

By 1994, the whole family was walking the streets and breathing the air of a foreign country. Within six years, Audrey had made multiple momentous life-changing decisions.

First Term (1994-1998)



Castle area of Buda in Budapest.
Courtesy Audrey Zub.

During our first term, we lived in the eastern city of Debrecen, regularly attending and ministering in the Free Christian Church, primarily with the youth when Steve was not ministering elsewhere in an itinerant evangelistic ministry. In his broken Hungarian, he regularly preached in the surrounding small towns and villages of Debrecen while the rest of the family earnestly focused on learning the difficult language.

Interestingly, Dr. George Kovacs, a church-planting researcher with the Baptist Union, made a fascinating comment regarding missionaries who live and minister in Hungary but refuse to learn the language. He said, “Hungary became a country where many mission groups settled when the East opened. However, not many and not enough came with the proper attitude—to learn the language and minister to and with a Hungarian mindset instead of a Western one. I cannot understand how some missionaries have lived here for five years and still cannot speak the language. They have made no attempt to learn, which is an insult to Hungarian sensibilities.”

In our minds, this observation by Dr. Kovacs underscored the wisdom of the Alliance’s strategy of having their international workers invest time and energy in learning the language and culture of the people they are ministering to.

One of our key leading scriptures is found in Proverbs 16:9, “In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.” We decided to be involved in a variety of ministries during the first term. This way, we simultaneously learned the language, the culture and finding out where God wanted us to join in the work He was already doing and preparing for us.



Some special godly Hungarian women Audrey ministered with in a new believers' Bible study.
Courtesy Audrey Zub.

We served the poor, singles, youth groups, neighbours, and small Romani home churches, all while establishing a home for our children and helping them adjust to school life. Once every month, Steve would minister to one particular village in a small house group. They raised chickens and pigs on their small plot of land and grew a vegetable garden. So how did they show their appreciation for his ministry? He always came home with either a small fowl or a bag of vegetables. Not your typical honorarium!

Dealing with government bureaucracy was always a major headache. Paperwork was endless and time-consuming year after year. We endured graciously mentoring seventeen national church planters in Hungary; however, it made the bureaucratic hassles we suffered bearable. These relationships lasted over two years, longer with some. It was a privilege to be a part of Hungary's church-planting movement, where many missionaries came alongside committed church planters. We blessed each other in the flesh even as God blessed them and us in the Spirit.

Second Term (1999-2003)

After Steve had his left hip replaced in Calgary while on home assignment, our whole family returned to Hungary. We settled in Budapest and started to attend and work with Bicske and Rose Garden Baptist Fellowship. This term would be a five-year commitment instead of four to accommodate our son Jonathan graduating

from Black Forest Academy in 2004. We were always so impressed with how understanding, flexible, and insightful our Canadian mission's leadership team worked with our family for a mutually beneficial outcome.

One aspiration we nurtured as parents was to include our children, as much as possible, in our ministry, making them feel a part of serving the Lord with us. During this second term, they were older and had learned to speak Hungarian. A weeklong evangelistic outreach in the small town of Bicske provided such an opportunity while the children were on summer vacation. The Bicske Baptist Church invited our whole family to participate in July 2000.

Steve preached every evening in an outdoor tent. Audrey and Brendon, Jonathan, and Stephanie ministered to the local community's children in the mornings. By the end of the week, over forty children were attending, and sixteen committed their hearts to God. From this, an ongoing children's club was established for the church starting in October; Audrey continued to teach. We stayed actively involved with the church for six years, watching it grow from fifteen people meeting in an old converted pub into a church building with an average attendance of over ninety people. It is not often when the whole family can minister together like this; it proved to be a significant highlight. We believe children need to feel they are a part of what their parents are doing without feeling the pressure to participate against their wills.

Audrey and Ildiko Kovacs met with the church-planting wives of Debrecen in late January. These women needed to experience the joy and freedom of Christ to serve with their own gifts and abilities stemming from the different circumstances and stages of their lives. From this group, we assisted in three church plants.

Audrey stated, "There are so many hurting people, so many people with hard lives, living with broken dreams, abused and used by this harsh world, they just need to know that they are loved, accepted and valued. After five years, we are beginning to see how to touch peoples' lives in this culture. The alabaster jar of



Steve in conversation with Hungarian leaders.

Courtesy Audrey Zub.

God's love has been broken and is being poured out. The fragrance of His love is in the air. We are that broken jar."

In speaking with Pastor Attila György and Pastor Bálint Bacskai, two young promising Reformed Church ministers, we became intensely aware of their denomination's spiritual barrenness in Hungary. What we had sensed intuitively was confirmed for us assuredly by the testimony of their own experiences.

Further verification came from our own experiences, having spent time among them.

According to these pastors, 28 percent of Hungarians claim Reformed Church affiliation, about 2 million people, but only 5-10 percent were truly converted believers and followers of Jesus Christ. Pastor Bálint believed that 25 percent were avowed atheists who just happened to be christened as children. Another 25 percent believed in God but were very liberal in their beliefs and behaviour. For example, they did not believe in the divinity of Christ or His resurrection, or that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, or that Jesus performed miracles because miracles just don't happen.

Still, another 40-45 percent were religious but not truly born again. This was certainly a sad state of affairs, not just for the Reformed Church but also for the traditional Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches. In essence, the situation in Hungary represented that of Europe as well. The historical churches needed to be re-evangelized and re-awakened.

Preaching Jesus in both a secular society and a church culture that valued the "traditions of men" was at the heart of Steve's ministry. In November 2000, Steve preached six times in two different Reformed churches in Budapest. Not unexpectedly, these religious folks were a tough group to speak to. On the four weeknights, we averaged about 20 people, and on Sunday, there were 45 in attendance. There were not many conversions or professions of faith during the weeklong campaign. Some significant breakthroughs did encourage both Pastor Attila and Steve. Overall, people reacted positively to the meetings and messages. There was a "stirring of the soul," a "breaking up of dry ground," and "awakenings within the heart." People were attentive but unresponsive—in the sense of not making any visible, open commitments. But people were visibly moved, and God's presence was noticeable.

One middle-aged couple raised their hands the first night was so changed their daughter later reported to us she had never heard her father and mother talk about themselves and about the Lord so openly. The man served as an elder in the Albertville Reformed Church. Pastor Attila could not contain himself; he was energized and excited over how God had worked amongst us.

Third Term (2005-2008)

Health is always a concern, and missionaries, wherever they are, share that concern. Steve had to deal with a painful deteriorating left hip and subsequent replacement. In 2006, he was forced to return to Calgary for three months to have an angiogram and an angioplasty, alleviating two blocked arteries. Had it not been discovered, he would have suffered a life-threatening heart attack.

Since we were married in 1990, Audrey suffered acutely from Crohn's disease with periods of remission. In 2003, she took a major turn for the worse, returning to Canada for treatment and possible surgery. Upon her arrival, she was entering a state of anorexia caused by the painful disease.

The Lord was clearly involved in her healing process because, after much prayer, no major surgery needed to be done. The surgeon was amazed and publicly acknowledged Divine providence in Audrey's recovery, saying, "this was indeed a miracle." Someone in her condition simply does not recover without removing the entire affected area.

Audrey's two-year healing process under her new gastroenterologist went so well that we were cleared to return to Hungary in the summer of 2005. Through everything we experienced, we learned that we all face testing and trials in many different ways and degrees. Faith is not only a belief in the living God and His promises but very much a personal trust in God during the trials of our faith. Sickness is a trial very draining physically, emotionally, and even spiritually, affecting the whole family. We learned perseverance and to trust God in every circumstance of life where faith might be tested.



Gyöngyös church family, c. 2011. Courtesy Audrey Zub.

Ministry takes many different forms. In our case, we focused on preaching, teaching, and service. Over eight years, the Alpha Course became a key component in our ministry in two of the churches—Rose Garden Fellowship in Budapest and New Life Fellowship in Gyöngyös. One semester Steve had the

privilege of teaching the Alpha Course to a class of English-speaking university students at the Gáspár Károli University in Budapest. Their English teacher Julia Fodor, a firm believer who attended the Rose Garden Fellowship, invited Steve into her classroom to conduct these sessions.

Audrey's English clubs and classes were always well attended. In Budapest and Gyöngyös, she held conversational English clubs to help Hungarians gain confidence in speaking the language, hoping to lead them to Christ. In Budapest, she taught English Life Lessons to four different groups of Hungarian teenagers. One group went through the "Life on the Edge" series by James Dobson. She also began a

group for adults in the local elementary and summer school with the Rose Garden church plant, with over 100 attending.

Over our two years in Gyöngyös, around fifty Hungarians participated in our conversational English clubs and classes. We endeavoured to build friendships, introduce them to our church, and invite them to the Alpha Course. Through this ministry, we learned we can always bear witness for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit even when the focus is on serving people in their place of need, without having to resort to manipulation.

Audrey's weekly Bible study group from Rose Garden Church, begun in 2006, averaged ten faithful and vibrant women committed to God's Word and doing good works. One neighbour, Erzsi, prayed the sinner's prayer and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. "It was truly a holy moment for us all as we saw the work of God's Holy Spirit convicting and drawing her into His family," said Audrey.

Audrey and Kovacs Zsuzsa started a mainly non-believers' Bible study from this group, made up mostly from outreach programs and neighbourhood friends. Over four years, many women came and left, with seventeen of them coming to know Christ and growing into mature disciples. They all found a place where they could minister, both inside and outside the church.



Audrey at Ray of Hope Institute, ca 2007.
Courtesy Audrey Zub.

Some began ministering every two weeks in the nearby Ray of Hope Institute. Initially, they were told very directly not to speak of God to any of the patients. Still, they stayed, helping the nurses with the handicapped patients while showing the love of Jesus. They brought joy and laughter, as well as the gift of themselves. After two years, the institute gave them a room for a chapel, a place to have a time of worship with the patients and their families. Many of the institute employees also used it to pray and be prayed for.

Having moved to Gyöngyös, Audrey was still able to meet with these women monthly travelling into Budapest. Many other ministries grew out of this group—craft outreaches, benevolent funds, caring for the sick, clothing drives, teaching children, and more.

In 2006, a fantastic ministry opportunity opened up for Steve in a secular setting at the same university where he led the Alpha Course. He taught a U.S. History Survey Course for the Department of English Literature and Culture. Professor

Julia Fodor asked Steve to be the guest lecturer while she was on maternity leave. She wanted a native English-speaker and fellow believer in Christ for her substitute. He taught the course using her lectures and connected with seventy students as well as faculty and staff. He presented a Christian perspective in this history course only because of the heavy religious influence in American history, from the first evangelical awakening in the 1700s to the founding fathers who were either deists or orthodox Christians the present day.

One pleasant surprise was the many closet Christians coming to him expressing gratitude for having a Christian professor unafraid to talk about matters of faith in class. One young woman, Nori, was still finding her way back to God, having gone through a deep hurt in the local church she had attended. Another student, George, an eclectic religionist with Buddhist leanings, had taken the best from many religions and created one of his own liking. Jesus was much appreciated in his religion, but he was a much different Jesus from the one taught in orthodox Christianity. These were the kinds of discussions Steve often had with students on campus.

Every fall, the university features a North American Culture Week where they invite guest lecturers from the Canadian and American embassies and within the university to speak on various aspects of North American culture. There was a two-day Canadian focus in which the Canadian Ambassador to Hungary, Robert Hage, gave the opening address after which Steve lectured. Steve's topic was "A Canadian Citizen with Hungarian Blood and a Christian Soul." He highlighted those positive values that had shaped his life growing up in Canada, along with his Hungarian heritage and his faith in the Living God. Ministry takes many different forms; being ready and available for service is critical to effective, fruitful service.

Fourth Term (2009-2011)

Our fourth term lasted two years. We lived and ministered in the city of Gyöngyös (Hungarian for "Pearl"). We worked closely with a Baptist church plant of thirty people. During this time, we discerned God was calling us back to Canada. After discussing this with our regional developers, Gerald and Dorothy Hogenbirk, we decided to make plans to return in the summer of 2011.

Although we believed we were making the right decision, it was tough to say goodbye to so many people we loved. We were emotionally spent by the time we attended all the farewell parties but felt we left well. This taught us the importance of arriving well into a new country and the equally important aspect of leaving well.

Striving to be faithful to our calling and giftedness, we also longed to be fruitful in our labour for Christ. As we prepared to leave the country, many Hungarians told

us how grateful they were for us having been there because their lives had changed for the better; our witness for Christ in word and deed had made the difference. They kept asking, “Why are you leaving?” How ironic! Only seventeen years earlier, when we arrived for the first time, the one question we kept hearing was, “Why did you come?”

We left immensely encouraged that our witness for Christ had not been in vain, and our committed presence and verbal witness had born fruit in the form of changed lives.

Adapted from a biography written June 2015

More Stories of Those Who Went



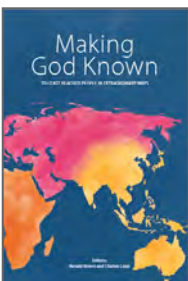
Leading by Serving by Elmer and Muriel Entz

The Entzes were missionaries to India with The Christian and Missionary Alliance for over four decades. They were appreciated for their lives and ministry, modelling the servanthood of Jesus. They were loving and supportive, proving themselves faithful friends.



The God Made Known: Through Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Don Dirks describes the witness to the nations in his chapter on France.



Making God Known: To Least-Reached People in Extraordinary Ways edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Chapter 34 provides a biography of Ralph and Ruth Shareski, entitled “Part of a Much Bigger Story,” describing their missionary career in another European country, Germany.

Chapter 6

Spoiled for the Ordinary: David and Brenda Petrescue

by Brenda Petrescue

“I’m afraid she’s too girly and fragile to be trekking around the world with a 30-pound backpack for the next nine months!” Dave’s dad exclaimed. He was trying to reason with his 24-year-old son, who had his mind set to take me, his bride of two years, on an extended trip overseas. Dave’s purpose was for me to experience frontline missions firsthand.

In Mali, Africa, four years earlier, God gave a clear call turning Dave’s heart towards mission-focused ministry. For the first few years of marriage, we laid in bed at night, and Dave would tell moving stories from his trip. My interest grew; it was not long until I set out to prove this “girly” type was up for the challenge!

During the year 1977-78, we took every mode of transportation imaginable and visited 24 countries. We did our best to help missionaries with a variety of tasks, all while asking lots of questions, listening to incredible stories, praying, laughing, crying, and singing our theme song from the bottom of our hearts, “Let Me See This World Through Your Eyes, Dear Lord.” By the end of that trip, we had been changed forever.

Our Early Years



Dave on the farm, date unknown.
Courtesy Brenda Petrescue.

Dave Petrescue was a Canadian of Romanian and Ukrainian descent. His childhood was spent on a farm in southern Saskatchewan, where the daily chores and many tasks instilled a solid work ethic. Even as a youngster, he sought out challenges, whether it was the biggest stone to lift, the highest tree to climb, or the toughest ram to ride.

When Dave was nine years old, his parents had a miraculous conversion experience. His dad was healed of alcoholism

and saved from an attempted suicide. The subsequent miracles Dave witnessed in their home created a deep spiritual awareness in him. Still, from the age of 10 and onwards, he grew streetwise in Regina, Saskatchewan, with increasing involvement in vandalism, theft, and crime. His early teen years were loads of fun mixed with a lot of pain. At 16, Dave was dramatically saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. He immediately began to win friends and others to Jesus as he modelled a living, vibrant relationship with Him.

I grew up in a loving and supportive Christian home in Regina. As my teen years were approaching, Dad and Mom made one of the most challenging decisions of their lives. They left their longtime “extended family” church to attend a Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) church, which provided ministries for their two young daughters. I will be forever grateful for the sacrifices they bore among family members because of that decision.

It was in Regina at the Hillsdale Alliance Church youth group that Dave and I met. Through the ministry of our leaders, Bob and Sandi Kinnie, many lives were dramatically impacted for Jesus. In later years, we took count, and approximately 70 percent of the youth group from that time were in some kind of full-time ministry. What a testimony and tribute to this couple, to our parents, and of course to the Holy Spirit’s great moving during those revival years.



Dave and Brenda’s engagement.
Courtesy Brenda Petrescue.

Dave and I graduated from Canadian Bible College, Dave with degrees in Christian Education and Theology, and I with a Bachelor of Religious Education. The Friday night missions meetings were when I first started to realize Dave’s passion for missions. Often after a guest missionary spoke and gave a challenge, Dave was face down at the front saying, “Anywhere, Lord!”

This left me glued to my seat in fear. By this time, our relationship was getting serious, and I could not help but project into the future. I visualized someday saying goodbye to my school-aged children, putting them on a plane to an MK (missionary kid) boarding school. Testimonies of missionaries being captured or martyred consumed me with fear.

One night Betty Hunt, a Vietnam missionary, ministered to my fearful heart. She told me God never promises His GRACE for our thought life and all the ‘what ifs’ in our future. He promises His GRACE when we need it, and at that time, it will be exactly enough. I never forgot that. It would become an important reminder to

me many times throughout the years.

Dave's life verses were Psalm 40:2-3, "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God..." I cannot recall ever observing Dave singing, "Amazing Grace, that saved a wretch like me," without tears filling his eyes. His heart was incredibly grateful for being rescued from his past.

My life verse is Jeremiah 29:11-13, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." As I reflect on the sovereignty of God and His loving plan for me, I am encouraged.

Ministry at Unionville Alliance Church



Dave speaking at Unionville Alliance Church,
date unknown.

Courtesy Brenda Petrescue.

While on our world adventure, Dave accepted an invitation to be the Senior Pastor of Unionville Alliance Church in Toronto, Ontario. From 1978-1991 we ministered there and experienced phenomenal growth both personally and in our church family. Dave was blessed with continual confirmation of his spiritual gifts in evangelism, preaching, and pastoring. Missions was a priority focus in our church. As a result, it was one of the top Canadian churches in giving to further God's Kingdom mandate worldwide.

During those early years in ministry, we were blessed with the arrival of our three children—Janelle, Tim, and Michelle. Between family and ministry, we were convinced that life could not get any better. We even survived and stayed serving after a massive church-building program!

Dave was a fantastic combination of leader, husband, and father. He modelled a transparent, on-the-grow, faithful follower of Jesus. Believing in giving until it hurt, we tithed faithfully during some pretty lean times in life.

I recall when Dave challenged the church family to dig deep during our new church facility's fundraising. He came home after the service and asked if I would support giving all that we had. Even with the responsibility of two little ones at the

time, we gave our all, cleared our account, our wallets, and even a small piggy bank. The following day someone stopped by to drop off a jug of milk. That week a cheque came in the mail from an unexpected source. Jehovah Jireh, our Provider, proved Himself faithful once again!

After twelve years at Unionville Alliance Church, I hit the most humbling season of my life. Due to over-commitment and heavy responsibilities, I experienced clinical burnout and was basically out of commission for close to a year. Later, I would often look back on this time and thank the Lord for the nuggets of truth I learned. It was a sobering life lesson to realize my own human limitations.

In the thirteenth year of our ministry, Dave faced his first staffing crisis, and it pulled the rug out from under him. Although the district was very supportive and helpful, Dave found his energy diminishing. We began to wonder if the Lord was directing us to move in another direction. After all, we initially had come to Unionville to do our two-year home service and then go overseas. Now 13 years had gone by. God spoke to Dave using the same message He said to Abraham thousands of years earlier,



Last formal picture before leaving Canada, 1991.
Courtesy Brenda Petrescue.

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” (Hebrews 11:8). So, we left Unionville. About the same time, a challenge came from my 81-year-old mentor, who encouraged me to begin praying, “God, just surprise me!”

Maadi Community Church

With a rewarding sense of completion to our ministry in Unionville, we left, with three young children, in June of 1991. We were invited to do an interim pastorate at the Kelowna Alliance Church for the next six months while we waited on God’s direction. During our backpacking trip years earlier, we had told the Lord “anywhere but the Middle East!” I’m sure God had a smile on His face when we arrived in Cairo, Egypt, on January 1, 1992. Little did we realize how many wonderful surprises would be in store.



From many tribes and nations, under the tent at Maadi Community Church, date unknown.
Courtesy Brenda Petrescue.

Our children took most of their schooling in Cairo and graduated at the foot of the Sphinx with the pyramids towering in the background. I was privileged to have a teaching job at the same school the kids attended, and with a lot of hard work and incredible family support, I received my Master's in Education in 1998. Dave was the senior pastor of the Maadi Community Church for 15 years. During this time, we kept our credentials with The Christian and Missionary Alliance and were officially called missionaries on special assignment.

The Maadi Community Church (MCC) is an international, interdenominational, English-speaking, independent church ministering to foreigners living in Cairo. When we arrived, the city's population was about 17 million, growing to 22 million during our 20-year tenure. Cairo is both the political capital of Egypt and the centre of Islamic education for all of North Africa. It traces its roots all the way through the Old and New Testament. It was even the home of Jesus when his parents fled Bethlehem to save His life.

The church averaged about 70 attendees when we first arrived in Maadi. We rented a quaint, beautiful little Anglican chapel to meet in. Within two years, we had moved outside to the courtyard under a tented canopy battling heat, swatting flies, distracted by horns honking, and dogs barking, BUT we did church like we never had before! With 50 denominations and over 40 nationalities in attendance, Dave repeatedly commented, "This is just a foretaste of what Heaven is going to be like."

For several years we had five weekend services, and the church grew to about 1,500. In addition to all the typical church ministries, Maadi Community Church had:

- a cell group ministry involving over 200 small groups;
- 30 ministry partners that teamed up with the Development and Outreach arm of MCC;
- a dynamic youth internship program;
- local ministries which invested into the Christian nationals of Egypt;
- Victory Bible School, which was initially for Africans, but presently has several continents represented (after Dave's death, they changed it to Petrescue Bible Institute (PBI) in honour of him);
- and various ministries to refugees.

Hundreds of thousands of displaced refugees have fled to Egypt over the many years of war in Sudan. They arrived in Egypt hopeful for a new beginning, only to discover they were a drain on an already depressed economy. Egypt felt they had enough pressure with their own declining economy and unemployment without helping others. Thankfully, along with several other organizations, MCC reached out tangibly with funding and leadership for schools, health care, education, and church plants, practically demonstrating ways that communicated value and love to the people.



Baptisms in the Jordan River were always a highlight. Courtesy Brenda Petrescue.

A unique characteristic of an international church is its invisible revolving door. Diplomats, business people, teachers, and refugees are continually moving in and out. We lost 30 percent of our congregation every summer. Early on, God gave Dave a vision from Samson's story tying up the foxtails, lighting them on fire, and sending them out to burn up the crops of the enemy (Judges 15:3-5).

Dave's vision based on this passage was, "Bring the people in. Lead them to Jesus. Get them filled up and fired up. Then bless them and send them out so they can likewise do wherever they repatriate all over the globe." He firmly believed that from the very beginning to the end of time, the Bible makes it clear that God's number one plan is to reach the

nations with His good news and with His love. This is His unstoppable plan and purpose. He wants to reach people from every tongue, tribe, and people group with His loving grace. We were honoured to play a part in that grand plan.

In Cairo, our primary purpose was to pastor the foreign community, but doors opened when Egyptians asked why we came to their corner of the world. We established friendships with business and government leaders, which in turn led to unique opportunities to share Jesus' love for them. In an inspired way, Pastor Dave had a practical outlook on the everyday challenges life frequently throws at us. He was known to be a gifted artist who used words as a medium to make you laugh, cry, or question. The church family and community at large loved Pastor Dave!

At one point, Dave received an email from our then president of the C&MA, Arnold Cook, saying, "People are asking when Petrescue is coming home. I'm telling them I think he's spoiled for the ordinary. Am I right?" Dave's reply was, "Arnold, I couldn't have said it better!" Two phrases I often heard Dave use during his years at Maadi Community Church were, "I can't believe I get paid to do this!" and "Does it get any better than this?"



Brenda and Dave loving Egypt. Courtesy Brenda Petrescue.

The Church in the Middle East was the centre for Christianity for many years. In fact, the intellectual centre of Christianity was in Alexandria, Egypt. God said He plans to use the Middle East as a primary source of His blessing for the whole world. Certainly, as we hear the news of recent years, the Middle East is a hotbed for the persecution of Christians.

But God says, “In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance’” (Isaiah 19:24, 25).

For years, the Middle East’s spiritual dynamic has been perceived to resemble its landscape: barren and unfruitful. Yet God declares that He will use this region to bless the entire world in the last days.

In a sermon Dave preached during 2005 called “Lord, Surprise Me,” he made the following comments, “When I come back here to North America and see the stereotypes in the media and hear the hearts of many Christians growing cold towards the Middle East, I am saddened. At the same time, God is firing up the hearts of people around the world who have a sense for what God is doing, a sense for His plan, and a sense for His prophetic time clock. God gives various ministries a vision to participate in what God is doing to transform this region for Christ. The Maadi Community Church continues to be one of them.

Amid this area of unrest, where persecution and hardship are common, thousands are coming to Christ. Supernatural dreams and visions appear to be a common means God uses to draw them, followed by being disciplined and then going out to boldly impact their world. After all, Jesus did proclaim that He would build His Church and even the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18)!

Dave, an ordinary farm boy, was thrilled and surprised to have a small part in this plan! He frequently asked, “Have you ever noticed that God often asks us to do things that are outside our comfort zone? God asks you to do things you can’t do. He asks you to give things you don’t have. He asks you to try things you can’t dream of accomplishing. God moves us outside the box of our comfort zones so that we learn to depend on His strength and not our own. As author Rick Yancy says, “God doesn’t call the equipped; He equips the called.” The Bible declares that our eyes haven’t seen, our ears haven’t heard, it hasn’t even entered into the heart of a man, the things that God has prepared for him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

The contract Dave signed with the Maadi Community Church was for three years. However, those three years turned into 15 explosively exciting years of ministry. The church had become a ministry movement. Dave had finally gathered what he referred to as his dream team in ministry. He was two months short of



The Petrescue Family together in Kelowna, B.C., summer 2006.

Courtesy Brenda Petrescue.

receiving his doctorate in ministry through Asbury Seminary. He had been re-visioned and re-tooled for the opportunities he thought were yet to come.

But God...

On September 1, 2006, he stepped up to the outdoor pulpit at MCC and preached from Romans 11, “God’s Chosen People.” Later, when he came down to stand beside me in that 40-degree heat, I gave him his water bottle and whispered in his ear, “Oh my gosh, Honey, that was incredible! I thought your feet were going to lift right off that platform, and you were going to go to Heaven without me!”

That was his last sermon. He was 53 years old and seemingly at the peak of his ministry. On Tuesday, September 5, 2006, Dave fell to his death from our 10-story apartment building roof. For the first eighteen hours, it was dealt with as a crime scene. When all evidence was taken into consideration, authorities, both foreign and national, deemed it an accident. Dave was locked out of our ninth-floor apartment and was implementing a plan to get to our balcony to let himself in. Questions remain around his death. It was utterly shocking and horrifying for us, his family, as well as for loved ones all over the globe.

In time, the Lord comforted my heart with numerous verses, one of them being, "...the devout are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death" (Isaiah 57:1-2).

My best friend, husband, lover, counsellor, and pastor was gone. The one who called me his 'queen' and believed that I could do anything I set my mind to was no longer there to affirm me. After 31 years of marriage and 28 years of full-time ministry, I was alone. In a unique vision, immediately following Dave's fourth memorial service, God gave me two words with three dots: BUT GOD...

They mark the banner I hold over my life. I return to these words frequently for encouragement, challenge, and declaration. Part of the vision God had revealed to me was that Dave's legacy would move forward even after his death. What our enemy meant for evil that September day God has redeemed and turned around, He has already and will continue, to bring about good for His name's sake.

Our children are amazing; my three best friends! All three live within a half-hour of each other in the Greater Vancouver area. They grieved, trusted, affirmed, and stayed in close contact with me during the five years following Dave's death as I felt God impress upon my heart to stay in Cairo. I continued to teach at Cairo American College and attend Maadi Community Church.

God spoke clearly that the 2010-2011 school year would be my last in Egypt. In January 2011, the Egyptian Revolution began. Tanks were rolling down my street, gunshots ringing in my ears, prisoners from the high-security prison two blocks away had broken free, and volatile protests were happening daily. This eventually led to my evacuation. Amazingly, I had every confidence that God was holding me in the palm of His righteous right hand, and I should fear not. After three weeks in Canada, I returned to Cairo, finished out the academic year, and repatriated to Langley, B.C., in June 2011. Oh, what joy it was to become a grandmother three months later!

In his book *Life of the Beloved*, Henri Nouwen made a comment that so describes my feelings during the past two years living back here in Canada. "As I grow older, I discover more and more that the greatest gift I have to offer is my own joy of living, my own inner peace, my own silence and solitude, and my own sense of well-being."

The following excerpt is taken from the brief biography Dave wrote for his dissertation:

God has regularly used people at strategic times and places to prune and shape me according to His design. Words of encouragement, rebuke, warning, counsel and affirmation have been fertilizer spread

lavishly over the depths of my character. Many have spoken into my life truths that have profoundly shaped me, adding colour and texture to my person and producing bountiful fruit from my life.

My primary input has come from God Himself through His written Word. From establishing my life's focus and purpose (Matthew 6:33; Psalm 37:4) to providing my personal security (Psalm 139) to directing my financial affairs (Luke 6:38; Proverbs 13:22), to drawing me deeply into His heart and revealing His secrets (Proverbs 3:32), to being the source for dynamic discipleship for the nations (Jeremiah 1:4-10), God has spoken intimately and profoundly to me. My relationship with Christ has grown close and sweet, creating an unbreakable bond and a continuous flow of life (John 15:1-8). God's word is truth, and I have grown to love and cherish His wisdom. Unfortunately, it is often when I am the busiest and, therefore most in need of God's enabling, I drift from my spiritual disciplines and dry up spiritually. Out of my hollow, I then turn to the Lord and find Him ever faithful.

As I have sought to abide in Christ, he has indeed allowed me the awesome privilege of seeing abundant fruit produced in and through my life. My public ministry has developed a cycle of significant change and advances about every 12 years. Each time God calls me to something more challenging, I come face to face with my inadequacies, only to be reminded that it's not about me but rather all about Him. As I stay close to Christ, He continues to overwhelm me with new measures of enabling grace I couldn't have imagined.

Although I am a reluctant leader, God continues to affirm my leadership and place me in positions requiring my absolute dependence on Him. Although always somewhat hesitant and careful when looking inward, I joyfully advance with God's aggressive agenda knowing that "The one who calls [me] is faithful and He will do it." (I Thessalonians 5:24)

Craig Bundy, in his forward to the book, *Pastor Dave's Reflections*, made a comment that "Dave was ever passionate about his wife, Brenda, his children, Janelle, Tim, and Michelle, and the church, but even they would concur that his primary passion was the person of Jesus Christ. He clearly understood the difference between promoting religion and promoting Christ. He chose the latter and actively searched for ways to direct others to discover the same."

Amy Widener, our youth pastor at MCC, wrote, "Dave will be remembered as an eternal optimist, seeing the best in every person and situation, as well as an

encourager, possessing the powerful ability to honestly express the depths of his emotions, whether through bursts of excitement, heartfelt tears, an intoxicating smile, or a big tight hug. Many adjectives will be ascribed to Dave, but of all, 'passionate' will best summarize the life he lived: passionate about his family, passionate about life, passionate about Christ and the advance of His kingdom!"

Janelle, Tim, Michelle, and I continue to miss and reminisce about this wonderful man. His life appeared to be taken from us prematurely, but what an incredible impact he made with the life he lived!

Adapted from a biography written 2013

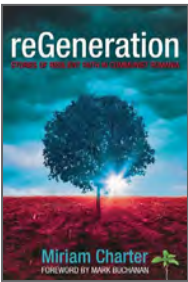
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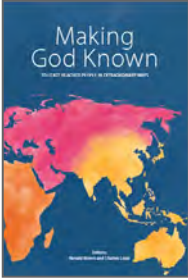
Pastor Dave's Reflections compiled by Brenda Petrescue

A collection of Maadi Messenger Magazine articles written by Rev. Dave Petrescue 1992-2006. The book also includes a brief autobiography written three years before his death and a poem written in 1999. The 315-page hardback edition of Pastor Dave's Reflections, compiled by his widow, Brenda Petrescue, is available for \$10 plus postage costs. To obtain a copy, contact davesreflectionsCanada@gmail.com.



reGeneration: Stories of Resilient Faith in Communist Romania by Miriam Charter

Miriam Charter tells the story of her ministry in the underground church of Communist Romania (1980s). It introduces a never-ending story about the regenerative process of true discipleship, which reaches today to the second, third, and fourth generations. These stories will inspire more in-depth reflection on challenging missional issues that will undoubtedly be encountered by the next generation of international workers.



Making God Known: To Least-Reached People in Extraordinary Ways edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Dr. Craig Bundy has written chapter 17, “Voices of the Arab Spring,” where he describes some of the paradigm shifts necessary to work in North Africa.

Chapter 7

Leaving Their Legacy Among the Vietnamese: George and Harriette Irwin

by Edwin Irwin

My Dad, George Irwin, simplified life. He took complex issues and made them simple, practical. To him, missionary work was not all about strategizing with designs and master plans. He got up every morning and did what he believed every missionary should do. His days were spent loving the people, serving them, visiting their homes and villages, witnessing to them about Christ, and teaching them the Bible.

Dad busied himself, using his Land Rover as a taxi, truck, ambulance, or hearse so he could serve the people who possessed nothing but their feet for transportation. When necessary, he pushed small trees over, climbed steep hillsides, and forded streams and rivers to reach the people. If he could not drive there, he walked.

Mom Harriette, also known as Hat, usually went everywhere Dad went, but she was different, coming from the Stebbins family. At 5'8", she was stunningly beautiful with jet-black hair and sparkling dark eyes. She did not try to hide her beauty, using it to her advantage in a godly way. Mom often dressed in a bright red dress with some jewelry and makeup when travelling to the jungle villages in Vietnam, where the natives wore practically nothing.¹

Mom would say with a sparkle, "God did not call me to look dreary." With this boldness, she had a way of making herself noticed. She did not do this for her own sake; instead, she wanted people to listen to her talk about Jesus.

Mom was not only colourful in appearance but did everything with panache. She cooked like a gourmet, wrote elegantly, and spoke with enthusiasm. Yearly she would produce Christmas dramas, designing and painting vibrant backdrops while also tirelessly working with the young people for hours to prepare the songs and theatrics.

Mom and Dad would then take these young people to different villages each night, presenting the Gospel of Christ for over a week. As a teenager, I remember many hours of practicing as she taught us to sing Christmas carols in four-part harmony while she played an old folding pump organ. She even designed and sewed colourful costumes for the pageant players.

¹ Early in the Irwin's missionary career, the Koho women dressed only in a short, hand-woven, wrap-around cloth skirt; the men wore a skimpy loincloth. They no longer dress like this.

As I write this, my parents are already in Glory. I am relying on my own experiences and the stories they and others told me about their lives.

The Early Years

When missionaries to the ethnic tribal people first arrived in Vietnam, they were assigned to French language study in Dalat, where one of the ethnic tribes, the Koho, lived. French was the government's official language.

Dad and Mom were both born in the Anamese Province of French Indochina and grew up in the country as missionaries' children. Since they already spoke Vietnamese and French, studying French was a formality. They had also experienced missionary work among the Koho tribe as children, so the mission assigned them to serve these people.

Missionary work among Koho began when Herb and Lydia Jackson felt burdened to evangelize them during Mom and Dad's childhood. The Jacksons had a fruitful ministry among the Vietnamese in the delta basin of the Mekong River. Still, they noticed the scantily clothed Koho walking along the roadside when visiting Dalat. These people had never heard the Gospel, and this reality broke the Jacksons' hearts. They asked the mission to transfer them and obtained permission from the French government to move to Dalat.



L-R: E.F. Irwin, I.R. Stebbins,
Marie Irwin, date unknown.
Courtesy Edwin Irwin.



Franklin and George Irwin,
date unknown. Courtesy
Bonnie Burnett

Because Dalat's temperate climate provided relief from the hot steamy weather in Vietnam, the mission leaders decided it was the perfect location for a missionary children's school. The Jacksons were asked to serve as directors and dorm parents.

Mom and Dad were two of the school's first three students upon opening in 1929. As part of the school's activities, the Jacksons brought the children to the Koho villages to help in the work. This choice ultimately helped prepare my parents for their future ministry.

The idea for the school started while Dad's parents, E. Frank and Marie Irwin were on home assignment in Toronto. They told the people at their church they were hesitant to return to Vietnam as missionaries unless the mission solved Dad's education problem. He was already in the fourth grade, and the schools in Vietnam did not provide the right kind of education. Led by the Spirit, two prominent citizens of Toronto and members

of the church, Mr. Christie of the Christie Biscuits Company and Mr. Jaffray of the Toronto Globe and Mail, provided \$5,000 to start the Dalat School.

Mom and Dad lived with “Uncle” and “Aunty” Jackson, often travelling with them to the jungle villages of these tribes. They would either walk or ride out on horseback. With no roads, only footpaths connected the city to these villages.

Some of the Koho worked at Dalat School. Sau, a teenager, was one of them. Dad was much older than the other students and made friends with Sau. Their friendship, along with the trips to the jungle, helped Dad develop a deep love for the Koho people.

Before leaving Vietnam to study at Nyack Missionary Institute (now Nyack College) in New York State, Mom and Dad independently committed their lives to return as missionaries to Vietnam so they could preach Christ to the Koho people. Although they were friends, they were not childhood sweethearts. Their romance began about three years after Dad graduated from Nyack Missionary Institute.

Dad’s story actually begins with his grandparents, James and Martha Irwin. The founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, Albert B. Simpson, came to Toronto to preach and teach about the urgent need for the Church to send missionaries to people everywhere who did not know about Jesus. The Irwins liked what they heard; when The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) launched their first Canadian church branch in Toronto, they immediately joined.

So did Robert Jaffray. Shortly after that, Jaffray went to Nyack Missionary Institute in New York and then to China as a missionary. In China, Jaffray noticed no Protestant churches were working to evangelize the Indochinese living in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. He reported this to Albert Simpson, and in 1911 Simpson sent two missionaries to start the work among the Anamese people in central Vietnam. These missionaries possessed German surnames, leading to the French regime expelling them when hostilities between France and Germany escalated.

Around this time, Ontario’s champion fencer, Edwin Franklin Irwin (Frank) of Toronto, and Marie Helen Morgenthaler (Marie) of Hamilton, Ontario, sensed the call to serve as foreign missionaries; they attended Nyack Missionary Institute to prepare.

Marie sensed her call in her family’s home church. She talked about it to her pastor, Rev. Dickman. He heard about missionary meetings in New Bremen, between Bowling Green and Dayton, so they went to see what was happening.

Mr. Christie of the Christie Biscuits Company and Mr. Jaffray of the Toronto Globe and Mail, provided \$5,000 to start the Dalat School.



The Irwins are on the right, in the front row. Dr. Jaffray is in the middle of the front row. Date unknown. Courtesy Bonnie Burnett.

God placed His desire to save the lost on both Marie and Rev. Dickman's hearts, and Marie chose to go to Nyack. Frank's call came when he heard A.B. Simpson preach. Frank and Marie fell in love with each other when they met at Nyack.

Although engaged to marry, Frank and Marie arrived in Vietnam's harbour at Tourane (Danang) as single missionaries in 1914. The ship's boat could not get close to the shore, so a Vietnamese labourer carried a very embarrassed 23-year-old missionary

woman to the beach on his back while Frank waded ashore. Although I wondered why Frank did not carry Marie, I never asked my grandmother the question.

Although the mission wanted them to serve two years before they married, the policy suddenly changed because Morgenthaler was a German name, while Irwin was not. This meant Marie was under threat of expulsion, so the mission ordered them to go to Wei Chou in Southern China, where Robert Jaffray married them. Two years later, on December 5, 1917, my Dad, George Edwin Irwin, was born in Danang, Vietnam.

Harriette Frances Stebbins, my Mom, arrived in Danang almost five years later, on November 23, 1921. Her parents, Irving Randolph Stebbins and Mary Hartman Stebbins, herself a second-generation Alliance missionary, arrived as single missionaries in 1918. Irving had left his girlfriend in the United States, expecting her to come later. However, when he met Mary during the voyage to Vietnam, the other lady's courtship ended, and not long after arriving in Vietnam, Irving proposed to Mary. Two years later, in Canton, China, Robert Jaffray officiated their wedding.

The senior Irwins' furlough came due in 1934, so Dad completed his junior and senior high school years in Toronto. In 1947, his parents returned to the field after an extended furlough during which Frank wrote his book, *With Christ in Indochina*. They left thinking they would see their son again during their next leave in five years.

Shortly before their time to return to Canada, some of the missionaries, including Frank as the lead, believed God wanted them to stand with Vietnam's Tin Lanh Church in the face of an imminent Japanese invasion. The Japanese only

fought three days and then quit because the French Vichy government in Vietnam was part of the Axis alliance. Their real objective was to take the island nations to the south.

Even though the war was intense around the world, missionaries in Vietnam were technically free to travel. However, under the duress of Roman Catholic leadership and Japanese pressure, the government interned the missionaries, including their children. They were placed in a concentration camp in My Tho, south of Saigon, until the war ended. Dad's 19-year-old brother, Franklin, taught school there to his 7-year-old sister, Helen May, and the other missionaries' children.

Dad completed his studies at Nyack and two years of required home service at the Alliance Church in Hopeville, Ontario. Along with Robert Ziemer, he prepared to sail on December 7, 1941, from San Francisco to Vietnam to serve as missionaries. Of course, the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor that day halted any and all civilian travel plans.

Dad was forced to return to Canada, knowing if he did not join the Royal Canadian Air Force, the government would conscript him into the army as a foot soldier. He entered the Air Force to train as a pilot for Lancaster bombers. He remained there through the duration of the war. When it was his turn to ship over to England, the war with Germany ended.

Canada discharged him, but the Air Force called him back again to prepare him for flight navigation in the Pacific, but that too ended before he got into the fight. Though somewhat disappointed, Dad realized God protected him so he could fulfill his commission and serve as a missionary. He never again piloted an aircraft.

The mission told the Stebbins family they needed to return to the United States. They had seven children, four of them already teenagers, with two ready to enter college. Mom, the oldest, had finished high school a year earlier, with her younger sister Ruth graduating that year.

Mom entered Nyack Missionary Institute in 1942 to prepare for missionary service. One day, she received a letter from Dad. Apparently, he wanted them to begin writing to each other. The last time she saw him was at Dalat School seven years earlier. At age twelve, she had no serious thoughts of marriage, especially not with him, possibly because he was five years older.

Nonetheless, his letter flattered her. The tall, handsome pilot was one of only two upper classmates she could have looked up to as a Dalat School student, and he was the only older boy. They began corresponding, then courted, and finally married on November 28, 1945, at Nyack, right after his Air Force discharge.

Dad's parents arrived in Canada in December 1945, fully expecting to witness their son's marriage. They already loved my Mom since the Stebbins and Irwins

were friends on the mission field. Word of their imminent arrival had not come, so Mom and Dad continued their plans to marry on November 28. They needed to get to their home assignment in the northern part of British Columbia before the heavy snowfall season.

This kind of sacrifice of missionaries not attending the significant events in their adult children's lives is commonplace, being even more typical in those days than it is now. God's call on a person's life requires sacrifice. Just as God sacrificed the life of his Son for us, Christians must make the complete sacrifice for the sake of the souls of others.

My parents did not take my sister Marilyn and me to an altar to symbolically leave us there, but they did not leave their ministry to serve us. Just as their parents sent them to boarding school, so they sent us. They missed our graduations, weddings, and the birth of our children. Of their four parents, they were only able to attend the funeral of Dad's mother.

As I consider this, I look at God's incredible benevolence and protection over the years for my life and my family. At times, we missionary kids often felt desperately lonely, but God showed me He loved me deeply. He has incredibly blessed my family and me. I think God specially sheltered us.

Before embarking on their missionary journey, Mom and Dad ministered for two years to Vietnamese refugees in Florida and Montreal. The Christian and Missionary Alliance then appointed them to the Vietnamese refugees in Europe.

Already fluent in both French and Vietnamese, Mom and Dad settled in France for the assignment. Their active service continued until 1990, working with Vietnamese people right to the end.

Return to Vietnam, 1947

As soon as Dad and Mom completed their home service, they returned to Vietnam in 1947 with their newly born daughter, Marilyn. After language school, they moved to their assigned station, Dilinh. Hunters worldwide came to Dilinh because roads and trails from the city led to their favourite hunting grounds. Those roads and paths also provided the missionaries access to the villages of the Koho nation.

While Mom maintained the home base in Dilinh, Dad would take extended evangelistic trips into these villages accompanied by a Vietnamese missionary and language teacher. Mom was unable to go because she had to care for two small children; I had shown up in June 1949.

The work was difficult, and not just because of their separation. The people lived in fear of an evil spirit world. Regular cruel ceremonial sacrifices of animals were

made to the demons for protection. They also drank heavily of the rice liquor they made. The system left these people wretchedly poor and sickly.

Dad visited one village of seventeen people, with five families living in a thatch and bamboo longhouse built on the ground. This house had only one door, which Dad had to stoop to enter. Five fires smouldered inside, one for each of the families. The people stank from sickness and lack of hygiene. Their pigs, dogs, chickens, and other small animals shared the house with them.

The Lord told Dad to tell these people only about Jesus. Nobody responded at first, but he kept going back. One man and his family finally responded and, on his own, moved out of the house and built a new one off the ground with a separated kitchen. Despite experiencing extreme testing, the family stayed true. One by one, the people turned away from their spirit worship and underwent a miraculous transformation. The village went from being a disgrace, even among their own people, to having exemplary status, showing what Christ can do when people turn to Him. ([Click](#) for an article adapted from *The Alliance Weekly*).

Mom and Dad started teaching the Bible as they visited. Mom prayerfully dispensed medicines sent to them from various medical missions. She had little training, but she read the directions, prayed, and believed God would give her the necessary wisdom (see James 1:5). They began to hold week-long Bible schools, mainly to train young men to shepherd the flock. They followed this practice as other villages started to turn to Christ. To help them, Dad worked many hours with his language teacher and another missionary to translate the Bible into Koho.

Illiteracy hindered the growth of Christians.

Illiteracy hindered the growth of Christians.

As noted, they had no Bible in their own language, and most of them spoke neither French nor Vietnamese. After a chance meeting in Saigon with Dr. Frank Laubach of worldwide literacy fame, Mom wrote a language study primer for the Koho people and successfully began to teach them to read. She even taught the 100-year-old grandmother of their language teacher. Later in their career, she was asked to design the reading primer, which would be used in the public schools to teach Koho children to read their own language. She did so well, the project managers asked her to design the primer for the Vietnamese language.

In 1954, South Vietnam achieved full independence from French rule, and Vietnamese became the official language. Vietnamese people started to move into the highlands, particularly those fleeing the Communist regime of the north. Vietnamese soon became the official language of the highlands. The tribal and Vietnamese churches were growing rapidly, and the Alliance was sending

missionaries for tribes not yet reached. These new missionaries now needed to learn Vietnamese, not French. The mission chose my parents to oversee the language training and orientation for the new arrivals. Mom supervised the language work, and Dad took the missionaries to visit the mountain villages.

Before beginning, the new missionaries travelled the country's length with their field leader and his wife to visit the different tribal groups. Dad and Mom went along because they spoke Vietnamese. After the trip, the mission decided to relocate them to Danang, which was more centrally located to the new tribes. The new arrivals settled in the city while learning the language under Mom's tutelage.

Ministry Among the Bru and Katu

While living in Danang, my parents started work among the Bru people of the north near Khe Sanh. They also served among the Katu who lived south of there, inland from Hoi An. They eventually moved to An Diem, a village directly bordering the territory of the fierce Katu.

The Katu worshiped human blood, not their own, but the blood of people murdered in another village. Consequently, the villages had no direct access by paths and were heavily booby-trapped with poisoned arrows. They lived high in the mountains, and the trail went straight up.

Marilyn and I went with my parents to visit the village of Hiep. I remember walking along a path in razor-sharp grass that was higher than my head, then for two hours, we climbed straight up the side of the mountain. We needed a guide to lead us through the traps into the village. Marilyn and I became the first white children to visit a Katu village. Great things were starting to happen among the Katu when the time came for Mom and Dad's home assignment in Canada.

Return to Ministry to the Koho

Upon return in 1962, the Katu region was no longer accessible, with Viet Cong guerillas actively patrolling the area. We moved back to Dilinh to continue work among the Koho. Mom and Dad continued to train new pastors, going into the villages to hold short-term Bible schools. Mom began teaching the young people to sing at this time.

Marilyn and I immensely enjoyed walking with these young people back to their villages during the Christmas season until we both graduated from high school and had to leave. While Dad drove the Land Rover, not everyone could ride. The villages were sometimes fifteen miles apart. We all walked carrying the supplies on

our backs to reach one village, including the folding organ. I remember we had to cross a river on a swinging bridge.

My parents continued to work like this, year after year, until the fall of South Vietnam's government in 1975. Marilyn and I were gone, but Mom and Dad literally inherited three new children. Mom's sister Ruth, and her husband Ed Thompson, were killed in the North Vietnamese 1968 Tet Offensive; they had left their children to my parents in their wills.

This happened while Mom and Dad were in Toronto on home assignment, so Dale (15), Laurel (11), and Tommy (7) joined my parents when they returned to the field. Judy (21) and David (19) Thompson were in College in the USA.



Tin-Lanh Church in Saigon, 2005.

Courtesy Wilson Kaan.

On March 29, 1975, the North Vietnamese launched a massive assault to overthrow the South Vietnamese government. Dad had to go to Saigon in April, and since things were deteriorating rapidly, he threw a couple barrels of their stuff into the back of the Land Rover. Later, he was unsuccessful in trying to return.

Airplanes full of babies and children awaiting adoption by American parents were flying out of Saigon. The children needed caregivers while they travelled. Mom and Dad joined the crew, sadly leaving Vietnam, never to return. The plane just ahead of theirs crashed on take-off killing seventy-eight children and thirty-five caregivers.

The legacy of their work among the Koho, training young people to teach the Bible, shows today. Nearly sixty thousand Koho identify themselves as Tin Lanh, which is the C&MA Church in Vietnam. When they left, the entire Tin Lanh Church numbered 75,000. At least two young Katu people are now attending the Saigon Seminary.

Ministry in Europe

Mom and Dad did not retire from missionary work when they left Vietnam. Their language proficiency in Vietnamese, French, and English enabled them to serve Vietnamese refugees moving to Europe. They moved to Paris and then Toulouse, where they started two churches. Church ministries among the Vietnamese also started in Belgium and Denmark.

Return to Canada, 1990

In 1989, Mom's memory was noticeably deteriorating. The Alliance asked them to retire, and they returned to settle in Canada in 1990. Already the Vietnamese had started five churches in Toronto, and my parents continued their work.

In 2001, Mom, diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, had to move to a nursing home as Dad was no longer able to care for her. This greatly distressed him, but he drove across the city every day to visit with her. He would read her the Bible and sing songs every time he went to see her. When she could not do anything else, we could see her mouthing the words as we sang.

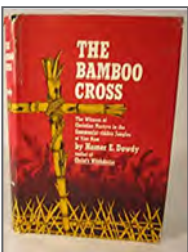
We were able to get Mom moved to a Canadian Pentecostal Assemblies Home, where Dad obtained a studio apartment. He would regularly go to feed his wife her meals. Toward the end of 2006, his health worsened, and we had to place him in the nursing home. On January 28, 2007, Dad passed into his Saviour's presence, and Mom followed on March 15.

I praise God and thank Him for my parents and our wonderful missionary heritage. They willfully "denied themselves, took up their cross and followed Jesus" to the end. The blood shed by my Aunt Ruth and Uncle Ed, along with four other missionaries in Banmethout, Vietnam, mingles with that of the great saints through the ages. When Christ returns, millions will worship at His throne because Mom, Dad, and so many others answered God's call to preach to the nations. They left a godly legacy in their lives and work, bearing witness to the enabling presence of God through the Holy Spirit while they sought to bring the saving power of Christ to all peoples.

Dad's brother, sister, and five of Mom's siblings served God as missionaries. Today, ten of their children and grandchildren are in full-time ministry for the Lord, five as missionaries.

Adapted from a biography written May 2013

More Stories of Those Who Went



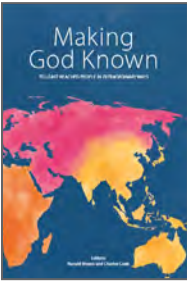
The Bamboo Cross by Homer Dowdy

Tells the story of Sau's life. He became a powerful preacher but died. After the hospital placed him in the morgue, he came back to life again. George Irwin translated for Sau as he told Dowdy his story.



The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Missionary Helen Douglas has a biography of her parents Frank and Marie Irwin, in chapter 18, “Trusting God in All Areas of Their Lives.”



Making God Known: To Least-Reached Peoples in Extraordinary Ways edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Dr. Thanh Trung Le has written a chapter about the Vietnamese Diaspora in Canada.

Chapter 8

God's Plan for a Broken World: Garth and Betty Hunt

by Brenda Schneider

As the freighter eased into its berth at the Seattle harbour in July 1972, a small group of passengers could be seen gathered at the rail. Garth and Betty Hunt, along with their five children, aged eleven to seventeen years old, had smiles of excitement and anticipation on their faces.

It had been a harrowing month on the *C.E. Dant*, crossing over from Saigon, Vietnam, to Seattle. The ship had been roughly buffeted by a typhoon just out of Taiwan and then spent long days in dense fog as it approached North America.

As the Hunt family walked down the gangplank, they remembered another long trip on the *S.S. Steel Admiral*, which landed in Saigon, Vietnam, on May 13, 1957. Here is the story of Mom and Dad's years of following God's plan for their lives.

The Early Years

Born February 25, 1929, in Brockville, Ontario, to parents Whitfield and Evelyn Hunt, my Dad, Garth, grew up in a non-Christian family, though both his grandfathers had been clergymen. His father was a baker and cook who started his own bakery out of their house in 1940. Dad and his brothers, Reg and Keith, worked in the family bakery and sold hot cross buns door to door during Easter.

In 1941, Whitfield moved the bakery to a storefront and started a restaurant where Dad became a short-order cook. They were a hard-working family. Dad got ten cents every week to go to the local theatre, usually to see John Wayne movies. Little did he imagine he would eventually meet John Wayne while filming "The Green Berets" in Saigon many years later.

Dad hated school, quitting at sixteen. He worked for his father for fifteen dollars a week until he became fed up with the restaurant. He then worked in a Sudbury smelter, moving from there to work in a gold mine with his brother Reg. It was there they got into a fight with the Ontario boxing champ. Dad reports that the champ left with the worst of it.

Hockey was Dad's first love. He joined an elite group of "rink rats" who cleaned

the ice at the local hockey rink and were rewarded with free hockey games and broken sticks. This was the brightest part of his childhood; he played bantam, midgets, juvenile, and juniors' hockey. He played hockey in Quebec for a year, where he was feared and hated by the French-Canadian players. His rough play as a defenseman earned him the nickname "Killer Hunt." At one game, the spectators came over the boards and beat him up. While playing for the Pembroke Lumber Kings, Dad was offered a tryout with the Detroit Red Wings. A knee injury in the playoffs of the same year ended his hockey career.

Joining his brother Keith, he went to work for an ambulance and towing business. He lived recklessly, having numerous accidents and wrecking several vehicles. One accident happened in an ambulance with Dad smashing it up and rolling it four times. He cried out to God, promising to be a better person if his life was spared. When released from the hospital, Dad began searching for God.

He was invited to attend a United Brethren Church on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1950. Here is his story as shared with us and many others throughout the years:

"Little did I realize at the time that the Lord had been orchestrating circumstances in my life and preparing me for a faith journey with Himself. In the Spring of 1950, I was bankrupt in spirit and terribly discouraged. The bottom had fallen out of my life, and I had no sense of direction or purpose. My hopes for a professional hockey career evaporated due to injuries, and several car accidents only compounded my disillusionment. I was truly at my wit's end and didn't realize that God was preparing me for the most important decision of my life.

Through God-ordained circumstances, I found myself in a little Evangelical United Brethren Church Easter Sunday night and heard the Easter message with my heart—he gift of life and hope through the Living Christ, and I responded. I opened my heart and invited Christ into my life in simple faith, and God fulfilled His word. The guilt of sin was lifted, my spirit was liberated, and Christ took control of my life and future. From that moment on, God's Word became the source of my strength, the comfort of my heart, and the guiding light of my life. His Word became a "Living Word" to me and the pathway to a growing knowledge of my Saviour."

His life changed immediately. The next night, at a dance, he shared his experience with friends who thought he was crazy.

Dad began to read God's Word, memorize Scripture verses, and pray. He memorized seven hundred and fifty verses and read the Bible seven times in the first year after accepting Christ as his Saviour.

He needed to have a new vocabulary with this new life, literally walking around with a dictionary to improve it. Often, he was asked to speak to young people about Christ.

In the Fall of 1950, Dad started Bible college. He had a zeal for the Lord, feeling he had a greater purpose with no time for social life. Every day before he went to bed, he would witness to five people.

While at the Canadian Bible Institute (later Canadian Bible College and now Ambrose University), he met Betty Sissons, who would eventually become his wife and my mother. She grew up in Regina in a loving, secure family. She had a happy childhood, always knowing she was loved even though hugs were not a part of their family life. She respected her father and could always ask him for anything; he never refused her, even though money was scarce.



Betty as a child with her mother. Courtesy Brenda Schneider.

When Mom was sixteen, a momentous event took place in her life. During the summer, she went with her aunt and uncle on the train to British Columbia. As she had never been out of Saskatchewan, this was a great experience for Mom. Her aunt and uncle were born-

again Christians, and they went to visit their children, who were now living in B.C. They were also Christians.

Before this time, Mom had gone to church with her aunt and uncle at times. Their church was very different from the United Church Mom attended with her parents. But it was at her aunt and uncle's church that she heard messages about sinners needing to be saved from sin. Mom would shake in her seat when the invitation to accept Christ was given.

So, in July 1947, while visiting her cousins in Oliver, B.C., she went to their small church where a couple of young men, Jimmy Pattison and Vernon McClelland, were conducting special meetings. When the invitation to receive Christ was given, Mom found herself kneeling at the front. After the service, Jimmy and Vern drove her home, telling her she now needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. At that time, she didn't know anything about the Holy Spirit or even any Scripture verses.

Nevertheless, the next morning she took a blanket and went into the apricot orchard where she laid under the trees. There she began to wait to be "filled with the Spirit." She didn't know what to expect but figured she'd know when it happened. She prayed out loud, asking to be filled with the Spirit. After several hours, nothing happened, so she went back to the house.

The next morning, she took her blanket again, went to the orchard, and began

praying as she had the previous day. She raised her arms to Heaven. Suddenly, as she prayed, the most incredible joy and rapture filled her soul. She laughed and sang and prayed and rejoiced for some time. When she returned to the house, she was told her face was shining. She was baptized in Lake Okanagan with Jimmy Pattison playing his trumpet and the congregation singing.

One evening, on her way to church on the bus, Mom met Ruth Mayell, a girl she knew from school. They soon discovered they had both become Christians and Ruth was on her way to the Alliance church, inviting Mom to go along with her. Mom said that from the moment she entered that humble church, the Holy Spirit whispered to her heart that this was where she belonged, and she never again went back to her old church. That was her introduction to The Christian and Missionary Alliance, which played such a big part in her life.

When she was in grade 12, Mom planned to go to "Normal School" in Moose Jaw to become a teacher. However, on May 22, 1948, her mother suddenly died of a heart attack, the first after years of being an invalid with heart failure.

Mom's grief was enormous. She had already passed with high marks, and in the fall, she was valedictorian at their Commencement Exercises. She felt she could not leave her grieving father to go to Normal School, so she stayed in Regina, taking a business course. She then took a secretarial job with a lawyer.

Little by little, Mom felt herself being drawn to Bible school. The Western Canadian Bible School was in Regina, and her mom's first cousin, Lucille Blackett, and her husband George were in charge of the school. In the fall of 1950, Mom began her four-year course.

There was a young fellow who had also started that fall; his name was Garth Hunt. He made quite a stir in the school with his wholehearted commitment to the Lord. He prayed so loud and so long, Mom felt embarrassed for him and wished he would keep quiet. He was finally asked to pray in the furnace room!

Then one day, he invited Mom to go skating with him, and she was quite thrilled to be on the arm of this smooth hockey player. Little by little, she felt attracted to him because of his wholehearted devotion and commitment to the Lord. He was a diamond in the rough, but he was determined to catch up in all the areas he had missed out on.

The fellows and girls were not allowed to talk with each other at school. However, they could get permission to go to the library in the evening and sit across from each other and converse for fifteen minutes. This is how Mom and Dad got to know one another. Mom says, "I found myself being more and more attracted to him because of his amazing commitment to the Lord. He was also quite good-looking, which was a plus."

Even though Dad warned Mom she would be a widow at thirty (because he planned to burn himself out for the Lord), they were married on September 6, 1952. Mr. Blackett married them, and they were among the first group of students who were allowed to marry during their training.

After graduating from the Canadian Bible Institute in 1954, they pastored a little church in Wimborne, Alberta. It was a town of seven hundred and sixty people, one hundred of whom attended the church. They had no fixed salary and averaged seventy-three dollars a week. The farmers took care of them, often bringing food such as live chickens. It was there they were first blessed with a daughter, Donna, and then a son, David.

During this time, Mom and Dad visited a Calgary church and heard Arthur Mau, a missionary from Borneo, speak. Then, at the Three Hills Bible School, they were deeply challenged in their hearts and felt God calling them to be missionaries. An application to the Alliance New York office was sent in; shockingly, they heard back within a month. They followed up and were approved as missionaries by December, with the Alliance asking if they were willing to go to Vietnam.

Ministry in Times of War

With two babies and heading off to Vietnam, it was then Mom realized that her little ones would have to leave home when they were only six years old to go off to boarding school in Malaysia. She says, "I couldn't face that, and I cried and cried and kept saying, "Lord, I can't, I can't." The Lord knew I wasn't saying, "I won't, I won't." Then He reminded me of something one of our Bible school teachers had said. Some of us were afraid if we were ever tied to the stake to be burned for our faith that we would recant. But Mr. Downey said: 'No, you wouldn't. Don't expect to have dying grace until you have to die.' The Lord used that to remind me that I was trying to part with my precious little ones years before I had to. He assured me that when the time came, His grace would be sufficient—and it was."

They arrived in Vietnam on May 14, 1957, after thirty-nine days on board a freighter. They had never felt such heat. Mom stood on the dock with the children as Dad went off to handle the paperwork.

They were eventually assigned to Ben Tre, a town south of Saigon set in beautiful coconut groves. Here, the infamous "culture shock" hit Mom like a brick wall. She even envied a missionary in Cambodia who had been stricken with polio and had to be sent back home!

For two years, they underwent language studies and then moved to Quang Tri, the northernmost and most primitive part of South Vietnam, where homes were



Family picture, 1961. Courtesy Brenda Schneider.

made of mud and thatch. Their second daughter, Lolly, was born in December 1959. By Christmas the following year, my twin sister Sandra and I were added, and the Hunts now had five children.

In 1963, their second term brought us to Saigon, where Mom and Dad began working with the hospital and military. They now lived in the heart of the war. Mom wrote, “There were explosions and the boom of distant artillery. Tracer bullets arced a red path across the sky in the evening. But

through it all, we weren’t afraid. We had beautiful peace because we knew we were exactly where God wanted us to be.”

Dad became a chaplain in the Vietnamese armed forces and worked with several of the army generals. He was flown out to the frontlines by fighter helicopters to preach to the troops before they went to battle, distributing small personal care packages containing the Gospel of John.

In October 1966, Dad wrote, “To those who daily face danger and death, God has sent us with His Living Word. We go by military plane, helicopter, convoy—over the enemy-filled jungle and on often-mined roads. Is it foolish to take such risks? Dare we consider our own safety when we can preach to either a handful or hundreds of troops and leave in their hands a gospel portion? There are fear, loneliness and death on the war front, but when the Word of God reaches a man’s heart, there is new hope, joy and salvation.”

In 1967, having completed their second term, the family looked forward to being away from the war on home assignment. On the way to Canada, we landed in Lebanon on the first day of the Six-day War between Arabs and the Israelis; we had to be evacuated. We spent the second home assignment in Ottawa, where we kids could experience a traditional Canadian winter.

Mom and Dad’s third term started in July 1968 and brought them back to Saigon. War was in full swing. Surrounded by constant gunfire and explosions, the Lord kept them in perfect peace with the knowledge they were still exactly where the Lord wanted them to be.

Mom and Dad were among the missionaries who ministered at the Benh Vien Cong Hoa (Gum Wa) Hospital. This was the largest Vietnamese military hospital with over three thousand young wounded soldiers. Mom wrote, “A big part of my



Betty sharing Scripture and visiting with wounded Vietnamese soldiers.

Courtesy Brenda Schneider.

ministry during those days was visiting the wounded Vietnamese soldiers. I would go from bed to bed giving them literature and explaining the good news of the Gospel.”

Sunday night services were held weekly for the soldiers. Dad and his team would drive around the massive hospital grounds with a flatbed truck picking up soldiers who could not make it to the auditorium independently. He would carry heavily wounded men, placing them gently on the trailer.

Close to four hundred wounded soldiers gathered. A short film, like a Laurel and Hardy comedy, would be shown, then there was music and a gospel message. Many soldiers prayed at the end of each service, giving their lives to Christ. The missionaries would do follow-ups the next week with these new Christians. In the ten years or so this ministry was carried on, some ten thousand soldiers put their faith in Christ! Every soldier always got a copy of the precious Word of God.

Dad worked alongside World Vision and its founder Bob Pierce, Food for the Hungry and founder Larry Ward, and the Kathryn Kuhlman organization to distribute humanitarian aid to the soldiers, such as wheelchairs and personal aid kits. He received ten decorations from the Government of Vietnam; among them was Vietnam's highest civilian medal of honour.

On their return to Canada in 1972, Dad and Mom booked passage on a freighter. It had twelve passengers, seven of whom were Hunts. We passed through a typhoon in the South China Sea, and at one point, the Captain came asking Dad to pray for the ship. We noticed Dad "disappeared" for several days, later finding out he had been on his knees in prayer for the ship's safety.

Dad recognized the war was lost, with it being just a matter of time before South Vietnam fell. Not wanting to endanger his children, Dad felt their missionary career in Vietnam was over. He began an itinerate ministry while waiting for God to open a door. After many interviews, he described himself as "the most sought after and least-hired missionary of the C&MA."

Translating the Living Word

In June 1973, he bumped into Ken McVety in the Winnipeg airport. Ken invited him to join his team doing Bible translations across Asia. Dad started as Ken's field secretary, moving to White Rock, B.C. He founded Living Bible International, which would become Bibles International and then finally World Serve.

Accepting Ken McVety's invitation to work with him in the Living Bibles ministry meant that Dad would be travelling throughout Asia much of the time. Mom stayed home with the five teenagers. It was hard, but she never resented it, knowing this was God's plan for them at that time. God helped us in every way, and for many years that was our life. During those years, one thing that really helped Mom was



Garth with Major General Stolyarov of the Russian Military.
Courtesy Brenda Schneider.

travelling overseas with Dad once a year, visiting all the countries where he worked. When she saw the wonderful national workers' commitment and sacrifice, it made it easier for her to fulfill her part of the ministry.

Dad received a doctorate degree from the California Graduate School of Theology in January 1979. On April 15, 1992, he was commissioned as Honorary General of Love and Hope in the Russian Army by the Assistant Commander-in-chief of Russia's Armed Forces. Dad often called the

development and provision of Russian New Testaments, with co-managed covers to the Russian Armed forces, a highlight of his life.

Reflecting on the Past



Garth and Betty in their later years. Courtesy Brenda Schneider.

In 2006, after retiring from World Serve, Dad started spending his “retirement” years assisting the Dalit Freedom Network organization under Sherry Bailey. During this time, Mom had a ministry leading a weekly ladies’ Bible study at Peace Portal Alliance Church, their home church for many years.

Dad and Mom were able to return to Ambrose University in 2015, over sixty years after graduating, to witness their granddaughter’s graduation. Three weeks later, Mom was called home to glory. Dad was never so conscious of the impact and comfort of experiencing the power of prayer by family and friends to sustain him in his deepest hours of grief.

After Mom’s passing, Dad was interviewed at Peace Portal Alliance Church in Surrey, B.C. When asked

why it is essential to reflect on what God has done in our past, Dad responded with his personal testimony.

In 1950 I had a personal encounter with God that changed my life and my whole world. God gave me two wonderful gifts: the gift of the Living Christ as my Saviour and the gift of Betty, who became my precious wife and my lifelong partner in ministry.

Now, as I reflect on the last 65 years, I can declare with absolute certainty that God is trustworthy and faithful, and I can face the future with confidence, peace and joy...

I never planned on being a Christian, and I certainly didn’t plan on being a missionary. But God had His plan for my life that I was to discover step by step...

Dad happened to be in Vietnam when the Communist government celebrated their fortieth anniversary of Saigon and South Vietnam’s fall. He wondered what God’s purpose was in bringing him into Saigon for the final hours of freedom for South Vietnam.

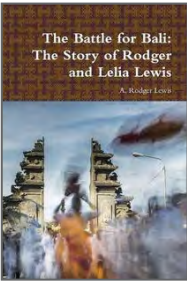
Many Vietnamese pastors were desperate and wanted to flee but had no way of escape. But God showed up at that very moment and opened a miraculous door to freedom through Dr. Larry Ward, President of Food for the Hungry and Dad.

Together, they got 1,700 Vietnamese, whose lives were in danger, manifested onto U.S. military aircraft and flown to the Philippines, Guam and the USA. Dr. Ward and Dad were evacuated on one of the last planes to leave Saigon.

It was then Dad realized the Lord wanted to bring a nucleus of His Vietnamese Church to North America. Amid all this desperation, God was demonstrating His faithfulness to these believers. This was the beginning of the Vietnamese Church in the USA and Canada; today, Vietnamese churches are scattered across the continent. Dad said, "I believe God wants to show up in all of our lives and demonstrate His power and love and the scope of His redemptive plan for broken people and a broken world."

Dad went home to Heaven on November 13, 2018.

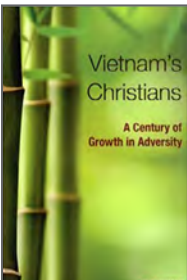
More Stories of Those Who Went



The Battle for Bali: The Story of Rodger and Lelia Lewis by A. Rodger Lewis

Demons were driven out, and people were set free, but it was a battle. With religion intricately entwined into both family and culture, becoming a Christian often meant ostracization and economic isolation for the Balinese. At first, few responded. The struggle seemed to no avail.

The Lewises often felt like they were living "within a yard of hell." A Communist takeover of Indonesia also threatened. The "garbage" pit, dug by the family helper in their own backyard, was actually a grave-in-waiting for the entire Lewis family. Despite supernatural but evil manifestations on every hand and defiant opposition to the preaching of the Gospel, Christ has built His Church on the beautiful isle of Bali.



Vietnam's Christians: A Century of Growth in Adversity by Reg Reimer

This is a well-written account of the history of evangelical Christianity in Vietnam. It goes back to the early centuries of Catholicism, but more emphasis is given to the time since missionaries left in 1975 and recent human rights violations.



The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Reg Reimer tells of Alliance Protestant missions in Vietnam in chapter 9, “The Coming of the Protestants.” In chapter 17, “Bringing Relief and Reconciliation to the ‘Cruel Edges of the World,’” he also shares his and his wife LaDonna’s autobiography.

Chapter 9

Teaching and Trusting: Cecil and Eunice Smith

by Eunice G. Smith

I cannot remember a time when I did not know about missions. Surely I was naive about what “going into all the world” meant, but I understood that the Lord would send those He chose and those who were obedient.

Missionaries on furlough visited my church and home in Belleville, Ontario, and proved to be catalysts for my own response to the Lord’s call on my life. By the time I was eleven years old, I spoke confidently of this call. One such missionary was Mrs. Ethel Bell, who, following her husband and two children’s death, fled Mali with her two remaining children. They and fourteen other passengers survived for thirty days on a raft in the Atlantic Ocean after their ship, the West Lashaway, was torpedoed in 1942. Her witness to the Lord’s faithfulness, and her own unwavering commitment to His service, along with reports from other missionaries who visited our congregation, were a testimony I have not forgotten.

The Early Years

I was born into a home where faith in Christ was a central aspect of daily life. My sister and I were taken to the Alliance Tabernacle in Belleville, Ontario every time the doors opened, or so it seemed. Even the death of our father when I was four did not affect our attendance. In fact, as we matured, we were expected to become increasingly involved with church activities. Some of these carried over into our home, where mother invited others our age, and together, we learned to sing trios and quartets.

By the time I was in high school, it was necessary to take on odd jobs and eventually full-time summer work, though not always near home. However improbable it may have seemed, my widowed mother knew my call to the Lord’s service was real and would involve preparation. The Alliance Bible Institute was where I needed to be.

Canada-wide and international travel are so extensive now that it seems much of the mystery and excitement of new landscapes has been lost. I still remember my

wonder during the last leg of my three-day trip from my home in Belleville to Regina, Saskatchewan, coming to study at the Western Canadian Bible Institute. I saw that seemingly endless expanse of wheat fields, and my world was somehow bigger.

Anyone looking for me in the following eight years would have found me in the small prairie town of Haywarden, Saskatchewan. I lived surrounded by an endless view of wheat fields married to Cecil Marvin Smith, mother of Gordon Timothy, and Judith Marlene. After graduating from the Western Canadian Bible Institute, I taught there and was now fulfilling ministry requirements for accreditation as a missionary with The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). Cecil and I were married in Belleville in 1952 and had applied “open,” meaning we agreed to go overseas wherever C&MA leadership deemed best.

Ecuador, 1956-1959

We received our assignment to Ecuador on January 10, 1956, just two days after reports emerged of five missionaries’ deaths in the Ecuadorian jungle. How could we know that we would live only a few kilometres from that remote site in three years?

Initially, we were sent to Costa Rica to attend language school in San José. The first jolt for me was not the city’s beauty but learning that a person I had never met would be assigned to care for my children while I attended classes. My goal to teach the Scriptures in Spanish was replaced by learning to talk to my children’s caregiver.

Our stay in Costa Rica was unexpectedly brief. A change in the political scene in Ecuador posed the possibility of us not being granted visas. The president-elect had campaigned on a promise to rid Ecuador of Protestants. After two months in Costa Rica, we were abruptly instructed to arrange a move to Quito, Ecuador’s capital, high in the Andes mountain range. Our trip to Ecuador provided the bumpiest airplane ride of my life, or so it seemed then, followed by three days stranded in Panama City without our luggage.

In Quito, the Alliance field director arranged our language classes at three different venues, reached by long bus rides over cobblestone roads. First, there were classes with an Alliance pastor at the church in the city centre, then a professor at the university, and finally in the home of a private teacher we knew as Miss Balarezo. These tedious trips had an unexpected result—I have never worn high heels since.

Once again, our schedule meant I needed assistance with the children. I arranged for Piedad (Piety) to help us. Each day, she came to our home, bringing her daughter Soledad (Solitude), who was Judy’s age. I had been advised against

hiring a helper who brought a child with her, but as I look back, I recognize that Piedad was placed on my path by the Lord. She offered one more motivation to learn the language, and, just as important, she taught me how to live in Ecuador, giving a thousand lessons no “how-to” book could ever match.

Cecil became very ill with hepatitis in early 1957 and was hospitalized. During the same epidemic, a teacher at the Alliance Academy (a school for missionaries’ children) became ill. He eventually resigned, and I was tagged to teach. My qualifications? Basically: willingness and, within limits, high school math, English, or Bible (no science, please).

When Cecil recovered, he needed private language lessons. As for me, I felt like a sponge absorbing Spanish; I took the language on with joy, no matter the setting. Right from the start, we attended church on Sundays, which meant more buses while carrying our children. We learned the hymns, even when sermons were still hard to understand.

Piedad and Soledad eventually came with us when we were assigned to teach at the Alliance Seminary in Guayaquil, a tropical port city. They stayed about three days. By then, Piedad had had enough of the heat and the mosquitos. She took Soledad and headed back to Quito and the mountains, but we never lost touch. Whenever I was in Quito, she would somehow find me; even when we visited Quito after our retirement in Canada, she heard we were there and came to the Alliance guest house. Fifty years after our first meeting, we had become two great-grandmothers remembering multiple smooth and rough spots in our lives, along with the unforgettable experience of the Lord’s blessing and mercy and the bond we shared as sisters in Jesus.

Though most of our ministry in Ecuador turned out to be in the Alliance Seminary in Guayaquil, we were there only one year during our first term. In 1958 we were re-assigned to the jungle village of Pano, on the banks of the Pano River,



Preaching in the coastal area near Guayaquil, Ecuador, 1960. Courtesy Jude Henry.

headwaters of the Amazon. At the time, mission theory emphasized the need to place extra effort and personnel in locations that had increased response to the Gospel. The 1956 killing of five missionaries in the Ecuadorian jungle (known in Ecuador as the East - el Oriente), accompanied by heightened concern for the tribal people of the Amazon jungle, prompted the Alliance to increase workers in that area. Our

immediate task was to become proficient in the Quichua language, although we felt that we barely became comfortable in Spanish.

The trip from the coast was strenuous. Cecil was required to go ahead, by plane, as far as Quito for consultation with the field director while Gordon, Judy, and I were to travel up to Quito by train. In His mercy, the Lord sent with us a student, Silvia, whom I had taught in the Bible Institute, and who, like Piedad, became a life-long friend. I visited Silvia in Guayaquil during my last visit to Ecuador. She had married Cesar, another former student I knew well, and had three daughters. The eldest, Eunice, was puzzled about my relationship with her mother and asked something like, “what is it with you two”? I responded, “When you have laughed and cried together as much as your mother and I have, there’s a curious bond that scarcely needs words to express.”

This curious bond was formed on that trip. We left Guayaquil early one morning, going by taxi to the river, the majestic Guayas. We crossed the river by boat and carried the children, our belongings, and enough food and water for the trip to the end of the train line. We travelled about 20 hours on the circuitous, narrow, steep, and breathtakingly beautiful route up the Andes range to Quito by train. Reunited with Cecil, we took a bus down the eastern side of the Andes range on a narrow ledge above a deep gorge where the Pastaza River flows to the Napo and eventually reaches the Amazon. All five of us arrived in Pano on a small plane of Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF).

We lived in a mission-built house on the Pano River banks, a pleasant and memorable experience though we learned little Quichua. Within a few months, we faced another abrupt move. I took very ill with symptoms indicating rheumatic fever. Our field leader, Henry Miller, had been hearing reports of my illness over ham radio through the MAF base in Shell Mera. On December 24, we were surprised to hear a plane in the distance. Henry Miller had come to take me to Quito. Taking Judy with me, we departed from Pano by plane. After Christmas, I was hospitalized in Quito; it was many years before I saw Pano again by car. By then, it was no longer

remote because roads kept stretching into the jungle for those in search of oil.

We completed our first term of missionary service in the beautiful city of Ambato, on the slopes of the Tungurahua volcano, south of Quito. Our ministry there involved visits to a Salasaca Indian village. Wearers of black ponchos and unique white hats, the Salasacas, have been exiled to Ecuador from Bolivia. They were forced to use the Quichua



Ministry in Ambato, Ecuador,
1959. Courtesy Jude Henry.

language by the Incas, who used exile to diffuse opposition to their cruel rule.

From Ambato, in our new Land Rover, we visited other mountain villages where we held outdoor meetings. The message was not always welcome, but I only remember being chased from town once. We felt confirmed in our call and eager to announce the enormous mercy in the message we had to share.

Gordon and Judy both succumbed to hepatitis in Ambato while I was still recovering from rheumatic fever. Even though there were some difficulties during our first term as missionaries, those four years (which included Costa Rica, Quito, Guayaquil, Pano, and Ambato) taught valued lessons of faith and service. Ecuador was home, but Canada welcomed us for home assignment; instead of finding snow high on the volcanoes' slopes, it soon appeared around our ankles.

Guayaquil/Quito (Return for the second term July 1961)

When we were living in Ambato, Gordon moved to the Alliance Academy's dormitory in Quito to begin grade one. After returning from Canada for our second term of service in Guayaquil, we sent Judy to Quito as well. At the time, and for many years prior, the policy was for children of missionaries to study in residential schools. This policy tore at our emotions and conscience, eventually leading to our resignation. We had no idea what to do next except return to Canada and seek to serve the Lord as He led.

Our resignation was not accepted. After another home assignment, we continued to serve in Guayaquil with our children in school there. We were assigned to Quito in 1966, where Cecil was designated director of the Academy, and I was to teach again. The repercussions of our initial resistance to authority left us under a cloud, inevitably influencing our relationship with some of our colleagues. Yet, the Lord somehow stretched our income to match our need to pay tuition. I can confidently say that our ministry was not hindered but was enhanced when we lived as a family like other members of the coastal community we served.

Guayaquil, Returning "Home," 1961-1966

Back in Guayaquil, I was the Greek teacher at Seminario Biblico Alianza (SBA). I insisted on making it fun for students, showing them that though Greek may look complicated, it is not. Greek was usually my early morning class, followed by Bible, Theology, and Hermeneutics. Additionally, I taught piano, accordion, and evangelism or church history, whatever was needed. Students came from as far north as Puerto Rico and as far south as Chile; some are now serving the Lord

in locations much further afield. A Peruvian graduate of SBA recently wrote from Rome to suggest I join her in Italy, where she and her husband serve under The Christian and Missionary Alliance of Peru.

We also ministered in local Alliance churches, usually including our children. I played my accordion and brought messages in countless meetings, being involved on Sundays, for special events, and on Good Friday after a week of special Easter services. Some churches were split bamboo structures built on stilts over the tidal flats, located in the outskirts of Guayaquil, while others were reached by boat across the Guayas.



Gordon, Jude, and Benjamin.
Courtesy Eunice Smith.

Benjamin Milton was born in 1967 during our second home assignment in Canada, nearly leaving us for Heaven when he became very ill with an intestinal obstruction during the General Council of the C&MA in Hartford, Connecticut. Benjamin brought a brand-new chapter of family life. Because of his illness, we remained in Canada for a while, serving as missionaries-in-residence at Canadian Theological Seminary (now Ambrose),

where we taught and studied. Then the five of us returned to Guayaquil until Gordon graduated from high school. He left our campus apartment at SBA, where he had spent much of his childhood, and moved to Regina's Canadian Bible College campus. Judy eventually studied in Regina as well, going on to settle in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

There were many lessons prepared, papers graded, theses read, chapel services attended, new personnel received, and adjustments made to ongoing ministry changes, and in Ecuador, during our missionary career. Every situation, including political upheaval, called for a renewed confidence in our Lord's guidance and care. Without faith, I certainly would have faltered.

I was called back to Canada in 1972 to spend one final week with my Mother before she passed into the Lord's presence. She had not allowed her sisters to call me home until she knew her time on earth was short. I had written to her every week since 1947, knowing mail delivery from Latin America could take months. She always appreciated and collected my poetry!

We experienced countless blessings and pleasures, including trips to the Pacific to camp under our home-made shelter on a long stretch of beach. We might not see anyone except a solitary fisherman in the distance during our three or four-day

vacation. Visits to Quito, church camps, and two trips to Lima, Peru, starting with an overnight boat trip down the Guayas River, then a truck ride to the border with a delay over Ecuadorian exit permits were all part of the adventure.

In Ecuador, we sang a simple song, which I have long remembered, “*En la lucha y en la prueba la iglesia sigue caminando.*” In English, “in the struggles and the trials the church keeps on going - Gloria Aleluya!”

Our third home assignment took us back to Regina. Benjamin was in grade school, Cecil was involved with missions reporting, and both of us participated in campus ministries. In my case, I oversaw the registration of new students while I completed requirements for a Master’s in Missiology.

We spent most of twenty-five years in Ecuador. Guayaquil remains a place of extraordinary memories and significance in my life’s journey, certainly in part at least because it was there the five of us lived together the longest, holding many shared memories. Benjamin had not been with us in Pano, Quito, or Ambato, though together we visited those places later.

Our trip to Canada in 1981 turned into another significant relocation. I had been invited to teach at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto and accepted the invitation with the authorization of C&MA leadership. Initially, I had no plans to study but graduated from Tyndale in 1983 with a Master in Divinity. For as long as I remember, reading, study, and the wonder of libraries have been like recreation for me. I confess to still burning the porridge on occasion when I cannot get, as my mother would say, “my nose out of that book.” Tyndale was a special gift in an uncertain time.

In between Cecil’s speaking tours, we learned he had cancer, and he was admitted to a Toronto hospital for surgery. Amazingly, the Lord provided housing during this challenging period. We lived in six different homes or facilities during 1982 and 1983. After Cecil’s recovery and some decisions made regarding Alliance ministries in Mexico, we were redeployed.



Eunice and Cecil at home in Mexico City, Mexico, 1982.

Courtesy Jude Henry.

Mexico, 1984-1996

At the Annual U.S. General Council, a decision was made that Alliance ministries to Mexico should no longer be under the auspices of the U.S. domestic Spanish ministries but rather should be administered similar to other nondomestic ministries. There were already Alliance churches in Mexico, mostly along the northern border. Cecil and



Cecil Smith, 1988.
Courtesy Eunice Smith.

I were the first workers assigned to Mexico under this new arrangement, and it led, during our time there, to the establishment of the National Alliance Church of Mexico.

We were based temporarily in McAllen, Texas until we received final confirmation as to where to begin our Mexican ministry—Mexico City. From McAllen, we had made several trips to the city, a mammoth by any standard. I travelled by bus to the northern city of Monterrey to teach evening courses in an Alliance church there. The last of our three to leave the nest, Benjamin graduated from high school in McAllen and left home to study at Trinity Western University. Before he left, we three visited Manila, Philippines, where

Gordon and his family served as Alliance missionaries.

Cecil and I drove into the great metropolis of Mexico City in February 1985. Not surprisingly, we were promptly lost. We ended up spending most of fifteen years in that amazing mini-nation. Except for visits, we were empty nesters. After renting a house, we, literally waited. How do we start a church from zero?

Completely unplanned, we met an Ecuadorian believer whom we had never met in Ecuador. He and his family invited us to their home located only a few blocks from our rented house. Through this new friendship, we met several young adults with whom they had shared the Gospel. The encounter did not seem remarkable at that time, yet as I look back, I recognize once again that when the Lord gives us an assignment, He opens a route to follow. Weeks later, some of those we met began to gather in our home, where I started Bible classes.

Later we met in a rented space to worship together, and finally as a church with a pastor, baptisms, the Lord's Supper, offerings, weddings, and funerals. All this came to fruition, but not without the struggles of any congregation learning to love, worship, and serve together. In September 1985, we as a church reflected on the disruption of a massive earthquake. A month later, Cecil was hospitalized with pancreatitis. Our Good Shepherd, as always, was there for that bumpy road.

We planted two small churches in Mexico City; though now moved from their original locations, they still prosper and support their pastoral leadership. Four pastors were called to the ministry out of our first small group, ministering in the capital and other cities. Some of those we met through that initial contact in our Ecuadorian friends' home are still in touch with me, encouraging my faith.

Retirement

In 1996, forty years after our first departure, we returned to Canada following our final term as official missionaries. While our children, being in Canada, certainly softened the trauma, it felt like an abrupt end to a context that had come to describe who we were and where home was. We were able to return several times, visiting and teaching in Quito, Guayaquil, Guadalajara, and Mexico City. My most recent such opportunity was in Cuba.

Throughout our missionary experience, Cecil made many trips in Canada and the USA, presenting missions to C&MA churches. To a lesser degree, I was privileged to speak in Canadian churches in each of the provinces, often for week-long mission conferences. I had anticipated I would find this difficult, but it gave me great joy along with the reward of many acquaintances and lasting friendships.



Distinguished Alumni, May 2013. Courtesy Jude Henry.



Ordination, June 9, 2013.
Rev. Eunice Smith was the first woman to be ordained by the C&MA in Canada.
Courtesy Jude Henry.

Cecil served as an interim pastor in Ottawa in 1997, and I helped in a Spanish language congregation meeting at the University of Ottawa. From Ottawa, we made the first of two trips back to Ecuador, where we were so blessed to re-experience the tie that binds our hearts in love; we also made the first of three visits to Australia to meet Benjamin's family.

In 1998, Cecil and I left Ottawa, making our way west to British Columbia, stopping to visit family along the way. The Lord led us to rent the duplex where I now live, in Richmond, a few blocks from the Pacific coast. It is a different latitude than Guayaquil and a different continent than our previous home, but it too has become home where strangers soon welcomed us at Richmond Alliance Church.

Cecil passed on to glory in December 2012 and is buried not far from the ocean. I serve at church where needed and am blessed with loyal friends I did not know during the first seven decades of my life. My faithful family, even from a distance, make sure they know what I am up to!

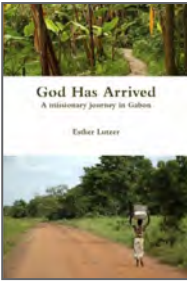
Recently, I was surprised to be recognized as a distinguished alumnus by Tyndale University & Seminary in Toronto and by Ambrose University Seminary in Calgary. I earned degrees decades ago from both schools. I was also honoured to be ordained

by the C&MA in Canada, under whose auspices, and by the Lord's eternal mercy, I have served these many years.

Editor's Note: Eunice continued her ministry at the Richmond Alliance Church until she moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba, to live with her daughter Jude. She passed away on November 14, 2019.

Adapted from a biography written August 2013

More Stories of Those Who Went



God Has Arrived: A Missionary Journey in Gabon by Esther Lutzer

This is a first-person account of life as a missionary/medical provider for many years in tropical Africa.



The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

The story of the Alliance mission work in Ecuador was written by Dr. Richard Reichert in chapter 5, “Daybreak in the Mountains.” Chapter 21, entitled “Being Trustful in the Lord,” is a biography of Jake and Mavis Klassen.



The God Made Known: Through Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Chapter 23 provides a biography of Richard and Hope Reichert, entitled “In the Pool of Ministry.”

Chapter 10

Experiencing God at Work: Wallace and Beverly Albrecht

by Wallace and Beverly Albrecht

In a squatter house along a drainage canal in Java's cultural capital, we learned the power of prayer. Some months previously, in the same clapboard shack with a dirt floor, seven adults invited Jesus into their lives at the end of a Bible study. The head of the household had regularly welcomed anyone from the neighbourhood to come for Bible study, but now he was acting very strange. His adult son had insulted him because he was embarrassed that both his Mom and Dad had turned from Islam to trust Jesus as their Saviour.

His son's insult triggered temporary insanity. Mr. Pye was running up and down the alley, naked, flailing a live chicken over his head while plucking its feathers with his mouth. One of Mr. Pye's neighbours came over to tell him his behaviour was shameful. The more the neighbour scolded Mr. Pye, the more agitated he became. Not knowing what to do, we said, "Let's pray." The more we prayed, the more settled and quieter he became. We had never seen such dramatic and immediate results from prayer before.

Our Early Years

Wallace:

Growing up on a mixed farm in rural Alberta offered both advantages and disadvantages. Meat, milk, and vegetables were abundant, but my family's only regular cash income was the cream cheque, which amounted to seven or eight dollars a week. Hard work on the farm helps to build character and the skill of innovation. When machinery broke down, the first solution was usually a metre or two of hay-wire or binder twine!

Our family home burned to the ground in the summer of 1955. Not long after, my father was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Progressive physical deterioration forced him out of farming and into temporary jobs that allowed him to remain seated while working. When God called me to ministry at age seventeen, I knew

I could not count on financial assistance from my family. Paying college tuition would require faith and hard work.

My call to ministry came on the heels of an unlikely mid-teen conversion. Unfortunately, my grade ten friends were increasingly involved in dangerous lifestyle choices. Their fast cars, strong drink, and loose sexual relationships pressed me to find safer peers. I was warmly welcomed at the Stony Plain Alliance Church youth meetings. It was Easter 1961 when I heard the Gospel preached in such an inimitable way by Rev. E.A. Phillips that I felt compelled to repent and surrender my life to Jesus Christ.

About one year later, the yearbook committee at Memorial High School made the rounds, asking upcoming grads a few questions. One question was, "What do you plan to do after high school?" My ambition was to study electrical engineering at the University of Alberta, so I had my answer ready. However, when I opened my mouth, different words emerged, much to my surprise and embarrassment. I heard myself saying, "I will become a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Shortly after, I felt strangely compelled to apply to Canadian Bible College (CBC). To my surprise, I was accepted though I had no idea how I would pay my way. To my amazement, God provided all the necessary funds to complete the three-year program over four years.

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necessary funds to
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program over four years.

Beverly:

It was a delightful experience to grow up in the Moose Jaw Alliance Church. Though church was a vital part of my experience, it was in our home at my mother's knee where I received Jesus into my heart at a very early age. My Mom and Dad faithfully took us to church, where the emphasis was often on missions. Missionaries would tell their stories illustrated by slides while sharing how they served God in foreign countries.

When I was in grade ten, a visiting missionary invited all those willing to serve the Lord overseas to come forward in the evening service. I remember walking up the aisle, fully persuaded I wanted to give my life to God's missionary work. At the same time, I wondered if God would notice such a young girl as me.

I went to Canadian Bible College in 1962 to prepare for overseas ministries. The Lord brought Wallace to my attention during our second year; he was president of the missions committee and a very dedicated young man. We fell in love and were married in 1965 in the college chapel.

Wallace taught me about prayer and perseverance, inspiring me with his love of Scripture. He has always been interested in facilitating others in their walk with the Lord. We served in several churches before he felt called to serve the Lord overseas, and my call to missions would be realized.

Church Ministries in Canada

Wallace:

After completing most of my work at CBC, I approached Rev. A.H. Orthner, district superintendent in the Canadian Midwest District, asking if there was a church in the Regina area where I could help out while completing my few remaining courses. He assigned me to Parry Alliance Church, which was likely the smallest Alliance church in Canada at the time. The congregation numbered thirty-five men, women, and children. We served from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon every weekend before returning to Regina, where Beverly was enrolled in the Teacher's College at the University of Regina.

After completing her program, we moved to Ogema, where Beverly taught grade four, and I gave full-time to pastoring the congregation at Parry. We initiated evangelistic ministries and home Bible studies in several towns around the area from our new base.

When it became evident that Beverly was expecting a baby and unable to continue teaching through to the end of the year, Rev. Orthner asked me to candidate in a new church plant in Manitou, Manitoba. There seemed to be a vacuum in the community filled by the Alliance, and this new church rapidly grew to the building's capacity.

After four wonderful years in Manitou, we were asked to move to Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, to help rehabilitate the church. It had been reduced to about five families when the nearby Canadian Forces base was scaled back. God filled the little building at least three times over the next six years, but families would move when summer came along, leaving the church weakened.

During our time in church ministry, we welcomed three children of our own to our family. They were the joy of our hearts. Torrey was born in Manitou in 1967, Valerie in Morden in 1968, and Megan in Portage la Prairie in 1976, all in Manitoba. We also welcomed twenty-seven foster children who needed a temporary refuge before being placed in a longer-term situation.

While we served at Portage la Prairie, William R. Goetz invited me to join his staff at Sevenoaks Alliance Church in Abbotsford, B.C. The ministry in Abbotsford was

growing at an annual average rate of 15-20 percent. A steady flow of conversions fed a dynamic discipleship program. While serving as pastor of personal ministries at Sevenoaks, I was privileged to work on the district extension committee under Rev. Gordon Fowler for several years. Daughter churches were planted by Sevenoaks in Mission, Aldergrove, and Langley during the six years we served there.

One day I was sitting in the North Vancouver Alliance Church with a district sub-committee. After the meeting, Rev. W.H. Brooks, retired but still very active in his travel agency, placed his hand on my knee and asked, "Isn't it time you led a group from Sevenoaks to the Holy Land?" I was nonplused and noncommittal. Later the same week, I visited an eighty-year-old lady who had recently become a new follower of Jesus. My intention was to ask her to consider baptism. Her response was, "Young man, I'm not getting baptized in your church. I'll be baptized in the Jordan River, and you're going to baptize me!" Nonplused for the second time in a week, I decided it was time to ask Beverly if she felt this might be God's prompting.

Within weeks we were planning a trip to the Middle East. It was our first experience outside of North America. From the moment we landed in Amman, Jordan, I was fascinated by the culture. We woke early on our first day in Amman. While looking out over the city from our open hotel window at 4:00 am, we heard what seemed to be the wail of an injured dog. As the eerie sound multiplied into a cacophony of similar sounds, I realized it to be the *fajr* (sunrise) Muslim call to prayer. Hearing the dissonance of thousands of *adzan* (calls to prayer) from minarets across the city placed an inescapable burden for the Muslim world upon my soul that still moves me to tears as I recall that event.

After gaining agreement from each of our family members, I approached Rev. Dr. Arnold Cook about the possibility of overseas service. This was the era when the Canadian Alliance was exercising creative initiatives, one of which was sending people whom Dr. Cook described as "young geriatrics." His intent was to bend the age rules a little to get more people into cross-cultural ministry.

Not only were we over the thirty-two-year age limit, but we also had three children, one of whom was a diabetic. Dr. Cook ignored the two-child limit and appointed us to the largest Muslim people group in Southeast Asia. He also ignored Dr. Frame's health evaluation, in which we were warned that Torrey may die if we proceeded to our overseas assignment. Within nine months of our trip to the land of the Bible, we were on our way to Asia.

International Workers in Indonesia

Beverly:

Our first term overseas was filled with new experiences: learning a new language and the Javanese culture. After just three weeks, Harold Klassen, our senior missionary, predicted, “You know, you are really going to like living here.” I was not so convinced, but his prediction proved correct. The Indonesian people and the country mysteriously won our hearts. After language study in Bandung, we moved to Solo (Surakarta, the Javanese cultural capital) for our first church-planting assignment. We saw God do amazing things. He multiplied food, healed the sick and most wonderfully, He opened the hearts of people to receive Jesus. It was there that we met Mr. Pye and witnessed his journey to faith as well as his miraculous healing from diphtheria in answer to prayer.

This term also involved teaching Theological Education by Extension (TEE) across the south coast of Central Java. I loved to prepare the lessons and then teach in towns and villages. Sometimes our children would join us. We firmly “advised” them that they should be polite and eat whatever was served. They graciously complied and often did so with an inward grimace behind a smiling face.

Wallace:

Language study was not easy for a middle-aged couple, but God taught us how to build on each other’s strengths. I learned slowly but remembered vocabulary longer. Beverly picked up words and phrases quite quickly but lost them if they were not used regularly. By helping each other out, we found ourselves teaching in the national language after only five months of language study. Leading a Friday evening discipleship group provided powerful motivation for us to grow in our language ability.

Not long before we arrived for our overseas assignment, Indonesia’s Alliance mission adopted a new goal. They set about to plant five hundred new churches on the predominantly Muslim island of Java within a ten-year time frame. Fresh out of language school, we were sent to pioneer in a city where the Alliance had no churches. The strategy was to work hand-in-hand with young evangelists from Kalimantan, an area where our national church was strong.

We were assigned to work with Evangelist Zasterman, a gentle and caring man, the product of Frank and Marie Peters’s excellent teaching ministries at the Long Bia Bible School. Another Alliance lad joined us, bringing our team to four. Ayub hailed from Alor, a region where the church had experienced revival accompanied by miracles. Two churches and five evangelistic posts were formed over the three

remaining years of our first term. It was in this context we learned how vital it is to let nationals take the lead. Both Zasterman and Ayub were still serving their congregations in Solo some thirty years later.

In the providence of God, sufficient funds were designated by our supporting churches to build two churches. Having developed cultural sensitivity through my studies at Fuller School of World Mission, it was

In the providence of God, sufficient funds were designated by our supporting churches to build two churches.

decided to build each in the *pendopo* architectural style typical to this Central Javanese area. The mayor of the city drove by the first church and decreed that all churches built in that city henceforth must use the *pendopo* roof profile. We were pleased that contextual architecture helped us gain favour.

Having established a pattern of monthly baptismal services in Abbotsford, we aimed to follow that pattern in our new ministry in Central Java. Though we did not baptize people every month, we frequently saw baptisms throughout the year. Because both churches began in homes with limited space, we raised the sides of a fishpond in our own backyard, making it deep enough to immerse people.

Early in our days in Solo, we announced a baptismal service. The congregation consisted of no more than forty persons. We offered to host a lunch after the baptism, a cultural must for any sort of celebration in that area. Beverly prepared Soto-Ayam, a potato and chicken broth sufficient, she thought, for about forty people. We discovered the Javanese bring their friends along when invited to a celebration. We were overwhelmed by the crowd of people who came to our home. Penny, our helper and cook, counted how many times she had to rewash the dishes to serve more people. After the guests left, she reported that we fed more than one hundred and twenty people with three chickens that day. In her eyes and ours, this was nothing short of a miracle.

Our first term was not without its challenges. During this period, an illness on top of two huge disappointments plunged me into depression. It hit me on a Friday evening like a load of bricks on my soul. I just wanted to die. By Monday morning, all the depression had mysteriously disappeared. When I woke up, the illness and disappointments were unchanged, but the depression was gone. About two weeks later, I received a letter from Doug, a truck driver and friend I had led to Christ a few years earlier. More than half of his letter consisted of Scripture. He had been given prophetic insight into my situation, describing it perfectly on the thirteen pages of his letter in which he assured me of his prayers. To this day, I have no

other explanation for my deliverance from depression. It was the effectual, fervent intercession of my friend.

In our second term, we were assigned to East Java. We travelled across the length and breadth of that province to teach TEE while helping plant a church in the city where we lived. On my first visit to the post office to mail a letter to our daughter at Dalat School, an imposing gentleman approached me with a question. “Do you know where I can find the Alliance missionary in this city?”

Dr. Patty had just moved to this city of 800,000 people from a university in Irian Jaya (now Papua). He had served on the Board of Directors of the Gospel Tabernacle Church¹ in that province. Someone had told him that Alliance missionaries had been assigned to plant a church in Malang where he had come to teach at a private university.

I understood his question correctly and answered, “I am he!” He must have thought I did not understand his question. He repeated it three times, to which I replied each time with, “I am he!” Finally, he understood. Would you say this was a mere chance? God was leading and providing! Professor Dr. Samuel Patty and his family became key supporters of the new work in Malang.

During our years of ministry in Java, Christmas was one long chain of special celebrations in churches spanning about six weeks or more. Christmas and Easter were also occasions for baptism. One year our family was invited to preach and baptize several new believers at a church in the provincial capital about 75 km from our home on Christmas Day. The service began at eight in the morning, so we decided to overnight in an affordable hotel so we would not have to get up and drive quite so early. We opened our gifts Christmas morning in that room that reeked of smoke. It was perhaps the worst Christmas ever for our family. The baptism service, however, made up for the lack of Christmas ambiance.

After three years in Malang, the annual field conference chose us to fill the field director and guesthouse manager’s roles for the year when our long-serving director, Gunther Kamphausen and his wife were on home assignment. This assignment took us to the end of our second term.

For ten years, from 1982 to 1992, I tucked into my ministry and home assignment schedule as many extension and intensive courses as I could from Fuller School of World Mission. My main objective was simply to obtain the tools to be more effective in our cross-cultural and church-planting ministries. At one point, Beverly observed I was within a semester of fulfilling the requirements for a degree and encouraged me to go for it.

¹ The Gospel Tabernacle Church of Indonesia (Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia) is the sister church of the C&MA with whom Alliance missionaries worked.



A Madurese batik maker in
Tanjungbumi, Bangkalan, Madura,
Indonesia. By Anggoro - Own work, CC
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org/w/index.php?curid=15118724](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15118724)

Having been a field researcher for several years in Southeast Asia and living among the Madurese, I decided to write a thesis project on the history of mission among this people group, the second-largest unengaged group in the nation. Dr. Paul Hiebert mentored me through the project, enabling me to complete the requirements for an M.A. in missiology. My thesis provided historical perspective and motivational impetus for the placement of a C&MA team to that least-reached ethnolinguistic group in the mid-1990s.

On Staff at the National Ministry Centre

Wallace:

Weeks before the end of our home assignment of 1991-92, Dr. Arnold Cook called me at our home in Abbotsford. I was leaning back on my office chair reading my Bible at 7:00 am when I received his call. He got to the point quickly. He asked me to assume the position of vice-president, personnel and missions, which he vacated when he was elected as president of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada. An involuntary jerk almost tumbled me backwards to the floor. I avoided disaster only by regaining balance when my feet hit my desk's underside, popping my chair's front wheels suddenly back to the floor. It took me a few minutes to regain composure. I explained that my calling was to return overseas to form a team among the unreached and unengaged Madurese. He asked me to at least pray about his proposal for a few days.

I struggled in prayer over his request. As I prayed, a new vision began to form in my mind. In this role, I would be able to place teams in multiple new unreached and unengaged people groups. Apparently, my vision for unreached and unengaged people groups matched his priorities as president. After appointment to the vice-president's position by the Board of Directors, Beverly and I began visiting all Canadian Alliance overseas personnel. On each trip, I intentionally included visits to one or more countries where the C&MA was not working. My

purpose was to check for least-reached people groups that were not yet served by any other mission.

The C&MA in Canada began several new initiatives during our time at the national office. This was just one factor leading to greater autonomy in these endeavours and the necessary change in the C&MA Canada's partnership with the C&MA United States.²

Beverly:

When Wallace was asked to take the role of vice-president for overseas ministries, we accepted with both joy and sadness. We were all ready to return to the field. Our daughter, Megan, was to leave in just a couple of days for her sophomore year at Dalat School in Malaysia. As we prayed, we realized that God was asking Wallace to do this, so Megan went back to Dalat to finish high school. We counted the days again until she would return for Christmas and the summer holidays.

Each of our children graduated from Dalat International School in Malaysia. Torrey went to be with the Lord in 1987 as a result of a car accident. Currently, Valerie and her husband Brian joyfully serve at the Dalat International School. Megan is now serving as president of an agency that assists non-profit and charitable organizations in raising funds. How we thank the Lord for our children and their families.

Wallace kept very busy working in his new role. I also joined the national office staff as an administrative assistant to the Vice-President of General Services, Ken Paton. Dr. Cook required that I join Wallace on his first two years of overseas trips.

When the Canadian Alliance began to manage its own mission effort, Wallace invited Gerald and Dorothy Hogenbirk to lead in the Europe/Middle East area, Harold and Becky Priebe in Latin America, Ron and Myra Brown in Africa and Brem and Donna Frentz in the Asia Pacific Region. Each couple was extraordinary in their unique contribution to developing our Global Ministries. It was such a joy to work together with these four couples and see God's hand in their lives and ministries.

During this period, Dr. Cook mandated the redeployment of Canadian Alliance mission personnel to the least reached. Redeployment was not always comfortable, especially when our personnel were moved to nations where they were required to learn a new language. Whenever challenges arose in any part of the world, Dr. Cook would call us to prayer and in every case, the Lord came to our rescue.

² For more on how this took place, see [Making God Known: To Least-Reached People in Extraordinary Ways](#), pages 3-11

Wallace:

The involvement of the vice-president, global ministries became less and less critical in regional initiatives as the four regional developer couples (whose areas are now known as Silk, Sand, Spice, and Sun) expanded their roles in the late years of the last century. That left me, as vice-president, involved mainly in the budget, administrative, and personnel challenges. I could not imagine myself crunching numbers and resolving personnel issues for another eight to ten years up to retirement age. One day I picked up a little publication in Barnes and Noble's bookstore in Wheaton, Illinois. It posed the question, "Who moved my Cheese?" I devoured the short story in less than twenty minutes and concluded my "cheese" was no longer found in the National Ministry Centre.

I inquired discreetly with the regional developers in the Asia-Pacific Region, Brem and Donna Frentz, if they would accept Beverly and me as international workers. Brem's eyes widened for a few moments before he regained enough composure to respond. We shared our plan with him: a new initiative among an unengaged people group with no church in its cultural and linguistic context.

I began doing research. Field leaders in the nation where we had previously served printed a brochure highlighting the five least-reached people groups with whom they felt God would have them engage. One of the five was a people group of almost three million. We approached the field leaders and asked if they would be interested in this becoming a Canadian initiative. They agreed.

During my travels as vice-president of personnel and missions (changed to VP-global ministries in 1997) for the C&MA in Canada, I began noting certain phenomena related to receptivity. While visiting with Blaine and Shelly Sylvester in Côte d'Ivoire, I learned they, along with students and national pastors, had been instrumental in planting twenty-five new churches in just two years. Gathering people and getting professions of faith were relatively easy tasks among the Bambara-speaking people.

In contrast, I discovered that it took the average missionary couple approximately five years to see someone become a Christ-follower in Morocco. As we entered post-Communist Russia, our workers there told me that the average person needed to hear the Gospel about ten times before the concept of grace began to sink in. I started gathering material on receptivity to the Gospel motivated by the mission administrator's need to know where and when to invest mission personnel and resources.

I started gathering
material on receptivity
to the Gospel...

Beverly:

In early 2001 we took vacation time to look after Val and Brian's children in Wheaton, Illinois, while they were leading a short-term mission team to Cambodia. Wallace and I asked each other the question, "If we could do anything, not worrying about money, people, or any other issues, what would you like to do with our final decade of formal ministry?" We both answered, "to engage in a pioneering effort overseas." We still remembered the language we had learned during the 1980s in Indonesia and felt energized to use it once again.

Not long after this epiphany, we attended the Canadian Theological Seminary-East opening at Bayview Glen Church in Toronto. Ben Heppner sang, "The blood shall never, never, never lose its power." He sang with such power and intensity; we were deeply moved. Wallace and I felt that if this message is that powerful, we must return to the field and share this good news with those who have never heard. So began the process of our return to overseas ministry.

Wallace:

After two years of preparation from 2002 and 2003, our team moved into a somewhat hostile Muslim environment. Our prayer had been, "Lord, lead us to some nice Soli³ people." The prayer sprang from a riot in 2000 where all Christians were chased off the island, and the twelve or so existing churches serving non-Soli minorities on that island were burned. Though the task was not without its challenges, God led clearly in so many ways it would take a small book to recount.

An entry path was the most significant early challenge. God had led me to enroll in a doctoral program in Singapore three years previously. I drafted a research proposal and submitted it to the nation's Institute of Sciences, which granted me a two-year research visa. Then we felt led to form a national non-profit development organization as our entry-path into the country.

Least-Reached People in Southeast Asia

Beverly:

During the staging period preparing for our initiative amongst this least-reached people group (LRPG), we worked with a veteran missionary in the International Church in Bali. We had beautiful times of prayer, ministry, and renewing our

³ Soli is a code name frequently used by international workers when referring to this people group. The code name is used here in order that the identity of the Canadian Alliance workers who continue to work among this people group are protected.

language fluency. During this time, I suffered a heart attack and had quadruple bypass surgery in Singapore. Five months later, I was hit by a motorbike while Wallace and I were crossing a main thoroughfare on our way home from exercising. I sustained five broken bones, none of which could be secured by a cast. Though the pain was extremely intense, I shall never forget the joy I had bubbling up in my heart while I rested on a green rubber sheet in the hospital. I realized then that no matter what we are called upon to endure, one's joy can never be taken away because God is in us, and He is JOY.

Miracles continued as we engaged this new people group. We knew no one, and people told us it would take up to 10 years before seeing anyone follow Jesus. The year before we left for the field, I had a very strong prompting to take some art lessons. I drove several miles in the winter just to do this, not knowing what the urgency was. I loved watercolour painting and found it opened a new part of me that was previously hidden. Little did we know this interest in art would open the doors for us in our new assignment.

A few days after we arrived on the island, a local artist visited our home after all our pictures were hung. He had heard I was interested in art and wanted to see some of my paintings. He offered to take us to all the artists' homes on the island so we could work together. It was just weeks later we sat in their homes planning an art exhibition at a local resort, which in turn opened the door for many new friendships. Truly the Lord works ahead of us as He knows and plans our future. We were overjoyed. There was only one Christian artist on the island, and he became one of the most valued leaders in the national development organization we helped establish. The Lord provided the funds to rent a place and create a Coffee House/ Art Gallery. Another family joined our team and helped work out all the details for this lovely place of ministry.

During our first team planning event, we agreed to pray for God-called national workers to come to us rather than going all over the country recruiting them ourselves, which was the method others often used. The Lord answered our prayers by bringing two beautiful couples into our lives. They became the backbone of our work there. One was an evangelist who has won scores of people to the Lord. The other couple were hard-working teachers. They were great friends as well as wonderful servants. We honour them highly and know their labours will be rewarded someday in glory. Other team members came and went along the way. We are so thankful to the Lord for each gift they gave to the work of His Kingdom among the Soli people.

Wallace:

Beverly and I did not make a practice of praying together regularly until 2002. Having been planted in a context where indigenous religions (Hindu and Muslim) maintain rigid devotional patterns, we felt the urgent need for divine guidance every day, so we began the discipline of extended morning prayer times imploring the Lord for direction. This discipline has been a fountain out of which creative energy was generated for all we have seen God accomplish in our ministries among highly-resistant people.

Combining human development programs with church-planting is not always an easy combination. In this hostile context, it was necessary to engage in research and development efforts in the day-time hours while training and strategizing for Kingdom development in the evenings and weekends. Keeping those two worlds separate was delicate at times and dangerous at others. Our friendships with local Muslim partners in the areas of art and development served to get us past more than one tense situation with government officials who would have liked to expel us from the island.

In 2001, I noticed a new post-graduate program at Bethany International University (BIU) in Singapore. I inquired and eventually enrolled in the Doctor of Missiology program there. Moving to Southeast Asia in 2002 brought me a lot closer to the campus and my mentor, who guided me through several years of independent research and writing.

The BIU program follows the European methodology: entrance to the program was conditional upon the successful defence of one's proposal. After my first doctoral seminar was submitted, Dr. Sudhir Isaiah recommended that my research subject fit more appropriately into a Ph.D. program. He convinced me to upgrade. The responsibilities of my mission assignment dictated I complete the doctoral seminars in intervals when time availed. My research took me to several libraries in both Asia and North America.

In November 2010, I was successful in defending my dissertation, "Factors and Measures of Resistance and Receptivity to the Communication of the Gospel: Tools for the Intercultural Strategist Engaging Least Reached People Groups." The central contribution made by this project is an inventory consisting of fifty questions. The score obtained among a specific people group would indicate with greater precision than previously possible the group's relative receptivity or resistance to the Gospel based on historical, anthropological, spiritual, theological, socio-political, missiological, and communication factors. The instrument was designed to sensitize international workers who serve in resistant contexts to mitigate resistance wherever possible.

Conclusion

Wallace:

As I look back on my departure from the farm near Stony Plain, Alberta, I must admit I was a slow starter. Despite this reality, my life's theme from the time I became a follower of Christ onward has motivated me to reach beyond my church, community, and country.

When I was a young pastor, I struggled to maintain a regular, soul-nurturing, quiet time. As a type-A personality, doing was my default behaviour. In the mid-70s, Youth with a Mission (YWAM) published a personal diary offering three key features: a calendar, a read-through-the-Bible-in-one-year schedule, and thumbnail sketches of unreached people groups. With this guide, I began reading through Old and New Testaments annually and reading the Psalms and Proverbs twice each year. This pattern became a life habit sustaining me over difficult periods in my life.

The last half of my life has been spent reaching out to or motivating others to take the Gospel to those who have never heard of Jesus Christ. While other mission agencies were engaging people groups where two to twenty-five percent were already in the church, Canadian Alliance efforts focused on people groups where 99.9 percent or more had never heard the Gospel.

Beverly:

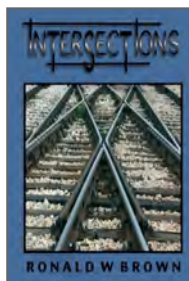
When we look back at our lives, we feel so humbled and very grateful to the Lord, who loves us and called us to His vineyard. We did so little, but God did so much. It often seemed like we were just standing on the sidelines watching Him work. He is so powerful, so faithful, so loving. How could we ever be so blessed to walk with Him? From our experiences, I have learned I should never doubt God even when it looks like He is not working.

I love to read. Books have become good mentors for me. Early in my college days, I was most inspired by the book, *We Would See Jesus* by Roy Hession. Later, while in international ministries, I learned much from LeAnne Paynes' books, *Listening Prayer*, *Restoring the Christian Soul* and *The Healing Presence*.

I have learned that it is wonderful to pray and to expect great things from Him. The reward of His presence is incredible; nothing is more exciting or rewarding. I have learned that in the darkest valleys when the testing is most severe, He will not leave us, not even for a moment. My lifelong desire has been to live for Jesus, and I can honestly say He has always been faithful. All the glory belongs to Him!

Adapted from an autobiography written in 2015

More Stories of Those Who Went



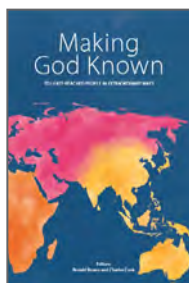
Intersections by Ronald W. Brown

This is the story of Ron Brown's life and how it intersected with the four streams of missiology; 1) showing his place in the history of missions, 2) showing where cultural anthropology helped him as a missionary to journey alongside other cultures, 3) offering a variety of strategic methodologies used in his missionary career, and 4) showing how a life based on a theology of mission took him from being a blessed one to then engage with the nations of Africa and beyond.



The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

A history of the Alliance work in Indonesia can be found in chapter 11, "Indonesia: Great Exploits for God."



Making God Known: To Least-Reached People in Extraordinary Ways edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Chapter 16 provides a biography of Harold and Maureen, entitled "Beyond Imagination."

Chapter 11

God Can Be Trusted: Elsie Toews

by Elsie Toews

Can God be trusted to take care of our lives? Yes, He can! With the hymn writer, Thomas Chisholm, we sing, “Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father . . . All I have needed Thy hand hath provided...”

I was born in Humboldt, Saskatchewan, the third of my parent’s five children. We lived on an isolated mixed farm. My two older siblings left home to follow their careers, so in our early teen years, my younger twin sisters and I became very proficient helping our parents in all areas of farm work. On long winter evenings, by the light of the kerosene lamp, our Mother, an avid reader, would read us stories. Often, they were missionary stories, so early on, we became interested in missions. During summer Bible camp, I met my first missionary, faithfully corresponding with her for many years.

In the early years, we travelled 25 miles with a horse team so we could attend church. Summer was the only time we would make the trip, and often only for special events like Thanksgiving. On Sundays, our Dad held church at home. Crowding around our temperamental battery-operated radio, we listened to a *Bible Hour*. Saturday morning featured *Children’s Hour*, which was our highlight. Whoever was on barnyard duty that morning was filled in later by those privileged to listen.

On our way to school, we would sing hymns and choruses at the top of our lungs. When our older sister, Anna, was home from Bible school, she would teach us new ones; we also learned more at Bible camp. Dad always held family devotions after both breakfast and supper with everyone participating. At camp, we also learned to have private devotions.

We took grades nine and ten by correspondence for high school and went to a regular school for the rest. I thoroughly enjoyed high school and took all the subjects offered to enter any area of study God would lead me to. Dad wanted us all to have a career, and I was torn between nursing and teaching.

When I was twelve, I was in the hospital, and nursing became very appealing. One day the primary doctor was away, and the interns found I had a ruptured appendix. They felt inexperienced in operating, and I had a 50 percent chance

of survival if they did. Dad came to my bedside and explained salvation to me using John 3:16. On numerous occasions, I had asked Jesus to forgive my sins, but this time I understood; having assurance and peace in my heart. So, I told Dad the doctors could do whatever. I was ready to live or die. Dad believed that God answered prayer, and so he prayed.

Years later, our brother told us that he remembered accompanying Dad to get the cows early in the morning. In the pasture, they both knelt down, and Dad prayed that if the Lord saw fit to restore me to health, that He would use my life for something unique. At my high school graduation, I rededicated my life for whatever the Lord had in store for me.

In 1960, my sister Elviera was teaching, and her twin Elfrieda was finishing her training to be a nurse. Our Dad passed away the previous year, and Mom moved into Saskatoon. Now was the time for the Bible training we yearned for, and we applied at a Bible school.



Elfrieda Toews. Courtesy National Ministry Centre.

In the meantime, our older sister had been a Bible camp cook and came home raving about this Canadian Bible College (CBC) camp counsellor who was so well versed in Scripture. It was the end of summer, and all three of us were so intrigued with CBC that we immediately applied. Every day we looked for our acceptance in the mail but to no avail. Classes were about to begin, so we packed our belongings and drove to Regina. Our acceptances were still on the registrar's desk, and we were accepted in person. We enrolled in all the Bible courses offered, in missions, and whatever electives fit in.



Elviera Toews. Courtesy National Ministry Centre.

At the outset of our senior year, dignitaries from The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) headquarters in New York came to interview missionary candidates, including us. Trembling, we wondered what they would ask these prairie farm girls. First, they wanted to know where we wanted to minister. We were open to going where there was a need, but I wanted to teach if possible. When told there was no teaching vacancy at the time, I said, "Fine with me, just send me wherever you need someone."

During our Thanksgiving break in October, we



Elsie Toews. Courtesy National Ministry Centre.

went home and talked with our Mother. She was shocked; how could we all leave her? In the two years Mother had lived in Saskatoon, she had become part of a very close-knit ladies' group at church. These ladies encouraged her, saying what a privilege it was to let her girls go as missionaries to tell others about God. She was unaware that she had influenced us by reading missionary stories when we were young.

In November, Elfrieda and I received our appointments to arrive before May 1 in Dutch New Guinea (later named Irian Jaya, Indonesia, and now Papua, Indonesia). It was a surprise to be appointed to the same field, and how could we go before graduation in mid-May? Elviera stayed to pick up our diplomas.

The biggest surprise was that I was asked to teach in the Missionary Kids' (MK) school. God was good to Mother as well. She had Elviera for two more years before she came to join us.

In December, we rearranged our study schedules to fulfill all the mission's requirements. We had been majoring in the Bible, leaving missions courses for the last semester. In January we finished our studies. The school arranged for special classes in linguistics and Greek to complete our requirements. In February, we left Elviera at CBC, going home to prepare for the mission field. Mother did not know if she would ever see us again but was caught up in packing 55-gallon drums with us. As opportunity afforded, we spoke at various churches and especially at Mother's ladies' group. They became our faithful prayer warriors.

March 30, 1963, found us at the Saskatoon airport—our first time in an airport. Most missionaries crossed the ocean by ship. Mother, Pastor Boldt, and members of the congregation circled us, sang, prayed, and sent us on our way. We were literally in a daze.

Oswald Chambers said, "God does not ask us to do things that are naturally easy for us—He only asks us to do things that we are perfectly fit to do through His grace, and that is where the cross we must bear will always come." Praise the Lord for His sustaining grace in time of need.

Finally, we arrived, the Sentani airport coming into view with Cyclops, a beautiful mountain to the North, and Sentani Lake with palm trees everywhere to the South. As we came off the plane, the feeling of breathing humid air made us uncomfortable. Then we were bombarded by many strange faces greeting us. Dazed, we were taken to the school campus; a new chapter was about to begin.

Trusting and Teaching

Sentani International School (SIS) was a welcome adventure. I loved exploring and soon enjoyed the perpetually warm tropical weather. I prepared a garden plot next to the house for the seeds I'd brought in my suitcase. Although it was August, I remembered there would be no winter, so I could plant any time. In the early morning, I enjoyed waking up to the strange, shrill bird calls echoing through the dense rain forest.

We did a lot of outdoor education. The younger children showed me an inconspicuous insect, a walking stick hidden among the leaves. Then we watched the cicadas rubbing their back legs against the wing to make their sound. The children picked up random stones along the path as we hiked; back in the classroom, we put them into the rock tumbler together with abrasive material. After several weeks of tumbling, beautiful gems emerged. The children made them into lovely bracelets and necklaces for their mothers.



Elviera and Elsie Toews.

Courtesy National Ministry Centre.

We praise the Lord for the years Elviera and I could work together, sharing our joys and sorrows. Lessons and field trips were planned for both classes. It was so much easier having someone to discuss plans with.

After Elviera's term, she returned home and attended university to upgrade. We had come to the field with only a teaching certificate, but while there, they required a Master's Degree. Instead of returning full-time, I spent every home assignment at university until I finally got my required degree.

At home, Elviera realized Mother needed someone to be with her. We had promised we would be there when she needed us. Elviera decided it would be a more stable situation if she remained at home and got a teaching job there.

God's Faithfulness in Leading the Way

One year my eyesight started deteriorating quickly, and the mission doctor found cataracts. I could cope during the regular teaching, but I could not see the tiny print on students' tests. The Lord supplied a teacher friend to do the checking and grading for me. They recommended that I go home for the operation.

At the end of the school year, I was sent home. Elfrieda wanted to accompany me, and Mother sent money for the ticket. The eye specialist found the beginnings of cataracts that could be corrected with a new prescription.

In the meantime, Elviera found she could not leave Mother alone while she was teaching. She had to begin part-time teaching, which was actually job sharing. When we discussed the situation, Elviera proposed that she get me into job sharing with her if I stayed home to help her with Mother. So, I arranged with headquarters and the field to go on a leave-of-absence. The only field stipulation was I must arrange for a substitute to teach in Sentani, which was no problem.

Once again, I was able to teach with Elviera. We had a ball during these two years together. It was also the only time I got full pay for the Master's Degree, which was a blessing since I was off allowance from the C&MA. Mother was blessed to have all her girls for the summer.

The Lord worked out all the details for my stay at home; Mother was praising the Lord. People asked me why I was staying at home. My reply was the Lord had orchestrated it and given me peace of heart. I knew I was in the centre of God's will, doing His bidding at this time.

In February 1988, Mother peacefully passed into the arms of Jesus. Elfrieda could not come home, but when the Nduga people heard Mother had passed away, they came and mourned with her. It was God's goodness to have us together, so Elviera did not have to care for Mother's final days and funeral alone.

During the next few months, I began having eye problems again. I returned to my eye specialist and found out my eyes had healed. The specialist said he must have made a mistake. In hindsight, I do not believe it was a mistake; it was God's doing to take me home for the time I was needed there. With my eyesight restored, I knew it was time to return to the field.

God's Faithfulness in Answering Prayer

By July 1988, everything had changed. Elviera was adjusting to being alone without Mother. Elfrieda was now married, and I flew back to Indonesia alone to resume SIS duties.

I was excited to see the familiar Mount Cyclops and Sentani Lake as the plane



Elfrieda with her husband
Adriann van der Bijl. Courtesy
National Ministry Centre.

approached the airport, but no one greeted me this time. I signed out a Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) car and went to my house. My former housemate had moved, taking our reliable house help with her.

I felt very alone, bordering on depression. However, I looked back at God's hand upon my life and moved on. I remembered one of my eighth-grade graduates wrote me a note from Dalat school. She must have felt deserted too and wrote, "The Lord has helped me all these years, so why should He drop me now?" Scripture became more meaningful to me; I delved deeper into God's Word. Ephesians 2:10 became especially meaningful: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Now was no time for self-pity but to trust in the Lord to lead on!

My home in Sentani had an open-door policy. One Christmas, all the singles came to celebrate with us at the coast. Whenever Alliance dignitaries from abroad came to visit, 'a must do' was to stop at Elsie's house for a tropical iced fruit slush. When new singles arrived on the field, they could stay until their visa documents were completed. When parents from isolated mountain stations came to visit their children at school, the ladies would radio ahead for an appointment to have their hair cut or permed. And so, the list goes on; even tourists who got into trouble with the police would come to see if I could accompany them to retrieve their confiscated passports or just to sightsee.

We would take the scenic route into Jayapura, the capital, drive to the highest spot overlooking the ocean, wind around the top of the mountain, and then down along the beach under the waving palms ending up at the fish market. This is where the fishing boats docked, and the fishermen sold their nightly catch.

One single missionary who needed to recuperate came to stay at my home for a while. She was also learning the language and wanted to attend the local Indonesian Alliance church instead of the English ex-pat church. I also wanted to add to my limited Indonesian, and so we went regularly. After attending a short time, someone from the congregation suggested that I teach Sunday school. "Oh no," I objected, "I don't know Indonesian." A few weeks later, the Sunday school superintendent confronted me with the same proposal, "Come teach Sunday school." My excuse, "I'm not fluent enough in Indonesian." Then a third time, I was approached. Was



Elsie Toews. Courtesy National Ministry Centre.

the Lord trying to tell me something, I pondered? I agreed to try.

They gave me the materials, and I memorized the lessons. And so began my weekend involvement with the Indonesian community. I had no idea where this might lead. I became more proficient in teaching, and by Christmas, some of my class were ready to accept the Lord. I asked the superintendent what to do. “Oh,” he said, “They have the opportunity for salvation in July at the youth camp.” I was very disappointed. During the Christmas break, I found and studied material I could use for soul-winning. In January, I got a new class; by Easter, they were ready to accept the Lord.

Four of them became Christians, one from a Muslim home. Later he went to Bible school and became a pastor. The others became strong leaders in the youth group. From then on, I began to teach evangelism and creative teaching methods to the Sunday school teachers. The church would schedule trips to outlying villages on Lake Sentani or on the ocean’s shore to hold weekend evangelistic meetings. My job was to train the youth in drama, skits, and kids’ events. In the mornings, they would gather the children to play games and tell Bible stories. In the afternoon, they went house to house to visit and pray for the people, and at night they began with hearty singing to attract the people and then performed skits and mimes in preparation for the evangelistic message.

Early Sunday morning, I would pick up a group of the youth Sunday school teachers to go to an outreach area on the lake and teach Sunday school. It had to be early so the young people could be back to sing in the choir at church. On sunny mornings, the village kids would often come to meet us and catch a ride back to their village. We parked our van on the hill and walked down to the lake. On cloudy days they would see the van arrive and quickly jump into the lake for their bath and come running to the open-air church with their hair dripping wet.

The year I went on home assignment, I cleaned out my closet of things I did not need and took them to this village. After my leave, I returned to this lakeside village and saw the church had walls. They told me they had sold my clothes and used the money to make bricks to finish their church building. I also met a girl from this village who had been in our Sunday school and now was a Sunday school teacher.

My Indonesian language was still not very fluent, but I could make myself understood. My main job, of course, was teaching at SIS, and I loved it. MKs are like brothers and sisters, and their teachers were aunts and uncles. In grades two and

three, which I usually taught, the children needed many hugs and much attention because they lived in dorms and away from their parents for many months.

While teaching grade two Bible, we had a series on soul-winning. Most of the children had already accepted Jesus personally by then. One little fellow went home and took his preschool brother into the bedroom. Their Mother found them kneeling at the bed, and the older was explaining salvation to his little brother. We also made prayer lists, and every morning the children came and reported answers to prayer, of which there were many.

For Christmas, the children who lived in the mountains went home via MAF planes. Often if the fuel ship had not arrived, and MAF would send out an alert to pray. The fuel always managed to arrive just on time so everyone could get home for Christmas. When the school had a hepatitis epidemic, we fasted and prayed, and the Lord heard and answered.

Sentani is located on the North coast of Papua, just four degrees south of the equator. To get relief from the heat, we would take the children to a swimming hole several miles off-campus. When the enrollment increased to the point they could not be easily transported, the upper-classmen decided to dig a swimming pool. What could the mission do but cement it? The pool was such a blessing, allowing us to cool off and get rid of extra energy after school or on weekends.

We often had earthquakes and, after a very strong one, large cracks appeared in the pool. Repairs were made, but every morning four or five inches of water disappeared. At the Wednesday night prayer meeting, the upper class laid hands on the pool and prayed, marking the water level. The next morning, they rushed to the bank to find the water had not gone down; the Lord answered their prayer.

There were also many sad events the students recorded in their prayer calendars. One Dad had not reported on the radio while he was surveying an unreached tribal area. Several days later, we found out he had been killed. There were also various MAF airplane accidents and lives lost. Much comfort and prayer were needed during these times.

As time went on, missionaries retired, left for health reasons, or were phased out. SIS accommodated the children from all the missions serving in Papua and any other ex-pat children. Alliance children became fewer even though the enrollment was well over one hundred. As a result, SIS transitioned to become an intermission school instead of an Alliance one, and the other mission's submitted teachers as well. Alliance teachers were relocated to Africa, South America, Manila, or elsewhere. As the teachers left one by one, I went to bid them farewell and shed bitter tears together with them. This isolated field had brought us all very close.

When former students returned from their ministries in other parts of the world

to visit their parents in Papua, they came scouting around mission hill. Often, I couldn't recognize them as adults, but they were so happy to find someone familiar still there!

Eventually, my time came to phase out of SIS. There were four Alliance children left with two Alliance teachers, one being the principal. My heart was with Indonesia and the Indonesian people. I asked our mission chairman if, rather than be appointed to another part of the world, I could transfer to the Indonesian Seminary (STT-WP).

God's Faithfulness in Changing Times

When I attended the first staff meeting at STT, I was reminded how limited my understanding of the Indonesian language was. Since I had a Master's degree, they asked me to set up the Christian Education major. They did not have enough qualified staff to do this. Until now, the school had only taught theology as a major.

August 1992 was the beginning of another whole new chapter in my life. For my 27 years of teaching elementary grades at SIS and six years in Canada, I had used a set curriculum, in the English language, with manuals to guide and textbooks for each student. Now, I created the Christian Ed major, wrote up the curriculum, looked for textbooks, and did the whole procedure in the Indonesian language. I called daily, hourly, "Lord help," and He always supplied. Jeremiah 33:3 was such an encouragement. "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

I discovered an Indonesian bookstore in the next town. It had a wealth of valuable materials. I found basic Teaching Education by Extension (TEE) courses in simple Indonesian for the women's classes. These were perfect for the women from Papua's many tribal groups and for me. They had limited education and could not enroll in regular classes with their husbands.



Elsie Toews. Courtesy National Ministry Centre.

Ladies from the church had adopted me as their missionary, making up a prayer calendar where someone was assigned to pray for me every day. My oldest sister, Anna, took the requests we sent and phoned them to interested churches.

My first semester was very intense, even traumatic at times. I asked an STT teacher's wife to sit in on some of my classes to help me out. For one of these classes, the students wrote a report and gave it orally

in class. I wrote out key phrases and words I was looking for because I could only understand half of what was said. As they reported, I checked off the points each student touched on and thus was able to grade their work.

Soon after, I realized the tribal students were lacking in Indonesian while fluent in their tribal language. At the next staff meeting, I requested to address the need to upgrade Indonesian comprehension skills for tribal students. I was asked to set up the course and given a senior student to teach it.

Semester one ended successfully with me giving the finals. I gathered up the papers, Indonesian dictionary, Bible, and texts to do grading while vacationing with Elfrieda at her station in the mountains. For many days I prayed and worked to decipher the test papers but to no avail. I could not understand what they had written.

The second semester was around the corner, with the Indonesian upgrade program to be created. As I returned to the coast, the first remark at the staff meeting was, "I'm just collecting the student's grades." My reply, "I've been working on them." In my heart, I prayed again, "Lord, help me!" Then the head of STT mentioned, "Last semester, two students helped you, and they want to help again." I answered, "Good, they can come today."

Both students came to my house, reading the exams from the last semester while I prepared my current lessons. They wrote remarks for each student's paper, and when I had a minute, we discussed each report and assigned the grade. In two or three days, we got through all 75 documents, and I could happily hand in the grades. The Lord had intervened again, and we all praised His Name.

The second year required my students to do practical work. In Christian Ed of Children, they had to teach a Sunday school class; for Christian Ed of Youth, they had to do youth work and the same with adults. They discovered that children and youth were much more receptive to the Gospel; easier to reach and lead to the Lord than adults. In their Visual Aids class, a lot of visuals were created because they could not be purchased. They made flannelgraph boards and objects, puppets, the Wordless Book¹, and much more. Teachers could hold a class's attention much better with visuals instead of just reading the story to them.

In my third year, the class did fundraising to take the Gospel to the children in the mountains. Teams of four students were formed, with one person acting as the

¹ The Wordless Book is a Christian evangelistic book. It is called a "book", as it is usually represented with pages, although it can be shown on a single page or banner.

The book consists of several blocks of pure color that, in sequence, represent a nonverbal catechism about basic Christian teachings for the instruction of children, the illiterate, or people of different cultures. The presentation of the book is meant to be a verbal experience, however, providing the "reader" a visual cue to expound Christian doctrine extemporaneously or in impromptu situations. (Wikipedia)

head to handle the schedule and money. They prepared their lessons, visuals and purchased MAF tickets.

Everyone should have at least one chance to hear the Gospel before the Lord returns. So, some students went on evangelistic trips to tree-dwelling tribes who had never heard the Good News of Jesus. Students returned with many stories of success and hardship. Life in the jungles of Papua is not easy.

Everyone should have
at least one chance to
hear the Gospel before
the Lord returns.

Ibu Derry came to STT-WP with her husband Yahya Tabuni during my first year there. Yahya was a successful businessman, born and raised in the mountains of Papua. At a youth retreat, Yahya realized the Lord was calling him into full-time ministry. He had already built a lovely house and started his family. Together, they were active in the local church, but Yahya felt the tug in his heart to follow God's call. When he discussed this idea with Derry, she was not impressed. Yahya was making a good salary; for the first time in their lives, they could live comfortably. Derry remembered her deprived lifestyle as a pastor's child, not wanting to put her own children through the same hardships. Yahya had firm convictions of his calling but, acting with understanding and patience, decided to fast and pray. It was two years before Derry realized God's call came above her personal comforts.

Derry always accompanied Yahya to his practical work at the transmigrant camps. Muslims observe Friday as their holy day of prayer, with Sunday being a regular workday, so Derry and Yahya could not have weekend services. What they could do was friendship evangelism. This meant working in the palm oil groves or the rice paddies with the farmers. When someone became sick with malaria, Yahya offered to pray for them. After miraculous healing, these Muslims began asking questions, becoming interested in and accepting the Gospel message.

After graduation, the Tabunis decided to move, living and ministering among the Muslim population. Derry was asked to teach religion to the few Christian children while other children learned Islam. But the Muslim children loved to look into Derry's class and see the colourful visuals she used. After school, they would run to Derry's house for Bible stories every chance they got.

One Christmas, while a large group of believers and interested seekers were gathered in the local church building for their celebrations, someone called out, "there's a house on fire!" The smoke was coming from the direction of Tabuni's house. Immediately they ran, but it was too late. The house was destroyed; only their motorbike was pulled from the back porch. Every earthly belonging was gone.

The Tabunis were in total shock for several days. The International English church started collecting clothes and household supplies. Money donations came in quickly, and soon they had a house bigger and better than before.

In 2001, when the tsunami hit South East Asia, the Tabunis lived with the Muslims in Ache. They encouraged the people, helping them rebuild. Now they are back in Papua, serving as dorm parents for youth from the interior tribes. God is continuing to use them despite the hardships they face.

Can God be trusted? Yes. Great is His faithfulness as the song continues: “. . . a peace that endureth, Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide; Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!”

Adapted from a biography written July 2015

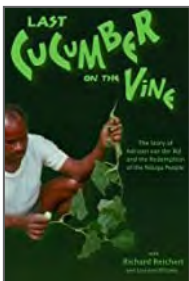
More Stories of Those Who Went



Thoughts on the Jungle Trail by Ed Maxey

This is the story of the Maxey family in the interior of Papua, Indonesia. It is a story of adventure, challenge, tragedy, and victory as they worked among remote tribal people. It is the local people's story as well. You will hear Nomarlok tell of his first encounter with the white people and Oadak tell of the day the people came to kill the Maxey family, and Amene tell his stories of war and cannibalism. But it is more than just a story.

These pages will inspire fellow pilgrims to press on when life gets complicated, pray when the task is heavy, and face fears in Christ's enabling strength, even when they feel inadequate. As you read, may you marvel at the sovereignty of God and how He is building His people in Papua, Indonesia.



Last Cucumber on the Vine by Richard Reichert and Lorraine Willems

This is the amazing story of Adriaan van der Bijl (who later married Elfrieda Toews) and his passionate yearning to reach the Nduga tribespeople hidden in the interior mountainous region of Papua, Indonesia. The Nduga people lived in constant fear of evil spirits, fear of the enemy and fear of death, which defaced the beauty of the race. They believed they had lost their

chance of enjoying eternal life. The message of eternal life brought an overwhelming acceptance of God's wonderful Good News, which liberated them from their slavery

to sin into glorious liberty in Christ.

Along with a team of four, Adriaan built airstrips, homes, churches, schools, and medical clinics, addressing physical, spiritual, and educational needs. He battled natural disasters, tribal wars, and malaria outbreaks. Through it all, he kept his sights on the God who was unstoppably building His Church.



The God Made Known: Through Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Missionary and former field leader Pat Worsley wrote chapter 8, “Irian Jaya: The People Time Forgot.” This country is now referred to as Papua, New Guinea.

Chapter 12

God's Faithfulness Through the Years: Ron and June MacKinnon

by Ron MacKinnon

During the first two years of our ministry in the Philippines, we did not have a vehicle, so we depended on other means of transportation. Our home in Kablon was up Mount Matutum three km from the main road. Public jeepneys only came through on Tuesdays, the market day in Tupi. One day our house helper, Mary, and I hitched a ride on a logging truck that regularly chewed up the road in front of our home on the village's edge. It was going down the mountain with a full load of logs, each about three feet in diameter. The cab was an example of Filipino ingenuity, a wooden structure built on the flatbed with room for four or five people.

As we approached the main road, I expected the truck to stop. Instead, the driver tried to make the right hand turn without slowing down. I do not know if this was a brake malfunction or a choice, but he lost control of the truck and hurtled toward a steep ravine, well to the right of the bridge which crossed it. In my mind's eye, I could see us ending up as grease spots, crushed by several tons of logs as the truck hit the bottom of the ravine.

When we passed the point where the truck had time to stop or turn towards the bridge, I was sure our ministry in the Philippines was over before it even began.

Suddenly the truck pivoted on its rear wheels and headed for the bridge, crossing right at the edge and continuing safely along the highway. With eyes as big as saucers, Mary looked at me in wonder, and all she said was, "Sir?"

God's Faithfulness and Love in Bringing Us to Himself

I was born in Toronto, Ontario. When I was about five, my parents moved to Lakeview, which is now part of Mississauga. The family began attending the Lakeview Alliance Tabernacle under Pastor Edwin Holt's ministry and became deeply involved with the church. This was the beginning of my lifelong relationship with The Christian and Missionary Alliance. Both my mom and dad were very active in the church. I attended Sunday school, along with my brother, Bill, and sister, Nessie Jo, having perfect attendance for several years.

One fond memory of my childhood was when missionaries came to the church, which they did often, it seemed; we usually had them in our home for a meal. Early on, I met some great missionaries and got to know them as real people.

I always wanted to be a missionary. Sure, I wanted to be a sports star, a fireman, and any number of other intriguing things, but I always came back to wanting to be a missionary. I do not remember when it started, but it was reinforced during high school years through Rev. and Mrs. Irwin coming to our church along with their son, George, and his wife, Harriette. During George's ministry, I was convinced God wanted me to serve among an ethnic minority people somewhere in the world.

At thirteen years of age, I remember being in a basement room of our partially constructed church, making a commitment to Christ, receiving Him as my Saviour. While my mom said I had come to Christ much earlier, this was the experience I remember, which remains meaningful. When I was fourteen, my dad died, and I knew it was time to be serious about my relationship with God.

Eventually, I headed off to Canadian Bible College (CBC). It was a good thing I did. On the train trip from Toronto to Regina, Saskatchewan, about fourteen students were travelling together, including June Whittaker, my future wife! After travelling for two or three days, I am not sure she knew who I was or cared, but the rest, as they say, is history.

June received Jesus as her Saviour when she was eight or nine years of age during a Vacation Bible School at the Alliance church in Belleville, Ontario. Earlier on, neighbours had invited her younger brother and June to attend Sunday school, and shortly after, her mother came to the Lord. Even later, during a deeper life campaign, June went forward and received Christ as her Sanctifier. Her family went to church every week, earning awards for perfect attendance year after year. June continued to be a part of that church throughout her teen years and was involved mostly in children's ministry.

Missions was emphasized at the church, and June felt God might be calling her to be a missionary. She had a lot of encouragement from various people in the church. So, after working as a secretary for two years following high school, June went to Canadian Bible College (CBC). During her time there, God confirmed that He did indeed want her to be a missionary.

June and I were married in Belleville on September 7, 1957. In 1958, after graduation from CBC, we served in two pastorates—Thorold (1958-59) and Sudbury (1960-64), both in Ontario.

God's Faithfulness in Giving a Harvest Among the Blaan



Blaan ladies' outfits. Courtesy
Ron MacKinnon.



Blaan man's outfit. Courtesy
Ron MacKinnon.

June and I arrived in the Philippines during February 1965 along with our two children, Ron (5) and Debbie (3). We had no idea what would follow, only knowing we would be involved in ministry among a tribal or ethnic minority people group.

After orientation in Zamboanga City, we moved to South Cotabato for ministry among the Blaan people group, eventually living in the small village of Kablon. Our house was a bamboo structure situated two thousand feet up on Mount Matutum. The scenery was delightful, and the climate was a little cooler than elsewhere in the country. We learned the Blaan¹ language, one of eighty-seven different languages in the Philippines. There were no medical facilities up in the mountains, so June was often called to minister to the sick even though she was not a nurse. Stephen (1966) and Kevin (1968) were added to our family during that term.

After our first home assignment, we returned to Kablon, where we continued ministering to the Blaan during the first year. God enabled us to introduce several new villages to the Gospel, like Lam Fitak (meaning "in the mud") during that year.

Life took an unexpected turn when I was elected field director, and we moved to the Mission office in

Zamboanga City. Over the next three years, our understanding of the church's field-wide ministry and mission grew substantially.

One major accomplishment during this tenure was a first working agreement between the Mission and the National Church. It created a clear picture of our working relationship. As part of that, I signed many, many pages of legal documents turning over all our mission-owned properties to The Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches of the Philippines (CAMACOP).

During these years, CAMACOP began to pick up momentum, as evidenced by the first church growth program of 1974, called Target 400 '79. From 1975 through 1979, our goal was reached, and four hundred and fifteen new congregations were

¹ The people group and their language is pronounced with both 'a's sounded as in the word "blah" with a glottal stop in between. Bla'an.

planted, almost doubling the number of churches in CAMACOP, bringing it to nine hundred and fifteen.

Diane (1971) was born while we lived in Zamboanga, and her arrival completed the MacKinnon family. June taught at the missionary kid's school in Zamboanga and managed the mission guest home.

During our second home assignment (1975-76), we lived in Glendale, California, where I studied at Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission in Pasadena. I took training in Theological Education by Extension (TEE) and writing programmed instructional material. My studies prepared me for my work in this area for much of my remaining missionary career.

At the beginning of our third term, we returned to the Blaan ministry, combined with starting the Alliance Theological Education by Extension program (ALL-TEE) for the CAMACOP. We had chosen to move to General Santos City for the TEE program because we also wanted to keep working among the Blaan who lived in the nearby mountains.

If it was our plan to major in TEE and minor in Blaan ministry, God quickly turned us around. Between 1976 and 1978, God broke through among the Blaan people. In less than two years, we planted churches in thirteen villages previously untouched by the Gospel, baptizing seven hundred and fifty-one new believers. I cannot think of anything more exciting than sharing the Gospel with people who have never heard the good news of salvation. We had this privilege!

It all started in 1976 when God led us to some Blaan students studying in General Santos City. They wanted us to go with them to their nearby village, Subeng Makar. We started teaching the people there, and as the work progressed, Edwin Ansang, a Blaan pastor, joined us along with his wife. Some of the people were from Bliane; they invited us to visit their village, about sixteen kilometres up in the mountains.



Baptism at Bliane, 1976.
Courtesy Ron MacKinnon.

Our first meeting place was under some mango trees, and then we went to Bliane ("chicken leg"), where we met in the shade of a house.

We then started services in San Jose. The leader, or barrio captain, of the nearby village of Maan was in San Jose the day of the first service, and he invited us to his village. A service was held in Maan that same day, meeting under a house built on stilts. And so it went. We were invited to village after village as

those who received Christ also wanted their families to hear the Good News.

There was something different about this rapid spread of the Gospel; it was a genuine people movement. For approximately three months, we would go to the same village on a specific day each week. Edwin Ansang and I taught them the Word of God starting with the creation of the world, the beginning of man and of sin, the results of sin, and God's remedy for sin, the coming of a Saviour. There were four lessons on the Old Testament ending with Moses and the Ten Commandments. We



Pastor Edwin preaching.
Courtesy Ron MacKinnon.

then taught about the life of Christ, His miracles and then what Christ taught about Himself, the "I Am's." How thrilling to tell them about the works of Jesus, the feeding of the five thousand, other miracles, and healings! They sat in amazement as they listened.

Often June would teach the children, and some older women liked to join her because she used pictures when she taught. The people were so excited when we told them Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We saw many people healed when, in simple faith, they trusted Jesus.

After three months of teaching in a village, when we felt the people were ready to decide for the Lord, we had decision day. Decision day simply involved all those who were sincere standing to indicate they chose Christ and repeating a prayer of confession of faith, led by Edwin. They were then instructed to share their testimony, and they gladly confessed Jesus as their Saviour.

After decision day, there were six more lessons, one each week, in preparation for baptism. Each person was personally interviewed before being baptized. What a thrill these baptisms were! The first baptismal service was held at the seashore, with one hundred and three baptized from two different villages. And so it went. They were baptized in groups of about twenty-five to fifty-nine, ultimately leading to seven hundred and fifty-one baptisms and thirteen new churches, with others in progress. After being baptized, each group of Christians would select four leaders for their new church.

We also started a lay pastors' training program. The four leaders chosen from each church would come to the Lay Preachers' Institute (LPI) three days each

month. Some of these men took what they learned at LPI and taught it in their own churches, and some of them started new congregations. They used the same method Edwin and I had used. There was no one else available to teach these new believers, so we went to their villages for an occasional Sunday service or Bible conferences lasting two or three days to augment the lay preachers' ministry.

God has given abundant blessings. There are now well over one hundred and eighty churches among the Blaan in this area; they have their own district and Blaan district superintendent. Edwin is now with the Lord. The LPI continues as the Pastors' Bible School. A few of the first lay pastors are still preaching and planting churches. Some of their children and other Blaan young people have gone to Bible college and have come back to pastor churches. God continues to build His Church among the Blaan over more than forty years since we left.

There are now well over one hundred and eighty churches among the Blaan in this area

In 1978, with one year remaining in our third term, we left the Blaan work and moved back to Zamboanga because our son, Kevin, was not adjusting to school well. Following consultations with the teachers and a doctor, it was agreed that he needed his parents.

At first, we were dismayed at the thought of moving away from the work God was doing among the Blaan, but after praying, we received assurance that God was leading us and would be with us to bless us wherever we went. Like Joshua in Joshua 1:9, we were not to be dismayed but were to trust God, who had already prepared David and Helen Douglas to continue our work. They were almost through their two years of Blaan language study when we left.

We planned to concentrate on the TEE ministry working out of Zamboanga City so Kevin could live at home with us. However, within a few days Met Castillo, a classmate at the School of World Mission, submitted an official request to the Mission asking that I be assigned to teach at the graduate school of which he was president.

I taught at the Alliance Graduate School of Theology and Mission as well as at Ebenezer Bible College. June taught at the missionary children's school once again. Through all of this, the ALL-TEE ministry continued and snowballed with many centres and students.

God's Faithfulness in Protecting and Caring for Us

I started this chapter by sharing one example of God's protection. This was indeed a miracle! Trucks do not pivot on their rear wheels, but God made it happen,

and we survived. That was not the only time God protected us.

Blaan villages are usually up in the mountains. We had to travel by jeep over very rough roads, up narrow gorges, and through rivers. At least we hoped we would get through the rivers, but sometimes we got stuck, so we had to be pulled out by a carabao (water buffalo). These large but generally docile creatures are powerful.

Some of these roads were on the side of a mountain, and it was scary experiencing how far the jeep would lean over! It was really muddy during the rainy season, making travel difficult, and in the dry season, it was very dusty.

One time our daughter, Debbie, and June had to be rescued from our jeep, which was at risk of being carried away due to the heavy rains in the mountains causing the flooding of the road.

We often had to leave the jeep and walk the rest of the way either because the road was not passable or was absent altogether. As you can imagine, it is sweltering walking in the tropics! We would walk along a path or road and sometimes through long grass, making us uneasy due to the Philippines' many poisonous snakes.

One day we were walking along a trail after leaving our jeep behind, and Edwin stopped us. He pointed back to where we had been walking, and in the paw print of a carabao was a curled-up snake. Edwin said June had stepped right over it and went on to tell us the name of the snake was "Itudo." We knew the word meant noon and so were puzzled until Edwin explained, if the snake bit a person in the morning, they would be dead by noon.

For one year, 1976-77, we used another missionary's jeep while he was on home assignment. As we approached Blagan the first time, we could not see men pointing guns at us from behind banana plants along the road. It was good we had the barrio captain with us in the jeep! We found out later the rebel leader in that area had a jeep just like the one we were driving.

This was a time of much rebel activity as Muslim and Communist armies fought against the government; sometimes, when we set out, the military would have roadblocks in place, and we were turned back. However, we had the freedom to travel for the most part, even though it was sometimes dangerous. We really sensed the Lord's protection and care throughout the years, and we were not afraid. The Lord had given us the command to go, and in Matthew 28:19-20, He promises, "And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

God's Faithfulness in Church Planting in Metro Manila

In 1978, I began teaching at the Alliance Graduate School (AGS) in Zamboanga City and following home assignment in 1979-1980, we returned to teach there. In



Ron with ABS graduate, 1981.
Courtesy Ron MacKinnon.



Project 8 Alliance Church, 1984.
Courtesy Ron MacKinnon.



June teaching ALL-TEE class at Alliance Church of Makati. Courtesy Ron MacKinnon.

1982, the graduate school transferred to Metro Manila and became the Alliance Biblical Seminary (ABS). We moved with the school.

June was not too happy about the move. She was quite content to keep teaching at the missionary kids' school for grades one to six. Ebenezer Bible College and AGS were both situated on a beautiful campus right on the South China Sea, a contrast to congested, dirty Manila!

June and I, along with senior ABS student Jun Aguilar, began a church-planting ministry in an area of Quezon City called Project 8. We started with Bible studies, film showings, visitation from October to March and then began services on Easter Sunday 1983. For one whole year, the attendance each Sunday either held its own or increased, but it never decreased. What a rewarding and fulfilling way to begin a church! Jun became the pastor of the Project 8 church after graduating. While planting this church, I worked on my Ph.D. at the University of the Philippines (Diliman) and taught full-time in the seminary.

When we returned from home assignment in 1985 for our fifth term, we were asked to start a church in Makati City, Metro Manila. From 1985-1989 we worked first with Edwin Fernandez and then with Dave Cometa in establishing this church. I continued to teach at ABS as well. In 1986, I graduated from the University of the Philippines with a

Ph.D. in education. A couple of months later, our son, Kevin, graduated from Dalat High School. The Alliance Church of Makati was established, but it was a long and difficult road, much more challenging than our Project 8 experience.

We worked hard in the Alliance Church of Makati (ACM), continuing to pray and trust the Lord, but it was tough. Pastor Ed decided to take a vacation after about a year and never came back. He was so discouraged he just gave up. We were pretty discouraged ourselves. June remembers one day doing some visiting, talking to the Lord while she walked. He brought to mind the verse in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not be weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we don't give up." This was a turning point for her; we did not give up. We thank the Lord for His grace to persevere in this ministry, and eventually, we were able to purchase a church lot with a grant from the C&MA in Canada.

We continued to work in the ACM for our sixth term, along with our TEE teaching. June had many TEE classes and was encouraged as her students grew in the Lord and took on responsibilities in the church.

For several years, we also had memory verse programs at ACM. In 1987, to celebrate the C&MA centennial, there was a program in Canada to memorize one hundred verses on Jesus Christ our Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King. The program encouraged us to do the same at ACM. Afterwards, we decided to continue the memorization program for the next year. We learned various parts of the Bible, one each month, such as the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, I Corinthians 13, Philippians 2:5-11, and portions of the birth and resurrection of Jesus, twelve portions in all.

Then we memorized twelve portions from Psalms, another year, it was the book of Philippians (104 verses), and one year it was the Sermon on the Mount (111 verses). Men, women, and children were all involved; of course, we learned them as well.

God's Faithfulness in the TEE Ministry

After teaching at the seminary from 1978 to 1989, I was asked to return to Alliance Theological Education by Extension (ALL-TEE) ministries as the national director. The program was still operating but seemed to lack direction and purpose.

Returning in 1990 for our sixth term, I worked with the division of Theological Education of CAMACOP to create a new ALL-TEE national committee and re-establish the program. Agreements were signed with the six Alliance Bible colleges to give credit for the extension studies. Two full-time workers, Ed Cajés²

² As this is edited in 2021, Ed Cajés is the president of the CAMACOP which now has more than 3,300 congregations.

and Ferdie Pabrua, were hired to provide oversight in different regions of Mindanao and workshops were conducted to train centre leaders. I did a lot of travelling during those days, and many were equipped for ministry as enrollment reached fifteen hundred students in more than seventy congregations.

We were also involved in textbook production. We wrote *Alliance History & Beliefs* in 1993; what a thrill to see this book published! After spending months adapting *Paul's Life and Letters Book 1*, it was a delight to finally see it in print. Just before we left the Philippines, we had *Paul's Life and Letters Book 2* ready to go to press. This had been a significant undertaking. We also worked on adapting a textbook on Genesis, which was being field-tested as we departed.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2). Paul taught Timothy expecting him to teach others. As TEE classes are conducted in the churches, local leaders are developed through learning and applying biblical lessons. TEE students are involved as pastors, lay leaders, and in teaching others.

...enrollment reached
fifteen hundred
students in more than
seventy congregations.

God's Faithfulness in Enabling Us to Finish Well

When we returned after home assignment for our seventh term in 1995, a new challenge greeted us. We were asked to pastor a congregation to reach out to the middle class and business people of Metro Manila. The Community of Christ Alliance Fellowship (COC) was a congregation with a few business people and many young professionals. For just over a year, Jack and Joy Herman held Sunday services, and they



Baby dedication at Community of Christ Alliance Fellowship. Courtesy Ron MacKinnon.

were leaving for home assignment. For one year, I was the senior pastor, doing most of the preaching. Afterwards, I continued to serve as an associate pastor alongside Jack and CAMACOP worker Rolman Lumapas. Benjie DeJesus, a 1996 graduate of Alliance Biblical Seminary, had interned with us during this time and became the senior pastor upon graduation.

As the older member of the church

staff serving with a pastor who was not yet ordained, it was my privilege and joy to often be asked to perform weddings and to dedicate babies. To become part of these families' growth and development in the Lord has been a real pleasure and a lot of fun! It was a truly enjoyable ministry; June and I have many wonderful memories and friends from this congregation.

The ministry at COC was not my only role. For example, I continued as ALL-TEE director until the end of 1998, when Reniel Nebab³ became the program director. June and I also continued to concentrate on textbook production.

From 1997 to 1999, our last two years on the field, I once again served as field director of the Philippine Mission of the C&MA. During my earlier tenure as field director, June had not been able to travel with me due to the birth of our youngest daughter. This time it was a real delight for June to travel throughout the Philippines with me, visiting missionaries in their homes and their areas of ministry. Overseeing and encouraging our missionaries gave us a renewed chance to have input into the total ministry of the Alliance missionary family.

During our final year on the field, in my second year on the board, I served as chairman of the Board of Trustees of Faith Academy, the world's largest missionary children's school.

From time to time, we could make some visits back to see and minister to the Blaen. What a delight that was even though our Blaen-speaking became rustier. Just before we left the field, our daughter, Debbie, brought her daughter, Janet, on a visit to show her the places of her childhood. We went back to Kablon, where we first lived. We were all warmly welcomed by many friends and believers.

As you can see, God has indeed been faithful to us in our varied ministries from the beginning and has enabled us to finish well. We are grateful to Him.

We are also thankful for God's faithfulness in giving us the grace to let go of our children. If we were to follow God's call to be missionaries, we had to deal with being willing to send our children away to boarding school. This was the most challenging part of being a missionary. After just five months in the Philippines, we had to leave Ron, our oldest, at the missionary children's school in Zamboanga for first grade when we moved to begin Blaen ministry.

Upon retirement, it was difficult to leave the Philippines, our home for most of thirty-five years. It was difficult leaving Filipino friends and co-workers, brothers and sisters in the Lord who had become very close to us. We retired in 2001 and remain busy serving the Lord. We were delighted to return to the Philippines in 2001 for the centennial celebration of the C&MA there.

³ When this was initially written in 2013, Reniel had become the CAMACOP president.

The Lord had promised, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother, or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29). The Lord has fulfilled this promise.



Ron and June MacKinnon, September 2013.
Courtesy Ron MacKinnon.

We think of Daddy Bulnes, Ron's Ilongo daddy, and Mommy Pada, who was like a mother to us. Edwin Ansang was as close as any brother could be; the list goes on. We have many children and grandchildren in the Lord and are thankful for Facebook helping us keep in touch with some of them.

During our missionary journey, thousands of folks have crossed our paths. From those who prayed for us, or supported us with missionary giving, to those who encouraged and challenged us, we have been incredibly blessed. Our journey has been amazingly enriched by those who taught, formed, and corrected us, as well as those we served with or ministered to. Our children have never complained about being missionary kids, our parents freely let us go, and all our family has been a wonderfully supportive treasure. From "A" [Abbot, mission office staff and friend] to "Zed" [Ruth Ziemer, missionary extraordinaire], we have been blessed. No one ever deserved such a journey, but God is gracious.

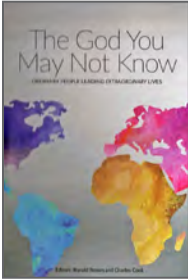
Adapted from a biography written September 2013

More Stories of Those Who Went



Only Thibet by David P. Jones

What made Tibet so resistant to the Gospel? What was it about the message of Christ that made it so unacceptable to the peoples of this Central Asian land? Those questions led the author to research and write this book. It provides a fresh look at what God did "back in the day," as well as learning what He is doing today among these key people to be reached before Christ's return.



The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

Chapter 8, entitled “The Philippines: God’s Faithfulness Through the Years,” provides a full description of the Alliance work in that country. It was also written by Ron MacKinnon.

Canadian Alliance Missions Engagement

Three books that tell our story



The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives

In *A God You May Not Know*, Ron and Charles provide a compelling collection of true-life stories. This autobiographical material by people who have "been there, done that" is both informative and inspirational. As Alliance missionaries, when they tell their stories, they are telling our story. They provide a window through which you catch a glimpse of our mission.

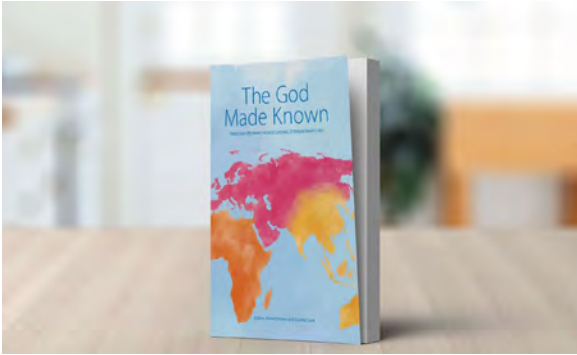
Mel Sylvester, President of C&MA in Canada 1980-1992

If you don't like to read long biographies but love short stories, if the exploits of extraordinarily gifted individuals often leave you wondering whether God ever uses ordinary people like you to accomplish His global agenda, if you find yourself wondering whether the Gospel is really the power of God unto salvation for all nations, if you want to understand why "missions" is part of the DNA of our denomination, then this book may have been written just for you. Just the introduction made me want to read it.

Sunder Krishnan, former pastor Rexdale Alliance Church

This book should come with a warning. Consumption may result in focused resolve to be about God's mission, a spirit stirred towards the least-reached peoples of the world, and a heart that bursts with godly pride of that which he extraordinarily accomplishes through his ordinary, faithful and Spirit-filled people.

Doug Balzer, Western Canadian District



**The God Made
Known:
Through Ordinary
People Leading
Extraordinary Lives**

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 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

The compilation of stories in this book reflects people empowered by the Spirit, living on mission and 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, Toronto



Making God Known: To Least-Reached People in Extraordinary Ways

This book tells our story. You'll recognize names and legendary accounts from our shared past. As with any good family narrative, you'll also discover connections and explanations about people and initiatives that were previously unknown to you. It is like reading a collection of family stories. This book chronicles how our denomination got the Gospel message out to people and places where Christ is unknown. It recounts how it all came together and the people who made it happen in a world where there was war, uncertainty, chaos, and upheaval. We learn how our international workers leveraged their talents to reach others, and in the reading, we become aware of the profound sacrifices they made and the burdens they bore. And throughout our stories, we see how God is writing a bigger story of love.

Pamela M. Nordstrom, Ph.D., Vice President, Academic Affairs, Ambrose University

This book unfolds like a theography of mission. It traces God's work and faithfulness through the continued development and formation of the international missions movement of the C&MA in Canada. Giving access to Jesus to the whole world, especially the least-reached, is at the heartbeat of the C&MA, and this book functions like an EKG of that movement in Canada, vibrating with the pulse of Jesus.

Bryce Ashlin-Mayo, Lead Pastor, Westlife Church, Calgary

This book is like holding a "missions convention" in your hand. As I read, I found myself once again enraptured by the stories of what God is doing in and through His people around the world. I was given a fresh look at the "unfinished mission" we all share. I was inspired by the stories of pioneer work, creative ventures, new opportunities abroad and at home, and it prompted me to consider how I might engage further with Jesus in His mission. And as I put down the book, I found myself once again raising my hand and whispering the words, "Here I am, LORD, send me."

Kirk Cowman, Lead Pastor, Living Hope Alliance Church, Regina

To download a zip file containing a PDF of:

- The God You May Not Know
- The God Made Known
- Making God Known

click on the link below and the download will start immediately.

<https://www.cmacan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Book-Series-CMA.zip>

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STORIES OF THOSE WHO WENT

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Red Deer AB to Congo
Moncton NB to Argentina
Belleville ON to Ecuador
Saskatoon SK to Papua
Arcola SK to Peru
Toronto ON to Vietnam
Moose Jaw SK to Indonesia
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