

# On mission

STORIES OF THOSE WHO WENT

Dicke ♦ Friesen ♦ Dubé ♦ Franklin ♦ Warden ♦ Derksen  
Tiessen ♦ Hall ♦ Charter ♦ Love ♦ Roseberry ♦ King



**VOL. 3**

Compiled by Ronald Brown

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# Introduction

by Ronald Brown

[I love giving to missions](#). Like you, perhaps, I have done it all my life in various ways. I also read a multitude of missionary updates. There is the odd time, after reading a good letter asking me for more money, when the response in my head is, “Hey, wait a minute, I’ve been giving to you for the past decade, I need a report of how God has used my donations before I make another contribution!”

So, this series of ON MISSION books was born with the idea of providing stories of how God’s Kingdom is slowly but surely extending all over the world because you and I have been going, giving, and praying. God is using our contributions to enlarge His family. A sort of accountability, if you will.

In this book, you will read about what God did through your gifts of prayers and finances, your daughters and sons who went to Russia, Cuba, Argentina, the Philippines, Eastern Europe, and West Africa. You will see how God worked through Canadians sent by our local churches to extend His Kingdom around the world.

This book, though, includes something else. While most of these global workers were sent out by the C&MA in Canada (people many of us know today), two others, Robert Roseberry and Louis King, were from the American Alliance and are now in Heaven.

Roseberry is the man in our Alliance history who we think of as opening up West Africa to the Gospel of Jesus. In 1909 his goal was to find the headwaters of the Niger River and then travel the river to get the Gospel as far as Timbuktu. He is an example of a visionary leader using the latest tools at his disposal to advance the Kingdom. Roseberry was one of the first missionaries to bring a Model T vehicle into West Africa to help him get around to villages.

Louis and Esther King arrived in India in 1947, only serving six years before being invited into mission administration. As a missiologist, he became known for moving Alliance mission fields as quickly as possible towards local leadership. In fact, in 1980, when Dr. King was president of the C&MA in the USA, he and Dr. Mel Sylvester worked together to see Canada become independent from the American administration.

Why did we do all this going, giving, praying, and sending? Well, we have come to understand, from Genesis to Revelation, God is on a mission. His mission is

to reach the Gentiles, or as we say now, to reach the peoples of the world who have never heard the good news of Jesus. In Genesis 12:1-3, God laid out a plan to bless one man, Abraham, in order for him to then bless the nations. So, in our day, I understand I have been blessed, not so much for my benefit, but in order to bless the people of the world who are different than me. In a sense, we all get to join God in His desire and goal to touch all peoples with the story of our Creator God who gave His only Son to redeem us.

Where do we find the peoples of the world today? The stories in this book are written by workers who spent decades living in various corners of our global village. But the world has changed, hasn't it, and wherever we live today, we have the peoples of the world living near us. For example, next door to my Canadian home is a family from China, across the street a family from Tunisia, and we have friends from other faith communities and major religions. We can entertain these global villagers in our homes, but we can also "work" in our homes—perhaps a weekly prayer time for Tibet, or for people of the Middle East, or Southeast Asia, or daily moments following the [Joshua Project](#), which lets us pray every day for a people who have limited access to Jesus.

So, as you read and understand what God is doing around the globe, may you be encouraged. But that's not all. May God also continue to fan the flame of mission engagement in your life wherever you live and whatever your age.

## Acknowledgements

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 interactive 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 the printed 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 from across this vast nation, 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 Cuba, Russia, Argentina, and Guinea heard about Jesus in their own language and responded to the redeeming message of Christ.

These international workers 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: Stories of Genuine Life Experiences**

by Genghis Chan

Every missionary has a story. A story from a tucked-away village or forested mountain. A story from walking down the street or in the wake of an emergency evacuation. A story of transformation among an unreached people group. How about a song made up of many stories proclaiming God's faithfulness? Every international worker has a story. You will find twelve life-changing stories in this book. They are proof that it is never too late to let God change your life as you prepare to change others. Get inspired by these workers who refused to crave routine or let life pass them by. Read how these humble servants responded to the ridiculous challenge, took chances, and made radical moves.

Never before has our culture been so self-centred and selfish. It is our choice where to go and what to do. It really is. What is your choice? "Whatever we do, we must not treat the Great Commission like it's the Great Suggestion," said Charles Swindoll.

I'm honoured to write the Foreword for this new book. You are holding in your hand a storybook written in genuine life experiences. You are invited to enter into the precious journeys of God-chosen people that will challenge you to greater heights and deeper life.

Genghis Chan  
Canadian Pacific District of C&MA  
Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association



## Chapter 1

### **Caring for the Body, Healing for the Soul: Marion Dicke**

by Marion Dicke

We were sitting around in a circle discussing the community health needs in a remote region of the Bateke Plateau in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It had been a gruelling ride in our bright red Toyota Hilux over open prairie grassland. My teammate, Barb Ihrke, and I were making our first official visit as nurses to this area. Suddenly the meeting was interrupted by the sight and sound of a man peddling furiously towards us on his bike, crying out loudly, “Come quickly, come quickly! My daughter just delivered, and the baby is not breathing.”

Barb and I jumped into the truck and followed the man over the sandy, grassy path about two kilometres to a small mud-brick house in a village with five or six other houses. Our hearts sank as we took in the scene – the tiny lifeless baby girl lying uncovered in a corner of the cool dirt floor, her mother and several attending women crying in despair. Quickly we picked up the baby, taking her to the warm truck and beginning basic resuscitation measures. We knew there was little we could do apart from a miracle.

As we worked over the baby, her grandfather, one of the very few Christ-followers in the area, took his stance in the middle of the village, loudly invoking the name of Jesus. And then, the miracle happened! The baby took one barely perceptible gasp, then another; her body began to warm up, and after a few very long minutes, she began to cry. Such music to our ears! Later, Barb and I had the privilege of giving this precious baby a name. We called her Lokumu (Glory) and praised God for the way He had demonstrated His power and opened the door for us to begin a community health and discipleship ministry in the area.

### **The Early Years**

Strangely, the story of Lokumu connected with the desire and longing I had felt from an early age to be used by God as a missionary nurse in some African country. I grew up on a farm near Vermilion, Alberta, the fourth of six children. Hard work, strong extended family bonds, and the importance of being a good neighbour and friend were all values my parents taught us and lived out. Sundays were special days for our family. It was the day we would attend the small community church

(called Windermere) in our neighbourhood, joined by four or five other families. Our church was led by a lay pastor who volunteered his services. Every week we would give the offering in its entirety to a cross-cultural worker either overseas or within Canada. Frequently these workers would join us on a Sunday when on home assignment or visit our home. I would sit enthralled, listen to their stories, and dream of one day joining them in their adventures.

One summer, a visiting pastor shared the story of *The Pilgrim's Progress* over several Sundays. As a four or five-year-old, my heart was so drawn to Christian and his journey in ways I could not explain. One night while lying in bed and talking to my older sister, I felt a strong sense of unease come over me with many questions about all I was hearing flooding my mind. I went to my mom's bedside, where she patiently answered my questions and explained in simple terms what it meant to invite Jesus to be part of my life. The memory is still as strong as the experience all those years ago. I had set my heart on the journey, and there was no turning back.

When I was in my teens, our church family began regularly attending the Alliance church in town after our country church closed. There my call continued to be nurtured as I prepared for nurses' training. This is not to say I did not try to dismiss or shake that sense of calling I felt on my life.

While in nurses training, and then the year following when I travelled to Newfoundland to work in a United Church hospital, my intimacy with God waned, as did my desire to follow Him wherever He might lead. At the time, I was in a serious relationship with a guy who respected my beliefs but did not entirely share them or my life goals. Everything in me longed to forget the calling I had sensed from the Lord and settle down in Newfoundland. But I had no peace in that decision. A year later, I reluctantly applied and was accepted at Canadian Bible College (CBC) to begin preparation for serving overseas.

Several significant events happened during my two years at CBC, changing my reluctance to a deep and joyful sense of surrender. During my first year, revival broke out on the campus. Classes were cancelled for several days while staff and students met together, worshipping the Lord, confessing areas the Spirit was spotlighting, and soaking in all He was showing us. I heard again the voice of God, which I had known so intimately and trusted so completely as a child. The conviction He was inviting me to serve Him overseas was stronger than ever. Still, I resisted the thought of leaving family and friends to work and live far from everything familiar. What if something happened to a family member and I was not there?

While I was in the midst of this struggle, I got news my father had been killed in a farm accident. I was unprepared for the massive wave of grief rolling over me or the profound impact his death would have on my whole family system. My desire was to quit college and help my mother and younger siblings on the farm, but Mom would not even entertain the thought. Both she and my father



Marion with her mother in later years.

Courtesy Marion Dicke.

had sensed and affirmed God's call on my life and encouraged me to pursue His leading. Somehow this helped me work through my grief as I returned to college.

Back again at CBC, I settled into my studies and my role as one of the resident assistants (RA) to the Dean of Women, Mrs. Rose. I had accepted the position of RA with little thought of what it might entail beyond helping me pay for some of my tuition fees. However, the mentoring and spiritual direction I received from Mrs. Rose,

one of the wisest and most discerning women I have ever met, was a big building block in my own spiritual and leadership development. Her way of seeing potential in my life and calling it out made a lasting impact.

The following steps of the journey seemed to happen quickly, graduation from CBC, appointment as an official overseas worker with The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), a program in Advanced Practical Obstetrics (midwifery) at the University of Alberta, French studies in France, and Tropical Medicine studies in Belgium.

## Language Study and Healing Ministry

At the age of twenty-six, I landed in Kinkonzi, a rural area of lower Congo (then Zaire), which was the location of a mission referral hospital for the area and a four-year program Bible school. I was assigned to full-time study of the Kikongo language as my primary focus. However, the hospital was short-staffed; the veteran midwife who was scheduled for teaching the nurse-midwives could not return from the United States, and I was thrust into her position with limited experience and little time for cultural orientation and adjustment. Trying to prepare the students for their state exam, teaching for the first time in French, and learning Kikongo in any remaining time I had seemed overwhelming.

I remember crying out to God over the year and writing dramatically in my journal, "OH GOD, if I survive this term. I promise I will never forget those who come behind me." It was a promise God would remind me of many times in the years to

"OH God, if I survive this term, I promise I will never forget those who come behind me."

follow! Member care (pastoral care of international workers) was not a common theme at this point, but God was allowing me even in my first term to see the need for greater resources, training, and support systems for workers.

As I began to be a little more comfortable with my role and had become involved in the Scripture Union Bible study movement with students, I was assigned to be in charge of a thirty-bed hospital in a place called Maduda where there was no doctor. All the things I had feared when I was wrestling through the call to overseas ministry as a nurse came to pass. Fears of inadequacy, of being called on to do things I was not trained for, and anxiety over the implications of making a wrong diagnosis all threatened to paralyze me.

Many nights I would be awakened by the sound of a truck dropping off a patient at the entrance of the mission station where I was living. Each situation was a different emergency—a man in respiratory distress because of a snake bite to the head, a woman about to deliver twin babies, a young man who had fallen from a palm tree while trying to harvest palm nuts, a baby severely dehydrated or anemic. It was with this backdrop I began to lean into the power of prayer and to see the healing power of Jesus flow through so many sick people in miraculous ways. Ever so gradually, my fears and self-doubt began to be replaced with God-confidence and trust.

During the year I lived in Maduda, I had the privilege of sharing a house with two very dedicated and encouraging high school teachers, Norma Hart and Gretha Stringer. I was also invited into the life of the student movement happening in the high school campus where they taught. A revival had broken out the year before my arrival and continued in full force while I was there. Although I had the privilege of teaching a Sunday morning class to several high school students, I was the one being disciplined. Seeing their deep love for God, evidenced by their practical help to those in need, and witnessing their zeal as I accompanied them on their outreach trips profoundly impacted me. Many of these students would go on to seminary and other places of higher learning, and eventually to ministries scattered around the globe where they continue to live out Kingdom values.

A year later, I was back in Kinkonzi and teaching in the nursing school again. So much had changed for me during my year away. I was developing a deep love for the Zairian culture and for the people who welcomed me into their lives. My aptitude in the Kikongo language was growing, and I had a new desire to see God work in the lives of student nurses as He had in the high school students. While I had never done much formal teaching before, I experienced so much joy in helping students expand their knowledge and develop their skills. During their years in training, many explored dimensions of faith during the Scripture Union Bible studies and worship times held regularly on the hospital campus. When they graduated, our teaching staff felt like proud parents about to send their children out into the larger world.

Over the years, the nursing school graduated many health workers who staffed medical facilities across the region and had a strong godly influence wherever they went. Qualified nursing professors and national doctors joined the missionary staff at the nursing school and hospital. The nursing school expanded to include other branches. The hospital continued to serve as a beacon of hope for so many who found both spiritual and physical healing

As much as I loved being part of our active hospital, I was also discovering how limited the access to health care was for many people in the surrounding areas. Often people would come into the hospital in the final stages of a disease that would have been completely treatable with earlier intervention. Sometimes the use of unmeasured doses of indigenous medicine resulted in a deadly reaction. Other times, faith in the fetishes many wore to ward off the evil spirits believed to be the cause of disease did not have the effect they had hoped for.

So, when I was asked to oversee a primary health care initiative another colleague had helped develop, I sensed this was a door the Lord was putting before me. A primary focus of the program was to train, resource, and supervise village health workers. Most of these were trusted men chosen by their village leaders. As my Congolese colleagues and I travelled out to the areas where these men lived and worked, I had the privilege of learning culture and growing in awareness of spiritual and physical needs. There was a deepening of trust, relationships, and opportunities to share God's love in ways institutional ministry did not permit. God was using this stage of the journey to prepare me for the next step.

### **Bateke Plateau**

At the time, in partnership with our mission leaders, the National Church began to share its vision to reach out to the Teke people group living in an area east of the capital city of Kinshasa. Pastor Niosi Seke and an international worker (IW) named Theo van Barneveld, two amazing men of God, were pioneering the work. Their travel to remote villages, partly by vehicle and partly on foot, allowed them to build relationships with village chiefs and residents. The Bateke people had long resisted any outside influence and had little contact with the Gospel. A strong tie to the spirit world, Animism, and witchcraft characterized their religious experiences. Schools, access to clean water, and health care resources of any kind were minimal.

Theo challenged me to consider the possibility of joining the team and reaching out to the Bateke women as a nurse-midwife. I learned a small but growing number of men had embraced the teaching of Jesus and were interested in seeing better health and education for their children. However, most of the women in the village did not have the time or inclination to listen to the discussions or attend church meetings. They were too busy working long hours in their fields, barely managing to feed and care for their families.

I thought and prayed over what Theo had shared. I did not consider myself to be a “pioneer,” nor did I gravitate toward the kind of travel and lifestyle work involved with the Bateke people. But yet, the familiar gentle voice of the Spirit was once again beckoning me to follow new paths. Colleagues at the hospital gave their blessing to another nurse, Barb Ihrke, and me to be part of this endeavour. We joined newly arrived workers, Stan and Connie Hotalen, in Kinshasa to learn the Lingala language and begin travelling and ministering with the team of Congolese pastors. A close friend, Anne Stephens, would become part of the team a few years later.

Working on the Bateke Plateau was indeed a daunting assignment. Most trips were characterized by long gruelling hours over challenging roads. Spiritual opposition and oppression were frequent. Our small band of pastors and missionaries faced many physical attacks resulting in chronic or life-threatening diseases. Several of our evangelists lost a child due to inadequate health care resources, and one of our evangelists was murdered by soldiers on his way home following a teaching expedition. It is hard to describe the depth of our grief and desolation when we discovered his body, abandoned in a ditch. How we had to lean into the character and purposes of God as we wrestled through the seemingly senseless loss of our beloved brother, who had been such a gifted and fearless evangelist. During this time, I began to wrestle through and formulate more intentionally my own theology of suffering.

While hardships abounded, the rewards and sense of fulfilment were equally as great. Our team of North American and Congolese pastors, teachers, and nurses became a close-knit community. Discipling new leaders and seeing God use them to bring healing and redemption to those caught in bondage filled us with such joy.

Starting a well-baby and pre-natal clinic in the area where baby Lokumu was miraculously brought back to life was another milestone. How rewarding it was to minister to the needs of moms who cared deeply for their children but often saw them die from preventable diseases. It was a sacred privilege listening to their hopes and dreams and seeing many open up to the love of Jesus. God was building His church, little by little, on the Bateke Plateau, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. This was a fact that we had to cling to as we were forced to leave the country a few years later due to rising civil unrest.

### **Canada: Missionary in Residence**

Back in Alberta, I was invited by Sherwood Park Alliance Church to join their staff for one year as the missionary in residence. One year turned into three years as I stayed on to become director of Women’s Ministry. The church was in an exciting stage of development as they explored and implemented the Meta Model of small groups. I was fortunate to serve with a great staff and head up a team of seven ministry leaders. I relished the opportunity to learn more about the

challenges and workings of one of the churches that had been part of my support system and ministry overseas.

### **Return to Bateke Plateau**

Life was good, and I was content, but my journey was about to take another turn. The DRC mission leadership had determined, in many respects, the church was firmly established in the Congo, and most IW's would not be returning to their former ministries. However, they wanted to send back six people, including a team of four, to work on the Bateke Plateau. I knew deep in my heart, my time with the Bateke people was not finished. So once again, it was back to DRC. During the next few years, political unrest increased. Finally, civil war broke out in the country, and as determined by our crisis contingency plans, we were forced to evacuate across the river to the Republic of Congo. There we were welcomed with open arms by our colleagues and put to work. One of my assignments was to teach a course on *Freedom in Christ* at the Bible school, which led to walking several students through the "Steps to Freedom."

A few months later, our team, accompanied by the Brazzaville team, made a sudden departure back to DRC when violence and political tensions boiled over in the city of Brazzaville. Back in DRC, a new government was in place, along with a group of very young armed soldiers patrolling the roads and streets. They had been recruited into service with little training or respect for the weapons they carried. This made road access to the villages on the Bateke Plateau very dangerous and difficult.

Something on the schedule for Anne Stephens and me was a long-anticipated retreat with the wives of the pastors and evangelists. The topic of our conference was *Spiritual Armour* from Ephesians 6. As our team assessed the risks and waited on God, we determined it would be safest to travel by motorized canoe to the retreat location. Travelling upriver, our canoe caught the attention of two armed soldiers on a large barge. Quickly the soldiers commandeered a small motorboat in the vicinity and headed our way. Despite our protests, they climbed into our canoe, which was already filled to capacity. They continued to shout at us, demanding to know what our mission was. How would this all end, we wondered? Finally, our fears began to subside as their demeanour softened, and we began to share with them the love of Jesus. An hour later, we had dropped them off at a village where they were posted, and we were back on our way to meet with the other women arriving by boat and land.

What a time of singing, laughing, crying, praying, and studying together we had over the next few days. How blessed Anne and I were to share this time with these courageous women who had given up the relative comfort of their lives to join their husbands in reaching the Bateke people for Christ. It would be our final time with this group.

## Mobile Member Care

As I returned to Canada in the late '90s, it became increasingly clear we would not be able to return to DRC. I was uncertain as to what the future would hold. During this time, I worked part-time on my master's degree through Canadian Theological College (now Ambrose Seminary) and signed up for a course on *Transitions* taught by Joan Carter. The whole concept of transitions was new, but William Bridges' explanation of the three stages (Endings, Neutral Zone, and New Beginnings) totally resonated with me. The course taught me a vocabulary for what I had been experiencing—lack of focus, chaos, confusion, discouragement, low energy—and essential tools and incentives for navigating through this phase of the journey.

I began to journal and review how the Lord had led me in the past. Each new role had built on the past one as God revealed new dreams and opportunities for each season. I realized just how much I enjoyed new challenges. My reflections revealed how deeply crisis situations in my own life and the lives of my colleagues had impacted me and how often in the past years I had found myself walking alongside my colleagues who had experienced tough times. I began to learn of a new ministry being formed to respond to the crisis needs of cross-cultural workers, likely to be located in West Africa. This ministry's rationale was to provide help and support on the field for workers who had experienced trauma. Too many workers had returned to their home countries to seek help and had not returned. Others were living under the impact of unresolved grief and trauma. How I resonated with the need for this ministry!

Dr. Karen Carr, a clinical psychologist with trauma experience, and Darlene Jerome, personnel director for the Cameroon Branch of Wycliffe Bible Translators/SIL with a graduate degree in Intercultural Training and Management, were pioneering the effort. They were taking some courses at Regent College in Vancouver, so we connected by phone.



Marion Dicke, Darlene Jerome, and Karen Carr.

Courtesy Marion Dicke.

Our two-hour call led to a face-to-face meeting and then enrolling in a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing training at the Justice Institute in BC, where Darlene and Karen had also been taking courses. The following year I joined them in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, to become part of the newly formed Mobile Member Care Team (MMCT).

A group of mission leaders from across West Africa, including my own regional developer, Ron Brown, had formed a liaison committee and were





Interpersonal Skills Workshop in Nigeria.

Courtesy Marion Dicke.

on the ground to welcome us, support us, and help discern the ministry's roll-out. They knew firsthand the difficulties facing so many cross-cultural workers and the lack of available resources on the continent.

We began by offering a workshop developed by Ken Williams entitled *Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills* in various countries around West Africa. Then we started to create and offer workshops to train mission leaders in crisis care. Team members with gifts in coming alongside others were

trained to debrief and care for their peers. We established an office in the capital in Abidjan, a city with a good airport and good accessibility to surrounding countries. From there, we could respond either directly or through those we trained to many different crisis situations.

The region of West Africa, stretching from Senegal to Nigeria, was fraught with trauma situations threatening workers' resilience. Civil unrest, erupting into violence, forced many international workers to evacuate to a neighbouring country. Our team was often called upon to debrief these workers and continually come alongside them as they faced the aftermath of trauma or the ongoing uncertainty of transition.

On many occasions, international workers became the target of armed robberies, physical assaults, or kidnappings. For example, one worker was taken hostage at gunpoint while eating in a local restaurant with her young daughter and her daughter's friend. She was menaced for several hours and then forced to lead the perpetrators to another missionary home, where they robbed the family. As a result, two of our team members travelled to the city where they lived to debrief the adults and children involved. Later, one of the couples received counselling from our staff to deal with some of the ongoing symptoms of trauma.

In other instances, there was not one specific incident precipitating the need for a worker to look for additional resources or help. Rather it might be the cumulative effect of living with high levels of stress over a long period of time. Or it might be the aftermath of crisis leading to burnout or depression prompting the worker to seek counselling with MMCT.

Just as we began to gain traction in our ministry, violent civil war erupted in our own country of Cote d'Ivoire. Suddenly we found ourselves holed up in the SIL guesthouse in the city of Bouake, doing a workshop while there. Unfortunately, our building was right in the middle of the crossfire between government and rebel

forces. We hunkered down on the second floor for seven days while the sound of heavy artillery and missiles whistled overhead. God miraculously protected us during those intense days, providing food and water as we were unable to leave the building complex. Finally, on the eighth day, French troops secured the city and arranged for us to drive our vehicles out to safety. The relief we felt soon gave way to realizing we would be forced to evacuate from the country.

With input and prayers from our regional board and other advisors, we moved next door to the country of Ghana to set up a new office. Again, we were plunged into the uncomfortable neutral zone of transition. Our team had increased to four with the arrival of an office administrator, Janna Greenfield, but was now back to the original three as we waited for new team members to join us. This time of reduced travel was spent developing a more intentional community as a team, revising some of our workshop material, and exploring new horizons. We



Marion encouraging woman in workshop in Ghana. Courtesy Marion Dicke.



MMCT East Africa and West Africa team. The Nigerian woman is Dr. Patience Ahmed. Courtesy Marion Dicke.

became increasingly aware of the strength and size of the indigenous African mission force, particularly in the nearby country of Nigeria. We discovered an estimated 5,000 African missionaries were working across West Africa. As we developed relationships with indigenous leaders, we also learned of the complex member care needs facing their workers and their desire to partner with us in developing and implementing more resources. A veteran Nigerian worker, Patience Ahmed, with training in counselling, joined our team for a few years and contributed so much in terms of experience and cultural awareness.

The resident staff of MMCT for West Africa never grew larger than six people at one time, but the enlarged team of trained mission leaders and peer responders spread across our region numbered well over three hundred. From the beginning, the vision of the international board had been to go beyond West Africa. Workshops expanded into other parts of Africa, and eventually, a team was

formed in East Africa. God had taken our small and often faltering offering and multiplied it in ways only He could do.

## **Retirement**

After fifteen years with MMCT, I sensed the Lord calling me to a new leg of the journey back home in Canada. I was nearing the official retirement age and had many questions about what the next season of life would hold. Colleagues who had gone before me said this would be the most challenging transition yet. How much, I wondered, was my identity wrapped up with the roles and titles I had assumed over many years of service? As in previous transitions, I realized I needed a fresh calling for the next season. I was privileged to attend two Holy Spirit encounters being offered by the Western Canadian District and sensed God was enlarging my capacity for Him. One day, in particular, I remember having set aside as a retreat day. The day ended with a fresh sense of the Spirit's presence and anointing as I released all my dreams and future plans to His care and direction.

Shortly afterwards I was asked by the Africa regional developers, Richard and Merinda Enns, to work with them in a member care role for a couple of years from my Canadian base. My role was extended for a third year working with the new directors of the Alliance Global Member Care. During this same time frame, I also accepted a part-time interim position for a year and a half as pastor of Adult Discipleship Ministries in my home church, Parkview Alliance, in Vermilion, Alberta. The church was going through a transition, and I felt privileged to join the staff and give back to a church that had supported, prayed for and encouraged me over so many years.

I still felt that God had something new for me. For many years I had been interested in spiritual direction. So many times, I had said or heard one of my colleagues say, 'I wish I knew what God is up to!' In navigating my own transitions or walking alongside others in grief or crisis, I had become more aware of how hard it can be to discern the voice of the Spirit or to sense His presence during those seasons.

Another realization was how easy it was to slip into spiritual complacency or neglect spiritual disciplines when life or ministry became routine or hectic. I was grateful for the many times God had used spiritual companions at crucial junctions in my own life, and I longed to be more equipped to be a similar soul companion for others. So it was exciting when the way opened up for me to take the two-year Soul Formation program followed by the additional year of Spiritual Direction out of Portland, Oregon. Those years provided a fertile and sacred place to learn and grow in a supportive and like-minded community. At the conclusion of those years, I began to offer spiritual direction to leaders in ministry, and in particular international workers.

After spending many years living overseas and travelling to many places

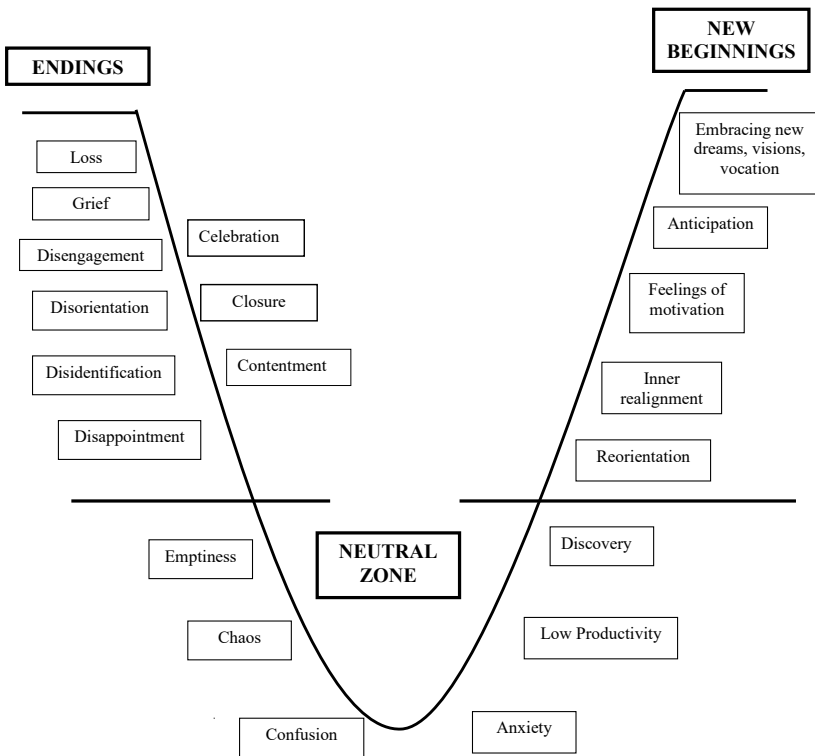
around the globe, I have come back full circle to the town of Vermilion, where I was born. From here, I connect virtually via ZOOM with ministry leaders, many of whom are cross-cultural workers, and offer debriefing and spiritual direction. I also do some training for mission organizations with Outreach Canada in the area of debriefing. As I continue on the path set out for me, I am filled with gratitude—to the One who has written His word on my heart from an early age, toward my whole extended family who has loved and supported me, to the churches who prayed for me and gave financially, and to all the leaders, colleagues, and friends who have been my companions on the journey.

## Resources

### [The Mobile Member Care Team Toolbox](#)

#### TRANSITION CURVE

Marion Dicke, revised version 2016  
adapted from *Transitions* by Bridges  
and *The Change Cycle* by Brock and Salerno



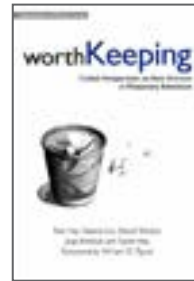
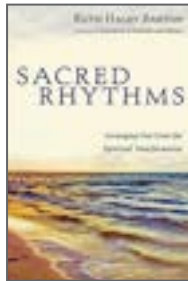
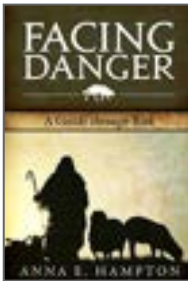
## Videos of Marion Dicke:

[Developing a Theology of Suffering](#)

[What would I say to a team leader beginning to lead?](#)

[Things to think about as a single in missions](#)

## Books:

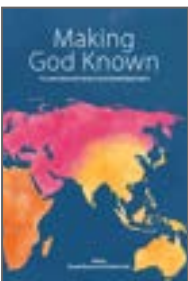


## More Stories of Those Who Went



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

Chapter 24 tells the story of Joan Carter and her journey into Member Care.



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

Judith Milne Wiebe has written Chapter 3, Caring for International Workers.

## Chapter 2

### **Wrecked for the Ordinary: Perry and Lynda Friesen**

by Perry and Lynda Friesen

A changed life greatly encouraged us in our second year of language study. It is the story of an elderly lady named Elena Feodorevna, the mother of a young couple in our home group. Our group was meeting at Elena's home, and one day Perry forgot his English/Russian New Testament at their apartment. Some weeks later, Elena had a great desire to share about something she had experienced. She asked if we remembered the day Perry forgot his Bible at her house. We did. Then she went on to tell how this particular version was interesting to her, especially the *Four Spiritual Laws* at the back of the Bible.

Coming across the prayer for salvation, she felt as if it exactly expressed her heart's desire. Elena prayed the prayer for salvation, and in the same moment, she accepted the Lord as her Saviour. She thanked Perry for forgetting his Bible! Who could imagine forgetting a Bible could have such a redemptive impact? We did not play a vital role in bringing Elena to Christ. It was God doing the work. He was working through His powerful Word to bring people to Himself. We can testify to the truth of Isaiah 55:11, "... so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

### **The Call to Missions**

**Lynda:**

As a young girl, I never thought I would become a missionary. My dream was to be a teacher, but God led me to get a Bachelor of Religious Education from Canadian Bible College in Regina, Saskatchewan. After my second year, I had an opportunity to go to the Philippines for six weeks with the Alliance Youth Corps. It was a fantastic summer of seeing missionaries in action, having a chance to participate in missions myself by sharing my testimony, and talking about Jesus with other young people. It was truly a life-changing experience! After this experience, God spoke very clearly to me through Isaiah 6. I had read this passage

many times before, but this time, the words came alive, and I heard the Holy Spirit asking ME, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” I responded in the affirmative, “Here am I, Lord. Send me. (v. 8)”

**Perry:**

I had no plans to ever become a missionary. I was already serving God as a pastor in Calgary when Lynda and I were married in October 1991.

Less than a year after we were married, God gave us an exciting opportunity to go on a short-term mission trip to Krasnodar, Russia. It changed our lives. In May 1992, the doors had just opened to sharing the Gospel in Russia. We passed out Bibles to school kids and had the opportunity to share the Gospel with Communists who had never heard it before. Explaining how to have a relationship with God, not knowing if we would ever see these people again, was spiritually exhilarating. We saw more people make commitments to Christ in those two weeks than we did in our entire lives. In short, we got “wrecked for the ordinary.”

We were ready to go back to Russia immediately, but The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) was not in Russia in 1992. Eventually, the C&MA set up partnerships in three Russian cities, one being Krasnodar. When Lynda and I heard that the C&MA was going to the same city where we had been, it seemed like everything was falling into place. We met with Wally Albrecht, Vice President of Global Ministries for the C&MA in Canada; he, too, was excited about new personnel to send to Russia. We were trained, had done our home service, and I was ready to go for one or two years. Then, Wally said, “Well, the C&MA doesn’t really do short-term missions.” I said, “What do you call long-term?” He replied, “Well, we’re looking for a minimum commitment of ten years.” What employer asks for a ten-year commitment? I walked away from the meeting like the rich man who walked away from Jesus, not able to pay the price.

Some weeks later, I had a life-changing encounter with God. I was praying for His direction, and He spoke to me in the still small voice, “Perry, what is it that you really want to do?” I said, “God, I want to make a big impact for your Kingdom.” And God said, “That’s a good thing, Perry. And just what are you willing to give up?” Those words cut me like a knife. I realized I was looking to make a significant impact without making much of a sacrifice. I wanted three dollars worth of missions. And God said, “Perry, it doesn’t work that way. Unless a grain of wheat dies, it can’t bear much fruit (see John 12:24). So come back when you’re ready to give more.” I thought about the words of C.T. Studd, who said, “If Jesus Christ is God’s Son, and died for me, then no sacrifice is too great for me to make for Him.”

I needed some mission courses at Canadian Theological Seminary (CTS), and we had to leave our native country of Canada and our family. But none of that was nearly as difficult as getting my will on the altar, agreeing to follow God wherever and however He would lead me. Jesus is worth giving up everything for, so those from every tribe, language, people, and nation will become worshippers of Him.

But none of that was nearly as difficult as getting my will on the altar, agreeing to follow God wherever and however He would lead me.

## **Language Study and Culture Shock**

Russian is a complex language to learn well. There were many days we thought we would never learn it. The one hour each way on public transit to language school was exhausting. The oral teaching style was frustrating. We studied Russian full-time at an agricultural institute in Krasnodar for two years.

When other ex-pats were actively doing ministry through translators, we were covetous. They were doing ministry while we were just studying the language. But the approach of the C&MA to learn the heart language of the people God called us to was wise; “wisdom is proved right by all her children” (Luke 7:35). While it was difficult initially, it eliminated the need for interpreters for the rest of our years in ministry. Learning the language is an essential first step to ministry and friendships in a foreign culture.

One of the first things needed in our new home was a way to wash clothes. So we went shopping for a washing machine; there was only one small import model left in the whole city of a million people. Once we decided to make the purchase, we went with our friends who had a car, planning to take it home by tying it to the roof. We had one million and five hundred thousand rubles in a huge bag for payment, consisting of three thousand bills of five hundred ruble notes. We could not believe it when the salesman said, “We can’t sell it to you; it doesn’t have a technical passport (instruction manual).” We told him we were willing to buy it without one. He was adamant that he couldn’t sell it to us. That was a moment of culture shock. A week later, we went back and bought the same machine for the same price, without a technical passport. It reminded us that the rules of commerce are different in every country.

Finding a competent plumber to hook up our washing machine was not easy; there was no Internet or yellow pages. Finally, we met a plumber by chance and agreed on the price. After hours of measuring, cutting our pipes, him leaving to



drink vodka and cut new pipes, and him sawing off a small piece of our bathtub to make everything fit, we finally got it installed!

### **Lynda: Having a Baby in Russia**

Our first daughter, Sarah, was born in Moscow. Giving birth in a Russian hospital was a challenging experience. I discovered, when a woman is in labour, she can only remember her native language. Fortunately, we had a translator present, because my Russian flew out of my head with every contraction, and we did not know enough medical terms to communicate well. When we returned to Krasnodar, we proudly showed Sarah off to our Russian friends at church. We were confused about why they looked shocked to see us at church until we found out that a new mother and her baby are supposed to stay at home in Russia and not leave the house for at least a month!

## **Krasnodar: September 20, 1994 - June 1998**

### **Church Planting in Krasnodar**

After two years of language school, we were eager to begin ministry. We were partnered with two church planting couples in our region of the city, Misha and Nataha Tkachenko and Kostya and Albina Solovyev. They each had different strengths, but both began by trying to grow small groups in their homes.

One of the people who came to know Christ in those years was Luba Vinnikov. She was a Jehovah's Witness, her mother-in-law was an atheist, and her husband's grandmother was Orthodox. The spiritual conversations we had about religion were complicated since our level of Russian was basic. We tried to give Luba books explaining the heretical nature of her faith, but this only pushed her further away. In the end, we prayed for God to speak to her, and when God spoke, Luba responded. She was baptized and, along with her daughter, became a true follower of Christ.



Krasnodar church plant. Courtesy Perry Friesen.

Marina was a teenager who lived near us in our church-planting days in Krasnodar. At the time, her parents had forbidden her to get involved in our ministry. Years later, we helped send her to a Christian camp. While there, she got saved, became a counsellor at camp in 2001, and got baptized the following year. It



Baptism in Kuban River. Courtesy Perry Friesen.

reminds us, one plants, the other waters, but God causes the growth!

Baptism services were held in the Kuban River. It was inspiring to see the commitment of believers getting baptized publicly while there was snow on the ground.

During two years of church planting, we only saw a handful of believers baptized. Since we had seen literally hundreds of people come to Christ in a couple of weeks in 1992, a tiny fellowship no bigger than a home group of eight or ten believers after two years did not seem like very much. Before we left, our home group wanted to have tea and give us a gift. One man named Mikaelovich spoke. He was a burly old fellow, a sergeant in the army, and a former Communist. He and his wife had both repented publicly and been baptized. He said, “Thanks for coming to Russia because if you hadn’t come, we wouldn’t be here.” This was enough encouragement to make up for two more years of discouraging, challenging ministries. It was worth it. Because this is why we went to Russia, and this is why Jesus went to the cross; God’s divine plan.

If we had not gone, Mikaelovich and others in our church plant probably would not have come to know Christ. But using the logic of Romans 10, if C&MA churches had not sent us, we would not have been able to go or minister in Russia. True partnership.

### **Building of Lampados Bible College (Krasnodar Evangelical Christian University)**

Training believers to become theologically competent leaders is an essential component of strengthening the National Church. Lampados Bible College started in two homes in Adegei territory, literally on “the other side of the tracks.” Multiple students shared dorm rooms. Power, water, and heat often did not work, but there was a hunger to grow in Christ in those days.

The C&MA in the United States and Canada made a significant investment to help build a Bible school in Russia. Of course, obtaining the proper permits for building and starting a college was not easy, with a city council holding the perspective that anything outside of Orthodoxy was heretical. It took years, but eventually, the doors were opened to students at a new campus. Genna Pchenishny, the college rector, received help with theological training in the USA and led the college’s transformation to become Krasnodar Evangelical Christian University.

### **Maikop: July 1999-June 2003**

#### **Perry: Lampados Bible Training Centre**

Our second term of service was based in Maikop, the capital of Adegei, an autonomous territory within Russia for a predominantly Muslim people group. One of the Bible Training Centre’s goals in Maikop was to provide theological education for laypeople who could not study as full-time students at Lampados Bible College. We trained over one hundred volunteer youth leaders who were a part of the Evangelical Christian Missionary Union. Along with Edik Rokach and Alexei Dashko, we developed multi-level training seminars and resources for youth leaders. We published a *Holiday Idea Book* for youth leaders, which sold out and was reprinted at least three times in two different countries. Concerts of prayer were organized by us, and we published materials on how to lead a concert of prayer.

I will never forget one evangelistic outreach we held on a local school campus near Hope Church, the church we were connected to. The last activity of the outreach was a race to the church, and the winners got prizes. It would have been an amazing picture to capture as a couple hundred young people raced to church. Unfortunately, following close behind was the vice principal of the school. She threatened many of the students from her school with expulsion if they did not leave. When youth leaders confronted her on the private property of the church, she said, “I’d rather that my kids were drug addicts than to attend your church.” Her sentiment highlights the challenging environment of growing an evangelical church in the area.



Kids at outreach in Maikop. Courtesy Perry Friesen.

One youth who came to Christ in those days was Vitya Trushov. He became an active part of the youth group and a worship leader. Years later, Vitya admitted that he first attended the youth group at Hope Church because he was so hungry. His family literally had no food, so he attended youth fellowship nights because they served snacks. If we had known how desperate the poverty really was, we would have fed many more people.

Lynda was a key organizer of the first summer day camp for children of Hope Church; sixty children attended, and four repented and came to Christ. Lynda also led an Alpha group for ladies. One came to Christ on the first night, and almost all who attended more than once repented.



Lynda with the Alpha group ladies.  
Courtesy Lynda Friesen.

Lynda was one of the first Canadian C&MA teachers to trial run homeschooling. She was an excellent teacher, and homeschooling is now a viable option for Canadian C&MA mission workers.

## **St. Petersburg: August 2004-February 2008; July 2009-June 2011**

### **Going to the Urban Centres**

Our third and fourth terms of ministry in Russia were based in St. Petersburg. Comparatively, there are far fewer evangelical churches in the large urban centres like Moscow and St. Petersburg than in some of the smaller cities in southwest Russia. This need moved our mission strategy to the large urban areas. Dima and Valya Frolov were the National Church planters we helped.

Church planting would be challenging enough in my home country using my native language. But to start a church in a city of five million people, with a core of two mission couples and a National Church pastor, was overwhelming. There are so many people, and they are all so busy. Since no one can greet everybody, most do not greet anyone. We believe the local church is the hope of the world, and relational evangelism is still the key to seeing people come to Christ. It is difficult to build those relationships in large cities, where relational walls are high.



Church plant in St. Petersburg. Courtesy Perry Friesen.



Perry baptizes happy believer in St. Petersburg.

Courtesy Perry Friesen.

Russia had some of the highest abortion rates in the world. In 2004 there were 1,500,000 children born and 1,800,000 abortions. One out of four Russians lived below the poverty line, and substance abuse was prevalent. More than three out of four teenagers between fourteen and nineteen use alcohol regularly. About half of adult women and two-thirds of the men smoke. The devil comes to steal, kill, and destroy, but Jesus came so we might have abundant life (see John 10:10).

When doing ministry in a large megacity, it is essential to keep the faith perspective of Caleb and Joshua when they entered the Promised Land. Yes, the cities are big and fortified, but our God is bigger and stronger. Yes, large enemies live there, but we are God's children. So problems became opportunities to see God at work.

We may have experienced the all-time worst response to a showing of the *JESUS* film. Two of our missionary colleagues, Ron and Wilma Priest, lived in another large city in Russia and had a pretty good response to showing it. Our thought was, *Well, if it works there, it should work in St. Petersburg.* So we asked the Priests details, like how they advertised, when they showed it, etc. If they put up 2,000 black and white posters, we would put up 10,000 colour posters. The goal was greatness. We showed the *JESUS* film twice on two different weekends and *The Passion of the Christ* three times during Passion week. In total, we only had ten visitors! But of those ten who came, three came to Christ, which is ultimately what matters.

**Lynda:**

Alyona lived in the same apartment building where Perry and I lived for four years in St. Petersburg. One day she and her boyfriend, Zhenya, found a crumpled-up piece of paper in the elevator. They picked it up and discovered it was an invitation to view *The Passion of the Christ*. Alyona had heard of this film and really wanted to see it. Zhenya agreed, and they came to the film sponsored by our church. They were deeply moved by it, and shortly after, they both gave their lives to Christ. It was a fulfillment of God's promise to Israel in Joshua 1:3, "I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses."

It was so much fun discipling Alyona. Everything about the Bible and Christianity was so new and interesting to her. For example, when we first discussed the concept of tithing, Alyona was shocked.

“You don’t really expect me to believe that God wants me to live on only 90% of my income and give 10% to the church, do you? That doesn’t make sense. I can barely live on what I make now.”

I agreed with her; by human logic, it does not make sense, but in God’s economy, not only does it make sense, it works. So, with some reluctance, she agreed to try it. Her hand was shaking when she gave her first tithe. The following Sunday, Alyona got up in church and testified that the day after she gave her money, she had received a bonus from her boss that exceeded her tithe! God is so faithful. After her experience, Alyona was definitely convinced she needed to tithe. She inspired many of our other new believers to tithe, and they started giving testimonies of how God had blessed them.

Although Alyona saw many answers to prayer, she went through some challenging trials. She and Zhenya got engaged, and the wedding was scheduled for May 2006. Only a month before the wedding, Zhenya died of a heroin overdose.

It was terrible since Zhenya was a prospective leader in our church plant, and we thought he had overcome his addiction. As you can imagine, Alyona was devastated. I was apprehensive she would turn her back on God

*She inspired many of our other new believers to tithe, and they started giving testimonies of how God had blessed them.*

and walk away from the church. But, praise God, she leaned in closer to the Lord and experienced the incredible comfort of the Holy Spirit. Then, only a few short months later, her alcoholic father committed suicide. It was another devastating blow for Alyona. Again, the church family rallied around her, prayed for her, and supported her the best we could. God proved Himself faithful, and Alyona’s faith grew even stronger and deeper. She shared her testimony in church shortly before we came back to Canada on home assignment. It was powerful; God refined her through suffering. She said, “God isn’t a pill we take that erases all our problems. But He is there to comfort us when we go through hard times.”

### **Train Ride to the Black Sea**

In June 2006, I had a wonderful opportunity to travel with Alyona and four teenagers to a church camp at the Black Sea. It was a very long train ride, forty-three hours one way! Although it felt very long and difficult at times, it was also a great



Lynda, Alyona, and teens at the church camp.  
Courtesy Lynda Friesen.

chance to get to know these young women and have many interesting spiritual discussions with them.

Two of the young women were not believers, but as they listened to the Bible being explained and heard the message of salvation, I could tell the Holy Spirit was working to soften their hearts. It was my privilege to lead both of them to Jesus. I remember the incredible feeling of joy at seeing them give their lives to Christ. I texted Perry, “Wonderful news. Both Tonya and

Katya repented yesterday! I am walking on air. And crying tears of joy! I miss you and the girls, but this makes it all worthwhile.” I felt so thankful for every prayer partner who prayed for me and for the salvation of these young women.

### **Working with Central Asians**

During our last term in Russia, we developed a growing vision for reaching the poor, oppressed, and foreigners. Many foreign immigrants from Central Asian countries live and work in Russia; most are nominal Muslims. They come to the big cities of Russia for work. Reaching these unreached people groups in their own countries is very difficult, as they represent some of the most closed countries to the Gospel. But the door to reach them in Russia is wide open. We were privileged to work alongside Babur and Dildora, who were persecuted in Uzbekistan, but dedicated to reaching their own countrymen and women in Russia.

### **Looking Back**

Looking back after the many years since we left Russia, we can see the forest, not just the trees. When we first arrived in Russia, there were many preaching points, but only one church in the Russian C&MA had its own building. We always knew where the annual national assembly would be held. By the time we left Russia eighteen years later, many churches had their own building. They acquired a summer camp on the Black Sea. A Bible college had become a Christian university; it had its own campus with a library and dorm rooms. The National Church had grown to about fifty churches and had expanded from the more agricultural south to urban areas in the north.





The Friesen family, 2020.  
Courtesy Lynda Friesen.

Over our years in Russia, it became more and more challenging to get visas. When we first arrived, we were on year-long visas as mission workers. Eighteen years later, we could only get three-month cultural visas. Once, we forgot to get an exit visa for our youngest daughter. We were almost turned back at the airport, but God was gracious, and miraculously we

were allowed to leave Russia without an exit visa or even paying a fine. We had our passports stolen one time, but God provided a way to travel without them until we could get them replaced.

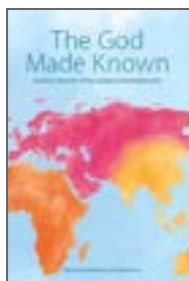
We saw the responsiveness to the Gospel diminish over the years, inversely proportional to the economy. As Russia developed financially, responsiveness to the Gospel waned. Former Canadian C&MA President Arnold Cook used to say, “the good times have never been a friend of the church.” So maybe a crisis is good. The Russians have a saying, “The farmer doesn’t cross himself (repent) until the lightning strikes.” May God grant a new revival.

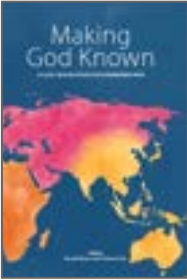
God’s story continues in Russia. It is not about us, but of Russians coming to Christ and becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus. There was no greater joy in our years in Russia than to see men and women, boys and girls, repent and get baptized. Churches were planted, grew, and multiplied. Someday we would love to go back and be reminded of all God did in us and through us in those years. It would be a great joy to know the believers and churches have stayed faithful to Christ. We gave some of the best years of our lives there and have no regrets; we count it a privilege to have served with the C&MA.

## More Stories of Those Who Went

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

In Chapter 28, Terry Young has written about “A Loving and Sending Family of Faith.”





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

Doug Gerrard, in Chapter 5, explains about “Supporting the Cause Through the Global Advance Fund.”



***On Mission: Stories of Those Who Went, Volume 2*** compiled by Ronald Brown

In Chapter 12, you can read about the “unwavering faith” of Robert, Minnie, and Margaret Jaffray.

## Chapter 3

### **Make God Famous: Michel and Denise Dubé**

by Michel and Denise Dubé

Casting out demons, healing the sick, and healing deep psychological wounds are biblical events we saw happen in our ministry. God took two very ordinary people with very ordinary stories and very ordinary gifts and worked through us for His glory and purpose.

Charlie was a stranger to us but the brother of a new friend. Our little Bible study made up of pre-believers had been praying for healing for him for a few weeks. Michel was finally able to visit our friend John and his brother Charlie at home to pray for him. A month after a tooth extraction had gone bad, Charlie was close to death from infection; the side of his face was so swollen his eye was protruding. The entire family was present as Michel prayed. They were from another religion and understood Michel prayed in the name of Jesus. Desperate to see their brother healed, they agreed to allow his prayers. Michel prayed a short prayer of healing and left.

The next day, Michel received a call from John who excitedly exclaimed that Charlie was being healed in front of them after a month of pain and agony. John shouted into the phone, telling us pus was spewing from Charlie's eye socket. We love how God left no room for speculation about the source of healing! Immediately, Charlie was significantly better; within a week, he was mostly healed. The result of this healing was that almost all the family members chose Christ; through them, many neighbours also heard the Gospel.

### **The Early Years**

#### **Denise:**

I was born in Scarborough, Ontario, to Bill and Sue Spires in June 1967. My mom had newly returned to faith, and my dad was an unbeliever. After a couple of moves, we landed in Shelburne, Ontario, where I spent most of my life until graduating high school.

I attended a Nazarene Bible camp when I was eight, and one night around a

campfire, I chose to follow Christ. This is a moment I clearly remember, and it has governed me through my life.

When I was fourteen, I decided I was old enough to choose my spiritual direction and informed my mom I wanted control over whether or not I went to church. In her infinite wisdom, my mom gave me a firm NO. So I appealed to my dad, who never went to church, and to my surprise, he backed up my mom. I mention this because as I look back on my life and all my poor decisions, I feel this moment was integral to my life's path. I'm not sure I would have continued to follow Christ had I been allowed the freedom to not attend church; I am thankful my parents did not give in to my will.

I continued on with life, living as most teenagers do; I was neither rebellious nor sincere in my faith. For some odd reason, I chose to go to Bible college for "one year." God got hold of me during the year, and I heard Him calling me into full-time ministry. I had no idea what this would look like, although I assumed maybe as a pastor's wife.

A fair amount of time was spent praying, asking God what it meant for me to be in full-time ministry and I heard nothing for over a year. I was still at Canadian Bible College (CBC) in Regina, Saskatchewan, and we had a speaker one week who spoke on confession. He mentioned unconfessed sin can prevent us from hearing God's will in our lives. I spent the week confessing everything I could think of and asking God to reveal sins I could not remember. After a week of soul-searching confession, I felt free and light. Very shortly after, God revealed to me His plan for my life.

I was sitting in my chair at the beginning of our weekly mission's service; a song was playing about the harvest being ripe and the need for workers. I was just sitting there when I heard, "What is keeping you in Canada?" I seriously thought someone was talking to me and looked around. It became obvious it was God, and I responded there was nothing holding me to Canada. I knew then missions was my path, and I began to prepare. My major switched from music to biblical studies, and I informed The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) of my intentions.

After graduating from CBC, I moved back to Ontario to start my home service in Kingston, Ontario. I was seriously angry with God for allowing me to graduate without a husband or even the prospect of one. How He could not provide a man dedicated to being a missionary while I was at *Bible college* was beyond me. Where else would I find a husband, for goodness' sake? Oh, how God must have been laughing at me in my anger! On my first Sunday at Kingston Alliance Church, I met the very cute, very shy Michel Dubé. He was not at all what I would have thought was the "right" guy for me. Michel had only been a Christian for

two weeks when we met. He was not headed for the mission field. He had ZERO theological training (necessary when one wanted to be a missionary with the C&MA), and he was in the military. But in the end, God knew best and provided me with precisely the right man to live life with.

**Michel:**

I was born in Trenton, Ontario, in 1971 to Yvan Dubé and Elizabeth Bell-Dubé. My father served in the Canadian Armed Forces throughout my life.

Life for a military family in those days was very transient. We moved every one, two, and even three years, depending on the circumstances. In a way, God was preparing me for a life overseas. My brother Stéphan and I moved with my parents from one end of our beautiful country to the other. I had attended eleven schools by the time I reached my nineteenth birthday. My mother was instrumental in helping me with this way of life. I enjoyed going to new places and making new friends. Yet, it was not always easy for my brother and me, and there were some very dark periods in my life.

My mother was of the Anglican faith, and my father was Catholic. Neither practiced their faith, but both had high regard for God. My father was an amazing supporter, sometimes having to take on another part-time job to make ends meet. My mother was my protector; she was also responsible for exposing me to the wonders of creation, which opened my eyes to God.



Michel and his mother, 2016.  
Courtesy Michel Dubé.

My thoughts and mood became dark as I entered my mid to late teens. My father was granted a special posting to S.H.A.P.E., Belgium, NATO's headquarters, in my seventeenth year. This move kept my head above the dark emotional waters of my soul as I fell in love with Europe.

After finishing my grade twelve at the American school, I moved to the Canadian military base in Baden, Germany, to do my grade thirteen. I was billeted to a Canadian family for the year. School went very poorly for many reasons, and when the Canadian military recruiters came by, I signed up

as an easy way out.

After basic training in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, I was posted to Kingston, Ontario, to begin my electronics course. It was here where I became increasingly lost as I fully indulged in a sinful life. I was seeking answers for a soul while it was being ripped apart. The darkness grew louder, and my thoughts began to fixate on ending my life.

One day, I overheard a guy at another table who worked with kids (Awana). I approached him after supper and asked him if I could volunteer. He said, "Sure, but you have to come to church first." I thought this was rather strange. He invited me Sunday morning, but I refused to go. He bugged me in the afternoon to go, and after I conceded, we left for the Kingston Alliance Church in a blizzard. It was Missionary Week, and I listened to Maureen Roarke talk about her crazy missionary life in the jungles of Indonesia. It amazed me she and her husband Mike were so dedicated to missionary work amid so many dangers. I was intrigued. So, I went back the Monday night.

Maureen shared her story before knowing Jesus, and it was as if she was speaking to me personally. She used to be in the same dark place I was in now. So, I decided to go Tuesday night. She wrapped up her missionary week, and everyone went into the foyer. I remained in the sanctuary, confused about the whole matter. A kind man named Warren Fallis came back in and silently sat down beside me. He broke the silence by asking how I was doing and then went for the jugular. "Do you want to accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour?" I closed my eyes, my head was swimming, and my heart was aching. Not fully understanding all it meant, I answered yes and prayed with him. I went home ecstatic.

Meanwhile, four hours away at the Shelburne Alliance Church, my future wife listened to Mike Roarke, Maureen's husband. Two weeks after my decision to follow Jesus, I met Denise, and we developed a friendship. I started Bible studies, but I would soon stop going to church. Warren and Denise would call the barracks, and I began to refuse their calls. They did it so much it was driving me crazy. I had to find a way to escape these Christian people. God provided a way. I accepted a three-month posting in the most northerly inhabited place on the planet, Alert, N.W.T. (now Nunavut).

Alert is a land of rocks. I was alone here, very isolated. There was no one to talk to, really. I decided one day to go down to the bay and touch the Arctic water. While there, I was staring at a stationary iceberg in the bay. It looked beautiful to me. Suddenly but slowly, the iceberg turned over, and I beheld the wonder of God. It was magical, and it was meant for only me. It was here I realized my error. After three months, I returned to Kingston and recommitted my life. God saw to it I left the military. My Lord clearly and powerfully called me to serve Him overseas. I said yes without reservation, and I applied to Canadian Bible College.

## **Our Story Together**

We married in 1993 and moved to Regina to allow Michel to finish his schooling. Soon our family grew to five. We were blessed with three beautiful children, Gabriel, Alexandre, and Marika. We will not say much about it, but they have enriched and blessed us in our lives and ministry. We are so thankful to God for them.

## **Québec**

As Michel was finishing seminary, we were seeking God's direction for our field of ministry. We knew He wanted us in missions; we just did not know where. During the last couple of months of seminary, several people spoke to us about going to Québec because of Michel's family ties there. The family dynamics had him determined to never live in Québec. God had other ideas, though! Soon, we were on our way to Rimouski, Québec, as missionary apprentices. The year was 1998.

## **Language Study**

When our apprenticeship was completed in 2001, we relocated to Laval for formal language study and then we were to start a church plant in the city. In addition to church planting, we were involved in our French Alliance church, and Michel served as the pastor of the Montreal Filipino Church for four years. This pastoral role was quite an experience, and we loved it. Where else could a young pastor have such unique experiences, such as eating balut and baptizing someone in her bathtub with the whole church watching? It was excellent cultural preparation for when we moved to Guinea.

We quickly grew to love both the Québécois people and culture. It was a joy to connect with our neighbours over corn roasts, Alpha groups in our home, and other gatherings with neighbours. This attachment made it difficult to move when Québec closed as a field, and it was time for us to leave. We left in 2006 for home assignment, not knowing where we would go next.

## **Guinea**

When it was time for us to leave Québec and choose our next steps, we prayed, fasted, and agonized over where to go next. We began to focus our attention on the French-speaking world. We were thinking Niger since there was a good team on the ground already.

UNTIL GOD....

Dan and Melodie Ibsen asked to connect with us in Calgary, and in the ten

minutes we had together, they put a 'bug in our ear' about Guinea ("Where?" we asked). We then began to pray about whether God wanted us in Niger or Guinea and were getting nowhere fast. The funny part about our journey is God made it clear to each of us individually where He wanted us to go, but neither of us said anything because we did not want to influence the other! It was only when we sat in Ron Brown's office and heard him tell us his opinion that we realized the path to take. The path was Guinea.

We took a trip to Guinea in early 2007 to check it out. Interestingly, we went during the worst riots Guinea had seen, which is saying something. The first night, we could not sleep for a long time because of all the gunshots and the sound of bullets hitting the tin roof. We really wondered if we had misheard God. In the morning, we woke up, and nothing had changed, the rioting was still going on, but we both had peace; Guinea was indeed the place for us. We returned to Canada and began to prepare for our move in August 2007.

A real advantage for us was being able to speak French fluently. It certainly made it easier to adapt to life in Guinea. We soon began Susu language study and managed to cram two years of language studies into three years. Constant violence, two evacuations, and general turbulence made it difficult to complete our studies. But complete them, we did!

Disruption was the theme of our time in Guinea. Health problems, political problems, and Ebola seemed to punctuate our lives regularly. We soldiered on throughout the disruptions and really saw God work through us.

Michel had fairly specific ministry responsibilities and opportunities. He thrived in his café ministry and in his pre-Christian Bible study ministry. Several of the guys in this group eventually became Christians. Interestingly, God used healing as a means to reach them.

One story is from someone named Emmanuel. We did not really know him well, he was our carpenter, and we had only met him a couple of times. One day Michel stopped in at his shop to see how our table was coming along. Emmanuel mentioned he had received a poorly placed injection, resulting in terrible pain for over six months; he could barely walk. Michel prayed for him for healing and gave him a Tylenol. A while later, Emmanuel casually told Michel he had no pain after that! He started attending Michel's Bible study, and a couple of years later, became a Christian.

For the first few years, Denise mostly kept the home fires burning and was a support worker for Michel and other missionaries, just plugging in where needed. Once the kids started to leave home, she began to look for a more directed ministry.



While on home assignment, international workers attend a gathering called Home Ministry Seminar. During one of the sessions, God just opened up Denise's brain and poured in the idea of a secretarial school for young women. We had been looking for a way to reach women away from their homes. From experience, Denise knew she was not good at connecting around the cooking fire, and women were quite hesitant to discuss spiritual things at home. We put together a business plan and started to raise money.

We returned to the field in 2012. Denise began the long process of getting registered with the government, developing the curriculum, and putting together a national team to help and advise. She was ready to open the school in 2014 when Ebola ripped through Guinea. Schools were closed, and we ended up having to leave Guinea for eight months until the Canadian government allowed us to return.



Denise and ladies baking, 2018.  
Courtesy Michel Dubé.

We had our first class in October 2015. It went well, and we were excited for the following year. Unfortunately, our daughter had a health issue, and Denise needed to spend the 2016-2017 school year in Dakar with her so she could finish her graduating year. Then we went on our scheduled one-year home assignment in June 2017. It was painful to close the school for the next two years, but we were excited to reopen it for the 2018 school year.

We returned in August 2018, and Denise began the steps of reopening the school. It quickly became apparent this was not going to happen for several reasons. How heartbreaking! Why did we spend all that time, energy, and money for one year of operation? We still do not know, but God does. But Denise participated in an incredible

two years of ministry, which would not have been possible had she been teaching.

While on home assignment 2017-2018, God spoke to Michel about working with the National Church during our next term. He was pretty hesitant at first because the church had not been interested in working with the people we were assigned to. Michel eventually gave in, and are we ever happy he did!

## Soul Care



Young adults at Soul Care, 2019.  
Courtesy Michel Dubé.

The day after we returned from our home assignment, we were thrust into the beginning of Soul Care conferences in Guinea. Soul Care conferences are based on the book *Soul Care* written by Rob Reimer. He will tell you there is nothing new in the book, but he has assembled biblical principles for freedom in Christ into one resource. We had just started to read this book while in Canada, so the timing of it all was perfect. God grabbed our attention, and we began to work with our American C&MA colleagues, Stephen and Lori Albright, to bring Soul Care to Guinea. Stephen had arranged for Rob Reimer to lead a conference for the pastors in Guinea in September 2018.

Over four hundred pastors attended the conference; we had high hopes for what God would do through it. We were disappointed with the response but continued to pray God would transform the Guinean church and us. About two months later, we began to receive requests to do Soul Care conferences around Guinea. In eighteen months, we did over twenty conferences of four or five days each. We have so many stories of complete change and freedom.

Marie is a young woman who loved God and truly wanted to serve Him but struggled with an addiction to men. She had been with various men for several years and was currently living with someone who was not her husband. She wanted to change but was afraid of starving if she left him. When she came to us during a Soul Care conference, she looked much older than her twenty-five years. She never smiled and had a deep crease between her eyes. She wept and wept as she told us about her painful story of neglect, abuse, and insecurity. As she confessed her sins, dealt with her hurt, forgave others, and sought spiritual deliverance, she experienced freedom. At the end of our time together, she laughed, smiled, and looked so much younger. She returned home and left her partner, although she had no way to support herself. Almost immediately, she had business opportunities that more than provided for her, including a teaching



Denise and ladies at Women's Conference, 2020. Courtesy Michel Dubé.

opportunity in another town. She has thrived spiritually, emotionally, and financially ever since. God is pretty amazing!

In our last two years of ministry, we saw pastors rising up and starting to take on the teaching of Soul Care. Pastors like Elie and Antoine began to teach it and

practice the principles in their churches. We also saw great transformation among leaders in the church and among the young adults of the church. It was humbling and thrilling to watch young men and women on their knees confessing old sins and forgiving old hurts.

Denise and Lori were asked to speak to women in the church about all things sexual. What began as a talk to the youth at our church spread to several groups of women, youth, and young women. What is satisfying is this ministry is continuing on even though we are gone. It is exciting because it was always our desire to work our way out of a job.

In the fall of 2019, we began to sense a need to pray about our future in Guinea. After much prayer, fasting, and discerning, we knew we were not returning to Guinea after our six-month home assignment in 2020. It was confusing why God would have us be in such an exciting and fulfilling ministry then take us out. God spoke to us through the story of Philip. He was in an inspiring and fruitful ministry when God whisked him away to the desert road, where he met the eunuch. A seemingly pointless move was responsible for the spread of the Gospel regions afar. We never know the global impact of our obedience.



Michel and Denise Dubé, 2020.  
Courtesy Michel Dubé.

## Return to Canada

We made the decision to return to Canada in May 2020. But then... COVID. Our airport closed in March, and we had no idea when we would be able to leave. Out of the blue, the Canadian embassy offered to broker a deal with the American government to allow us to get on a repatriation flight. Thirty-eight hours later, we were on a plane. In those thirty-eight hours, we completely emptied our house, got the contents to their new owners, saw our two dogs to their new owners, put our cat down, repacked our suitcases (we had to go from six to two), arranged for a place to quarantine, and said goodbye to everyone we had been friends with for the last thirteen years.

It was a whirlwind day and a half, but with help from friends and lots of work, we did it. Then we started off on our new path.

We quarantined for two weeks, which was a wonderful time of decompressing after such a stressful few weeks. We then began to seek God for direction. It became clear we needed to be in Canada for the foreseeable future, and we resigned from Global Ministries, our employer of twenty-two years. We feel blessed to have worked for The Christian and Missionary Alliance for so many years. They were so gracious and kind to us in our strange ministry path. It was sad to leave, but we were also eager for what God had for us next.

## Epilogue

Michel decided to become a Personal Support Worker, a perfect fit for his excellent people skills. Denise is teaching English as a Second Language online to Québécois businessmen. It is so interesting; she has come full circle and is once again interacting with Québécois. God is amazing and has a reason for everything He does.

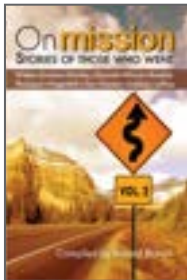
What an awesome God we serve!



### More Stories of Those Who Went

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

Dan Ibsen has written “Guinea: C&MA Ministry, Conception Through Maturity,” as Chapter 1 in the book. Also, Chapter 18 tells the story of Jess and Anne Jespersen and how they “learned to depend on God.”



***On Mission: Stories of Those Who Went, Volume 2*** compiled by Ronald Brown

In Chapter 6, Colette Baudais tells of her experience of “trusting the Lord for the unknown.”

## Chapter 4

### Following God: Lois Franklin

by Lois Franklin

After becoming a Christian, one of my habits became reading the Word of God. For many years it has been my habit to read through the Bible each year. Jesus said, “Come, follow me...” (Matthew 4:19) as He called His disciples. He keeps repeating this call to me. “Come, Lois.” And so I have followed.

There is nothing like growing up on a farm, seeing God in action in the crops and animals, the weather up close, and learning to work in conjunction with nature. It marked my life. There was a sense of God’s presence, but my life was often out of control.

I am told I was in church the Sunday after I was born (March 9, 1951). My mom Eva (Moffat), was a school teacher who came to teach at the country school across the field, and my dad, George Franklin, was a farmer. I have two older brothers and a younger sister. From an early age, I have had a sense of God; the sense things are in His hands, whether or not I understand it.

Life at home was difficult for me, and as much as I spent my younger years attending church convinced there was a God, there was no sense He would personally have anything to do with me. Through some of the difficult times of my childhood, I remember being out in the more wooded areas, wandering around and yelling at God, asking Him to make Himself known. *Where are You? I know that You are real. I need You. Why can’t You make Yourself known? I need You to help me.*

I finished high school and entered nurse’s training in Bottineau, North Dakota. There I met a couple of girls who became my friends. One asked me questions about God. I said, “Oh yes, I’ve gone to church all of my life.” We talked from time to time, and then she invited me to a Bible study. I went, taking along my Bible given to me by my mom and dad years before.

At the Bible study, God continued His work in my heart. Everyone was pleased I was there. They talked about God and the Bible in ways I had never heard before. As they spoke and prayed, I began to sense God’s presence. Each week as I went back, I questioned what I would do with what I was feeling and learning. Then,

one week my friend asked if I wanted to pray. I had no clue what it meant to pray, but I know my life was not the same in the end. From then on, my life began to change. I began to read the Bible. In summer, I went to youth group and was met week after week with a new sense of God's presence.

Following graduation, I returned to Canada to work at the hospital in Winkler, Manitoba. Church attendance was difficult because I worked a lot of shift work, but I was able to be part of a youth group. It was all new and different, and I somewhat learned a new language, low German.



Graduation from nursing,  
June 9, 1972.  
Courtesy Lois Franklin.

Moving to Brandon to train to be an ICU nurse, McDiarmid Drive Alliance Church became my home. I joined the choir and was part of a college and career group. God continued to call me closer. I went off to Canadian Bible College (CBC), working with Mrs. Tiessen in student care and graduating in 1979. I knew I was called into ministry, but I was unsure what exactly I would be doing, so I returned to nursing.

I moved to Winnipeg, back to nursing, and attended Central Alliance Church with Rev. Willoughby, my CBC professor. The church moved to a different area through the following years, and I came on to the board as the elder of Christian education. Changes were happening all around. As time went on, I continually remembered my call to ministry; maybe this was it? Or was there more ahead? These were exciting years as the church moved into a new building, and a new pastor came to lead. Then Winnipeg Alliance churches held a city-wide missions event with Arnold Cook. I went forward, knowing this was where God was calling me.

I had a personal mission trip planned to visit Doug and Ann Snowsell, Alliance missionaries to Chile. It was one of those unforgettable trips. As the plane was coming in to land in Santiago, Chile, it was as if God said to me, *This will be your new country, take a good look around.* I had already planned to travel all the way south and north. Part of my visit was a side trip to Quito, Ecuador, where I met with Dr. Ron Gudarian and his wife Eleanor working in the Radio HCJB hospital. I went, as friends said, "to spy out the hospital there." With Ron, I travelled to the jungle for a weekend and tested eyes with an Ecuadorian ophthalmologist, helped to fit glasses, took in the environment, and again heard from God. *You can do this, but it is not what I have planned for you.*

Returning to Chile and then Canada, I knew changes were again coming my way. God also gave me a verse from Scripture, "Now to him who is able to do

immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21). God is the only one able to lead me, and the glory is all for Him.

Returning to Regina and Canadian Theological Seminary (CTS), I had no clue how God would organize everything. I was over the age limit for foreign missions, and I had not done a formal home assignment. There were two years of studies ahead, accreditation, and pre-deployment, etc. But I was sure God had me firmly by the hand. What He wills, He does.

The First Church (now The Bridge Church) in Winnipeg was marvellous in providing a shower of needed items for me. They had been my family for ten years. The Church in Pinawa became very special as they invited me to visit even before leaving Canada.

## Language Study

My first term (1990) started off with language study. Even before leaving Canada, it was great to meet the folks headed to Costa Rica and language learning at Pre-deployment and Toronto Institute of Linguistics. There were five of us going to Costa Rica in August. There was even a conversation about my name, as it is not a very Spanish name, and I did not like the Spanish translation of Timothy’s grandmother’s name in 2 Timothy 1:5. I decided I would be Luisa going with true *Superman*, God.

It was a fabulous time learning Spanish, understanding and not understanding all at the same time. The Instituto de la Lengua Española with Elizabeth Alfaro was a special place where no English was spoken, verbs and more verbs, less ‘t,’ and repeat and repeat. But also marvellous! I lived with a family where conversations about God seemed to be daily. It was their first experience with a foreign student in their home, so I was culturally an oddity. I really enjoyed living with them despite two earthquakes, termites in my bed, giving injections morning and night for a week, and G.I. parasites every month. There were also two special dogs, shopping with my Tico mother, going to church across the city, lots of ice cream, and long walks to get anywhere.

I stayed an extra week in Costa Rica to attend an Evangelism Explosion Clinic in Spanish. When I registered, the people at the clinic wondered out loud whether or not I would ever complete the course because of my Spanish, but the person to whom I presented the Gospel received Jesus. It was a palpable God moment!

On the plane from Costa Rica, another passenger, an Argentinian woman, was



incensed about my going to a Catholic country as an evangelical missionary. My response was that this was not about church or religion, it was about following Jesus, and even Catholics sometimes need to follow Jesus better.

## Chile

I arrived in Chile with most of the missionaries there welcoming me at the airport. A missionary couple invited me to their home where they had a maid who, on my arrival, wanted to talk. One day she prayed with me to receive Jesus. It was awesome to do discipleship with her.

Shortly after I arrived, there was a bit of a kerfuffle between a pastor and some missionaries; my world became chaotic regarding my placement. At the same time, I received a questionnaire from a grad student doing a thesis about why missionaries stay on the field amid difficulties. It was a moving time for me, but through the questions God reminded me, it really was not about me. It was about Him and how He had not changed, He was still in charge, and the results were not up to me. I was called to be faithful and to do the best I could, even in all circumstances. Just as He had called me there, He would take care of me.

In my first term, I worked with a national pastor in the Providencia Church. I was part of the regular women's program and worked with an Evangelism Explosion group. One request I made was for the opportunity to work with three other younger women to have an outreach event every two or three months, on Saturday afternoons, where some of the working women could come and bring visitors. Each event was different from the next, Christmas stories and songs, to a look at Genesis 1-3 in drama and the significance of the coming of Christ. God blessed us, as each time, at least one woman came to new life. Wow!

Coming back to my first home assignment (HA) after having been away for four years was an experience. There were new people in the lives of family and friends, events I had missed, and anecdotes about which I had no idea. Going on tour to the churches through the fall and spring for eight to ten weeks without a break was an all-new experience. The first church I visited had us go to a school on the afternoon of our arrival to talk about our countries. After my presentation, one of the teachers asked, "Chile would be considered a Catholic country; why are you there?" I had been through this trial by fire previously! "I am there to help people walk better with Jesus no matter who they are." But, I loved being in the churches and talking about missions. I was also very blessed with The Pas Alliance Church and Pastor Rudy and Priscilla Ruten, as I became their adopted missionary.

My second term in 1995, I was based at the La Florida Church. I took over a

discipleship group in the SEAN series from the second Sunday as their teacher had left the church when some misconduct was discovered. About six months later, it was time to talk about church discipline. Real-life lessons are not always easy ones.

Because of the needs of many in the church, I generally had non-perishable grocery hampers in the trunk of my car. Almost every second week, Rosi, a friend, and I visited three or four homes with the hampers and prayed for the people. Many times there were other needs where we could lend a hand or find help.



Parade through Temuco with Dr. Rambo, 1997.  
Courtesy Lois Franklin.



Chilean celebration in stadium, 1997.  
Courtesy Lois Franklin.



Stamp commemorating 100 years of the C&MA in Chile, 1997. Courtesy Lois Franklin.

These were fabulous afternoons of helping and praying for people. It was great then to hear of answered prayers.

The La Florida Church was part of the Encounter with God ministries. I was able to attend the first Women's Encounter at the La Cordillera Church. There I witnessed women hearing the Gospel in a way they could understand, enabling them to make decisions to follow Jesus. It was exciting to see the women get on board, invite friends and take care of all of what was needed to continue it in our church. God provided, moved, brought new life, and healed, continuing after I left Chile.

In January 1997, the Chilean National Church celebrated one hundred years of the Alliance in Chile. It was a great time as people from the Alliance churches from north to south joined together in Temuco, where the

Alliance has its head offices. They gathered together to celebrate in a soccer stadium, several retired missionaries returning to join in, and held a march through the city's centre. The Chilean post office put out a stamp to celebrate.

About six months before the end of this term, I received the news; Canada would not be sending missionaries to Chile anymore as it was considered a reached country. But, I had made a home for myself

there. As I began to assimilate this change, God gave me much calmness, and, as before, He brought me again a word of Scripture, “I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore” (Psalm 121:1-2, 7-8). This was not just a word for me but for all of those with whom I had worked closely.

## **Mexico**

As I returned for my second home assignment in 1999, the program was still tours. Now I was promoting the change currently in progress in my ministry, which was a great way to have relationships with the churches and talk about the needs in my new assignment, Mexico.

For my third term starting in 2000, I moved to Mexico City, the largest metropolitan city in the world. My assignment was to a church that had been through great difficulty. I worked where I could, with women, new believers in discipleship, the music ministry, and prayer times. I learned to drive and find routes for getting around a metropolitan city. Time in traffic was always a factor. I had a book of seventy maps where I had to turn pages, and I needed a magnifying glass to read it. I had to rely on memory and God’s voice to guide me.

After about two and a half years, I moved to Guadalajara to work with Steve and Andrea Scarrow to organize the Women’s Encounter. God again provided not only women from Guadalajara, but women from Mexico City, Janice (and Tim) Greenfield, who had just moved from Chile, as well as women from one of the churches in Peru. God brought it all together for women to hear about Jesus and to see how He loved them. These events continued through the following years, even as I went to home assignment.

As I returned to Canada in 2004, I was given permission to study. Having spent much of my time talking to people about life, I felt I needed more aids. I entered the counselling program at Providence Theological Seminary. While studying, I visited all of my churches, as most of them were within a couple of hours’ distance.

## **Guadalajara**

In my fourth term in Guadalajara, I continued with the Women’s Encounter as well as teaching, preaching, and evangelism ministries. Conversations became commonplace for me. As the church grew, I was very busy in all areas of ministry.

In my fourth home assignment, I continued studying at Providence Seminary,



Graduation from counselling program, 2010.  
Courtesy Lois Franklin.



Lois teaching, 2012.  
Courtesy Lois Franklin.



Lois and Laura in the office, 2013.  
Courtesy Lois Franklin.

finishing my counselling degree in 2010. Now, after so many years of visiting the churches, it was like returning to visit friends.

### Return to Mexico City

Returning again to Mexico City for my fifth term, I ministered in the Atizapán Church located in the north of the city. My time there coincided with the construction of a second floor on the main thoroughfare through the city. Travel, particularly back to Del Valle where I lived, was often three hours during the week. I had lots of time talking to myself and God, singing, and wondering what was happening up ahead. Praise God for safety!

Norma Van Dalen and I began to work on the Women's Encounter. We revamped it and called it EVA with monologues by Eve. First, we had an event in Del Valle where we lived in 2012, and the next year we had another in Del Valle and Atizapán. God touched women's lives and the churches.

The year 2012 was one of those crazy years. As several missionary couples left for home assignment, retirement, etc., there was a void in office administration. A bookkeeper, Laura, was hired, and she and I learned QuickBooks together. God's presence was very evident as we learned about each other and the affairs of the mission. Working with

the architect and finishing up the ministry centre while keeping up with the visitors staying at the centre were part of every day. I wore so many hats for a while, it was tough to keep life straight. God showed me much mercy, strength, and peace.

Norma and I took some courses from Entrust about teaching adults, and one called *Developing a Discerning Heart*. We went to Cuba to teach with Gaileen Warden. In 2013, we taught a course to leaders in Atizapán about teaching adults. We also worked with the women of the Shekinah Church using the principles for conducting Bible studies. It was a great time together around the Word. Norma and I also team-taught *Emotionally Healthy Women* in Atizapan.

In the summer of 2013, Chris Smith wrote to me as he had just become the new pastor at The Bridge Church in Winnipeg, my home church. He had asked Shauna Archer, the missions consultant, what he needed to do regarding signing our Seamless Link Agreement. So, we talked about how we would get the signatures over Skype. About ten days before the signing, I asked, “What would you say if I came for the signing?” He said it would be fantastic, so we made plans for my visit and kept it a secret. I arrived, and Sunday morning, I went to the office to begin the service on Skype. When we started the part about the Seamless Link, there were some “transmission difficulties,” and I ran into the sanctuary. It was an unforgettable moment! The church was excellent support for me in ministry in Mexico, with video updates every few months.

Back in Mexico, counselling started to move forward. There was an empty space at the ministry centre where I set up a counselling room. One pastor approached me to say he was sending me all those who needed help. Many young people from the church came to me as they lacked orientation on how to go forward in their lives. It was amazing to be with them and encourage them. They have continued to contact me.

In December 2014, I went on home assignment, staying late to hand off the administration. I decided to live in Winnipeg and spend time with my home church. From there, I visited the churches inviting me. It was again great to be able to visit with so many friends through the years. During one of my church visits, a young woman came up to me saying she had come specially to see me as she had grown up in The Pas and remembered my visits when I was their adopted missionary. We don’t always know how our lives have touched others. Before my return, I had spoken with my District Superintendent, Al Fedoruk, about ordination. God again confirmed His call on my life as I was ordained at The Bridge Church in May 2015.

In late July of 2015, I returned to Mexico for what turned out to be my last term. With my counselling room ready, and people in waiting, I quickly became quite busy. I continued to visit and encourage in the Atizapán Church. One thing I need to do was to figure out how to hand off my counselling. I looked at so many possibilities, but none seemed to work. It is probably one of the laments of my time in Mexico.

People need encouragement many times in their lives, but they do not always



Lois' farewell from Mexico, 2017.  
Courtesy Lois Franklin.



Lois with Babe, 2012. Courtesy Lois Franklin.

talk with someone. My life revolved around conversations with them in the counselling room and elsewhere. I came to measure Sundays by the number of conversations of substance about how to walk with God amid life's interruptions.

## Back in Canada

In 2017, I left Mexico. Leaving can be complicated, but again it was amazing to watch God organize and orchestrate the time. There was much loss, as Mexico had been my life for so long. God reminded me of the verses from Ephesians and the Psalms, "Now to him who is able..." God is the one who is able, not me. And God "... will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore." Life goes on, and it shows where my confidence really is!

Living on the Prairies has brought back fond memories of my favourite

recreation spots in Mexico. One is a hot spring spa, Balneario San Juan Cosalá, on Lake Chapala, south of Guadalajara. The other is a beach, Rincón de Guayabitos. A friend, my poodle Babe, and I would drive four hours from Guadalajara or ten to eleven hours from Mexico City. We generally arrived in the late afternoon. We usually had a hotel with a kitchen, so we often took care of many of our own meals. Fish and shrimp could be bought at the beach every morning. We would rest under the umbrella, go for walks along the beach, read, do Sudoku, eat ceviche and other goodies brought to us. Also, playing in the ocean was absolutely beautiful!!

Coming back to Canada, I began to remodel our family home. It has been hard work, and it has taught me a lot. There is a tearing apart and a building up. God provided it all. It is great to see things fall into place.

A trip to Chile in January 2019 was a great time to renew friendships; it was beautiful to see them walking with God! And then a visit to Guadalajara early in 2020, where I ministered with Norma Van Dalen, Gaileen Warden, and Janice Greenfield.



Lois teaching, along with Norma and Gaileen, 2020. Courtesy Lois Franklin.

How beautiful to see women receiving healing and direction from God.

### **Soul Care**

After retiring to Canada, I have had the opportunity to be part of several Soul Care Conferences, experiencing God's healing and care, receiving ministry, and being a part of ministering to others. I am constantly amazed at the rest God can give us through Jesus. God so wants to raise up a strong church in Canada.

I am not sure what retirement is supposed to be. Via Zoom, I have been able to continue counselling with some from Mexico. I have used my meagre guitar playing in the music ministry at the church I attend. The pandemic has been a great time for philosophizing about God, time, and pandemics in the light of all of the conspiracy theories. How great is our God!

My newest ministry is with a retired pastoral couple in our lodge who have no family nearby. It has been great to minister to them in presence, song, and conversation. They have also ministered to me.

How could I not follow God when He called? I looked for Him, and He allowed me to come to know Him. Then He gave me new life, calling, and purpose. He has done "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine... to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus."

How great it has been to follow Him, and it's not over yet!



### **More Stories of Those Who Went**

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

Craig Bundy has written about "Latin America's Mission Movement: From Receiving to Sending," in Chapter 6.



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

Chapter 21, by Dave and Arlene Peters, tells of the “Lessons Learned on the Mission Field.” Also, in Chapter 23, you will learn about “Richard and Hope Reichert: In the Pool of Ministry.”



## Chapter 5

### Passing on the Legacy of my Heritage: Gaileen Warden

by Gaileen Warden

It was February 9, 2009, a sad day in my life. I was leaving Venezuela. My colleague Rebecca Rodríguez and I were the last international workers (IWs) to leave the Venezuelan Alliance ministry, where I had served for twenty-seven years. I was also sad because of some disappointments in ministry. One, in particular, was regarding a young couple I worked with in the first Alliance church that started in Caracas in 1986.



Pablo and Carolina with Rebecca, ca 1990.  
Courtesy Gaileen Warden.

When I moved from Alliance ministry in Valencia, Venezuela, to the capital city of Caracas, it was to help Harold and Becky Priebe in this new church plant. The young couple I met there, Pablo and Carolina, were recruited to help me with youth ministry; their involvement was valued. Pablo was the youngest son of an Alliance Peruvian family instrumental in the start of the church in Caracas. After Pablo and Carolina married and started a family, their involvement in the church ended,

even though they attended sporadically. I sadly gave up on them ever being deeply involved in the church again. When I left in 2009, I wondered what would become of this young family. I questioned if the time we had poured into them in those early years would bear fruit once again. I was to find out a few years later.

The story continues...

### My background...my heritage

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect...” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

It was the Fall of 1969 and my first year of Bible college in Miami, Florida. I was sitting dejectedly in the welcome chapel service while listening to several new students give their testimonies.

My goal in life was to become a missionary, a goal I had since I was eleven years old. I had dedicated my life to the Lord at a missions week at an Alliance church in Burnaby, British Columbia. Coming from a missionary family, we had been instructed in God's Word through family devotions. We prayed for missionaries, friends of my parents from Bible college who, like us, had spread all over the world. In our early teen years, my dad had purchased youth devotional books so we could start doing our own personal devotions. We had faithfully attended Bible-believing, missions-minded churches. My home life was happy, and I was doing well. Entering into Bible college after high school was the next step on my road to the mission field.

So why was I feeling so dejected as I listened to the testimonies? Though I thanked God for rescuing and saving these new friends and bringing them to Bible college, all I could think was, *Wow, I don't have an impressive personal testimony like them...mine is boring...saved at the age of five and a half, dedicated my life to the Lord at age eleven, daughter of missionaries...* In my imagination, people were yawning with boredom at my testimony. A few days, I felt down about this until the Lord broke through my wrong thinking and I repented. I began to thank Him; He had saved me from so many sad and painful events by saving me at such a young age. This had been God's sovereign plan for my life. I had a rich and blessed heritage and legacy for which to be thankful. God met me during this spiritual crisis, but it would not be the last time I faced this issue; it would show up again in my career as an international worker.

## Cuba Then...and My Youth



Salem Orphanage, Cuba, ca. 1959.

Courtesy Gaileen Warden.

This is the story of my heritage. My parents, Bert and Lena Warden, met at Western Canadian Bible Institute in Regina right after World War II. After getting married in 1948, their deep love for children led them into a couple of years of ministry with children's organizations in Canada before heading to Cuba to work at an orphanage with Mission to Orphans

(later merged with Worldteam). I was born in Cuba on January 1, 1951, the second child born to them, following my older brother, Len. My twin sisters, Judy and Joy, were born a year and a half later.

Unfortunately, both parents became ill after the twins were born, requiring us to return to Canada for a few years, living in Three Hills, Alberta, where my parents served as home representatives for Mission to Orphans. In 1956 we returned to Cuba with another brother named Evan.

Living in Cuba, we went through the Castro Revolution ending in January 1959. Those were frightening days as the orphanage was located near the city of Santa Clara, where the final, decisive battle was fought. We often heard the air raid sirens as Dictator Batista's airplanes circled over the orphanage to bomb and strafe in Santa Clara.

But our life in Cuba was soon to come to an end; the orphanage was not allowed to continue operation because of the Communist regime under Fidel Castro. Therefore, all the Canadian missionaries who worked at the orphanage, except one couple, left Cuba. We went in the summer of 1961 as a family of eight; my sister Lori was born there before leaving.

Though we returned to British Columbia, my parents desired to return to the Caribbean with Worldteam. However, with another daughter, Bonnie, born in Canada, we were now a family of nine; raising support was a significant challenge.

Another part of my legacy was established by my parents during the two years we lived in Canada. The week-long missions conferences at the Alliance church we attended in Burnaby were considered important events. Our whole family attended every night of the conference. During one of these weeks, I heard Alliance missionary Garth Hunt speak of his ministry in Vietnam, and I dedicated my life to the Lord to be a missionary when I grew up. My other siblings were also impacted for serving the Lord during missions weeks at this and other Alliance churches over the years.

When it became evident we were not going to be able to return to the Caribbean, God opened up a different opportunity for my parents. There was a massive influx of Cuban refugees to Miami in the early 1960s. The five English-speaking Alliance churches in Miami, and a church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, wanted to reach them for Christ and were willing to support an Alliance worker to do this. The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) in New York contacted Worldteam. They asked if they had any missionaries available to move to Miami and begin a Spanish-speaking Alliance church. This was how our family of nine ended up in Florida; my parents lived there for the next twenty years. They were involved in both church planting and Spanish Christian literature ministry. My parents started

the first Spanish Alliance Church, and after three years, turned it over to a pastor who had come to Miami from Cuba. My dad continued in the literature ministry until moving back to Canada in 1982.

We helped our parents with the Spanish church ministry during those years in Miami, but they felt it was important for us to be involved in an English-speaking Alliance church as the older four of us children were entering our teen years. Once again, we were engaged in a missions-minded church with a great youth ministry. My parents did many things right but were not perfect parents (nor were we perfect children). Whatever “success” they had as parents was attributed to the grace of God. They also said they were grateful for godly pastors, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, and Bible college professors who had a lasting impact on our lives as youth. While reading through the Epistle to the Romans during my teen years, I came to understand what it meant to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Another thing standing out clearly in the memories of my parents and my home life came to me years later. My parents believed Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness...” and they fleshed it out in front of us. What they lived outside our home was no different than what they lived in the home, even though not perfectly. They were firm believers in prayer, and all of us children were covered by their prayers during their whole lifetime. After the grandchildren started arriving, prayers were raised to God for them as well. My parents never pressured us to become missionaries or enter full-time Christian work.

Though I was the first to head overseas, I was soon followed by some of my siblings into Alliance ministries in South America. Len and Diane Warden went to Brazil, where they served for thirty-four years. Judy Warden was a teacher at the Alliance Academy in Quito, Ecuador, for twenty-two years. Joy (Warden) and Bob Brougher served the Alliance in three countries, seventeen years in Bogota, Colombia, four years in Caracas, Venezuela, and ten years in Asuncion, Paraguay.

Serving in North America, Evan and Betty Warden went in Bible camp ministries, at the Alliance camp in Eagle Bay, British Columbia for fifteen years, at Stillwood Camp for two years, and then Bear Lake Bible Camp in Alberta for seven years. Lori (Warden) and Gary Schmidt were Alliance tentmakers in Caracas for three and a half years. They then worked in Alliance pastoral ministries in Miami, Florida and Tsawwassen, British Columbia, before Gary embarked on teaching at Simpson Bible College in Redding, California and, most recently, at Trinity University in Langley, British Columbia. Bonnie (Warden) and Dean Salvog have served as lay leaders in Alliance churches in Miami and Keystone Heights, Florida, in youth and worship ministries. Three of my parent’s grandchildren and their spouses are currently international workers, one family with the Alliance in Amman, Jordan.

## Venezuela Then...

When I finished Bible college in 1973, I decided to serve with a camp ministry in need of a single woman working with a missionary family in Venezuela. I served one term with them from 1976 to 1980. I had attended Alliance summer camps in Miami throughout my youth, and they had left a profound impact. I wanted to have a similar effect on the lives of youth. It was a stretching time of ministry. The family I served with my first year had to leave to raise more support and then decided not to return to Venezuela. So, I served alone for about a year and a half. When another family joined me, we worked well together until we realized our philosophy of ministry was not the same. I realized the Lord had given me the spiritual gifts of exhortation and teaching. One of the breaking points was not being allowed to have any teaching role if our camp training classes included men. So, I left this organization on good terms.

My desire was to return to Venezuela and work in church planting, which is how I ended up contacting the C&MA in the USA. I had always considered myself "Alliance" as our family had been in Alliance churches in Canada and Miami. So it felt like coming home when I was accepted as an Alliance missionary in 1981, after a semester of studies in The Alliance Theological Seminary in Nyack, New York, in 1980.

For twenty-seven years (1982 to 2009), I ministered in Venezuela with the Alliance. Most of those years were in church planting in Valencia and Caracas, but the last few years, I was involved as a professor in our modular Bible institute, travelling between three cities where we had Alliance churches, training leaders and pastors. When I arrived in Valencia, Venezuela, there was only one Alliance church. However, by the time I transferred to the ministry in Caracas in 1988, there were four Alliance churches in Valencia.



Chuao Church, Caracas, 2008.  
Courtesy Gaileen Warden.

Another ministry evolving in Venezuela was in the area of music. Little did I know, years of piano lessons started as a child in Cuba, and singing in a trio with my twin sisters from early adolescence, would be incorporated into my ministry.

In church planting overseas, I learned one must be willing to be stretched, especially in the first stages of starting a church. Although one may have a spiritual gift or a passion for particular ministries, one must

be willing to help out wherever needed until nationals are trained to do those ministries, like in children's, youth, and worship ministries. This was true for me.



Caracas Christmas cantata, 2008.  
Courtesy Gaileen Warden.



Celebrating birthdays, ministry to single women,  
1994. Courtesy Gaileen Warden.



Gaileen leading a workshop for single women,  
1993. Courtesy Gaileen Warden.

Not only did I help by accompanying on the keyboard, but I also had to lead the worship team while playing the keyboard at times. Then I decided I would introduce Christmas cantatas in the churches. I translated several cantatas over the years and incorporated people from the Alliance churches in the choirs, using CD orchestration accompaniment for each cantata. These were very popular in our churches. My early training in music, and fluency in Spanish, were another part of my legacy.

As I look back on my years in the first Alliance church in Caracas (1988 to 1998), I can see God's hand in preparing me for future ministry and preparing Venezuelans for future ministry. My colleague, Rebecca, and I had a ministry to single women in the church. Many women were alone, single (never married), single with children, divorced and/or widowed. We provided fellowship and teaching to this group. Many of the women later became leaders in the church in various areas of ministry. One woman returned to her native Colombia and served the Lord in an Alliance church in Bogota in children's ministries. This passion had been ignited in her because of the training she received in our church in Caracas.

Little did I realize the Lord had a major shake-up for the Alliance

international workers and the Venezuela Alliance National Church. Not only was the political scene changing in the country with the election of Hugo Chavez in 1999, but the Alliance church scene was stagnating in their church planting. Though the National Church had tried to do their own church planting, most of those attempts had failed. Of the ten churches that existed, the Alliance missionaries had started all but about two. The Bible Institute was also mostly run and supported by the Alliance mission. It was time to “cut the apron strings.” Though it was not an easy decision, God was in it; He was still in control.<sup>1</sup>

### Venezuela now...



Gaileen teaching at the Venezuelan Bible Institute, 2007. Courtesy Gaileen Warden.



Gaileen teaching at the Venezuelan Bible Institute, 2006. Courtesy Gaileen Warden.

The Venezuela Alliance stepped up to the plate and continued moving forward. Since 2009, there are sixteen churches, six of which are new church plants. Two Alliance churches are being led by non-Venezuelans, though they are the fruit of the Alliance ministries in Peru and Chile. These two churches have been in Venezuela for about fifteen to nineteen years. The other fourteen churches and church plants are pastored by Venezuelans, most of whom were trained in the Venezuelan Bible Institute. Unfortunately, Venezuela’s current political and economic chaos has placed a hardship on the churches and the pastors. Over the six mentioned, some new church plants could not continue operation because of lack of economy to support them.

The Bible Institute (IBAVEN) has continued with the help of Venezuelan Alliance pastors and visiting Peruvian professors. In recent years, the Alliance

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<sup>1</sup> The Lord led the Canadian Alliance to re-enter Venezuela in 2011 with international workers to assist in work in Caracas to begin a house church. However, worsening political/economic conditions necessitated a departure of all Alliance IWs by 2017.

Seminary in Peru has played an essential role in Venezuela. Professors from Peru started travelling to Venezuela in 2014 to lead classes every three months, but during the pandemic in 2020-2021, they have been giving online courses to 55 students. There are currently 72 students registered in the Bible Institute.

What of Pablo and Carolina, the couple who had been active in the early years in Caracas? God got ahold of them and their three teenage sons, all of them became actively involved in the church again in 2010. Pablo and Carolina were helping with ministry to couples in the church, and their boys were involved in youth ministries. In fact, by 2017, Pablo was taken on staff as one of the pastors of that first Alliance church in Caracas, and Carolina became involved in the Women's Encounter with God ministry of the church. Though I had given up on them, God had not. The spiritual growth in Pablo has been evidenced, especially in April 2021. Within one day of each other, he suffered his mother and his wife's passing during the Covid pandemic. He has continued his pastoral ministry and has shared a couple of devotional reflections on the Internet about suffering and comfort from the Lord, showing the amazing insight and strength God has given him.

Thinking about leaving Venezuela in 2009 was not in my life plan. I had expected I would be retiring from ministry there. But, again, I struggled with the Lord's plan for my life, as well as for the lives of my fellow international workers. What was in store for me? What kind of ministry could I be involved in somewhere else? I was already in my late fifties and not really looking to go to a country where I would have to learn a new language. What was God up to?

## **Cuba now...**

What He was up to was bringing me full circle in my life. The Lord was going to send me back to Cuba, the land of my birth, to become involved in the Alliance ministry. However, since I was born in Cuba and wanted to enter the country, I needed to take out a Cuban passport to travel in and out of the country.

For a Cuban passport, I needed my Cuban birth certificate, which had been lost for years. But just at the right time (2009), in God's time, my dad found my birth certificate. So I was on my way to Cuba by March 2010, with a purpose given to me by the Lord; mentoring women in ministry and advising those in leadership development.

It was the Fall of 2010 in Cuba, and I had just finished travelling around the island meeting Alliance pastors and their wives. In conversing with the women, I would mention my purpose for being in Cuba was to begin working with Alliance women in the churches. More specifically, I told them I wanted to train and



encourage the wives of pastors and church planters, most of them being first-generation Christians. Visit after visit, these women began telling me their sad stories of hurt, brokenness, abuse (sexual, verbal, physical—even ritual abuse in the Santeria cult of Cuba), promiscuity, divorces, abandonment, attempted suicide, and more. Their stories moved me profoundly and convinced me we were on the right track in starting this ministry. The women told me they needed inner healing to help bring healing to the many broken women in their house churches.

### “Ana’s” story...

Ana’s life before she gave her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ was full of brokenness and sadness. As a child, she was sexually abused by an immediate family member; as a teen, she was raped by a boy in school. Her longing was for a loving, caring relationship with someone. Instead, living in fear of the family member’s harassment led her into marriage at a very young age to escape further abuse. She had longed for the protection of her father but could not even tell him about what the family member had done. To make things even worse, her father committed suicide soon after Ana left home.

Though her husband truly valued and loved her, Ana’s life did not significantly improve. Her husband was addicted to gambling—any kind of gambling—and tended to drink excessively. He would often get into fights and come away with injuries.

Ana came to faith in Jesus after the birth of their two sons. She became an active member of the local Alliance church and her sons also came to faith in Jesus. Ana prayed fervently for the Lord to save her husband. The Lord answered this prayer after she had been praying for him for many years. The transformation in her husband’s life is a beautiful testimony of deliverance from his addictions.

Today “Ana” and her husband Ricardo<sup>2</sup> have studied in the Cuban Bible Institute and are pastoring a church in Central Cuba.<sup>3</sup> “Ana” also went through the *Developing a Discerning Heart* course in 2012 and experienced deep inner healing as she came to realize her worth in Christ. She knew she was



Gaileen and Ana, 2012.  
Courtesy Gaileen Warden.

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<sup>2</sup> Read about Ricardo’s experience in *A Country Bumpkin*—see link below.

<sup>3</sup> See stories published by Gaileen Warden on her ministry in Cuba on the Alliance Canada website, links noted at the end of this chapter.

forgiven and could now extend that forgiveness to those who had hurt her deeply. Three years ago, she was elected to serve as the Treasurer of the Cuban Alliance National Church Board.

However, the sadder the stories I heard, the more self-doubt invaded my mind. Once again, I was faced with a spiritual struggle from my first year in Bible college. Whether from my flesh or from the Enemy of my soul or both, I do not know, but the doubts came fast and furious. Thoughts invaded my mind like, *Gaileen, what do you think you're doing here in Cuba? You have nothing to say to these broken women, for your life has been so much easier than theirs. You haven't experienced even a tiny portion of what they've lived through. How can you identify with them? How can you minister to them?*

As I heard these accusations, I began to wonder about my ministry's value to these women. However, through prayer and conversations with my Alliance colleagues in Cuba and Cuban brethren, they assured me I had much to offer these women. Sure, I had not lived through many tragedies in my life, but the testimony of God's grace in my life and in my family was a rich heritage. I could share this heritage with them. I could pass on the legacy started by my parents in our family. They told me my story gave them hope. *Hope?* Yes, the hope of, starting with them, things for their children being different, and the sad stories of their lives as parents not being repeated.

Encouraged by their words, I started sharing experiences from my own family life, even in simple day-to-day matters. For example, the first year I was in Cuba, I was at a beach with three pastoral families and their children. When we arrived, the adults settled themselves on the sand under the palm trees; the children ran off into the water. As I observed this, I turned to the parents and told them about my parents and how they played with us as children, sharing beautiful memories of my family at the beach. Then, I told them they should go down into the water and have fun with their children.

Doing this had never occurred to them, as they had not grown up in homes where their parents had fun with them. Nevertheless, these parents joined their children in the water and had a blast; they never forgot this experience.

On other occasions, I would talk to parents about the importance of telling their children they loved them. Many of the pastors and their wives had never heard those words uttered by their own parents; many had never been hugged by their parents. Even though I never married, I shared some tips on parenting and marriage relationships from my family experiences, what I had observed in my own parents, and from my siblings with their children.

However, my greatest desire was to minister to the wives of pastors and church

planters who so desperately needed a touch from the Lord in their inner being. This is why we began the women's ministry for the Alliance in Cuba. Here is what I wrote in a vision statement for the Canadian Alliance office:

“The purpose of the women's ministry is to strengthen wives of pastors and church planters spiritually through mentoring and training, so that they in turn can do the same with their women leaders and the women in their house groups and communities. Many of these leaders of house groups have felt inadequate to minister to other women because of deep needs and hurts in their own past. The goal is to establish a strong women's ministry in the country so that marriages and families will not only be strong but healthy, serving as a testimony to a society where most marriages and families are highly dysfunctional.”

To help accomplish this, I was able to have an excellent course translated into Spanish dealing specifically with personal sanctification through the process of inner healing, called *Developing a Discerning Heart* (DDH). It was written by women for women by Entrust Ministries. I was also able to get the Entrust Ministries course, *Facilitating Relational Learning* (FRL), translated and used it to prepare facilitators for the women's ministry, and for pastors in the Cuban Bible Institute.<sup>4</sup> God had allowed me to study both of these courses in the USA before I left for Cuba in 2010.

Many of the women who have gone through these courses have testified how their lives have been transformed. They also say their marriages and families have been impacted by this transformation in their lives. The Alliance Women's ministry in Cuba grew during the ten years I was there. I left Cuba in July 2019 to begin retirement in January 2020. There are some excellent women leaders in Cuba who have committed themselves to continue the work with women as part of the National Women's Leadership Team carrying on this ministry across the Island, led by Leslie (Lili), the wife of one of our pastors in Havana. I have been working with and mentoring her since my first year on the Island. The interest in our courses and our ministry to women has extended beyond the Alliance in Cuba to other denominations.

Another way we blessed and encouraged the wives of pastors and church planters in Cuba was to hold retreats for them. We held these for five succeeding years, beginning in 2013. Alliances churches in Canada participated in four of these by sending short-term teams of women to minister and help with some expenses for the retreats. Teams from Canada and IWs from the Caribbean Sun

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<sup>4</sup> See stories published by Gaileen Warden on her ministry in Cuba on the Alliance Canada website at [cman.org](http://cman.org).



Gaileen and Lili, 2016.  
Courtesy Gaileen Warden.



Regional Women's Retreat for Pastors' Wives,  
Cuba, 2016. Courtesy Gaileen Warden.

Region also came to help with women's leadership training sessions.

The Lord gave me the joy of helping to facilitate the DDH course for women IWs from the Caribbean Sun Region and other women leaders in Mexico City in 2017, as well as facilitate FRL to three women leaders of MOPS (Mothers of Pre-schoolers) in Mexico City. Later I helped facilitate the DDH course with national Alliance women leaders in San Jose, Costa Rica, and Guadalajara, Mexico.

### **Canada Today...**

From my experience in Cuba, I believe the *Developing a Discerning Heart* course can be transformational anywhere it is offered. This has proven true back in Canada, where I have helped facilitate it to a couple of groups of Alliance women in my home

church, Sevenoaks Alliance Church in Abbotsford, and from around the province over the past years.

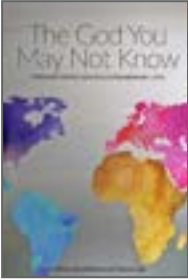
Since my years of working in Cuba with the wives of pastors, a passion that has grown in my heart is the needs of wives of pastors in Canada. Like the women in Cuba, many feel "left behind" as far as spiritual input and training in their lives. The women in Cuba saw their pastor husbands often attend seminars and retreats, but they were back home caring for the children and often for the church ministries. I have some ideas for the years ahead in Canada; we will see if they take off, fall to the ground, get promoted by others, or get postponed until later. I am holding these ideas in my open hands.

*Thank You, Lord God, for my ideas that take off and prove to be Your ideas after all! I look forward with excitement to this next part of my sojourn with You. Thank You for my heritage. Thank You that all of this is a gift from You—a lasting legacy of Your love and grace in my life. Amen.*

## Stories from Gaileen's Ministry

*The Country Bumpkin*, March 14, 2016. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160409211416/http://www.cmacan.org/stories/the-country-bumpkin>

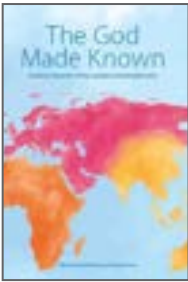
*Developing a Discerning Heart*, January 28, 2020. <https://www.cmacan.org/developing-a-discerning-heart/>



### More Stories of Those Who Went

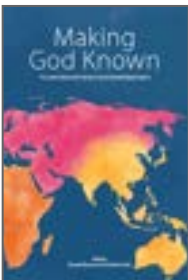
***The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives*** edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook

In Chapter 22, we read why Jack and Jean Shannon came to believe “The Best Teaching Happens Outside the Classroom.”



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

In Chapter 22, Ernie and Marilyn Klassen write about running the race set out for them.



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

Joseph and Helen Lee share their story of following the Lord's call in “Blind Obedience” in Chapter 38.

## Chapter 6

### **Follow Me: Murray and Michelle Derksen**

by Michelle Derksen

Cristina and her husband were our neighbours in Guadalajara; they lived on the corner of the next block, on our way to the preschool our boys attended. Many days we would stop and talk coming or going from school. Over time we became friends. Her husband had served in the Mexican military, and their children lived in the USA, so they were alone. One day they were not there, and for many months we did not see them. When I did see Cristina next, her husband had passed away. We began spending more time together, and our conversations turned to Jesus. Not long after, I came by one day, and I hardly recognized Cristina. She excitedly invited me in to tell me, "I met Him! I know Him! Everything has changed!" Her encounter with Jesus was so profound and so personal her very countenance had literally changed. After the encounter, her favourite thing was to spend hours reading her Bible each day! Even in her grief, she lived with deep joy and a newfound passion for El Shaddai, the All-Sufficient God.

God has taken us on an adventure of a lifetime. It has included risk, change, challenge, and lots of unknowns. It has meant a wealth of relationships with many who chose to also follow Jesus on His path for them. It has been incredible, challenging, and vibrant to accept His invitation over and over to "follow Me."

Murray was born in 1964 into a Christian family with five boys. He is the fourth of those boys and accepted Jesus at the age of seven when he and his brothers were "playing" church. From a very young age, he planned to be a medical doctor, studying and excelling at school. Active in Boy's Brigade and youth group, he was a natural leader. He describes his life during adolescence as "one way at church and another at school," until one day he heard God's voice clearly giving him a choice, an invitation, "You can continue down the path you live at school, but you will do it without Me, or you can choose Me. Which will it be?" Murray chose to follow Jesus and leave the double life behind.

Not long after, on the first night of a week-long missions conference, the speaker asked who felt God calling them to missions. Murray sat back comfortably, knowing his path was already firmly set with plans to study medicine. Over the week, God

did “desire surgery,” and by the last night, Murray was so convinced he wanted to follow God’s calling into cross-cultural missions he was ready to stand up and declare it even if the speaker did not ask. He did ask, and Murray stood to declare his decision. His Dad came and stood behind him, affirming, “your mother and I support you in this.” Their support meant the world! As has the support of our home church.

I also grew up in a Christian family, though it was not always the case. My Dad was an alcoholic. God miraculously rescued him at the point of suicide; an old drinking buddy who had found Jesus arrived at the very moment and told him about Jesus. The story of this friend’s obedience has deeply impacted me to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant. Through our obedience, the All-Sufficient God could be intersecting a situation, which might literally mean life or death for someone.

I am the youngest of four and still remember wanting my own personal faith journey with Jesus at the age of five because He was so real in our home. Prayer, faith, deliverance, and serving were some of the fruits modelled. It has always been my desire to serve Jesus with my whole life, whatever that looks like. So, when Murray and I met in high school, our love for Jesus, our mutual goals in life, and our vibrant youth group were good soil for a lasting relationship to begin.

We were married in 1984 and then went back to finish our theological training at Canadian Bible College. We knew we were headed for missions but had lots of questions. After college, we wrote to many Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) international workers around the globe with one question, “If we came, would they put us to work doing whatever they did not have time for?” In all, we spent six months travelling and learning from men and women who were serving globally. God confirmed His cross-cultural call to me sitting on a hot and sweaty bus in Thailand during our trip. The bus had stopped to pick up more people. Outside the window, a man was selling roasted chicken on a stick. There was lots of noise, many smells, and we could not understand a word of what was being said. Everything was so different! I asked God, “Why do I need to leave culture, language, and everything known? Couldn’t I be more effective in my own known world, in Canada?” His response was shocking, “If one person comes to know Me through your ministry, isn’t it worth it?” “One person, Lord?” “Yes, all Heaven rejoices over one person who repents.” And it was settled! Beautifully, there has been at least one in each place we have lived!

Coming back from our world trip, we were convinced that God was inviting us to take risks and follow Him deeper wherever we would go. We were ready to go and start things where there was nothing, rather than managing or maintaining

ministries that already existed. None of this could be done on our own. We needed to listen and follow closely what El Shaddai was saying. God gave us a burning desire for more of Him, and we began asking for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit. We shared our desire with a friend; he encouraged us to fast and pray for a season. Then he came back and prayed for us. For me, the immediate and consistent fruit of this time was a boldness to share my faith. For Murray, it was a fresh filling, manifesting itself in personal ways and ministry effectiveness in his first pastoral role. Daily and consistent morning time with God became, and has continued to be, a pattern that kept our faith strong and has developed our ability to recognize and follow Father's voice.

We served at Kilcona Park Alliance Church in Winnipeg for the next four years, where Murray was the outreach, pastoral care, and worship pastor. Those years were such good learning and stretching times for us. We were out four or five nights a week at care groups and would pack the playpen and put our first son to bed wherever we were. Murray honed and developed his skills in leadership, worship leading, prayer, and pastoral shepherding. I discovered my love for discipling new believers and still look back at those classes with joy; people whose roots have gone deep in Christ as they have learned to follow El Shaddai. They continue to bear good fruit.

On a short-term missions trip we lead into Northern Mexico, after supper one evening, walking up an avenue near Ciudad Victoria, we said to each other, "This feels like home." After four years of ministry at Kilcona, where our two sons, Mitch and Myles, were born, we headed back to Canadian Theological Seminary (CTS) for final preparation to go global. During the year (1991-1992), Murray travelled to Mexico with Charlie Cook and Steve Scarrow. God gave them a vision, one we have carried forward ever since, "Dios a México, México al Mundo," "God to Mexico, Mexico to the world." As we write this, the Mexico National Church is preparing its first candidates to send to the least reached!



Baptism in Mexico. Courtesy Murray Derksen.

## Mexico

Guadalajara was known as a missionary graveyard. Many mission groups had gone in and left because the soil was so hard, the work too challenging, the persecution too intense. Yet, we felt called to this city of six million people. Our field director



at the time, Ramon Esparza, had prayed for over twenty years for the opportunity to plant a church there. So, in the summer of 1992, we moved there with Tim and Susan Webster to start the C&MA's first church plant. In the city, we knew one Christian couple, a couple who had written the Esparzas. Through research, investigation, and meetings with other pastors, we sought out where the greatest need existed in the megacity. They directed us to an area of about 100,000 people with no known church or believers. So we began to walk and pray and pray and walk, week after week.

One day, as Tim and Murray stopped at a corner store (tienda) for a Coca Cola, a conversation ensued, opening a door for a Bible study in the tienda owner's home. Two more *Life of Jesus* studies started, and within a few months, we had a nucleolus of new believers, and a church was birthed. A few months later, the same tienda owner called one day. He was reading the Bible with some friends and needed help explaining what they were reading. I got off the phone and commented, "I feel like we are living in the Book of Acts. I just don't know what will happen on the next page." It was God's place and time for Guadalajara. This challenging, dry place was encountering El Shaddai; He was changing lives one at a time. The church grew, and a second one was started, along with a seminary. Our family grew too with the birth of our two girls, Mikaela and Mattea.

"I feel like we are living in the Book of Acts. I just don't know what will happen on the next page."

## Canadian Pacific District

In the middle of this exciting roller coaster ride, God asked again, "Will you follow Me?" This time it was back to Canada for Murray to work in the Canadian Pacific district office. Little did we know, it was also to save my life. Shortly after arriving and getting settled, it was discovered I have a rare, life-threatening condition. A phone call came from the doctor's office, "The doctor has requested an appointment with you and your husband as soon as possible." Ugh! Obviously, bad news! In the twenty-four hours between the call and the appointment, I clearly heard God's voice, "Michelle, I will not remove this from you but will walk with you each step of the way." After all these years, I declare God is faithful to His promises. Though He has not healed me completely, He heals me daily and gives me my portion! He is close, He is trustworthy, and He knows best. Though following Him in this health journey is one thing I would have never chosen,

neither would I trade it! He has called me deeper and walks so closely with me! He continually proves He is sufficient.

Why do we see hard as bad? Isaiah says, “Though the Lord gave you adversity for food and suffering for drink, he will still be with you to teach you. You will see your teacher with your own eyes. Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, ‘This is the way you should go, whether to the right or to the left’” (30:20, 21 NLT). We all like the last part of the verse, but that intimate knowledge of His voice comes at a cost. The “follow Me” can carry lots of adversity and suffering, and it is so worth it!

In our second year in Canada, Dave and Brenda Petrescue (Michelle’s brother) came to Canada for a family event. Dave shared his vision and dreams for Egypt and Maadi Community Church. He jokingly jabbed Murray in the ribs and said, “So, where do you see yourself fitting in?” At that moment, a switch went off in Murray’s heart and another “follow Me” invitation ensued. Our leadership was turning their focus to least-reached people and encouraged us to consider this opportunity. Though Murray felt a desire to go, he said to me, “We won’t go unless you, Michelle, are convinced it is right.” I wrestled hard and long with the Lord. One Sunday morning at church, a young lady I did not know handed me a note and said, “I sensed God ask me to give this to you.” I thanked her and put it in my Bible. The next morning in my quiet time, I remembered the note and read it. It was from Isaiah “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:18 19 NIV). Reading the note, my wrestling ended, and I said, “Yes, I will follow. I will go.”



Egyptian mosque.

Courtesy Murray Derksen.

## Cairo, Egypt

Haroun was the first-born son of the local mosque’s imam in Haroun’s hometown in South Sudan. Haroun had a dream one night; he saw a man’s face and sensed Jesus telling him to find the man because he had something for Haroun. One day, while walking down the street of his town, he saw the man from the dream. He approached him many times, told him about his dream, and asked what the man had for him. The man was the only church leader in town, and he eventually, reluctantly (because it was illegal), gave Haroun a copy of the Bible. While reading the



Egyptian street scene. Courtesy Murray Derksen.

Bible, Haroun encountered Jesus. His decision to follow Jesus led to significant persecution from his family, even to the point of them giving the order for him to be executed. As a result, Haroun fled north to Egypt. In Cairo, Haroun was discipled in a small group through Maadi Community Church (MCC). Haroun became a small group leader, multiplied his small group many times, and became a significant spiritual leader among the many Sudanese living in Cairo, pastoring one of the six church plants from MCC in 2006-2007.

Haroun knew he would not be able to return to South Sudan because of the persecution he would face. So, he began a Bible institute to train other Sudanese believers to go back and share their faith, starting faith communities in South Sudan where disciples could be multiplied. It was a privilege to work side-by-side with Haroun as part of the MCC staff.

Egypt encompassed some of the best and most challenging years of our lives. We discovered rich, fruitful ministry and deep personal pain often walk in tandem. Church was like a touch of heaven, with many nations and traditions worshipping together in the desert land, unified by the love of Jesus. Never before had we experienced such deep friendships as quickly as we did in Cairo. In ministry, Murray focused on opportunities outside the church walls and saw rich fruit among refugees and “cousins” like Haroun. I had the privilege of studying God’s Word together with women from many nations who had never studied it before. Simple steps of obedience, plus God’s intervention, resulted in many people choosing to follow Jesus.

Elaine was one of those. She was a nurse, and in nursing school many years earlier, she had a friend who was a Jesus follower. This friend was kind and loving and often invited Elaine to a Bible study or church. Elaine would politely decline, but she was intrigued by her friend’s life. She promised herself that one day, she would study the Bible to understand her friend more. Fast forward twenty years, and she had just moved to Cairo. While attending a lady’s event, an invitation to study the Bible was given. She said, “I don’t have an excuse why not.” Elaine joined me in my living room, told me of her promise, and emphatically iterated, “but I don’t want anything to do with religion or church.” It was one of those times when I was keenly aware God was at work. I just did not want to get in the way. We started studying the Book of John. When we got to chapter three, she said, “can I do this?” I reminded her, this is what she said she did not want to do. With her whole heart, she chose to embrace Jesus.

What made Cairo hard? Our All-Sufficient God used our time in Egypt to break down our perception of who we thought Him to be. He challenged our way of doing things, and in the process, He developed compassion, humility, and curiosity in us. We had loved one people group, but there in Egypt, God expanded our hearts to love the world and its variety of cultures and peoples.

...God expanded our hearts to love the world and its variety of cultures and peoples.

The year 2006 was a tough one for us. First, my brother Dave died tragically in an accident in Cairo. He was deeply loved by the church and the community;

we all grieved together. Then, only seven weeks later, my Dad passed away in our hometown of Kelowna. Grief is another of those “follow Me” journeys we would not choose. Yet, within grief, we find God near and dear; He deepens our ability to understand His heart of love. Even in grief, we have found Him to be sufficient. Though we only lived in Cairo for four years, we feel like we lived about ten years of life. Later on, when working through some past experiences, we counted over thirty major traumatic events from those years.

## **Caribbean Sun Region**

When our leaders asked us to consider going back to Latin America as the regional developers, we said, “No, why would we do that?” Our family of six had moved to the Middle East, and we were learning Arabic. We agreed to pray about it for one month. On the last day of the month, both of us, individually, heard God’s voice and invitation, “Do you trust Me? Be willing to enter the process.” And every step of the way, His invitation continued, “Just follow Me, one more step.”

We returned to Canada in 2008 for one year to begin the new role and then headed to Costa Rica in 2009 to set up our new base and regional office. Leaving our two university-aged sons in Canada, we embarked on another adventure with our girls. Upon arrival in this new land, we had just our suitcases and our All-Sufficient God, who opened the doors and provided housing, schooling, and immediate needs. It usually takes a few months of transition before one gets their footing again, but we could not land. By the end of 2009, we realized we were not thriving; we were barely surviving.

We had a conversation with Dr. Westwood, one of our international medical team, and two hours into the conversation, he said, “Your souls need time to catch up to your bodies.” Our leaders graciously gave us a leave of absence to process the many traumas, transitions, and unprocessed griefs we had experienced over the years. The year 2010 was our year of recalibration. We discovered Holy Spirit as a counsellor as He gently unpacked a tangled web of pain, emotion, and unhealthy work and transition patterns. Healing us from the inside out, He re-established health and vibrancy. He taught us the importance of Sabbath rest, praying as a priority, and abiding instead of striving. That year transformed the way we live, think, love, and do life and ministry. Oddly enough, it also established a healthy leadership style in the Sun Region where authenticity, trust, and vulnerability marked us all, impacting us and the way we disciple others.

As has been my practice in each place we have lived, I was part of or started a prayer group for our children’s school. I prayed for a year and a half in Costa Rica

for God to connect me with at least one other Christian mom with whom I could pray. He answered, and Pai Li and I began. She invited a friend, and another lady joined, the school director's wife. After months of being together, someone asked the director's wife where they went to church. She replied, "We don't." Murray and I talked about it and felt urged to offer regular time together to study the life of Jesus, even though we were not sure how we would do it with our travel schedule. We invited them. A few weeks later, we received an email from the two of them, "We have never had a worship experience as a family before, but we are up for the adventure." We met for supper, and they asked, "What are you thinking, and when can we start?" In the next breath, they asked, "Can we invite people?" And so, a little house church began. It was our joy to witness highly educated people, some who were almost opposed to the concept of God, turn their eyes and hearts towards Him. What a privilege to journey with these families as we discovered new things about Jesus together.

The places where we still have international workers in the Sun Region are hard. We would often find ourselves hitting a wall and having numerous setbacks. After 2010 and our commitment to pray about everything, my sister and I dreamed of setting up an intercessor team who would meet virtually, for one hour per week, to pray specifically for what was happening in the region. iSUN was born (intercessors for the Sun region). At the end of each semester, we would have a *God Story Day* and recall the many answers to prayer during the time frame. In those places where previously we would hit the wall, we began to see movement and breakthroughs. This group continues to meet, do the battle, and unseen ground preparation for the seeds being sown. There is a rich harvest because of their weekly investment! Thank you. We now have intercessor groups like this for all the other regions too.

How do you sum up the twelve years of regional leadership in a few lines? Our C&MA international workers are our heroes! Our Alliance leaders are godly. Choosing to pursue more of Father has no limits! Prayer has been a priority; authenticity a must. Unity has propelled us forward, and perseverance has paid its dividends. The mission work over the last one hundred and thirty years in Latin America has been effective, and we have been privileged to partner with our national churches in many ways. We have persevered in a launch of an international school with numerous challenges. One new innovation has been through Samuel House, a cross-cultural live-in internship program preparing Latin Americans to thrive among the least reached as international workers.

In Cairo, Egypt in 2008, we met some young men from Central America serving in Jordan as international workers. We already knew we were leaving Egypt and



All Region Retreat Latin America, 2015. Courtesy Murray Derksen.

heading back to Latin America. Their story impacted us and inspired us to dream about the possibilities of Latin American Alliance women and men being sent to the least reached around the world. Over the next few years, in meetings with the National Church leaders from various countries in Latin America, we discovered God was already calling men and women to serve the least reached. These leaders asked us to help them prepare their international workers. We dreamed of how The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada could best help. How could we pass on some of our decades of mission experience in a practical training program allowing for the development of even better, more integrated, more transparent workers who would form part of the next global wave of missions?

It was in August 2016, at the annual conference of Latin American C&MA leaders in Bolivia, when a “God Moment” happened. Murray was sitting at a table having lunch with the C&MA contingent from Chile. The director of missions and Murray hit it off immediately due to the enjoyment of food, lively conversation, and a similar sense of humour (mostly the humour). They asked what our vision was and why we Canadians were there, and then they shared their vision of training missions’ candidates in a multicultural setting. A natural friendship blossomed, and our shared dream became a partnership with a common purpose, vision, and values.

The director of Global Missions, Brem Frentz, and Murray went straight from the conference in Bolivia to Paraguay to visit the multicultural church the Chileans had started in a poly-cultural border town. This was the environment

we had been looking for; Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, and Christians, all mingled together in one large microcosm of cultures and languages. Their visit and many follow-up visits opened the door to what is now called Samuel House. We have had two Canadian couples assist in the launch of this year-long missions training program. Samuel House (or Casa de Samuel) is now led by the Chilean National Church, with new missions' candidates attending every year. Several of the graduates have already been assigned to Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt. What happened to us in Egypt was God's preparation for what He was already doing in the hearts and minds of our Latin American C&MA family, sending new workers

to the least reached. We love how He weaves His Story together!

In the fall of 2019, we sensed God inviting us to follow Him on an Abrahamic journey, to "leave what is known and travel to a land I will show you." We sensed it was time to step away from our role as regional developers without having something else to go to. There was a deep sense of peace that this was the right thing to do. We finished our role in the summer of 2020. As I write this, we are just coming to the end of our last



Michelle and Murray Derksen, 2018.  
Courtesy Murray Derksen.

home assignment as international workers with The Alliance Canada. What will life look like from here on? We trust the All-Sufficient God will continue to lead the way. We know we cannot live internationally because of my health, and we know God will continue to give us His assignments as we respond to His ongoing invitation, "Follow Me."

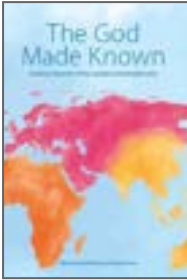
## More Stories of Those Who Went

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

In Chapter 23, Wilson Kaan tells of his parents, Jonathan and Huilan, and their "Sixty Years on the Mission Field."







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

Chapter 11, written by Marilyn Klassen, tells of ministry in Peru.



***On Mission: Stories of Those Who Went, Volume 1*** compiled by Ronald Brown

Read how Dave and Brenda Petrescue were “Spoiled for the Ordinary,” in chapter 6.

## Chapter 7

### **First Wave to Russia: Doug and Julie Tiessen**

by Julie Tiessen

Before the modern era, missionaries packed their belongings in coffins with the sobering knowledge their bodies would likely return in them! Prospective missionaries were fully cognizant of the ultimate sacrifice they may be required to make in carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

In the 20th century, missionaries like Herb and Eileen Tiessen knew life in India would have risks but could never anticipate what happened one Easter Monday. The day before, Herb preached a powerful resurrection message in the church founded by missionary statesman C.T. Studd. Preparing for a picnic in the mountains with another missionary family, Herb, a capable mechanic, hopped on his Vespa scooter to go examine their car, which would not start. He took six-year-old Dougie, the youngest of his three children, for the ride. Inspecting the vehicle, Herb discovered the problem and had the necessary part at home. Dougie wanted to ride with him, but Herb said to play with the kids, and he would be right back. Sadly, he never returned; a truck passing another on a winding mountain road hit his Vespa head-on. It was a senseless end in the prime of a ministry career. Centuries earlier, Herb's 11th great uncle, the Bishop of England, was burned at the stake before the Protestant Reformation. Although Herb's tragic death would never be recorded in church history, God would use it to draw young people into missionary service.

Eileen and the children returned to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan and later moved to Regina, for her to serve as Campus Nurse and Director of Admissions at Canadian Bible College (now Ambrose University in Calgary). It was there, while a student, that God called Doug to replace his father on the mission field.

The Berlin Wall was torn down, and the Soviet Union was opening up. Doug and I, married and both students at Canadian Theological Seminary, felt strongly that The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) should respond (we were both members and Doug's dad had been an Alliance pastor). Dr. Arnold Cook, Vice President of Global Ministries, accepted our proposal to do a Missions Research Project on the feasibility of sending missionaries into Russia.

In the summer of 1993, we were asked to host a Canadian/American C&MA

Russia team for a six-week language program at the University of Regina, billeting them in the dorms at Canadian Bible College. We were the first wave of missionaries invited to join young Russians starting churches and opening schools for theological education in Southern Russia and the Crimean Region of Ukraine. With new religious freedom, Christian literature had started flooding in from Germany. Downtown book tables led to Bible studies, which developed into fifty fledgling church plants by the Apocalypse Mission, which would soon partner with the C&MA to become the Evangelical Christian Missionary Union (ECMU). Discipleship and pastoral ministry training were desperately needed, and the C&MA was well suited to fill the need.

Studying Russian at Kuban State University, we were affirmed as having an



Doug showing land for Lampados Bible College to Dr. Arnold Cook, wife Mary Lou and son John, 1996. Courtesy Doug Tiessen.

early aptitude for the language. Doug and I were often pulled out of classes to translate between C&MA and Russian church leadership, meeting to develop the relationship and establish a partnership. Before we finished formal language study, we were hastened into ministry, invited to teach at Lampados Bible College (now Kuban Evangelical Christian University). Prior to the first wave of C&MA missionaries arriving, in September 1993 the Russians had started this school in the “Adegei” Muslim Republic adjacent to the city of Krasnodar, and from it an extension education program based in the city of Maykop an hour away. Inundated with 250 applicants the first year, the two large houses could only accommodate 50, yet they accepted 75! In the first cohort, 23 students studied at the school, and 80 by extension. They asked the C&MA to provide teachers and church planting “consultants” (their word) to partner with future grads.



First phase of new campus for Lampados Bible College (now Kuban Evangelical Christian University), 2000. Courtesy Doug Tiessen.



First Russian field forum, 1994. Courtesy Doug Tiessen.

With space restrictions, and pressures from the Muslim Republic disapproving of a Bible college being located there, the Canadian Alliance Women raised funds for a new college campus on 4.5 acres, which still thrives in the north sector of Krasnodar to this day. Almost 30 years later, they have graduated 877 students, now spread into 16 countries!

While teaching there, Doug served as Academic Dean, training a young Russian to take over when Doug was appointed Field Director for the C&MA missionary team that grew to forty missionaries from seven countries. He taught *Organization of the Church* at the Bible college and in their extension program. The Russian church leaders stated publicly at their pastors' conference that this was the most practical and beneficial class to their church planting efforts, for which Doug gave glory to God and thanked Him for being used in this way.

I taught *Music and Worship* at the Bible college and extension program and *Christian Hospitality* to the female students and pastors' wives based on notes from a seminar in Canada by the C&MA President's wife, Marion Sylvester. We, in turn, passed on all our class and seminar notes to young Russian teachers who carried on our ministry at the Bible college and beyond. Working ourselves out of a job in two years, we were happy to make a small contribution to the



Julie teaching at Lampados Bible College, 1996. Courtesy Doug Tiessen.

multiplication process for God’s Kingdom advancement in Russia and Ukraine.

The push into the former Soviet Union was a significant endeavour for the C&MA. Before going to the field, we had travelled to speak at “Eastern Europe and Russia Rallies” held at churches across Canada. This was organized by C&MA Vice President Stuart Lightbody (who later visited us in Krasnodar when I was on bed rest awaiting the birth of our first child in 1995). From those rallies emerged an army of financial supporters and faithful intercessors. Carried along by their prayers, during the early years on the field, we felt invincible despite dangers at every turn.

One winter’s day, Doug was detained and interrogated KGB-style for long gruelling hours, while I ventured to the farmers market and wound up locked in a dark cold-storage vault with a fur-clad mafia kingpin wielding the most menacing axe I had ever seen! We each emerged unscathed and found the way back to our Soviet-era apartment block by nightfall, shaken up but safe. The prayers of God’s people had miraculously unlocked doors, reminiscent of the Apostle Paul and Silas, whose prison gates flung open.

In Moscow, we were awaiting the birth of our first son, after a difficult pregnancy which necessitated emergency flights and a Kremlin hospital stay. Doug was held at knifepoint in the market, then days later was given supernatural strength in

the C&MA guest flat to fight off an intruder intent on cutting the baby out of my tummy to sell on the black market! The threat of death from snake bites and tropical diseases was replaced by new dangers on mission fields like Russia, where corruption and crime seemed to lurk on every corner.

Despite emotional trauma caused by the incident and the mission's directive to keep it quiet so as not to alarm other missionaries, I remained undeterred, knowing God had protected Doug, me, and the baby born a week later. Discovering the intention of the intruder from a police detective (confirmed later by an article in the *Moscow Times* newspaper), I sensed little 'Joshy' must be a special child meant to be raised by us.

From age eleven I had a strong call to missions, and I believe God knew why this would be needed. Missionary Ruth Patterson spoke to our Pioneer Girls at Stoney Creek Alliance Church, asking for any willing to follow God's call to the mission field. I stood immediately, never forgetting that moment when I was the only girl in a large circle who made a stand. I would take the road less travelled, leaving behind an artistic flair, career aspirations, and boyfriends not called to missions. Instead, God gifted Doug and me with tenacity and a love of adventure. We would turn our missionary hardships into stories featured in C&MA publications



Doug with field leadership team, 1999. Courtesy Doug Tiessen.

and videos. It seemed nothing could stop us... until something did. However, like Doug's father, it was not what anyone expected.

During our second term, as Field Director, Doug, along with me and our sons Joshua and Zachary, faced finding a new home, field office, and guest apartment on short notice. Threatened by mafia loan sharks, our landlord needed to sell his real estate fast. When Zachary was born, I had contracted a severe virus from the Russian hospital, which developed into symptoms later diagnosed as Fibromyalgia. With a newborn and toddler, I had spent most of our first home assignment in Canada flat-out on the couch, in between a rigorous speaking schedule in Ontario and Saskatchewan. Back in Russia, I struggled to stay on my feet caring for a young family and steady stream of missionaries, Russian church leaders, and short-term mission teams. So I was thrilled when God provided a large home close to the building site for the new Bible college, which conveniently housed everything under one roof.

In our previous home and adjacent field office, we had to keep the mission money in a safe, carried into the country by visiting C&MA leaders, professors, and short-termers. As a result, we endured a couple of harrowing nighttime break-in attempts. The Russian 'ruble' had crashed, and the bank froze \$200,000 of mission money, which took Doug a two-year battle to retrieve (with interest



The Tiessen Family, 1997. Courtesy Doug Tiessen.

PTL!) The ECMU Church President urged us to get a gun or a guard dog. We opted for a fierce-looking German Boxer that immediately took to our boys. Sadly, a year later when we were in Helsinki, Finland having our work visas renewed, the dog fell ill and died.

Our Russian nanny suspected poisoning from the large clan of Gypsies running an opium trade from the house next door. Syringes were often tossed over the tall metal walls into our yard where the boys played. On one occasion, three-year-old Zac found a used condom in his sandbox, thinking it was a balloon! The neighbours stole a large box from our shed containing toys from Canada for birthdays and Christmases, and set a visiting missionary's car on fire. They seemed intent on pushing us out of the neighbourhood, despite our kindness to them. The nanny hauled our dead dog to a clinic for an autopsy, which indicated it died from a virus that could kill a Boxer in 24 hours.

We thought it fortunate when we returned from Helsinki to discover the new house came with a guard dog — a German Wire-haired Pointer, the pride of its owner who occasionally took it hunting and returned with a truckload of pheasants. After the first expedition, the dog was placed back in our yard, and a few days passed before I noticed several brown sacs like large corn kernels hanging from around its eyes. Inspecting the long fur, Doug found dozens of engorged insects feeding off the animal's blood. To relieve the dog and protect our boys who played with it in the yard, Doug began pulling the insects off using tweezers from his computer repair kit, with me urging him to wear gloves as they may carry some disease. Doug removed 30 to 40 ticks on a couple of occasions, and the nanny removed that many a few other times.

Doug went from hardly a sick day in his life to suffering one health challenge after another—from environmentally-induced asthma to irritable bowel syndrome. Each month he would have a flareup of flu-like symptoms and depression, such that I began calling it male PMS! Several times during our last years in Russia, Doug wanted to 'throw in the towel' and go home. By then, my health was recovering, thanks to a suitcase of naturopathic supplements for Fibromyalgia, gifted to me by a short-term team that had heard about my condition. I tried to keep Doug from despair, while adding a one-room schoolhouse for six missionary kids (MKs) to my ministries in our final year. Feeling ill-equipped to teach children, I begged the C&MA to send us a teacher, but none could be found.

In 2001 we returned to Ontario for our second home assignment, grateful that God had brought our family through another term intact. It had not been easy serving as a young Field Director on a team of mostly older missionaries, although we felt affirmed by leadership and votes from the missionaries. They said we were



the right couple for that time due to our language proficiency, favour with the Russian church leaders, and the simple fact that we were willing to carry suitcases! That we did, along with finding apartments, rental homes, language schools, and nannies for the steady stream of missionaries joining the team.

In Moscow, with our boys in tow, we welcomed new missionary families, visiting professors, and short-term mission teams, showing them around, orientating them to the culture, then accompanying them to their cities. We travelled across Russia and Ukraine to visit church leaders with whom the C&MA was partnering, and missionaries settling into language study, then later entering into church planting partnerships with Russian Bible college graduates.

I was assigned as Language Coordinator, but felt like a taskmaster while missionaries struggled with this complex language I referred to as “Greek in a blender.” Eager to send missionaries to Russia, North American C&MA leadership ignored Modern Language Aptitude Test results and sent personnel who might have had better success with an easier language. One American couple struggled so badly, leadership wanted to send them home, but Doug fought to keep them as Russian colleagues petitioned on their behalf. This couple is the only remaining first wave of missionaries serving there to this day!

Upon what would become our final return to Canada from serving two terms, Doug began seeing medical specialists, recounting his story of the hunting dog. After a dozen specialists he stopped telling it, although by then he had heard about ticks and Lyme Disease, but suggested it to doctors in vain.

Doug was urged by his former professor, Dr. Enoch Wan, and American C&MA leadership to take his Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Reformed Theological Seminary. So he flew back and forth to Jackson, Mississippi, on a full-tuition scholarship. In between two-week intensive classes, I would have everything ready to go for a whirlwind of up to 14 speaking engagements at churches and schools on weekends.

Doug was exhausted from the rigours, still struggling with a myriad of symptoms coming and going, which no doctor could diagnose. With a strong physical constitution and an inherited Mennonite work ethic, he soldiered on. After defending his dissertation about the C&MA partnership in Russia, professors said it was among the best in the past 25 years. In April 2004, upon completing his studies, Doug took on the role of Assistant Vice President of Global Ministries at the Alliance National Ministry Centre (NMC) in Toronto.

Dr. Martin Sanders, our former professor who had become a mentor when we hosted him in Russia on several of his trips, insisted I possessed the intellectual fortitude to warrant further studies. When I resisted, he secured financial

sponsorship and submitted a reference to the Arrow Leadership Program he taught in. After several trips to British Columbia to attend intensive courses, I was offered a scholarship from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to apply my Arrow credits toward a Doctor of Ministry in Leadership Studies. Sanders found funding for my travel to the campus in Charlotte, North Carolina, and a pastor and his wife offered me free room and board, making it an opportunity I could not pass up. I only hoped it would help me be more useful for God's Kingdom and not merely serve my own interest in further studies. By God's enabling, I graduated in 2008 at the top of my class but by then, Doug was too sick and finances were too scarce for me to attend.

Neither of us had planned to live in Canada. After graduating from Bible college and anticipating life as a single missionary, I had found myself engaged and sitting through interviews with Doug for pastoral positions to fulfill the two-year home ministry requirement before being assigned to the mission field. During one meeting with a District Superintendent, the man disregarded me until we stood up to leave, and he asked if I played the piano or typed! It was a stark realization of the limitations, especially for a pastor's wife, in C&MA church ministry at the time.

Conversely, on the mission field serving among conservative Russian Baptists whose wives still wore head coverings, I was given every opportunity to minister using my spiritual gifts. Eventually I was invited to teach *New Testament Greek* and *Biblical Hermeneutics* at the Bible college (although by then I had to decline further teaching, due to our assignment as Field Director).

The path to my teaching had been forged by an older woman from C&MA Holland named Britta, who, along with her husband Lammert Hukema, was invited to teach at the Bible college in the early years when the Canadian C&MA also redeployed Clem and Maddie Dreger, and Lloyd and Georgette Makaroff. Pre-retirement teachers like these filled a temporary gap, working through translators while new missionaries learned the language. The Russians were brutal about their language, rating missionaries in front of each other and only allowing the most proficient to teach in theological education.

From 2004 to 2005, Doug worked sick at the NMC and travelled, until his health deteriorated, and he was forced to take sick leave. With no answers from numerous diagnostic tests, after five weeks the missionary doctor said it was likely just chronic fatigue, and he should go back to work as it would do no harm. Doug responded, half-jokingly, he would meet him next in the Emergency.

A few months later, while interviewing a missionary candidate couple over a meal during General Assembly in Edmonton, suddenly Doug could not breathe. As he gasped for air, in desperation, the young woman handed him an asthma

inhaler from her purse, which remedied the problem. He called me at home to book him a doctor's appointment. Doug barely managed to lead the missions rally the night before flying home and heading straight to the Emergency, where it was discovered all his organs were shutting down! He was forced to leave his ministry at the NMC, not imagining he would never return.

By the time I received my diploma, cap and gown in the mail from Gordon-Conwell in 2008, Doug had been off work and without an income for two years, and we had drained our savings. Eventually, we secured CPP Disability for him, then the C&MA insurance provider added Long Term Disability, including two years back-pay, for which we were relieved and thankful to God.

My graduation had passed by then, and the stresses had given rise to symptoms much like Doug's. After ten years and eighteen medical specialists, he had recently been diagnosed with Chronic Lyme Disease and several co-infections. I fell ill while still on official study leave with the C&MA. For the next three years, after treating me unsuccessfully for Fibromyalgia, the physician finally realized I, too, had developed Chronic Lyme Disease.

A year later, with our teenage boys easily breaking bones, it was discovered that they had also tragically contracted this debilitating disease. It was impossible to determine whether we got it from the guard dog in Russia or from living in the same household with Doug (like families in Lyme, Connecticut, where it got its name).

What started as a small undetected tick bite on the mission field ended up a family tragedy. We read years later about the proliferation of Lyme bacteria in ticks on pheasants in southern Russia during the time we had served there. The deep grieving which began when Doug went on permanent sick leave in 2006, proved to be a terribly hard, long, and lonely road.

By God's grace, with the help of His Church and the Holy Spirit as our Comforter, over the course of a decade, Doug and I came to accept the loss of our health, savings, career, and colleagues. We will never be accorded the honour of martyred missionaries, those who returned in coffins, or casualties like Doug's dad buried in India. But we now live quietly and contentedly as C&MA medical retirees, with the knowledge that we answered God's call to the mission field and served Him to the best of our ability for the limited time we had, teaching and serving in mission leadership in Russia and Canada.

Those preparing for missionary service, and those sending them, must seriously count the cost. We knew only too well the threats on our lives at the hands of the Russian mafia and former-KGB that tapped our phones and often surveilled our home and mission office from a car parked across the street. But we never imagined a tiny insect bite would eventually take us out of ministry, rendering us

disabled for the rest of our own lives and the lives of our sons.

Ironically, as teenagers, Josh and Zac were discovered to be prodigies, the odds of two in one family being one in ten million! Josh's early gift for art is hypothesized to be from an in-vitro brain injury during the scuffle in Moscow shortly before his birth. The full story is told in a book and documentary film.

In an unusual way, God brought beauty from ashes for our family (Isaiah 61:3). We remain committed to the Lord's plan for our lives, which took an unexpected turn into the fine art and music composing worlds each of our boys entered at a young age. These are very secular fields populated by exceedingly few Christians. Josh and Zac exemplify the missional fervour of their parents and grandparents, intentional in carrying that legacy to 'unreached people groups' on international 'mission fields' afforded by globalization. You can take the missionary off the field, but you can't take the missionary heart out of the Tiessens!

Over the years, following the advice of industry mentors like artist Robert Bateman, Doug and I have helped launch our boys' careers in these difficult fields. Admittedly, seminary did not prepare us for this. Nevertheless, we have been able to use transferable ministry skills with the limited strength God gives us each day. Alongside their emerging careers, Josh and Zac are each involved in related local church and parachurch Arts ministries, with us serving gladly behind the scenes in supportive roles.

After Lyme treatment stronger than chemotherapy, six years later our family still pays \$3,000 a month to keep us all on our feet. Doug continues to receive Long Term Disability because of working those two years at the NMC, and we see this as God's provision, reflecting our life verse in Jeremiah 29:11. Josh and Zac are partially supported as Christians in the Arts through Incarnation Ministries toward their portion of our family's ongoing Lyme treatment, funded by a handful of donors who believe the Church should look after missionaries they committed to when commissioning them for service.

We are still in contact with our boys' Russian nanny, who also developed Chronic Lyme Disease presumably from the same guard dog, as did her daughter. Through Facebook, we eventually reconnected with our missionary colleagues and Bible college students, plus Russian and Ukrainian pastors and missionaries spread throughout the world, continuing the multiplication process to build God's Kingdom. To date, the C&MA partnerships we were blessed to help forge in Russia have seen 90 churches planted, with 5,700 members and adherents now joining in the song of the redeemed. To God be the glory!

"Only one life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last." C.T. Studd

## Resources

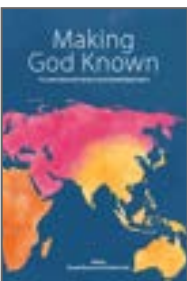
- For the full story of the attempted prenatal abduction, see [Josh Tiessen: A Decade of Inspiration](#) by Julie A. Tiessen and Josh Tiessen
- [Prodigy Brothers](#) by Joe Camoriano - A 40-minute documentary about Josh and Zac Tiessen available for rent or purchase on Amazon
- [The Prodigy's Cousin: The Family Link Between Autism and Extraordinary Talent](#) by Joanne Ruthsatz and Kimberly Stephens - Chapter Eight "Another Path to Prodigy" about Josh and Zac Tiessen
- [Streams in the Wasteland](#) by Josh Tiessen
- Josh and Zac Tiessen's websites:
  - [www.joshtiessen.com](http://www.joshtiessen.com)
  - [www.zactiessen.com](http://www.zactiessen.com)
- Doug Tiessen Ph.D. Dissertation: [A Historical Ethnographic Document Analysis of an Invitational Partnership: A case study of the Evangelical Christian Missionary Union and The Christian and Missionary Alliance](#)
- Julie Tiessen DMin Dissertation: [The Trailing Spouse in Mission Leadership: Stewarded Commodity or Lost Resource?](#)

## More Stories of Those Who Went



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

In Chapter 27, you can read the story of the Canadian Chinese Alliances Churches Association, compiled by Anita Leung.



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

Donna Frentz and Ron Brown, in Chapter 2, explain how the C&MA's Global Ministries has stayed true to its purpose. In Chapter 37, you will find the story of Bob and Louella Gould and the "Tap on the Shoulder."

## Chapter 8

# From War to Earthquakes: God Led and Protected John and Penny Hall

by Penelope R. Hall

In 1974 when we were living in Pleiku in the central highlands of Viet Nam, there were many attacks on the villages in the area, particularly between Pleiku and the Cambodian border. As a result, the South Vietnamese government began evacuating people from the villages under threat and moving them to a large open area just south of Pleiku.

We learned these villagers were in dire need of help, so, taking many sacks of rice, oatmeal, noodles, tinned fish, and other staples, we went out to the campsite. On arrival, we learned the camp was divided into Jarai and Bahnar. I went into the Jarai section and the Flemings to the Bahnar. I found the tent of the leader of the group, who immediately came out to welcome me, exclaiming they knew I would come. He proceeded to bow at my feet, proclaiming to everyone the angel with the message had arrived. I pulled him to his feet, assuring him I was not an angel. Fortunately, I had Ilana, our three-year-old daughter, with me and explained I was just a human and she was my daughter. He insisted they knew I was coming because they had a dream, and I looked like the angel in the dream. I was the first white person these people had seen, and I suppose my fair skin and blond hair helped them draw this conclusion. He also insisted I had a Book with an important message. I agreed with him on that point.

He insisted they knew I was coming because they had a dream, and I looked like the angel in the dream.

He then sent the children to call all the people to come to hear the story from the Book. While the children were running around, he told me, at one time, they knew the story from the Book, but it had been passed down for so many years they no longer had the story correct. But he knew I had the story written down in the Book, so I could tell them the true story. I marvelled at how the Holy Spirit had prepared these people to hear the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

They all gathered around me; they told me I had to start at the beginning and

tell the whole story of the Book. I started with Creation, the fall, God's promises, the prophecies, the birth of Jesus, His life, His death, His resurrection, the good news of how through Jesus' death and resurrection we can be cleansed from our sin, made pure in God's eyes, and can have eternal life.

In summary, I told them the story of the Book from Genesis to Revelation. I was about to ask if any of them wanted to repent from their sin and turn to Jesus when the headman stood up and said they must believe what I was telling them because he knew it was the truth. That day I had the privilege of leading forty-four people to Christ. A week later, I returned with more supplies and some fifty people were waiting for me; they wanted to know Jesus as their Saviour too. We began regular meetings, and almost the whole camp came to profess Christ as Lord and Saviour, all except that headman, who repeatedly explained to me it was too late for him and he had sinned too much to be forgiven. I wept and prayed for him, but ultimately, I had to leave him in God's hands. Yes, many came to Christ, but we were always aware of the fact that we were in a very real battle for the souls of men and women, boys and girls (Ephesians 6:12).

## **From the Beginning**

I had the privilege of being raised in a godly home. I came to know Jesus as my Saviour on Good Friday, just before I turned five. At the age of seven, I heard God's call to missions; it was a distinctive call, which to my young ears sounded like God was talking to me in an audible voice. At the age of thirteen, I asked God to confirm my call, and He spoke to me powerfully from Isaiah 61:1-3. I thank God for keeping the call ever before me throughout my schooling.

In 1961, John graduated from Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College and came to Ottawa to practice. Although his mother had sent him to Sunday school at the United Church when he was young, he had never been challenged to make a decision to follow Jesus Christ as Lord. Nevertheless, on looking back, he can see how God had His hand on his life. After coming to Ottawa, he was invited to the Alliance church, where he heard the Gospel. At the time, he had been dating a girl who was in training to be a Jehovah's Witness. He had been to the Kingdom Hall with her, but after opening his heart to Christ and claiming Him as Lord and Saviour, he saw what was going on in the Kingdom Hall was more like organized compulsion rather than a message of saving grace.

John continued to attend the Alliance church and grew rapidly in his faith. It was at the church where we met and I, along with my Dad, had the privilege of discipling John. We began dating, but our dates were marked by discussions centred on the



John and Penny's wedding, 1964.  
Courtesy Penny Hall.

Word of God. John put me to shame by his eagerness to learn God's Word and his enthusiasm to understand how to apply the Scripture to his life.

The first time he proposed marriage to me, I said, "No." I knew God had not called him to missions, so how could I agree to marry him. However, some months later, during our missionary convention, John heard the Lord's call from John 20:21, "...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." I knew His call was genuine, and God had given me a partner who shared my purpose in life to follow God's calling. So we were married in May 1964.

We began to seek the Lord's leading for our lives but kept meeting with closed doors. Then, in *The Alliance Witness* magazine, we read a plea for teachers for the Dalat School. The

Ellisons were on furlough from Viet Nam, and we talked to them about this need. As I was teaching at the time, they encouraged us to apply. So, in October of 1965, we sent in our letter of application. In November, we went to New York City for an interview and were appointed to the Dalat School. We arrived in Tanah Rata, Malaysia, in May 1966 to take the place of the teachers who were on furlough for the following academic year.

## Ministry in Viet Nam

In June 1967, we attended the field conference in Viet Nam, and as the teachers whom we had replaced were returning, we were asked if we would be willing to be reassigned to Viet Nam under special assignment. We agreed immediately and moved to Dalat, Viet Nam, for language study in July 1967.

God was very gracious to me and gave me facility with the Vietnamese language very quickly, so I was able to finish the two-year course in three months. This, indeed, was a blessing because, by December, I ended up in bed due to problems with my pregnancy. John kept studying in class, and I began to



memorize Scriptures in Vietnamese and read classical Vietnamese literature. This went on until Tét 1968 when there was an abrupt escalation in the attacks all over South Viet Nam. We had to leave our house and go up to the school buildings. The following night our compound was being showered with rockets exploding in the air and scattering shrapnel all over. While running for shelter in an underground storeroom, I began to haemorrhage. When we reached the storeroom, our colleagues gathered around me and prayed; the bleeding stopped while praying. All thirty-four of us knew God was with us. We were at peace even though we knew soldiers were searching for us. The next day, after what seemed like an interminable wait, the American military came for us and took us to the signal corps base. After spending two weeks on the American base on Cam Ranh Bay, we were flown to Thailand, where later in the year, our daughter Ilana<sup>1</sup>, our miracle baby, was born.



John distributing Bibles to the Vietnamese military.  
Courtesy Penny Hall.

Eventually, we returned to Viet Nam and settled in Saigon, where John began working with Garth Hunt in evangelism among the South Vietnamese military. As for myself, I started writing a fifteen-year series of graded Sunday school lessons for the Vietnamese church and running teacher training classes for Sunday school teachers and child evangelism clubs. I managed to complete the Sunday school series before coming back to Canada for home assignment. During these years in Saigon, we saw many men and women, boys and girls, come to faith in Jesus Christ. In particular, many were patients in the military hospital where we held evangelistic services every Sunday evening. We were also involved in city-wide campaigns and outreach to the prisons.

While living in Saigon, through one particular incident, we were reminded the Lord is constantly watching over us (Psalm 121), even to the extent of providing the answer to our prayers before we even asked (Philippians 4:19).

In 1968, a very turbulent year in South Viet Nam, we were living in Saigon quite near the airport. For several days we had been under stringent curfew rules, only allowing people to move about the city for a couple of hours each day. The markets were all closed, and food was running short.

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<sup>1</sup> Ilana, is now Ilana Lobbezoo, who has served in Cambodia with the Alliance since 1996.

Some Alliance visitors were supposed to arrive by air, and because we were close to the airport, John was asked to go to pick them up. When he got there, he discovered three American businessmen who had been bumped from the plane and were going to have to spend the night in the Saigon Airport, which at the time was a small terminal building with no facilities for food or lodging. John also learned the expected visitors were not going to arrive that day. He called me from the airport to tell me he was bringing these three businessmen home. I agreed, provided he told them we were down to tinned tuna and rice, but we would be happy to share what we had with them. I prayed, asking the Lord to give me some creative ideas for fixing dinner for our visitors.

I had just sent my prayer heavenward when I heard a honking horn at our gate. I rushed out to see the chaplain's assistant from the American base nearby. He said, "Some of the freezers on the base have conked out, and we have extra food that we thought you could use. I have it here; can I give it to you?"

"You are an answer to prayer," I told him. He then proceeded to empty the cartons from the jeep, including a carton of T-bone steaks, a box of fresh salad vegetables, a carton of various frozen vegetables, a box of fresh fruit, and a huge bag of potatoes and six gallons of milk. The food had been on its way to us, even before I prayed. By the time John arrived with the businessmen, I had the steaks under the broiler, potatoes cooking, and a salad ready to serve.

The men came in, and one of them noted he could smell meat cooking. He said, "I thought you were low on food, and we were to eat tuna and rice tonight, but I am smelling steaks cooking."

"Yes," I said, "Apparently, the Lord knew that you were hungry, and He has provided a feast for you and for us. I asked Him for some creative ideas to prepare food for you from what I had on hand, but He supplied an abundance of food instead." I explained what had happened after John's telephone call. We had a wonderful opportunity to share some food during the evening, the concrete evidence of God's goodness, as well as the gospel message to these who were both physically and spiritually hungry.

Towards the end of our first term, the field leaders began talking to us about moving to the central highlands when we returned after our year at home. John was very interested in the work with the patients of Hansen's disease (leprosy) because of one of the men, Dr. Robert Thompson, who had been instrumental in leading him to Christ. He was a chiropractor who had been a missionary in Ethiopia, where he had done considerable work among those suffering from this dreadful disease. The mission was planning to increase the work of the three leprosy clinics in the central highlands; so, they approached John about getting involved in this



John carrying a wounded South Vietnamese military person so he can attend the evangelistic service on Sunday evening in the hospital auditorium. Courtesy Penny Hall.

effort. They also suggested that on our way back to Canada, John could take some training in India at the hospital in Karigiri, where Dr. Paul Brand had had a remarkable ministry and pioneered rehabilitation surgery for leprosy patients and we could visit the leprosy treatment centres in Ethiopia. In addition, there were opportunities for me to get involved in the work on the translation of the Bible into Jarai were we to settle in Pleiku on our return.

Arrangements were made following this plan; on our way back to Canada, we spent a month in India and a month in Ethiopia, where John was able to work in some of the leading leprosy treatment centres. He learned a lot about rehabilitation for these patients after reconstructive surgery. He also learned strategies for preventing deformities and secondary infection, the leading causes of deformity and disfigurement in people suffering from Hansen's disease. Also, during our year

at home, we went to the leprosy treatment and research centre in Carville, Louisiana, where we had the privilege of meeting Dr. Paul Brand and his wife, Dr. Margaret Brand, an ophthalmic surgeon. John spent most of the time in Carville working with Paul, and I spent some time with Margaret, who coached me in diagnostic techniques and in some simple procedures for the prevention of damage to the eyes of leprosy patients. We were able to attend some fascinating lectures on research progress into treatments for this insidious disease. I spent some time in the diagnostic laboratory and received training to later train laboratory technicians in Pleiku.

While we were at home, we both had many opportunities to share the news about some of the marvellous things God was doing in Viet Nam. We also had occasions of challenging young people in the Alliance churches to consider committing their lives to the Lord to minister to the needy people of this world and give them the glorious message of salvation in Jesus Christ.



John treating a leprosy patient. Courtesy Penny Hall.

When we returned to Southeast Asia, we spent the first few months in Chiang Mai, Thailand, at the Presbyterian hospital leprosy treatment centre, where John received further training in preventative and rehabilitation procedures. Then we moved to Pleiku to begin our study of the Jarai language. Even while studying the language, John started doing some work in the Pleiku clinic. Eventually, he had oversight of prevention and rehabilitation in the three leprosy clinics run by the Alliance mission in the central highlands—Pleiku, Cheo Reo, and Banmethuot.

Once again, the Lord graciously gave me facility with the Jarai language. After consulting with the team working on the Jarai translation of the Bible, it became evident they needed someone to do the exegetical checking for the already translated New Testament texts. When they learned I had a working knowledge of both Greek and Hebrew, it seemed sensible for me to do the work while at the same time beginning work on the Old Testament. I assembled a team of Jarai translation helpers, including a school teacher who read Vietnamese, a lab technician whose schooling had been in French, and a young man who was proficient in his own language and eager to serve the Lord.

When we first arrived in Pleiku, we learned there were about four hundred baptized believers among the Jarai. A few pastors had received training at the Bible school in Nhatrang, and a few more were studying in Nhatrang at the time. There were, however, many more active laypeople who were regularly going out from the church in Pleiku on Sunday afternoons to spread the Gospel in the surrounding villages. My three translation helpers were among those who were faithful in this outreach ministry. Each week we heard reports of people who had come to Christ; the church began to multiply among the Jarai, to the extent of there being more than six thousand baptized Jarai believers when we were evacuated from Pleiku four years later in 1975.

With so many people coming to faith in Christ, the need to have the Scriptures in the Jarai language became increasingly urgent. Charlie Long and Mr. Sang, a Vietnamese missionary to the Jarai, had done most of the New Testament translation. Charlie moved to Saigon to oversee the typesetting of the manuscripts, which were to be sent by the United Bible Societies to Hong Kong for printing. We kept working on the exegetical checking, while at the same time, we began to work on the principal stories from the Old Testament first, then gradually moved to work on the books of the Old Testament.

In the summer of 1974, the New Testament manuscript was nearing completion when I received an urgent note from Charlie asking me where the Book of Hebrews was. I immediately went to see Mr. Sang to ask him about Hebrews, only to learn he had not translated the book and he did not remember ever seeing any of it in Jarai. I asked my helpers, and no one knew anything about the translation of Hebrews. Shortly after, I received another note, this time from Dick Phillips, who was the Alliance missionary overseeing all the translation work being done by the Alliance

in Viet Nam. The message simply said, "Penny, translate Hebrews!"

I sent a quick letter home to my parents asking them to pray and spread the word in the churches for prayer, letting them know there would be no more letters until we finished translating the Book of Hebrews. Meanwhile, Charlie, Dick, and the head of the Bible Society in Viet Nam began to make contingency plans. They would send what had been completed to Hong Kong with instructions to start



Penny doing translation work.  
Courtesy Penny Hall.

printing, making allowances for the inclusion of the Book of Hebrews once it was translated, typeset, and sent to them.

I earnestly prayed for the Lord's help; then, I called my helpers to come, and we prayed together. They were sent away with the Vietnamese text and the French text while I opened my Greek text and began translating Hebrews. We had agreed to meet a week later to compare the work we had done and start working on a first draft. Miraculously, all three of us managed to translate the Book of Hebrews in one week. The school teacher found a substitute teacher, whom he would have to pay out of his own pocket; the lab technician took leave without pay, even though his wife was expecting their seventh child. I told them I did not have any extra money to give them, but they were convinced this was important to God, and He would provide. Thus, within two weeks, we had a first draft of the Book of Hebrews.

What a blessing when, at the end of the year, the Bible Society office in Saigon had a surplus on their books; the money they sent to Pleiku covered all the expenses we had, plus both the teacher and the lab technician received double what they would have earned during the time they had taken off. Philippians 4:19 rang true for them!

The following week was a scheduled week's intensive training for lay leaders, as part of the short-term Bible school we ran in Pleiku, where we gave classes for a week every six weeks to train leaders for the rapidly growing church among the Jarai. My young helper typed up the draft copy and mimeographed enough documents to send one home with each student attending that week. In this way, we were able to quickly distribute nearly fifty copies for the people to read. We urged them to read through it with other members in their churches and get their comments back to us as soon as possible, praying they would be able to do so, all the while remembering it had taken months to get comments back on

Philemon. God wonderfully answered our prayers, and the comments started to come back within a week, some comments bringing tears to our eyes. The translation was easily understood, whether people read it by themselves or had it read to them. Only a few dialectic idiomatic expressions were suggested as substitutes in two or three places. How great is our God! He answered above and beyond anything we could have asked or thought! The Book of



Jarai New Testaments.  
Courtesy Penny Hall.

Hebrews was sent to Hong Kong with the rest of the type-set manuscripts.

The finished printed copies of the New Testament and Psalms arrived in Saigon just before the lunar new year's celebration; so, they were quickly cleared off the docks. The trucks arrived in Pleiku, and we celebrated this milestone in the life of the Jarai church with a joyous praise service in the Pleiku church just two weeks before we were evacuated from Pleiku at the beginning of March 1975. I was airlifted out the day before the province was lost, and John was brought out by the Control Commission, which was there to oversee the transfer of Pleiku and Kontum provinces to the North Vietnamese. God's timing was perfect! What a privilege to be part of the Holy Spirit's work, preparing His people for what lay ahead of them!

In a similar way, John had trained the people who worked at the leprosy clinic to make special shoes to prevent deformity in the patients' feet, to construct braces to help those who suffered from foot drop, to apply casts to promote healing in limbs with severe ulcers, and to lead people in exercises to delay paralysis. He did this while teaching them about Jesus, discipling them, and serving as a mentor as they



Penny teaching at the short-term Bible school.  
Courtesy Penny Hall.



John teaching a Bible class.  
Courtesy Penny Hall.

reached out to win others and disciple them. These Christian patients began to reach out to other leprosy patients exiled from their home villages and to healthy people in the area.

In August 1974, we began a Bible study in Plei Brđi at the request of eight women who were new believers. Within two months, the Bible study attendance had increased to over 30 men and women. After an impressive demonstration of God's mighty power, the sorceress who was the head of the village came to Christ. By January, we were privileged to baptize 153 people in that village; they were building a church for the village when we suddenly were obliged to leave Pleiku.

Today the church among the Jarai in Viet Nam has grown to close to one million believers, for the Spirit of God continues to move among these people as Jesus builds His church in

the central highlands of Southeast Asia. The Jarai living in Cambodia have also been touched by this movement, and the church there is growing too. As the four hundred voice Jarai choir sang the *Hallelujah Chorus* on the last day of the centennial celebration in 2011, we wept with joy as we marvelled at what God has done and continues to do. God did so many great things in Viet Nam, and we were highly honoured to witness.

## **Further Ministries**

Space does not allow me to cover our years of ministry in Canada, helping the Vietnamese boat people (refugees) settle and establish Vietnamese churches in Ottawa and Montreal. This was followed by ten years of ministry in the northeast corner of Ecuador in the upper Amazon region working among the Spanish-speaking peoples, the lowland Quichua (the north-eastern tribes of the former Quechua empire), and the Guarani (better known as Auca). Our ministry in South America culminated in establishing and building a church in Lago Agrio, Ecuador, in a previously unreached area of the upper Amazon. In addition, we trained a couple of leaders for that church. Again, I was privileged to do exegetical checking for several translations done by both Wycliffe missionaries and the Bible Society translators.

### **Ecuador**

Just before we were to leave Ecuador for our home assignment, Lago Agrio was hit by a massive earthquake. A large section of the only road leading into the jungle was swept away, along with several villages on the lower skirts of a volcano. John was in Quito when the earthquake occurred and thankfully was not on the area of the road swept away. He had planned to drive back home with supplies for the construction of the church, but in the morning, when he went to leave, the car would not start; God preserved his life. The Texaco company eventually flew him to their base in Lago Agrio. A few months later, a Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilot airlifted us out as we began our trip back to Canada.

### **Canada**

After our years of working in Ecuador, we were unable to return to overseas ministry because of health concerns. However, God continued to show us He still had work for us to do. John became involved in ministry in various churches in Ottawa and eventually was called to begin an English language ministry at the Kanata Chinese Alliance Church, now the Emmanuel Alliance Church of Ottawa. He spent seven years building up the English ministry as a bi-vocational worker as he picked





John and Penny Hall. Courtesy Penny Hall.

up his chiropractic practice. Then, seeing a need in other ethnic churches in the city, we helped another Chinese church and the Vietnamese church start English language ministries and lent a hand in establishing a Spanish language congregation at East Gate Alliance Church. Finally, we returned to Emmanuel to continue to help build up the church, both of us serving as interim pastors when there has been no English pastor. I have served for

over 20 years as a consultant for theological training globally, travelling extensively all over the world in connection with this ministry.

## Abundantly Blessed

Not only did God have work for us, but He also had His hand upon our daughter. After the perilous night in Dalat, Viet Nam, when our compound was under attack, and God touched me, preserving the life of our child, [Ilana](#), we knew God had a purpose for her. Ilana and her husband [Bill Lobbezoo](#) have been serving with the Alliance as international workers in Cambodia since 1996. We praise God for the honour He gave to us to raise a daughter who continues to carry on the missionary legacy in our family and indeed, in turn, is passing it on to her daughters. What a blessing God has bestowed on us!

God has blessed us abundantly, and we feel a very close identification with the Apostle John when he writes:

This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written (John 21:24-25).

## Publications

### Books:

- *Tri-Lingual Dictionary: Jerai, Vietnamese, English*. Texas: SIL, 1976.
- Translator of *The Indian Face of God in Latin America* by Marzal, Maurer et al. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.

### Contributor:

- *Women in God's Presence: 260 Christian Women Share Lessons Learned in the Life of Faith*. A daily devotional compiled by Delores Taylor. Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, 1988.

### Articles:

- "Jerai Legends Retold." *Viet Nam Today*. Spring 1973. pp. 12-15.
- "When God Stepped In." *Alliance Witness*. Vol. 109, No. 10. May 8, 1974. pp. 16-17.
- "They Begin Again in Montreal." *Alliance Witness*. Vol. 110, No. 23. November 5, 1975. pp. 18-19.
- "Travelling the Napo River." *Alliance World*. Winter 1982.
- "From Bootlegger to Church-BUILDER." *Alliance World*. Winter 1984.
- "On Revelation." *Women in God's Presence*. Compiled by Delores Taylor. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1988.
- "The Married Woman with an Empty Nest." *Report of the Overseas Advisory Council Study Commission on Women in Ministry*. Nyack, NY: The Christian and Missionary Alliance, January 1988.
- "What is the Woman's Desire? A Response to Susan Foh." A Study of Genesis 3:16b. *His Dominion*. Vol. 14, No. 3, 1988. pp. 29-37.

## More Stories of Those Who Went



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

Reg Reimer, in Chapter 9, tells of "The Coming of the Protestants" to Vietnam.



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

In Chapter 20, Darlene Dreger writes of her parents, Clem and Maddie Dreger, and their belief that the good news of Jesus Christ is “For Every Nation, Tribe, Language, and People.” Also, in Chapter 24, Jim Foster reminds us of “The Spark that Ignited a Missionary Movement in Canada.”

## Chapter 9

### Passing Faith to the Next Generations: Miriam Charter

by Miriam Charter

#### A Prophetic Word (December 1983)

From my perch in the little café on the town square, Piata Unirii, I watch people shuffle past clutching cheap burlap carry-bags, probably hoping to find bread in the shops. I was there as instructed on the itinerary I had memorized and then flushed down the toilet on the Austrian Air flight to Bucharest. It said someone would meet me at 5:00pm on the town square in Cluj-Napoca, between the old church and the bronze statue of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, mounted on his horse.

At 5:00pm sharp, I stand beside the statue; a man walks behind me and whispers my name. I follow him without a word, always at a distance. A block ahead, I see him throw his bag into the open trunk of an idling car, climb in, and motion for me to do the same. The driver nods as though he is expecting these passengers. He leaves the city centre and drives for ten minutes, slowing in front of a tall block of flats. At a signal from some window high up in the building that *all is clear*, we leave the car, stumble up the unlit stairwell to a door standing open on the fourth floor. Unceremoniously, we are pulled into a dimly lit room deeper in the apartment where men are gathered for their evening class.

I am here on behalf of the C&MA (Canada) to explore involvement with the underground training program for pastors. As the evening unfolds, the reason for my presence—my potential involvement as an itinerant teacher—is explained to the men. I see the surprise in their eyes as they hear this news. I feel an audible gasp from Lucia, the daughter of our host when she learns why I am here. She is filled with questions. Rather than become a distraction, once the men return to class, I suggest we go to the kitchen to talk.

When the kitchen door swings shut, Lucia asks breathlessly, “You went to seminary and studied the Bible with men? Miriam, these pastors cannot imagine a woman teaching them anything, especially the Bible. They will never be willing to learn from you. Why don’t you do something similar with women?” I will not see Lucia again for thirty-five years.

## Oradea, Romania (October 2019)

The parking lot of Oradea's upscale Hotel Imperio is almost full when I arrive. The evening event doesn't begin for an hour, but women are arriving, eager to get a good seat. The rented room in the hotel will hold three hundred, but some suspect many more will try to attend – so they come early for a seat.

Most of the women here have one thing in common – they have been invited by Viorica. Vio, as many call her, is an uneducated, unpretentious woman who once a year gathers her disciples in this alumni-style celebration. To be an alumna of one of Viorica's discipling groups is a badge of belonging among women in the churches in Romania. It is difficult to estimate how many women are actually represented by the three hundred here tonight because many of those present have their own groups.

As I find a seat, it occurs to me that these women tonight are my fourth generation. My mind moves backwards in time: Viorica was discipled by Ica during the late 1990s. Ica was discipled by Nicoleta during the early 90s, who, in turn, was discipled by me in the 80s. Four generations.

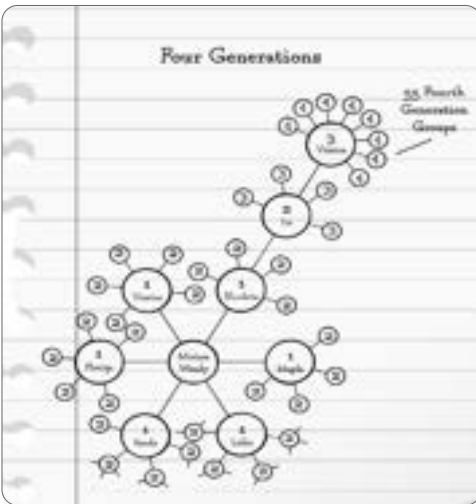
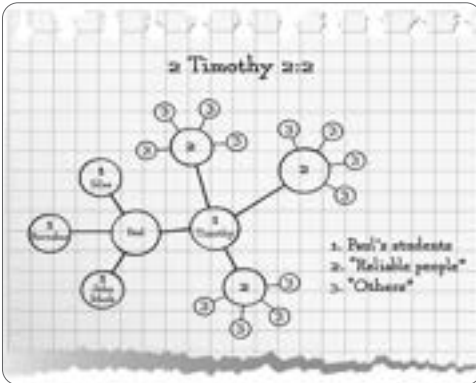


Miriam travels in Romania, avoiding detection by the Secret Police. Courtesy Miriam Charter.

## Passing Faith to the Next Generation (Romania, 1985-89)

During the eighties, six courageous women in Oradea gathered regularly to study the Bible with women from Vienna who came to teach. The group gathered, always watchful for the secret police in the street. Sometimes, across the street from the apartment block where we met, they'd see a man sitting in an unmarked car or someone wearing dark glasses leaning up against the building as if to make his presence obvious. If you saw anything suspicious, you would continue walking, circling back later to see if it was now safe to enter the building where we were meeting.

Nearly every time we met, I would take a folded, metre-square piece of



Diagrams torn from notebook of the outworking of 2 Timothy 2:2 in Oradea group.  
 Courtesy Miriam Charter.

butcher paper from my suitcase. The women would gather around as I drew a circle in the middle of the paper and wrote my name in it. From that circle emanated six spokes; at the end of each spoke was a circle in which I wrote the name of one of the six women in the room.

The women knew what the diagram was about. It was the Apostle Paul’s strategy for multiplying leaders. To his disciple, Timothy, he said, “Whatever you heard me teach . . . pass along to trustworthy people who have the ability to teach others too” (2 Timothy 2:2, VOICE). We saw three generations in Paul’s plan. “Who are the *trustworthy people* (women) to whom you will pass what you learn in this group?”

It was a plan for multiplication, maybe the only way to train the next generation in this repressive, Communist country, where engaging in any form of church education with younger people was a crime against the state. I would press them to tell me who was in their second-generation groups. It was a rigorous form of accountability with the women.

Nicoleta was in that first group that began in 1985, and Ica was in one of the groups Nicoleta formed near the end of the 80s. Ica invited Viorica to join one of the groups she formed in the early 90s, a third-generation group. This evening I will meet many of the women from Viorica’s study groups, the fourth generation.

## A Biblical Model for Disciple Making

As I stand to speak, Ema, my translator, stands with me. Her presence beside me takes me back thirty-six years (November 1983) to the heavily shuttered room

in the little church on Popa Rusu Street in Bucharest. Six pastors were with me at the table – leaders in the evangelical movement in Romania. Ema’s father, Dr. Nic, led the group that day. They were wrestling with the outrageous idea I had just proposed: forming groups like the men’s groups, already meeting, in an underground pastoral training program, but this time for women.

The idea of training women to serve the church was new to these men. All of them took at face value the Apostle’s words, “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak. . . If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home. . .” (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35). For these men, the words were timeless instruction: women should learn at home and be quiet.

But the men around the table were wrestling with another complicated reality: it was dangerous, actually against the law in Communist Romania, to gather a small group for any reason, especially in the church. Groups of more than three were deemed the breeding ground for revolution. The men were afraid that if they allowed women’s groups to be started, the increased number of participants might expose the program they so deeply treasured, their only hope for biblical training. More groups meant more chances of information getting into the wrong hands. If even one woman inadvertently spoke to a less trustworthy person in the church about the group, the authorities might uncover the training program.

Tonight, I share the words Dr. Nic, Ema’s father, spoke as he leaned forward, palms of his hands firmly planted on the table, his stern face just inches from mine. With a glint of laughter in his eye, he whispered, “Miriam, you can’t train women! They talk too much!” The double meaning in his statement brought laughter to the men seated around the table thirty-six years ago. The women at the Imperio Hotel laugh tonight as I retell the story.



Women’s Group in Romania, 1985.  
Courtesy Miriam Charter.

Tearing a piece of paper from my notebook, I drew the diagram of 2 Timothy 2:2, which the men knew so well. In the middle, I drew a circle with my name in it and six spokes radiating outward to six circles. Then, going around the table, as each man told me his wife’s name, I wrote it in one of those circles. It was as though he was saying on behalf of his wife, “We’re in!”

One year later, I began to meet with the wives of six pastors who crossed



The same women's group on Miriam's return visit to Romania. 2019. Courtesy Miriam Charter.

the country by train to Bucharest, the first generation of students in a program to train women to disciple new believers in the beleaguered church. Thirty-six years later, I stand beside Dr. Nic's lovely daughter, who translates my story to a room filled with third-and fourth-generation women.

## **The Formation of my Passions<sup>1</sup>**

### **Passion #1 – The Suffering Church**

Ministry in the underground church in Communist Europe satisfied one of my lifetime passions, the suffering church around the world. I grew up praying for the millions in our world who intensely suffer because they follow Jesus. That passion was nurtured in me from my birth in southern China (1949), as the regime of Mao Zedong came to power. In my first two years, we were house prisoners of the newly established Communist regime. My father grew up in China. It was, even then, the world's largest mission field. Every day my father would go to the authorities to ask if our family had been cleared to leave China, fearing each time that we had become objects of unfounded extortion. After many months, the day finally arrived. We were given twenty-four hours to leave, part of the "reluctant exodus" of 1951, one thousand missionaries forced to leave China in a single day! My father's eyes always filled with tears when he told his children about that

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<sup>1</sup> By *passion*, I refer to that which means more to me than anything else.





The Charter Family. Courtesy Miriam Charter.

day. A handful of Chinese Christians had the courage to gather around us to say goodbye. They didn't know that the church in China was entering a period of unprecedented suffering under Mao.

I was a baby in my mother's arms when my parents and their three children walked to the outskirts of Siangyun, southern China, with just the clothes on our backs. Mother flagged down a truck loaded with oranges, and with me in her arms, she pulled another toddler, a seven-year-old, and her invalid husband onto the pile of fruit. We began to hitchhike across southern China – a journey to Hong Kong that took several weeks, a journey that would eventually end in Canada.

### **Passion #2 – Unreached Peoples**

In 1951, we settled in Three Hills, a small town in southern Alberta, home to one of the largest missionary-sending institutions in North America, Prairie Bible Institute. My parents joined the faculty; over the next twenty-five years, their seven children attended elementary, high school and Bible college. It was here that another passion began to take shape: the millions in our world who, through no fault of their own, have never heard of Jesus. It was impossible to be at Prairie

Bible College for twenty years without getting “infected” with a passion for the lost, for unreached people.<sup>2</sup>

My scholarly father encouraged each of his children to train the mind in a discipline that would become a productive place for spiritual gifts to flourish. I went to the University of Calgary after graduation from Prairie Bible College (1971) and, to my father’s delight, chose to study linguistics, the science of language. Did my father recognize in his middle child an apostolic gifting (otherwise known as the “missionary” gift), which included the easy acquisition of languages, an adventurous spirit taking one where no one else dares to go, and an ability to cross cultural barriers without angst?

### **An Unusual Love Affair**

And so it was that in September 1971, I walked through the front doors of Foothills Alliance Church, located strategically across from the University of Calgary (U of C) campus – and I suppose I have never left. Pastor Gordon Fowler and his wife, Eleanor, introduced me and others in the college group<sup>3</sup> to the ethos of Alliance churches in that era: the week-long, yearly “gala” they called the missions conference and the rich theology and sombre hymnody of A.B. Simpson with hymns like “To the Regions Beyond” and “A Hundred Thousand Souls a Day.” Foothills became the place where my passion began to grow.

I got involved in ministries in the church: music, college and career, teaching Sunday school, clubs. . . I had never experienced a church that noticed whether I showed up or not – or expected me to contribute to the work. I fell desperately in love with this church. I was there every time the doors were open. I graduated from U of C and was hired by the Calgary Board of Education. Deep within me, I knew that teaching French to junior high students was not my career. I knew that ultimately God would take me to either an unreached people group or to the suffering church somewhere in the world. But where? And when? And how? Meanwhile, ministry gifts were being honed and made visible in this Body of believers with whom I had fallen in love.

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<sup>2</sup> An *Unreached People Group (UPG)* is a group that has little access to the Gospel; there is no possibility, given current conditions, to hear the good news in their own language in a way that makes sense to them. UPGs don’t have enough followers of Jesus or the resources required to evangelize their own people; they need help from the outside to do so.

<sup>3</sup> Others in the college group at Foothills in the 1970s who were similarly “infected” with this ethos of missions and the local church were Larry Charter, Pixie Hoath Charter, Ron Brown, Myra Elliott Brown, Jim Elliott, Carol Brown Elliott, Harvey Matchullis, Brem Frentz, Garth Crundwell, Clayton Nordstrom, Rick Love.

## **The Local Church Discerns and Affirms (March 1978)**

One Sunday morning in March 1978, a leader met me at the church door and told me the elders wanted to speak with me after the service. My heart was racing as the men gathered around me in the lobby. The chairman of the board asked a simple question: “Are you planning to teach French the rest of your life?” Without stopping, he continued, “We’ve been watching you for seven years here at Foothills, and we can see that you have gifts for ministry. We think you should consider going to seminary and explore ministry options.”

I was dumbfounded. My gifts were affirmed. I felt the tug of the nations! The elders made clear that if I was willing to go to seminary, the church would pay the bill! If in exploring ministry options, I discerned that this was not my calling, their investment would be an interest-free loan. However, if God clearly directed me to ministry, it was an outright gift from God’s people. I was launched on a six-year journey to the nations that included two years at Canadian Theological Seminary, one year there on faculty and three years of “home service” at First Alliance Church. I had been launched by a local church to the nations, a journey that landed me in Communist Europe in 1983.

## **A Man Ahead of His Time: An Understanding of Partnership**

The advocacy of Dr. Arnold Cook in those years was significant. The C&MA had no ministry in Communist Europe. Before it was talked about much in mission circles, Arnold believed in partnership with like-minded organizations. Years of comity agreements between missions were over. He proposed to the Board of Directors that the C&MA (Canada) enter a partnership with B.E.E. (Biblical Education by Extension), an inter-mission educational ministry providing pastoral training to churches in Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, East Germany and Russia. They had developed a comprehensive plan to train pastors in countries where Soviet-style governments had closed seminaries and Bible colleges. They knew how to smuggle curriculum to pastoral groups who took risks to receive teachers from the West. Teachers travelled on the pretence of business or study to offer a solid educational program for men in ministry. “Why recreate the wheel?” was Dr. Cook’s response. The local church had affirmed God’s call; a group was already doing what I felt called to do; why should the Alliance not enter such a partnership? My initial trip to Romania in 1983 proved my suspicion that men in Romania would never accept teaching from a woman. In the wonderfully prophetic word of Lucia, God unveiled the plan for me to establish a parallel

program for women, a preposterous idea in those days.<sup>4</sup>

The revolution of 1989 unfolded; Nicolae Ceaucescu and his wife were executed on Christmas Day. Romania was free after forty years of Communist oppression. Churches in Eastern Europe emerged from decades underground, leaders equipped through the ministry of BEE. Eastern European churches in post-Communist countries were among the best-equipped churches in Europe to weather the encroaching storms of secularism and consumerism that plague Europe today.

...God unveiled the plan for me to establish a parallel program for women, a preposterous idea in those days.

## **A Man Ahead of His Time: An Understanding of Academia**

Soon after the revolution, in 1994, I drove Dr. Cook and two other leaders from the Alliance World Fellowship across Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland on a *Caleb-style* trip to evaluate what the C&MA might do in post-Communist countries. I had relationships with pastors everywhere in the region. The time was ripe for the Alliance to venture into these post-Communist countries. I assumed I would be a part of this expansion. But Arnold Cook had a different idea. Standing in the doorway of my living room in Vienna, I heard him say, “Sister, it’s time for you to retool. Have you ever thought about pursuing a Ph.D.?”

Dr. Cook was looking at least a generation ahead to the day when our Alliance schools in Canada would need an academic who understood the DNA of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, had practical experience in missions and the credentials required by accrediting agencies. He had benefitted from the same kind of forward-thinking at the end of several terms in Latin America. Dr. David Rambo (then Vice President for Missions in the C&MA) suggested he think about doing doctoral work. Arnold recognized my love for learning and my gifting as a teacher. He shared how those in the Global Ministries Department placed great value upon the equipping of a few to seek higher degrees. If I were willing, Global Ministries would fund such studies. As a bursary recipient, I was to promise to return to work in Alliance higher education, at least one year per \$10,000 invested, to pay off the debt.

In September 1992, I set off for Trinity Evangelical Divinity School to study under the leading scholar in the field of nonformal theological education, Dr. Ted

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<sup>4</sup> See the full story in *reGeneration: Stories of Resilient Faith in Communist Romania*, 2020, Word Alive Press, Winnipeg, MB. <https://regenerationbook.ca/>

Ward. Ted shared my growing passion for churches in the developing world where totalitarian regimes do not allow for the overt passing of Christian faith to the next generations. New approaches to education had to be explored. The days of building costly campuses for pastoral education were coming to an end. It was a new era.

## **A New Day in Missions: A Different Approach to Pastoral Education**

My Ph.D. dissertation: *Theological Education for New Protestant Churches of Russia, Indigenous Judgments on the Appropriateness of Educational Methods and Styles*, addressed issues in theological education that the church in post-Communist societies faces.<sup>5</sup> I moved to Russia, learned Russian and searched Russian libraries for never-translated literature about Russian understanding of learning and their relationship to Western education. Russians were never sure if they were “West” or “East.” The impact of seventy years of Marxist-Stalinist dictatorship on epistemology needed to be understood by those with a vision for theological education in Russia. My ethnographic study during the first five years after the dissolution of Communism involved the first cohort of students finishing undergraduate programs brought by Western educators to the Russian church, often without asking nationals what was appropriate.

I was finishing language study as the first class of students from three fledgling Bible colleges/Christian universities (two in Russia and one in eastern Ukraine) completed their studies. One was the newly established school of the Russian Alliance in Krasnodar, southern Russia. In some cases, well-meaning Westerners flooded the region, believing they knew best what Russia and the Ukraine needed to “catch up on” after seventy years of limited or non-existent pastoral/theological training. Groups from North America raised millions of dollars to establish schools with buildings, curriculum, and educational approaches that were direct imports from the West, forgetting that “Russia is not Europe.” Nor did Russian Bible college students, who had grown up in Soviet-style education, their very souls impregnated by Eastern Orthodoxy, respond well to the predominantly Calvinist/reformed theology embedded in most textbooks that were hastily translated into Russian for these schools, often without consultation with Russians. Students could not verbalize what didn’t sit well with them. A good ethnographic interview was an amazing tool to help them discuss with me their innate *dis-ease*.

My Alliance colleagues from Canada and the USA set about raising millions of dollars to build a Bible school in southern Russia which was deemed to be the “future of the newly-established Alliance church in Russia.” It was what we did

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<sup>5</sup> A PDF copy of this dissertation is available on request through <https://regenerationbook.ca/>

in those days. My heart and my dissertation suggested a better way forward. But who was I to give direction? Alas, I was a woman.

## **I Am a Woman**

With the newly minted Ph.D. degree, I was ready to jump in and improve my ability to teach in Russian (a devilishly difficult language that takes most Westerners a decade to perfect). I assumed I'd find a place in theological education for pastors and Christian workers in Russia. Imagine my surprise when our American field leader, quoting the National Church president of the Russian Alliance Church, refused to even discuss my desire to teach in the recently-established Bible college in Krasnodar – “unless of course, you are willing to teach women in the areas of child-rearing, prayer, or English language.” During that interaction with the field leader, speaking for the National Church president, he forthrightly suggested that “if God has called you to Russia, you will be happy to clean toilets for Him.”<sup>6</sup>

Very quickly, it became abundantly evident that no one had a plan in mind for this woman in whom they had invested \$50,000 for a Ph.D. I was encouraged to do some exploring in the field and see if I could find “something to do.” I was asked by American C&MA leaders to consider leading the soon-to-be-established Polish field. However, in personal conversation with a new mission recruit, with no experience in missions or Europe, I learned that this younger, inexperienced man had already agreed to fill the post.

## **Budapest, Hungary, 1997**

In August 1997, I was invited to the annual gathering of presidents and deans of newly-established Bible colleges and seminaries in former Soviet bloc countries. They gathered in Budapest to discuss establishing an accrediting

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<sup>6</sup> Twenty-four years later discussions with Russians still involved in theological education but who remember that era raise many questions about why my involvement was not allowed. I was reminded that wives of missionary men (Maddie Dreger and Brita Hoekema) were teaching in the college at that time. Were they allowed as part of the contract forged for their husbands when the newly established Bible college reached out for professorial help from the West? Was my intention to serve long-term in theological education in Russia a threat to both the field leader and the National Church? Recent dialogue with one of the leaders at Kuban Evangelical Christian University (the evolution of the Bible college in Krasnodar) indicates that during the years in question the attitudes of Russian churches toward women in teaching roles were “generally reserved.” He suggests that in that era women were teaching but the range of permissible subjects was limited to church history and children’s ministry. This may explain why my involvement was not welcomed.

association for the theological schools established since the end of Communism. I was invited by the executive officer who thought my educational background and experience ideally fitted me to lead this group of men who had little experience in theological education or accreditation issues. Many of these presidents and deans knew me from in-country encounters during the ten years prior to the fall of Communism. Each one had received a copy of my dissertation on floppy disk, with its recommendations for the future of theological education for the post-Communist church. As I sat and listened to them debate in the only language they had in common, English, I heard things like, “She is well equipped; we need the kind of experience she would bring to us; but. . . she is a woman.”

I returned to Calgary, downhearted and confused. So much had been invested in me, but it seemed there had never been a plan for how to optimize the education I had acquired and the experience I had in formal and nonformal theological education in post-Communist societies. I was crushed.

### **The Local Church: A Good Husband (1997)**

For nearly twenty years, I had described the church as a “good husband” to me. Foothills Alliance Church had affirmed God’s call on my life, and for nearly twenty years Alliance churches in Canada had loved me, prayed for me, provided for me, protected me. . . everything a good husband would do. Back in Calgary, I turned to the elders of First Alliance Church in this time of disappointment. Seventeen elders surrounded me in the pastor’s study. I told them my story of rejection; I wept; they listened. It was as though I was receiving the wisdom of seventeen husbands. They went around the room—doctor, dentists, lawyer, businessmen, mission personnel, tradesmen—each of those seventeen godly men brought insight to the decision I needed to make. At the end, a retired mission leader summed up their comments: “With all your investment in education and mission, it does not seem wise to us for you to continue with an overseas posting with The Christian and Missionary Alliance.” They invited me to join the church staff again, this time as pastor of discipleship and education, while we waited to see what God had for me.

### **Canadian Theological Seminary – Toronto (2000)**

I healed and thrived in those two and a half years back at First Alliance, implementing a 2 Timothy 2:2 type educational model for local churches that wanted to discern among their people who were called to ministry and equip *reliable people who could teach others also*. Then, in late 1999, I was invited by

Canadian Theological Seminary (still in Regina) to establish a branch of the seminary in Toronto. The invitation came from Alliance workers in Ontario and further east who highly prized a seminary education with Alliance history and thought embedded in it. But it needed to be more accessible. Could they get an “Alliance” theological education without uprooting family and leaving ministry positions to move across Canada to Regina? Many were Chinese and Vietnamese pastors.

When I arrived in Toronto in July 2000, I had a laptop and a printer in the trunk of my car. Classes were offered on weekends to accommodate men and women who worked during the week. Professors travelled to students, and students travelled to cities where classes were available. Classes were offered in Toronto, Georgetown, Ottawa, Montreal and as far east as Halifax. It had elements of theological education I had dreamed of for Russia. Pastors appreciated the possibility of quality extension education near to home. This model opened up pathways for accreditation and ordination within The Christian and Missionary Alliance without travelling to the mother institution in Regina/Calgary.

## **Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (2006)**

### **Passion #3 – Mobilizing and Equipping the Next Generation**

In 2004, I was invited to join the faculty at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) in Deerfield, Illinois, to give direction to the Ph.D. program from which I had graduated. I moved in 2006, soon realizing this position opened strategic doors for working within my third passion – investing in the next generation. Two aspects of the invitation were particularly appealing to me as the years at Trinity unfolded:

1. The program I led attracted presidents, deans, and faculty from theological schools around the world. These schools had been established by white, Western missionaries, often steeped in a Western philosophy of education that took little account of the impact of culture on learning and teaching styles – not to mention the need for indigenous theologies shaped for a non-Western culture.<sup>7</sup> What a privilege it was to help educators think

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<sup>7</sup> For example, while in Russia doing doctoral research at St. Petersburg Christian University, I befriended Alexander Negrov, Professor of New Testament and Exegesis (later Rector of the university). Our lengthy discussions centred on the noticeable lack of a truly Russian “Protestant” theology in Russia, due to the strong influence of Russian Orthodox theology and the impositions from multiple Western theological traditions, none of them really arising from the Russian “soul.” He asked questions like, “What does indigenous even mean in our context?” I encouraged him to write on the topic but at that time he shrank from doing so, feeling he had no voice in the Western world, a world dominated by English journals. I agreed to co-write on the topic with him. See: *Why Is There No Russian Protestant Theology in Russia? A Personal Outcry* by Alexander Negrov and Miriam Charter (1997) Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe: Vol 17: Iss 1: Article 1.



through issues that impact the direction of schools, especially in the developing world, schools emerging from the influence of colonialism. National educators looked ahead to theological education that was more appropriate to the cultures in which their graduates would serve.

2. Passing through a school like TEDS were Alliance international workers, administrators, and nationals from countries in the Alliance World Fellowship (Canada, USA, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Congo, Guinea, Gabon, Cote d'Ivoire, many European countries, Russia, Indonesia, etc.). They were delighted to discover that while doing their advanced degrees at TEDS, a faculty mentor understood Alliance history and thought, the Alliance educational context, and the denominational shift in their educational institutions from Western leadership to national leadership.

The years at TEDS were pressured years attempting to balance the demands of scholarship with my secret passion of mentoring the next generation of educational leaders. I wrestled with the expectations to publish so as to achieve tenure when I was surrounded by so many students wanting nothing more than someone who could help them think through educational strategies and structures for their unique educational context. When reflecting on the relentless and understandable pressure to write books and papers to achieve tenure, I was once quoted that “some people write books — others write in the lives of students, some invest in institutional change.” It was not an “either/or” decision, but when forced to choose, I found myself gravitating to the investment in people, helping them in their processes of navigating institutional change.

## **Return to Canada (2012)**

As the official age of retirement appeared on the horizon, another word from Arnold Cook was in the foreground of my thinking: “When it comes to retirement, before the moment arrives, move to the place where you think you’d like to retire; settle down there; re-establish relationships; begin to invest in the people among whom you want to serve on this last lap of the journey.” It was a no-brainer. I would return to Calgary, to Ambrose University and to Foothills Alliance Church.

A position at Ambrose University appeared in 2012, teaching in and giving leadership to the Intercultural Studies program (undergraduate level.) My own beliefs on cultural adaptation were personally challenged as I returned for a four-year term at Ambrose University: 1) transition from the USA to Canada; 2) from lecturing to doctoral students to lecturing to undergraduate students in their first year(s) out of high school; 3) teaching in the disciplines of education and



Miriam teaching at Ambrose University, 2016.  
Courtesy Ambrose University.

philosophy to teaching in the discipline of intercultural studies. It was the most stretching transition I have ever made; one I am glad I made at 63 years of age and not later. Arnold Cook was right!

### **The Story Never Ends**

My greatest joy in returning to Canada in 2012 was to return to Foothills Alliance Church. It had been thirty-four years since I regularly attended this remarkable community of believers who “tapped on the shoulder” of a twenty-nine-year-old French teacher, affirmed her gifts for

ministry, sent her off to seminary, and launched her into ministry. I re-established myself in this church that was instrumental in my call to mission. It is now a very different community. Many of the leaders who were in the church in the seventies are in Heaven. I enjoy face-to-face friendship with my former pastors, Gordon and Eleanor Fowler. My pastor is Ian Trigg, who encountered Jesus at Camp Chamisall (1973) and began attending Foothills as a teenager (1974). He now pastors this church in which he was nurtured, and I was called.

From its beginnings, Foothills has been a “missional” church where teaching on the intersection between the deeper life and the sending of harvesters to the ends of the earth happens. Its second building in Calgary (built in 1992) is strategically located in the suburb of Edgemont (neighbouring on the Hamptons). The 2011 census shows that 37% of the residents of Edgemont and 44% of the Hamptons were born outside of Canada.

Foothills recognized an opportunity on its doorstep. Its Intercultural Ministries Department offers many classes each week to serve the needs of newcomers to Canada. I love involvement in ESL classes where students come from people groups we call “least-reached peoples.” I teach a class for immigrants called “Transitions to a New Culture.” Tuesday afternoons, I host “Tea and Talk” time from my home, to which primarily Asians come by Zoom. When a participant in an ESL class reaches a certain facility with English, I invite them to an ESL-sensitive Alpha table within the church’s Alpha program. What joy when a couple from Iran decide, without coercion, to follow Jesus and ask to be baptized – or a

businessman from Taiwan announces with urgency he must invite Jesus into his life “now” because he will return to his workplace in Taipei in two days. Discipling happens on the internet.

## Afterword



Miriam Charter

Only in 2021 do I understand why God allowed me that strategic moment in Romania (in the 80s), the final decade of the Communist era, to begin a disciple-making movement among women. It started in 1983 with six humble women who loved Jesus but never thought about the lostness of people around them. Over thirty-eight years, the movement has grown exponentially to include thousands in the country, even to the fourth and fifth generation.

But there is a reality today in post-Communist Romania which we didn’t anticipate in the eighties – the migration of people. One in five Romanian workers lives outside of Romania today because of local poverty and corruption. Thousands emigrate each year to the West in search of a better life. Initially, it frustrated me that women in whom I had invested left the country. But it doesn’t take long for them to realize that the society of Western Europe is secular and the Church in the West is weak.

On my return trips<sup>8</sup> to do research for my book, I saw that God’s covenant with Abraham is true for the Romanian church *in diaspora*. To Abraham, God said: “I will bless you. . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:1-3). God is shuffling the nations in His sovereign way, placing Romanian women in hard places like Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan. It doesn’t take them long to realize that they have been placed in those hard places to infect society with a disciple-making movement *for all peoples*. They know how to win and disciple people. Many of the women they introduce to Jesus and invite into their discipleship groups speak only a national language like German or French, or Italian. These are no longer Romanian-speaking discipleship groups.

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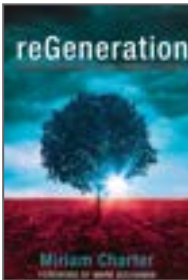
<sup>8</sup> I returned in 2018 and 2019, living a total of three months in the country for research.

The eyes of Romanian women who have fled from poverty and corruption have been lifted from seeking blessing for themselves to embracing the lostness of Spaniards, Italians, Belgians and Germans. God's blessing upon Romanian women and upon all who call themselves children of Abraham (Galatians 3:19) is for one reason alone: that all *peoples* on earth will be blessed.

## Resources

Video clips of Miriam Charter and her ministries:

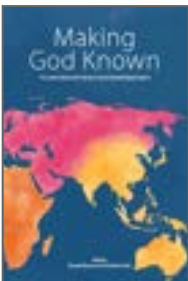
<https://globalvault.ca/the-media-room/sea-to-sea-region-our-people-on-youtube/>



### More Stories of Those Who Went

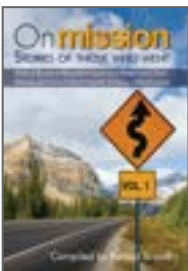
***reGeneration: Stories of Resilient Faith in Communist Romania***  
by Miriam Charter

The author spent a decade working in Communist Romania in the 1980s. An unexpected and invaluable outcome of that solid contribution is the amazing yet simple discipleship model that was put into motion. Miriam Charter “weaves together theological truth and compelling stories that both intrigue and inspire.” <https://regenerationbook.ca/>



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

In Chapter 34, Ralph and Ruth Shareski share how their ministry was “Part of a Much Bigger Story.”



***On Mission: Stories of Those Who Went, Volume 1*** compiled by Ronald Brown

Steve and Audrey Zub tell of their ministry of “Breaking up Dry Ground,” in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 10

### Love in the Philippines: Rick and Patti Love

by Rick and Patti Love

#### **Patti:**

While pregnant with our fourth child, I was involved in a bizarre and unsettling car accident with a taxi driver who became very upset after unsuccessfully trying to cut into my lane, thereby damaging his taxi. No one was injured in the accident, but the taxi driver physically threatened me (and swung his fist at me) before stealing my vehicle keys and running off. My wrist was badly bruised when he grabbed the keys. The policemen involved were not interested in who was in the right but asked for money and left the taxi driver (he had returned) and me to settle the matter between ourselves. The taxi company owner made threats as well, all with the view, like the police, of getting money from us. Later we learned that one of our faithful prayer supporters had woken up during the night (daytime for us in Manila) and was prompted by God to pray for us, not knowing about the challenging hours we were facing at the exact same time.

Throughout the several weeks it took to settle this situation, we were very concerned for the personal safety of ourselves and our children since the taxi company was located very close to our children's bus pick-up point. However, God used Scripture, Filipino friends, missionary colleagues, and a wonderful mission business manager (Terry Huffman) to offer encouragement and guidance through those horrible weeks.

We cannot adequately express our appreciation to those who faithfully prayed for our safety. For a few weeks, we lost our enthusiasm for being in Manila. Still, we eventually came to understand that the Philippines is like Canada in that for every 99 good citizens, there are one or two non-positive representatives of the nation.

#### **Rick & Patti:**

We began 11 years of missionary service in June 1994 by flying to Manila, Philippines, with our three oldest children, Bethany, Ian, and Angela. Sandra was born in Quezon City in 1996. Our kids attended Faith Academy (a 30-60-minute



Love family photo, Mandaluyong, 1996.  
Courtesy Rick Love.



Rick teaching at the Alliance Biblical Seminary,  
Quezon City, c. 1995. Courtesy Rick Love.



Patti teaching at the Alliance Biblical Seminary,  
Quezon City, c. 1998. Courtesy Rick Love.

drive east of the various places we lived in Metro Manila). We both studied Tagalog and began ministry at the Alliance Biblical Seminary in Quezon City, the city with the largest population in Metro Manila. Patti's initial focus was a ministry for seminary women. In 1997 she began teaching English language classes for foreign students at the seminary while Rick taught Old Testament classes there. Later, as part of the commitment to the nationalization of the faculty, Rick taught Old Testament for Th.M. and doctoral students in various Asian Graduate School of Theology programs. Other ministries included regular speaking at churches, the board of directors of the Philippine Alliance College of Theology, field leadership team, and Muslim ministry focus team.

## Prayer

### Rick:

It is hard to describe the encouragement we found knowing people in Canada were praying for us while we were ministering in the Philippines. During our home assignment years, we would travel throughout Alberta speaking in churches and sleeping in spare rooms provided by gracious hosts. During our first home assignment year, we spoke

141 times to about 8,500 people! Many of our hosts had our prayer card displayed prominently on their fridges. As well, most of the churches we visited had a place in their church building where people could pick up missionary prayer cards,



A carabao was hired to tow our van up a muddy, remote hill, Caliraya, 2000. The tallest man shown is our mission colleague Jack Herman.  
Courtesy Rick Love.

including our own. How does one adequately express our thanksgiving to God for the prayers of His people on our behalf?

About a year after arriving in the Philippines, we received a small stack of church bulletins from our home church, Rockyview Alliance in Calgary. While reading through them, I saw we were the missionary prayer focus during the first week of January 1995. Immediately I was filled with thanksgiving to God, realizing it was during the particular week when our

church was praying for us I had preached a sermon during which I experienced the presence and power of the Holy Spirit like never before. Thanks be to God!

Thinking about the prayers for safety on our behalf offered by sending churches brings to mind some of the more harrowing moments from when we were living in the Philippines:

- A gun-toting wild man ran up and down our street, firing shots into the air, warning those who were driving too fast.
- Bloodstains on the street next to ours where a taxi driver was murdered for his cash.
- Having our vehicle stopped by police who were controlling traffic while firefighters from more than a dozen emergency vehicles tried to put out a raging fire as flames leapt from a five-story upholstery factory. We were about twenty-five metres from the fire for around thirty minutes, trying to decide what to do if the building started to collapse or if glass from the building cascaded onto the street.
- A neighbourhood fire destroyed the home three doors down from us and badly damaged the house next to ours. This was the day our one-year-old Sandra learned to say the word “hot.”
- Thieves breaking into our vehicles on three occasions.
- Driving through flooded streets up to a metre in depth.
- Threatening phone calls made to our missionary colleagues from those who said they would kidnap their children if they were not given money.
- Bombings perpetrated by Muslim separatists in places we regularly frequented.

- The death of our colleague's sister while she tried to flee from an attempted kidnapping.

Join me in continuing to pray for international workers in troubled parts of our world.

## Preparation for Cross-Cultural Ministry

### Patti:

My parents became followers of Jesus two years before I was born. I grew up in Brandon, Manitoba, attending McDiarmid Drive Alliance Church. I loved going to the missions conference at our church each year and visiting with missionaries who stayed in our home. At the age of six, I sensed a call from God to cross-cultural ministry. While studying at Canadian Bible College (CBC) as a young



Patti with the Alliance Youth Corps in Côte d'Ivoire, 1983. Courtesy Rick Love.

woman preparing for missions, I was greatly encouraged by Dr. Arnold Cook. He creatively helped me see ways of moving forward within the call of God. Other mission preparation included courses at Canadian Theological Seminary, Alliance Youth Corps, church planting in Nova Scotia, and ministry in Côte d'Ivoire. Rick and I were married in 1983 and later pastored at Rockyview Alliance Church in Calgary.

### Rick:

I grew up in Calgary, Alberta, attending Foothills Alliance Church. I spent the summer of 1981 in Brittany (the NW part of France) with Operation Mobilization. I was on a team selling Bibles and gospel books while distributing gospel pamphlets. One day while walking on a country road, complaining to God about how difficult this ministry was, God spoke to me. He asked just one question, "How would you like to do this for the rest of your life?" My immediate and heartfelt response was, "No! Not me! I'm not smart enough! I'm not strong enough! Get someone else to do it!" But even as I said "No," I knew my answer had to be "Yes!" Since that day, I have known that God called me to cross-cultural ministry. Preparation for our ministry in the Philippines included studies at CBC and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois (M.Div. & Ph.D. in Old Testament Theology).





Patti with seminary women in Quezon City, ca. 1997. Courtesy Rick Love.

## **New Programs**

While teaching at the Alliance Biblical Seminary, we saw growth in student enrollment as new programs were added to assist the church with its various ministries. New seminary programs included:

- Youth Ministries (1997)
- Christian Counselling (1997)
- Urban Ministries (1998)
- Community Development (1999)
- Applied Linguistics / Bible Translation (2000)

## **Bible Translation**

In 2000 the seminary began to offer a Master of Arts degree program in Applied Linguistics. The program consisted of various Bible and theology courses taught by our seminary faculty and linguistics courses taught by SIL missionaries with education and expertise in Bible translation. After graduation, some of these students translated the New Testament into languages without Scripture in various countries throughout Southeast Asia. Other grads were mother-tongue

translators recruited to work on teams translating the Old Testament into their own Filipino languages, which only had New Testaments. Rick had the great privilege of having these students in his Old Testament and Hebrew courses.

## **Tribal Youth Camp**

### **Rick:**

In 2005 I spoke at a camp for young people from four tribal groups in the northern part of Luzon in the Philippines. Not one person from these tribes had ever heard of Christ until missionaries brought the good news of the Gospel there in the mid-1970s. One highlight for me was having a visit in the home of the first missionary to one of these remote tribal groups. There are now thousands of Christians in these four tribes. One group had been known as headhunters. As many of them became followers of Jesus, they decided to change their tribal name because they no longer wanted to be known as those who killed their enemies.

Speaking at the youth camp was a linguistic challenge for me. Since many of the youth did not know English, I used all the Tagalog I had ever learned (and more!) to teach the Word of God. Six of my seminary students came from these tribes to learn how to translate the Old Testament into their own language. It is a phenomenal goal to help each people group in the Philippines have all of God's Word in their own language.

## **Community Development**

As they are able, CAMACOP churches (Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches of the Philippines) throughout the country have provided both spiritual and physical care for the poor in a variety of ways. To assist in these ventures, the National Church asked the seminary to start a Master of Arts degree program focusing on community development. The program began in 1999 under the leadership of Peter Malvicini. Our seminary students learned how to work with leaders in communities where poverty is often oppressive. Their work led to the poor gaining access to electricity and fresh water, job creation, medical care, school transportation, garbage removal, and other programs to help with the day-to-day needs of the poor.

## **The Good News is Preached to the Poor**

Pastor Roger Abe was one of our seminary grads who became a pastor at the

Alliance Fellowship Church (AFC), where our family regularly attended during our years in Metro Manila. While pastoring at AFC, Roger also started a church plant in a nearby community known as Marytown, a squatter area of about 7,000 impoverished people in Quezon City. Desperation and industry led people with limited resources to construct squatter residences with any materials they could find. This community was built over a polluted creek about four metres wide. Residents saw that the space above the open sewer was unused and chose this extremely poor, crime-ridden, and drug-infested area as a place to live.

Pastor Roger started the church as a Bible study, meeting in our living room. Soon our house was not big enough, so they moved to the rooftop of a nearby office building a few hundred metres from Marytown. I spoke once at the church. When it started to rain, everyone ran for the covered stairwell. They sat on the steps while I stood on a landing between floors to share the Word of the Lord. The Lord Jesus grew His church even in this terribly malodorous area without electricity or fresh water. Over two years, the church grew to more than a hundred adults.

In November of 2000, our family attended a joint wedding and baptismal service for the church, celebrating its anniversary. The four couples who were married were all new Christians. Three of the four couples lived together for many years; many of the poor find the cost of a wedding prohibitive. The pastor commended the couples in their decision to formally marry, thus setting a good example to their children. Wedding pictures were followed immediately by a baptismal service for twenty-five new believers. Two of the brides really had to scramble to get changed out of their bridal dresses and into something more suitable for the water! As soon as the baptisms were finished, 68 children, most of whom had never been in a swimming pool, jumped into the water, splashing and laughing and having a great time. It was one of the most joyful days of ministry we had ever experienced!

## **Grads**

One of the greatest privileges coming from teaching at a seminary is seeing the ministries our graduates pursue when they are finished their studies. For the most part, our students became preaching pastors, youth pastors, counsellors, school teachers, community development workers, Bible translators, and missionaries.

In 2003, I (Rick) attended CAMACOP's General Assembly in Davao. A highlight was looking through the list of official workers and seeing the ministries of so many of my former students. At the time, five had become Bible college or seminary presidents, seven were seminary faculty, twenty-two were Bible college



The Love family with Pastor Cin, a seminary student from Myanmar, Marikina, c. 2000.  
Courtesy Rick Love.

faculty, eleven were district leadership team members, and about a hundred were pastoring CAMACOP churches.

Though most of our students were Filipinos who ministered in the Philippines, many came from other Asian countries. Former students, many of whom began their seminary studies in Patti's English class, went on to work as church leaders and Bible school faculty in Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, Palestine, Israel, Indonesia, India, Viet Nam, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia, China, and Nigeria. It was so

encouraging for us to be a part of the ministry of academic study, ministry skill development, and spiritual growth in the lives of church leaders in the Philippines and throughout Asia.

## Healing

### Rick:

Two of the most formative experiences for me as a child were my brother's death from leukemia when I was ten and my Mom's healing from colon cancer when I was sixteen. She was healed after the elders of our church anointed her with oil and prayed. When I spoke at churches in Manila, I usually talked about healing. We looked at the Bible to answer questions like, "Is there healing in the atonement of Christ? What is the connection between sickness and sin? Why are some not healed? What about physicians and medicine? Are there people with special gifts of healing? How can we pray for healing today?"

Sickness is always a challenge in any context, but there was an added burden in the Philippines because few people had medical insurance. Usually, when we were praying for the sick, we were also praying for the financial crisis the family was experiencing because of loss of income and medical costs. Therefore, when we prayed for the sick, we began by asking them to tell us about their physical challenges and let us know about their spiritual, relational, financial, and emotional needs.

I will never forget the Sunday I spoke at a church of about 75 people who had

never heard about the idea of praying for the sick. About 35 people stayed after the service, and Patti and I prayed for more than two hours, asking God to show His supernatural power in each person coming to Him in faith.

Over the years, we prayed for hundreds of people and saw God heal a variety of sicknesses. One woman who worked at the seminary asked us to pray for her daughter, who had epilepsy. I had never seen someone healed from epilepsy, but we prayed with this mother who came to God in faith. Over the next month, God prompted me to ask this woman how her daughter was doing, but my lack of faith kept me from asking because I feared how I would respond if her symptoms had not changed. When I finally got up the courage to do the right thing, she told me her daughter had significantly improved. Before we prayed, she had dozens of seizures each day, making it impossible to have anything like a normal life. Since praying for her, the daughter was now having one or two seizures each week. Her life had become livable again, and her mother was filled with great joy. I was thankful to God for His great work in this pre-teen's life, but I may never know why God did not heal her completely.

In 2001 I had a retinal detachment repaired by surgery. Three months later, I had another retinal detachment in the same eye and could no longer see with my left eye. I returned to Canada for a second surgery, and about a month later, I started to see in my left eye. I cannot tell you what joy this brought to me. Out of my experience, I planned a course called "Biblical Theology of Suffering." The first syllabus for the course consisted of six questions and nothing else. We began studying the Scripture carefully to see what God tells us about retributive suffering, the suffering of the righteous, Satan and suffering, God's role in suffering, meaningless suffering, sickness, natural disasters, prayers of lament, Jesus as the answer to human suffering, suffering for Christ, and Christian responses to suffering. One of the greatest joys of my life has been to work with students trying to understand what God has revealed about suffering.

## **Day of Prayer**

While we were living in the Philippines, the House of Representatives moved to impeach the country's president, Joseph Estrada. He was accused of illegally receiving gambling money equivalent to ten million US dollars and hiding this money in secret bank accounts, among other irregularities. He was accused by a friend of his, a governor named Luis "Chavit" Singson.

People throughout the country followed the case closely through radio and television news. On Tuesday evening, January 16, 2001, the impeachment court

voted not to open an envelope alleged to contain incriminating evidence against the president. The basis for this decision was that this evidence had not been included with the impeachment complaint. The vote was 11-10 in favour of keeping the envelope closed. The 11 senators who voted not to open the envelope were friends of the president. When this happened, the country exploded politically; people started to gather in public protest of what was going on in the Senate.

**Rick:**

Months previous to these events, we had scheduled a day of prayer at the Alliance Biblical Seminary for Friday, January 19. On that Friday morning, one of my students, Rico Villaneuva, led us through a discussion of the lament Psalms. Then he led us in a public and communal prayer of lament.

What followed cannot be adequately described with words. You know some things for which words are inadequate, like trying to describe beautiful scenery or an aroma or taste. This was a similar experience. There were about 70 people gathered together, all praying at the same time. They were declaring their lament to God because of the injustice of what was going on politically. People were standing up and pouring out all of their emotions to God. They were frustrated. They were angry. They desperately wanted God to move in their country. They



The final C&MA Philippine Mission field forum, Mindoro, 2005. Courtesy Rick Love.

spoke at the top of their voices, all at once, begging God to intervene in the political process. They talked to God about all of their country's problems: poverty, social injustice, and the spiritual vacuum because people were not obeying God and worshiping Him. They were asking for God's dramatic intervention with all of these problems. This was, by far, the loudest prayer meeting I have ever been a part of. It was like being at a football game or hockey game when a team wins in overtime. The intensity of these loud prayers went on for about forty minutes. After this lengthy prayer time, things started to die down, I think out of pure exhaustion. We finished our day with other prayers and then songs of worship. We ended our fast with a bowl of chicken soup.

Later on Friday, the Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Angelo Reyes withdrew his support for the president and endorsed the vice president. The next day, a Saturday, Estrada resigned as president, and the chief justice swore in Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as the new president of the Philippines.

I honestly do not know what effect those prayers of lament had on the events of that weekend. I do not know how that could be measured. But I know tens of thousands of people throughout the country and worldwide prayed about these frustrating events. God, in His mercy, listened to the prayers of His people and ended the injustice perpetrated in the Philippine senate.

## Teaching English

### Patti:

When we arrived in Manila, I was frustrated there was no clear path for me to begin ministry. I struggled with this, not knowing God had great plans I could not possibly have imagined.

In 1997, I started teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to help foreign students at the seminary improve their English listening, writing, reading, and speaking skills. I taught twice-weekly English classes and provided individual tutoring sessions each week for those who requested extra assistance.



Patti tutoring a student, Quezon City, c. 1997.

Courtesy Rick Love.

In my first year of teaching, I had students from Myanmar, South Korea, Nepal, Pakistan, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia. Most of these students

were married men who had left their spouses and children in their homelands. Many were discouraged. They faced both financial and family pressure to learn English quickly so they could finish their seminary studies and return to their home churches.

One semester I felt frustrated by the students, primarily men from Myanmar, who, rather than taking notes, always sat in class with their arms crossed resting on their chests. I considered this a negative gesture and wondered if perhaps this was some kind of protest because they preferred a male teacher. Eventually, I gathered the courage to ask one of those in a tutoring session about this arms-crossed gesture. I was pleasantly surprised when the pastor from Myanmar told me this was a sign of respect for their teacher. It was the body position they had been taught since childhood to adopt while in a classroom.

One of the highlights of this teaching ministry was getting to know our students. We regularly invited the class to our home for a meal. Good conversation and great food created many fond memories. For example, one December, I invited the English class to our house for a Canadian Christmas dinner, traditional except for the rice. There was one supper where we served two desserts, angel food cake and devil's food cake. For some reason, none of the students ate any of the devil's food cake—maybe they thought it was some kind of test.

As we got to know our students, they would open up and tell us about their life challenges. One very thin student told us he was only eating one meal a day to have enough money to buy his textbooks. Another student was filled with discouragement because his church of five thousand in Myanmar was expecting his quick return to lead the church. He had been struggling with English and was still a long way from finishing his studies.

Our students from Myanmar were required by their government to pay a regular tax even though they had no income. One of our students had borrowed money in his birth country before coming to Manila to study. He was being charged an interest rate of ten percent compounded monthly on his loan. Those supporting the seminary financially helped us to address most of these very challenging situations.

While gaining skill and confidence as an English teacher, I realized there were still so many ways to develop as a teacher. In the providence of God, we were living less than a kilometre from one of the premier universities in the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University. I enrolled in a Master of Arts program in Teaching English Language and Literature. The university courses increased my skill and understanding in teaching ESL classes at the seminary and, in the sovereignty of God, prepared me for our next ministry in Canada.



## Calgary

### Patti:

While attending the Western Canadian District (WCD) prayer retreat in the fall of 2003, District Superintendent Ken Driedger challenged each of us to think about how we could creatively share the love of Jesus with those in our neighbourhoods. I felt like God was telling me if we ever moved back to Canada, I would want to work in a church offering ESL classes as part of a ministry helping immigrants move along a pathway to Jesus.

Meanwhile, Pastor Ian Trigg was shopping at a grocery store, and God led him to think about the fact that those in the store did not look the same as those in the church building next door. This eventually led to me becoming pastor of Intercultural Ministries at Foothills Alliance.

We returned to Canada from the Philippines in 2005, and I started working at Foothills Alliance in 2006. I began this ministry with over one hundred interviews of people in the church and the neighbourhood, trying to determine what kinds of ministries would be of most significant interest to immigrants. I discovered that, though immigrants are, of course, looking for help finding a job or learning English, their biggest desire is social connection. So we started asking the question, “What can we do to create a situation in which immigrants in our community could have a conversation with a loving Christian?”

At our first ESL class, we had five volunteers and two students. Every week we wondered if anyone would show up. Over the years, we have developed a ministry model for new Canadians made up of three stages.

- 1. Stage 1** has little or no spiritual content. Instead, it is all about showing kindness and friendship while helping new Canadians adapt to life in Canada. It includes a focus on ESL, employment, citizenship, public speaking, “Life in Canada” (finances, parenting, health care, and education), and immigrant transitions, normalizing the emotional challenge of moving to a new country and culture. Activities include farm trips, camping, curling, hiking, Easter egg hunts, banquets, and potlucks. We offered a regular gym night with ping-pong and badminton for six years before adding basketball, volleyball, games and crafts, movie nights, and a scrapbooking club.
- 2. Stage 2** is a pre-evangelistic class for the spiritually curious. This is our Bridges class because it bridges the gap between settlement classes and events (stage 1) and spiritual classes (stage 3). Those who attend the Bridges class are not usually interested in becoming followers of Jesus (at least not yet), but they are curious about Christianity or about Jesus. Many come from countries where they were not allowed to ask questions about Jesus or the

Church. People from various faiths (including atheists) learn about the life and teaching of Jesus while studying the English language and Canadian culture. Immigrants learn about the Gospel gently and respectfully.

- 3. Stage 3** of this pathway to Jesus is the spiritual classes, like ESL Bible studies and Alpha. The students who attend these classes are usually close to faith or have already decided to follow Jesus. They ask heartfelt and profound questions, and we pray together for our physical and spiritual needs.

On average, we have found, for every ten who attend settlement classes (stage 1), four will attend Bridges (stage 2), and two will participate in spiritual classes (stage 3). We are overwhelmed with thanksgiving to God for how He has used His people volunteering in this ministry to reap a spiritual harvest. At our church, when everything is functioning, about 250 attend settlement classes each week, 80-90 attend the ESL Bridges class, and 40-50 come to one of the spiritual classes. Our goal is to increase the variety of settlement programming we offer so that a broader range of immigrants will enter onto a pathway to Jesus. The more students attending settlement classes (stage 1), the more will come to Bridges (stage 2), and the more who will attend Alpha and ESL Bible studies (stage 3).

While writing this chapter, I met with a former student who has become a follower of Jesus and wants to get baptized. We love seeing God at work in the lives of those new to Canada.

### **Rick:**



Rick and Patti Love. Courtesy Rick Love.

With the growing nationalization of the faculty at the Alliance Biblical Seminary in Quezon City, the Alliance mission chose to close the field in 2005. So we transitioned to Calgary, and I became the Associate Professor of Old Testament at Canadian Theological Seminary. I thoroughly enjoyed the ministry of teaching, preparing the people of God for the various ministries to which God was calling them.

In 2014 we started Love New Canadians to help churches develop their own pathway to Jesus for immigrants. We encourage churches to experiment with the three-stage ministry model we have used at Foothills Alliance Church since 2006. Love New Canadians serves churches

by “holding hands” while we walk together through details such as advertising, choosing classes and events, selecting curriculum, finding and training volunteers, and troubleshooting when problems arise. As of June 2021, we have worked with 343 churches and ministries from twenty-five denominations in eight provinces of Canada and fifteen countries around the world. We focus on coaching, curriculum, and seminars for volunteer training. We like to help others avoid some of the myriads of mistakes we have made over the years. Our seminars focus on

- understanding immigration in a local community,
- the needs of new Canadians,
- each church’s role in helping new Canadians,
- common challenges in this venture,
- defining success,
- creating values to guide this ministry,
- explaining the three-stage pathway,
- the ideal intercultural church,
- beginning to learn how to teach ESL classes,
- and the equipping of church volunteers for ministry with immigrants.

The twenty books of the curriculum we have written are designed for churches to use at each part of the three-stage pathway: 1) settlement, 2) transition, and 3) spiritual focus.

We thank God for using us to help churches throughout Canada as they each develop their own pathway to Jesus for immigrants.

## Resource

[Love New Canadians](#) website



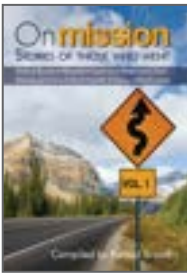
### **More Stories of Those Who Went**

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

Lauren Spenser is a pseudonym for a worker who shares about ministry in “Laos: Little Land of Hope” (Chapter 10).



***The God Made Known: Through Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives*** edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook  
Pat Worsley, in Chapter 8, tells of “Irian Jaya: The People Time Forgot.”



***On Mission: Stories of Those Who Went, Volume 1*** compiled by Ronald Brown  
Ron and June MacKinnon tell of “God’s Faithfulness Through the Years” in Chapter 12.

## Chapter 11

### **On the Shoulders of Giants: Robert and Edith Roseberry**

by Daniel Ibsen

In 1986 my wife and I left with another Canadian couple to the newly opened field of Guinea, West Africa. A particular focus of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) was placed on Guinea from 1985-1995. The country had been closed to new missionaries from 1967-1985 and had just re-opened when a new government came into power. During this decade, about fifty new workers were sent from the USA, Canada, and the Netherlands to kickstart the work in Guinea. As young, newly trained and appointed missionary candidates, we were excited to be part of this new initiative. We were certain we would be catalysts to see the Gospel penetrate this virtually unreached country. Less than half of one percent were evangelical followers of Jesus. Little did we realize, we would be standing on the shoulders of giants who had gone before us.

Alliance work in West Africa began in 1890 and started in Freetown, Sierra Leone. At that time, the vision was to cross Sierra Leone to Guinea, find the headwaters of the Niger River, and missionaries would then use the river as a highway into the vast interior regions of West Africa. They would proclaim the gospel message to the millions who never had an opportunity to hear about Jesus. There were no roads, railways, or other means of transportation into this region at that time. The plan was to establish mission stations every fifty miles along the river from Freetown to Timbuktu as gospel lighthouses to take the message to the ninety million people who had not yet had access to this life-giving message.

One of the early recruits in this initial thrust into West Africa was Robert Sherman Roseberry. He was born on November 22, 1883, in Skelp, Pennsylvania, to a family with Quaker and Presbyterian heritage. At age fourteen, he responded to the gospel message from evangelistic meetings in the community. Later, at holiness revival meetings, he came to understand what it meant to be filled with the Spirit. This gave him a passion for knowing and following Christ. He had been planning a career as a schoolteacher and was attending Normal School for training. At a summer camp meeting, he had such a longing for a fuller experience with Christ, he went out into the forest and cried out to God with raised hands

saying, “Lord give me Your power, and I will go to the ends of the earth.” He later said he “... went out from that holy place with great quietness of soul.” (Herber, 30) Roseberry applied to the Missionary Training Institute in Nyack, New York, where the regular weekly emphasis on the needs of the least-reached places in the world was presented. Roseberry received a passion and burden for French West Africa and the Niger vision. He wanted to be part of the group taking the message to the interior of West Africa.

Roseberry left New York for Freetown, Sierra Leone, in October 1909. He was partnered with another single missionary, David Muir, who had already been on the field for some time. They were assigned to open two new mission stations in Sierra Leone along the route toward the headwaters of the Niger River. They lived in very primitive conditions, building their own grass-roofed hut in the first village. Unfortunately, not long after their arrival, Muir suddenly got an extremely high fever, and three days later, he died of the dreaded “blackwater fever,” a type of malaria. Young Roseberry buried his colleague; he was the only Christian in the whole area. However, he continued his service among the Kuronko people for the rest of his first four-year term. The mission had been working in Sierra Leone for twenty years but had no established national church, and over thirty missionaries had lost their lives.



A baptism in Dogon country in the early days of ministry. A pool from rain is a water source in a dry land. Courtesy Daniel Ibsen.

Despite the challenges and danger of working in West Africa, after one year back in the USA for furlough, Roseberry returned for his second term to Sierra Leone. He got to know a single young woman missionary named Edith Plattenberg from the neighbouring station, and they were married in Sierra Leone in 1914. Later in the term, Roseberry was chosen as the field leader, a post he held whenever he was not on home assignment.

Throughout their forty-four years in West Africa, Robert and Edith Roseberry functioned as a team in ministry. She was an integral part of the work. Her medical skills brought healing to many sick and hurting Africans and missionary colleagues. She was known by everyone as *Madame* and often travelled with her husband on his trips to the various stations. When she could not travel with him, she dealt with any situations coming up while he was away. Her daughter



The Roseberry Family. Courtesy Daniel Ibsen.



Evangelists, all converted Muslims.  
Courtesy Daniel Ibsen.

states, “She was the mother of the mission for many years” (Herber, 85). At their retirement, missionaries said to Roseberry, “We appreciated your ministry, but you are what you are because of Madame” (Herber, 84).

### **People of Prayer**

The primary work in which Robert and Edith engaged was a ministry of prayer. This was undoubtedly the source of power behind their long service. Intercessory prayer was a way of life for them. Their daughter tells how her parents woke well before dawn and spent the first hours of the day in prayer and meditation. Under Roseberry’s leadership, from 4-5pm each day, all missionaries in French West Africa stopped what they were doing and set aside this hour for prayer for one another, their national colleagues, and the ministry and advance of the work. As a result, these faithful workers saw God break through in powerful ways, impossible health situations were healed, rain came to parched lands, demons were cast out, and sorcerers came to faith in Christ.

### **A Man of Vision and Passion**

Roseberry was driven by a passion for those who had not yet had an opportunity to know the message of Christ. His heart broke, and with tears, he prayed that the millions in French West Africa might have an opportunity to hear about and know the Lord Jesus. The Roseberrys were the first resident missionaries in



Robert Roseberry. Courtesy Daniel Ibsen.

Guinea. They helped establish the first mission station at Baro near the Niger River in January 1919. This passion was expressed in his constant efforts to see mission stations established all along the Niger River as lighthouses for the Gospel. These strategic centres focused on evangelism, trained new believers, and gathered new believers together in churches.

Shortly after arriving in Guinea, Roseberry and his colleague bought three old boats from government surplus. They made one good working boat from them and travelled from Baro to Bamako, preaching in over one hundred villages. After the trip, Roseberry stated, “We reached about five thousand souls with the gospel on the trip and extended our mission... we are only beginning to realize the

magnitude of this open door and boundless opportunity we have” (Herber, 54).

Roseberry realized, to firmly establish the church, national leadership would be necessary. He encouraged the development of Bible schools in each region. Shortly after WWII, Bible schools were established at Ntorosso in Mali, Bobo-Dioulasso in Burkina Faso, Bouake in Côte d’Ivoire, and Telekoro in Guinea. A women’s training school was started at Baro in Guinea. These schools often had to teach students to read and write before training them in Bible, theology, and church polity. Graduates from the Bible schools were the passionate, godly, and trained pastoral leaders for the growing church.

When Roseberry sensed the winds of independence blowing through the region, he encouraged the mission to take steps to position itself well for the division of French West Africa into separate countries. Thus, in 1949, about ten years before the independence of most of these countries, Roseberry encouraged the mission to divide into three fields, each with its own field structure. These fields were Mali/Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, and Guinea. This strategic move positioned the mission well to move through the upheaval caused by the movement to independence by these countries.





Roseberry's visionary and passionate leadership led to strong churches in four different countries in what was French West Africa.

### **An Innovator**



Roseberry was what one might call an early adopter of new and innovative technologies in mission. He travelled incessantly and by any means available. He walked, had porters, travelled by bicycle, motorcycle, train, riverboat, car, and airplane so he could cover the vast territory of French West Africa. In 1923, Roseberry was one of the first missionaries to bring a Model T car to the field so people could get where they needed to go.



Roseberry also encouraged his workers to learn local languages, develop literacy programs, and translate Scripture. As a result, the mission adopted a strategy of short-term Bible schools and discipleship training. Additionally, under his leadership, the C&MA operated a printing press to produce materials in the multiple languages in which the mission worked.



Various modes of transportation used by Roseberry. Courtesy Daniel Ibsen.

On the occasion of Roseberry's retirement, a 1953 article in the *French West Africa Quarterly* states, "Mr. Roseberry knew African missionary labors in their most primitive form. On the other hand, he has been one of Africa's most progressive persons in campaigning for improvement, advancement, and completion of the remaining task" (175-6).

### **A Pastor of Missionaries**

One of Roseberry's strengths was his support and encouragement of his mission team. This was one of the main reasons for his continual travel schedule. He would visit each worker at their station, encourage them, pray for them, and learn the challenges they were facing.

He bore the burden of loss of his team members. Parents who lost children because of inadequate health care, colleagues who died from tropical diseases,

and the burden of isolation placed on his workers weighed heavily on Robert's heart. He bore their burdens with them, and they knew that he and Madame were there for them.

Each year there was a spiritual/strategy retreat for all mission personnel. These times were great opportunities for those who worked in isolated conditions to be retooled and refuelled for their next year of ministry. Roseberry saw the need for workers to get away from the heat and taxing conditions of their everyday lives. So he initiated the purchase of a vacation property in the cooler mountains of central Guinea. Families would build a cabin on this property and spend a month each year vacationing at Dalaba. Many are the stories of refreshment and blessing this place was to workers. Herber says it this way, "A whole month of such change along with fun, fellowship and spiritual blessings at Dalaba sent these workers back refreshed and renewed...Roseberry knew that renewal in spirit and body was necessary if they were to be able to face the debilitating climate and constant spiritual warfare back in their districts" (Herber, 60). Dalaba was even one of our favourite places to go as a family when we served in Guinea!

Roseberry loved children, and they knew it. When he was visiting a missionary family, at some point, Robert would have the kids gathered around him, and he would be telling them stories from his life and travels. Kids loved his visits.

Another need Roseberry addressed was finding a good way for workers to educate their kids. At first, parents tried to teach their kids at home, but after a certain age, this was too difficult, so many of the children would return to the USA for high school. This was difficult for the missionary family, and parents soon started to ask for an option in the region. The mission purchased a property in Mamou and established a school for missionary kids. Roseberry would visit the school twice a year and considered this "one of the most important ministries of my life" (Herber, 94).

## **A Friend of Nationals**

A key aspect of Roseberry's leadership was his ability to interact with and gain the respect of nationals. His book entitled "The Soul of West Africa" highlights the stories of several national believers whom Roseberry knew and encouraged in their lives and ministries. One gains a sense of Robert's respect and love for these African men and women.

Roseberry realized, to make an impact, he and his workers would need to learn the local languages and customs and engage the locals in ministry right from the start. So Roseberry would have learned French, Kuronko, Maninka, and probably

some greetings and words in several dialects.

He was respected as a man of his word and a man of prayer. Roseberry provided the same kind of care and respect to nationals as he did to his missionary colleagues. Whenever he went to a new community, he would stop to greet the chief of the village or region. Out of respect for nationals, he sought to follow protocol wherever he went.

## A Partner

As a Protestant, Roseberry and the mission needed to gain the trust of the French colonial authorities to have permission to work in French West Africa. Through his years in dealing with these authorities, Roseberry established relationships with a couple of evangelical French pastors and workers who helped him navigate the French bureaucracy. The French had no categories for a Protestant Mission. The C&MA was the first to be granted permission to work in the interior in French West Africa. He gained such a level of trust with authorities, by 1952, he was honoured by the French government as “Knight of the Legion of Honor.” Colonial authorities looked to him and the C&MA for guidance in making decisions about who should be allowed to work in the region.

Roseberry also saw the Body of Christ as bigger than the C&MA. He realized the whole Body would need to be engaged in reaching the over ninety million people of French West Africa. In the early days, he helped broker an agreement with the Evangelical Missionary Church to take over the C&MA work in Sierra Leone so the C&MA could concentrate on French West Africa. After WWII, Roseberry helped organize the “Federation of Missions” to help coordinate efforts throughout the region.

In the spirit of partnership and engaging others to help advance the work, Roseberry initiated a partnership with the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society in 1947 to take over the C&MA work in Senoufou country. He also

encouraged the Evangelical Baptist Mission to engage in the C&MA initiated work in Timbuctu and Gao in Mali. In western Mali, the United World Mission took over work from the C&MA. These strategic partnerships increased mission effectiveness and allowed the C&MA to concentrate its efforts according to their

These strategic partnerships increased mission effectiveness and allowed the C&MA to concentrate its efforts according to their resources.

resources. It is rare for a leader to have such openness to sharing vision and resources with other organizations, but this proved to be advantageous for the advancement of the Kingdom.

## **A Man**

At times, R.S. Roseberry doubted himself and his calling. He felt in over his head, incapable and unworthy. In seasons like this, he would remember his original calling and said, “having the Spirit of God in control of our lives was of utmost importance” (Herber, 77). He found his assurance in the One who called him.

## **The Final Years**

The Roseberrys retired from the mission in 1953. In reflecting on their years in West Africa, they cite a turning point in the impact of the mission effort around 1931. That year, the mission team was decimated during a yellow fever outbreak. A baby was left without parents, small children without a mother, husbands without their wives. The Roseberrys believed these losses precipitated a fresh commitment to prayer for the region and brought a significant harvest during the 1930s.

When they left the field in 1953, there were:

- 33 mission stations in what became four different countries,
- three Bible schools,
- several short-term preparatory schools teaching literacy and the Bible,
- clinics and dispensaries on several stations,
- 360 outstations workers would regularly visit,
- 6,000 baptized members gathered in 509 churches,
- an army of 150 trained African workers.

Quite a legacy for their lifetime of service! Edith and Robert would be the first to give God glory and give credit to their colleagues who worked so tirelessly.

Robert returned one final time to West Africa for the field conferences in 1956. During this visit, he had the privilege of ordaining two of Guinea’s first pastors. In addition, Robert was often called upon to speak at conferences and mission events. He always gladly accepted these opportunities and challenged people to engage more fully in Christ and His mission.

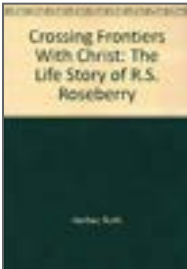
He and Edith lived at Beulah Beach in Ohio, then moved to the Alliance Home in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Edith passed away in 1964, and later, Robert married Anne German. They moved in 1968 to Deland, Florida. Robert Sherman Roseberry passed away at age ninety in July 1976.



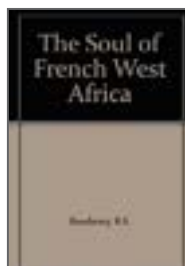
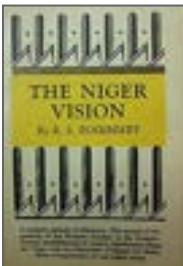
Robert and Edith Roseberry.  
Courtesy Daniel Ibsen.

Melodie and I went to Guinea thinking we would accomplish great things for the Kingdom. Little did we realize the sacrifice, prayer, and persistence of those giants like Robert and Edith Roseberry who preceded us. Without their faithful efforts, their strong confidence in God and His promises, and dogged determination, our efforts would be nothing. These giants had set the pace, broken strongholds, established the church, and faithfully served their Master. We stood on the shoulders of giants.

## Resources Used



The principal resource was *Crossing Frontiers with Christ: the Life Story of R.S. Roseberry*, written by his daughter and son-in-law Ruth and Ralph Herber, published by Toccoa Falls College in 1997. Also *The Niger Vision* and *The Soul of French West Africa*, both by R.S. Roseberry.



## Chapter 12

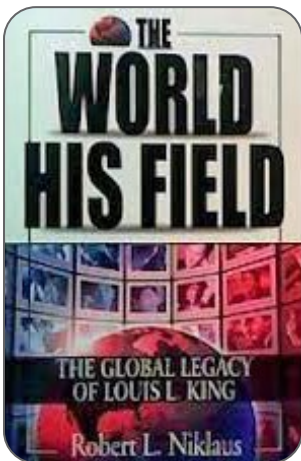
# The World His Field: The Global Legacy of Louis L. King

by Raymur Downey

### Introduction

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" I have a T-shirt with that question emblazoned on the front. The question often brings a smirk to the faces of those who happen to read it as they walk past. "Looks like that old guy (me) is having serious second childhood issues."

Few of us settle final career decisions in our early years, though most of us entertain a variety of childhood dreams of what we would like to be or do in life. For young Louis Ladner King, his dream was to become a medical doctor. My own ideas ranged from a ten-year-old's dream of playing professional hockey to a teenager's desire to study architecture. My earlier dream was shattered when my parents put a stop to my participation in Sunday morning bantam hockey practices. Later, my dream of becoming an architect was snuffed out when my Grade 12 comprehensive exam results eliminated the chance of winning the academic scholarship which had enabled my older brother to attend McGill University a year earlier. Unbelievably, the two younger brothers who followed me won scholarships to McGill, and both became architects.



Reading biographies has always been a favourite pastime of mine. One reason I love Bible reading is more than ninety per cent of the sixty-six books are biographical in content. I have many biographies in my personal library, one of them being *The World His Field – The Global Legacy of Louis L. King*, written by Robert Niklaus, a former Alliance missionary to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and later an editor of *Alliance Life* magazine and personal assistant to Dr. King.

Few people have had a more significant impact on Alliance missions than Louis Ladner King. Niklaus provides a written record of the captivating events in

King's life journey (1915-2004), which marked him as an icon in contemporary Protestant mission history. His ministry spanned five decades and numerous roles, including student, pastor, missionary, mission administrator, and president of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) in the United States. His influence on mission theory and practice extends far beyond the Alliance, both in space and time. His field was indeed the world!

Niklaus captures King's life story in an engaging series of ten chapters, each one set in the context of historical time markers bracketing the lengthening shadow of a truly unique missionary statesperson. As a first-term missionary in India, King earned the reputation as a maverick who, based on strong biblical conviction, was not afraid to buck the system. He was a man of great personal discipline. His most outstanding achievement, humbly confirmed even by him, was applying the indigenous church principle throughout the Alliance world overseas. However, his influence was much wider than the Alliance, extending to many sister missionary organizations. The paths he traced continue to impact the practice of missions in the twenty-first century.

## **Divine Intersections**

On a personal note, though twenty-six years my senior, L.L. King's journey and mine intersected many times over the years. For example, during my student days in the early sixties at Canadian Bible College in Regina, Louis King was a frequent speaker on our campus and at my home church, The Alliance Tabernacle at 13th Avenue and Osler Street.

Later, while studying in the Master of Divinity program at Wheaton Grad School (1964-1967), I was privileged to serve as a student volunteer during the April 9-16, 1966 *Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission* hosted at Wheaton College. King gave the keynote address, based on Ephesians 1:22-23, entitled *God's Gift to the Church*. Here is a quote from the address:

"In its biblical sense and usage, the Church refers to the whole mass of redeemed men and women and not so much to so many separate and unrelated parts. It is a society in which man is perfected. It is a kingdom in which God is glorified. It is the grouping together of the individually redeemed to form the society of God. Our Lord and the apostles also used the word *church* to refer to a *spiritually-free, saved, called-out-of-the-world people who fulfill certain qualifications and to whom a certain work is committed*."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Lindsell, ed., (1966:18,19)



Ray's graduation from Wheaton College, with L.L. King, 1967. Courtesy Ray Downey.



Ray and Viola Downey on their 50th wedding anniversary. Courtesy Ray Downey.

During my three years as a student at Wheaton, two daughters were welcomed into our home, Carla at the beginning of my studies (1964) and Coralee just after my graduation (1967). While living in Wheaton, we attended the Westmont Alliance Church in Westmont, Illinois, a church where King pastored from 1942-1945 when their family's departure for India was delayed by WWII. Viola and I served as volunteer sponsors of the Westmont Senior High youth group during our Wheaton days. We still maintain contact with a few members of that group.

King was the guest speaker at my Wheaton graduation in 1967, at which time he was awarded an honorary doctorate in recognition for his outstanding contributions to evangelical missions.

Our family returned to Canada in August 1967, where we completed two years of required home service at the St. Vital Alliance Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Our official letter of appointment to the Democratic Republic of Congo arrived in early 1969 under the signature of Dr. King. We joined a group of fourteen missionaries and eight children who departed by ocean liner from New York City to France in September 1969 for nine

months of French language study in Albertville. Just before our NYC departure, King challenged our group and offered a prayer of commissioning as we gathered in the chapel of the C&MA headquarters.

After our studies in France, we arrived in the Congo in late August 1970.





Dr. King with Zaire's Bishop Bokeleale at the Alliance Centennial in Boma, Zaire, 1984.

Courtesy C&MA-USA archives.



Louis and Esther King at the Alliance Centennial in Zaire, 1984. Courtesy C&MA-USA archives.

Due to challenging situations in the country and the National Church in the sixties, no new missionaries were assigned to the DRC for almost a decade. We found out we, along with another couple, had been appointed to the Congo as replacements for Arni and Irene Shareski, competent and respected Congo field leaders. When King was named as Foreign Secretary of Overseas Ministries, he invited Arni to be his assistant in the New York office. A sort of two-for-one deal, big shoes to fill indeed!

During our ministry in the Congo (1970-1996), Dr. King was a frequent visitor to the field, particularly during the five-year agreement meetings between Church and Mission. In 1985 he was an honoured guest during the Centennial Celebration of the Congolese Alliance Community in the DRC, the C&MA's first mission field.

Dr. King was a key player when the C&MA authorized and funded my doctoral studies (1980-1982) at the School of World Mission - Fuller Theological Seminary. This school was founded by King's friend and associate in India, Dr. Donald McGavran.

Always a powerful preacher, King delivered anointed sermons without referring to notes. His passionate message on people's lost state remains a significant personal marker in my life. His views are summarized in a 1991 Heritage Series brochure entitled [The Lostness of Mankind, One Motivation for Evangelism](#). Here is one quote from the 27-page brochure:

"The whole of Jesus' mission was to find lost people, to rectify their sinful acts, to place them in the right path. He came for this purpose. Jesus, the King of Truth, taught that His mission to earth was "to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). Indeed, His mission cannot be defined without speaking of people as being lost."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> King, 1991:4



King with local pastors, date unknown. Courtesy C&MA-USA archives.

King's biography serves as a casebook in best practices concerning such matters as mission diplomacy, evangelical ecumenism, empowering national leadership, confronting error, and crisis response. Regarded as one of the foremost missionary statesmen of the modern missions era, Dr. Louis L. King (1915–2004) served the Alliance for more than four decades, filling roles as pastor, missionary, Vice President of the C&MA's Division of Overseas Ministries and as a key catalyst in the forward momentum of the indigenous church planting movement.

## **Early Markers in the Life of L.L. King (1915-1935)**

### **Family Background**

Louis King was born into a faith family on November 30, 1915, the fourth of five children. He was brought up in a wholesome atmosphere built on Presbyterian values, including strict Sabbath observance. His father, Raymond King, began following Christ when Louis was about eight years old. They attended the Grenloch Presbyterian Church in New Jersey, where Pastor William Topping profoundly impacted Louis's life. His parents owned a small mixed farm of horses, cattle, pigs, and laying hens along with a vegetable and flower garden. Though



Mr. and Mrs. King. Courtesy  
C&MA-USA archives.

they had hired helpers, the children were expected to help out with chores.

### **Conversion**

As a young teenager, Louis responded to an altar call at Delcanco Camp near Camden, New Jersey, on August 27, 1930. He could recall little about the speaker, the service, or the sermon topic but remembered it being the turning point of his life, noting, "the change was total and permanent."

Though baptized as an infant in the Presbyterian church, he decided after his camp conversion experience he now needed to be baptized by immersion. He elected to have this done by the pastor at the Pitman C&MA church. Pastor Topping from his Presbyterian church offered to do it, but King declined the offer stating, "his Presbyterian pastor really did not believe in baptism by immersion." After being baptized in the morning at a nearby lake, he changed clothes and hurried back to his home church. Not long after, the King family began attending the Pitman Alliance Church.

### **Health Challenges**

Although King had long cherished the ambition of becoming a medical doctor, shortly after his conversion, he came down with a severe case of pneumonia, causing significant damage to his heart and lungs. Even climbing a flight of stairs left him out of breath. Though previously healthy and quite able to do strenuous farm labour, this health blow meant the dream of being a physician was no longer possible.

The illness also prevented King from participating in sports like others of his age. So, he made a life-changing decision to discipline and exercise his mind. For example, he developed the habit of listening intently without taking notes as his high school teachers taught their courses. Then returning home, he would reconstruct the day's lessons by memory in a notebook. Gradually he achieved the capacity for nearly total recall. He continued a similar practice during his student days at Nyack. This proved to serve him well in his lifelong ability to preach without the use of written notes.

## **Call to Ministry**

It was not easy for King to abandon his dream of being a medical doctor. However, there was a growing conviction God was calling him to be a preacher; this was how he would find and fulfill the central purpose of his life. A wealthy uncle on his mother's side had promised to finance his medical training at the University of Pennsylvania. Fearful to inform his parents of this new sense of calling, he chose to leave a written note informing them after they headed for church one Sunday, on his mother's birthday. Amazingly, both his father and mother supported his decision, as eventually, the rich uncle did also. This led King to enroll in studies at the Alliance Missionary Training Institute (Nyack College).

As he continued to be exposed to Alliance beliefs, both in school and in the Alliance churches he attended, King was introduced to the doctrine of sanctification as an ongoing, life-transforming experience in which the Holy Spirit becomes a part of a person's life just as personally as Christ had at the moment of conversion. The result would be the power to live a holy life while being fruitful in service.

After many attempts and prayers for this to happen, Christ's words in the Gospel of Matthew 9:37-38 took on special meaning for him. "...The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

The power of the Holy Spirit became a reality in his life. An immediate result was leading a high-school friend, Herbert Madcliff, to Christ. "As they knelt at a back pew of the church, Louis led the first of many people to the Lord."<sup>3</sup> It was a wonderful affirmation the Holy Spirit had taken control of his life, allowing him to see lives changed as he shared the Gospel.

## **Nyack College – Missionary Training Institute (1935-1938)**

### **Divine Healing**

Because of his physical liability, King had been given a dorm room on the ground floor of the institute building where the dean of men, "Daddy" Dunbar, could keep a closer watch on his young student charge. In late November 1935, King had knelt alone in his room, claiming Christ as his Healer. His faith was soon tested, as he and Dunbar had agreed on regularly walking together along the road beside the institute building. About 150 metres past the building, the road took a steep climb where the two of them would generally turn back without tackling the hill.

However, this time, King told his mentor he wanted to continue to the top of the hill. At his insistence, they continued to Inspiration Point all the way at

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<sup>3</sup> Niklaus 2004:39

the top. King experienced none of the familiar signs of shortened breath and a weakened heart! "Not then, not ever – not even years later, when he maintained a travel-heavy schedule. He was indeed healed."<sup>4</sup>

### **Finding One's Life Partner – The Simpson Match Box**

Bible college students often meet their future mates at the schools they attend. The Missionary Training Institute was dubbed *The Simpson Match Box*. Unattached upper classmates had the habit of "looking over the new crop" at the beginning of each Fall semester. Though King feigned a certain disinterest in dating, a young transfer student from Chicago caught his eye. She had "beautiful, curly, auburn hair... was attractive to look at... of singular appearance." Louis was hopelessly smitten!

Her name was Esther Lillian Martz, born in 1917, the last of four siblings from a Methodist family. However, her whole family had come under the spell of a certain Chicago pastor and writer, Aiden W. Tozer, by name. As a young child, Esther had felt the call to be a missionary. A friend had recommended Nyack as a good school to attend "if you want spiritual life and missions." So, after two years of college in Chicago, she headed to Nyack, where she imagined an uncomplicated future lay before her; another two years of schooling and then off to Africa as a single missionary.

It was Thanksgiving 1936. After a noon feast to celebrate the occasion, Nyack students had congregated around the school mailboxes. An established tradition was for couples and singles to participate in an afternoon hike around the mountain. Neither Louis nor Esther had ever dated before. In fear and trembling, Louis approached Esther and blurted out, "Are you engaged?" He quickly corrected his *faux pas* saying, "I mean, do you have anyone to join you for a hike around the mountain this afternoon?"

She accepted his invitation, quickly sharing the good news with her roommate. Esther commented later, they had little to say to each other during the two-and-a-half-hour walk, though along the way, they felt at ease greeting fellow hikers. After the hike, Esther assumed their difficulty in conversing meant this would be the last she heard from him.

The same day, however, he invited her to join him at the evening meal, followed by a testimony meeting in the chapel. Louis's testimony added a further humorous twist to the day. He recounted his recent experience of healing for his heart and lung condition, adding, "But now the Lord has healed me from that problem." The room exploded in laughter as they saw Esther seated beside him.

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<sup>4</sup> Niklaus 2004:47

As Esther's face turned the same colour as her bright red dress, Louis did not even catch on to why they were laughing.

Their relationship developed over the school year, with both of them liking what they were experiencing in newfound love. The mailbox site had become a regular place where couples were allowed time for brief conversations together in public and to exchange written notes. Recognized now as a couple, a running joke on campus circulated, "I wonder how the King and Queen Esther are doing today?" It was not long before the school year ended, and Louis formalized their engagement with a proposal and a ring. However, their marriage would not take place until three years later, after both of them completed their Nyack studies.

## **Home Service (1939-1947)**

### **Pastorates**

Following his 1938 Spring graduation, King accepted an invitation to preach at the small Alliance church in North Tonawanda, NY, near Buffalo. He arrived with only two sermons, written and memorized, but enough for the Sunday services on May 15, 1938. After the service, he was interviewed and then invited to become their pastor. His immediate response was positive; none, least of all him, had considered how he would be supported. When asked later why he agreed so quickly, he said, "I just wanted to preach. In my daily devotions, I was so committed to the Lord and His guidance that I had no hesitance and no fear that I was missing the mark."<sup>5</sup> This first pastorate served as a basic training ground that would largely shape his ministry's future character. In January 1939, Esther visited North Tonawanda after graduating midterm at Nyack and then continued her trip to Chicago after the couple had worked out the details for their April wedding.

On the long trip back to Philadelphia the next morning, Louis chose to dedicate some time to reflect on directives for his future ministry. He took a detour to his Nyack alma mater, renting a dorm room there to settle on some basic life principles which he cautiously called "semi-vows because if I broke any of them, I would not have sinned." Nine semi-vows emerged, which gave structure to his ministry in three pastorates during the next eight years, followed by their six-year mission term in India. These same principles also played a role in his subsequent years of missionary administration. Years later, when asked by an Australian pastor, King provided the requested list of semi-vows:

1. Arise, shave, dress and be at my desk working before the first one in my congregation left for work.

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<sup>5</sup> Niklaus 2004:69

2. As far as possible, prepare to be in bed each evening by 10:30pm.
3. Study a minimum of five hours a day, but strive for eight.
4. Study every word of the New Testament in the original language.
5. Write in full two sermons a week – one expositional, the other evangelistic.
6. Preach without notes.
7. Visit every member or family once a month, staying no longer than twenty minutes. Never leave without prayer and Scripture reading.
8. Give a weekly lecture formatted like a seminary Bible course; prepare and preserve notes that could become a commentary.
9. Read recent college textbooks to stay current on developing scholarship.

Later he added another semi-vow, based on Job 31:1, "I make a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman." He realized some preachers were having trouble morally, and he did not want to be one of them.

## **Marriage**

On April 14, 1939, Louis travelled to Chicago, where his marriage to Esther was to take place, officiated by her pastor, A.W. Tozer. The wedding was a double-ring ceremony for Esther and her sister, Margaret. King was somewhat surprised at the officiating pastor's relaxed attitude as he told the brides-to-be, "There are no tracks to run on for this one since there are two of you. So do it any way you want. Nobody is going to say anything."

This freedom actually involved an unexpected delay in the ceremony. The best man, William Moreland, discovered he had misplaced Esther's wedding ring and, in a panic, substituted another smaller ring in its place. Things proceeded so smoothly Esther did not notice her ring did not fit; it was her sister-in-law's. Only later during the reception did Moreland return with the retrieved wedding ring. Unknowingly, it had slipped from his vest pocket into his suitcase as he was getting dressed for the event.

Following their honeymoon, Esther joined Louis in North Tonawanda for year two of pastoring the church. During the second year, Louis completed the requirements for ordination, which took place at their district conference in 1941. He had also more than met the criteria for their two-year home assignment. The Kings had not named a specific preferred country when they were appointed to India. However, a prediction had been made years earlier to King's parents by Alliance missionary James Brabazon; he said King would replace him in India.

Their departure was seriously delayed by the onset of World War II and the impossibility of safely travelling by sea during the war years. Obviously, there was

much more to be learned through a series of pastorates filling the interim for the young couple.

### **Westmont Alliance Church**

A church in Westmont, Illinois, twenty miles from Chicago, was without a pastor. R.R. Brown, District Superintendent, asked King to preach there one Sunday, an invitation which stretched into four consecutive Sundays. The church governing board liked what they saw and were aware of the Kings' uncertain situation; they invited King to be their pastor without having to candidate. For the next three years, the church flourished under his ministry. King admitted, "A minister rarely had as good a time as I did at Westmont."<sup>6</sup> One unexpected benefit of this period was their proximity to Chicago's Southside Alliance Church, where A.W. Tozer was pastor.

### **The A.W. Tozer Impact**

A friendship developed between Tozer and Louis King, who had come to the attention of the renowned pastor by marrying Esther, one of his church's young people. He jokingly chided Louis for stealing one of his girls from a future in Africa. On one occasion, he invited Louis to preach at his church. Louis declined the invitation several times, feeling too inexperienced for such a lofty task, but finally relented during a time when he and Esther were visiting the Martz family.

Tozer had several pieces of advice to offer Louis. For instance, he advised him to have both "fire and ice" in his messages, the fire of passion and the ice of deliberate preparation. Further, he told Louis to avoid preaching a new sermon whenever he was away from his own flock. It was better to preach a message he already knew; one God had previously used to bless his own congregation. When he preached for the first time at Tozer's church, six people responded to the invitation he gave at the end. Afterwards, Louis said with a grin, "I had it made with him. He really mentored me for fair after that."<sup>7</sup>

On another occasion while in Chicago, Louis visited the home of his mentor and friend, who neither owned nor drove a car. Tozer asked Louis to take him to a store, but first paused to pray before they went. Tozer dropped to his knees and "poured out his heart to the Lord to give direction so he wouldn't be frivolous in what he bought. It was mostly a worship prayer and a revelation to me" was Louis' comment.<sup>8</sup>

After a three-year pastorate at Westmont, Louis was invited to candidate at

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<sup>6</sup> Niklaus 2004:83

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 2004:80

<sup>8</sup> 2004:85



the Havelock Alliance Church in Lincoln, Nebraska, where Theodore Epp, radio speaker on *Back to the Bible*, was a member. It was a much larger church in a period of continuous revival. Again, he was reluctant to go. When he finally consented, after feeling a sense of release from Westmont, he and Esther spent a fruitful two years as pastor of a church well along the road to explosive growth. One thing stuck with him through these experiences, "The call of the church is the call of the Lord." This became a life-long principle for King.

### **Missionary Service in India (1947-1953)**

The Second World War finally ended in 1945 with a decisive victory by the Allies over the Axis powers. However, it would not be until mid-1947 before Louis and Esther King, with their three young sons, finally reached India. Complications beyond their control forced one delay after another.

They learned from Foreign Secretary A.C. Snead that their passage had been secured on a ship bound for India. Then, however, the bubble burst when Snead received a phone call informing how, in a frenzied postwar rush for business companies to return personnel to their overseas assignments, the King passage had been sold to another party.



The King Family.  
Courtesy C&MA-USA archives.

Thankfully, the King family had been put on missionary allowance with additional funds for rent. Louis spent the next several months ministering to small Midwest congregations who could not afford special speakers. This had the advantage of enabling him to meet Alliance people he would otherwise not have met. The churches, in turn, were introduced to a young missionary family who would need their prayers.

King's relationship with A.W. Tozer faced some unexpected hurdles as well. Tozer had always insisted Louis belonged in the pastorate, not overseas, and he would be stepping out of God's will if the family went to India. Though King disagreed with his mentor's opinion, he humbly respected Tozer's right to differ.

By early 1947, the King family was able to secure passage aboard the *Marine Adder*, a troop carrier used during the war. In Tozer's strenuous opposition, the final straw was refusing to announce to his Chicago church (Esther's home church)

the Kings were about to depart for India. Thus, there was neither a farewell service nor prayer requests for them as they launched their missionary career.

Onboard their ship headed from San Francisco for India, they soon met 140 missionaries also bound for India, including Bakht Singh, an Indian evangelist of national stature, who had come to Christ while studying in Canada. They soon became friends, and the relationship opened many interdenominational doors for King during their time in India.

For their entire six-year term in India, Tozer maintained his opposition to their missionary appointment. When they returned for furlough in 1953, Tozer contacted Louis, inviting him to take his pulpit on Sunday, but said, "Don't give a missionary message. . . just one of your good Bible sermons." Louis experienced great liberty in his preaching that Sunday. Tozer asked to speak with him privately after the service, repeating his familiar refrain of not returning to India after furlough. Subsequent events would confirm Tozer's convictions. Only the timing was wrong.

It is no surprise the King family weathered many challenges and learned many valuable lessons during their time in India. There were the typical challenges of cultural adaptation, language learning, the unrelenting heat, and the risk of tropical diseases. They were separated from their sons for nine months each year while they attended boarding school; the separation was painful for all concerned. In the years to follow as an administrator, Louis had to enforce the regulations of sending missionary kids (MKs) away to school. Louis and Esther understood the pain of school children being separated from their parents because they had experienced it themselves.

Esther picked up the Gujarati language with relative ease, better than most first-termers. Not so for Louis, who struggled with language learning. His inability to master the language did not render him useless since their work was primarily in large cities. Because so many different languages were spoken, people had to resort to English to communicate even with each other. When Louis preached in English, some hearers got the message before the majority heard it translated into Gujarati.

His reputation as a gifted preacher resulted in him being invited to speak not only in Alliance churches but to large interdenominational gatherings of up to 4,000 attendees. Many were nominal Christians who, night after night, responded to King's invitation. He also preached regularly to the large Alliance congregations in Maharashtra and Ahmedabad, but always with a translator.

India was in the throes of gaining its independence from Britain, a reality taking place in 1947. The political change had repercussions on the C&MA

National Church in both its Maharashtra and Gujarat Synods, resulting in added tension between church and mission. Louis was beginning to wonder whether his mentor, Tozer, was right after all; had their family made a wrong decision in coming to India?

Though not a rebel by nature, King resolved to live by specific guidelines that put him at odds with current mission practice in India. These included his decisions:

1. to not hold any church office,
2. to support the church with offerings, but not to make public the amount,
3. to faithfully teach the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit,
4. to be a diligent example in witnessing to the lost, and
5. where he differed with his missionary colleagues, to do it discreetly without causing unnecessary contention in the ranks.

During their April 1953 return to America, Louis had occasion to read the manuscript of a book written by a fellow missionary to India, Donald McGavran, on people's movements toward God. The book, entitled *The Bridges of God*, was to have a bombshell impact on missionary efforts, notably among least-reached people groups. King was a quick convert to the [group-movement concept](#) since it was so much in line with his guidelines for doing mission. When he finally met McGavran personally, they became fast friends and colleagues. The strategy would be encouraged and adopted in several Alliance fields in the future during King's lengthy role as a mission administrator.

By 1953 Louis would sum up six years of missionary experience in India, saying, "The main thing I learned was what we should do and not do."<sup>9</sup> India was for Louis King the proving grounds of principles which would inform the decades of service soon to open for him on a worldwide scale.<sup>10</sup>

## **Area Secretary for India and the Far East (1953-1956)**

A significant sea change was on the horizon for the King family as they returned from India in 1953. They had settled into furlough in Chicago, where Esther's parents lived. While Louis was away on a fall tour, their fourth son was born and named John Mark, continuing to follow the practice to use Bible names for their sons.

The Alliance's overseas work had grown to 22 fields and close to 800 missionaries, triggering an urgent need for additional administrative help at the national office. Two area secretaries were to be added to serve from the headquarters in New York City. Tozer suggested that his young "mentoree"

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<sup>9</sup> Niklaus 2004:96

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 2004:225

L.L. King be offered the position of area secretary for India and the Far East. After considering several names, the board of managers agreed "by a good majority" to follow Tozer's suggestion and approached King. Foreign Secretary Snead phoned Louis, informing him of their offer and saying they needed an answer within two and one-half hours since their board meeting was about to adjourn.

Louis hung up the phone in wonder and disbelief. He quickly informed Esther he planned to refuse, saying, "I am a Bible teacher and preacher, not an administrator! It is not in my blood." But, this time, Esther's blunt comment caught him up short. "You keep telling people that '*the call of the church is the call of the Lord.*' Why don't you follow your own advice?"

Guilty as charged! Without further ado or even pausing to pray about it, Louis returned Dr. Snead's call, telling him, "I will do it, but I don't understand why they chose me. I'll just have to accept it as the call of the Lord."<sup>11</sup>



Louis King in China, date unknown.  
Courtesy C&MA-USA archives.

The next three years would entail a whirlwind of activity for Louis. His new role as area secretary involved giving oversight to 510 missionaries in 11 Asian fields, plus France and Holland. He started work on January 1, 1954, admitting to his new secretary, Edna Figg, he knew nothing about administration, so she would have to be his instructor. She proved to be a godsend, well organized and not easily intimidated, a thoroughly practical

person given to speaking frankly. Each morning as King arrived at the office, she handed him a typed list of things to do, letters to write, even suggesting what to write as needed.<sup>12</sup>

In the early 1950s, little thought had been given by the C&MA headquarters as to how staff newcomers were to secure housing for themselves and settle into their new jobs. They were left to fend on their own. Louis arrived at the national office, bunking into a single bedroom until he arranged accommodations for his family. Temporary family quarters were found first in Manhattan and later in a house owned by the Alliance in Nyack, NY.

Surprisingly, the move meant taking a pay cut in salary since they lost their missionary status. Esther was now off missionary allowance, and they no longer

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<sup>11</sup> 2004:131

<sup>12</sup> 2004:132, 133



King at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Vietnam, date unknown. Courtesy C&MA-USA archives.

received supplemental MK allowances for their four sons. They took it all in stride, however, knowing God would provide, and He did!

Louis may have had little administrative experience, but he was a quick learner. He was disciplined, hardworking, and methodical, made out of the right stuff! One of the early accomplishments of their office was to develop a detailed *Policies and Procedures Manual*, which was subsequently put into the hands of every overseas missionary. Timebanks became a part of field administration, with fixed 48-month terms established; so, anyone departing early for furlough had to be counterbalanced by someone willing to extend their term.

The list of challenges went on! Unrestrained inflation due to currency devaluation struck operations on the four Indo-China fields, forcing a significant reduction to existing missionary staff and a shut-down on new appointments. In addition, King had to make an unplanned trip to Vietnam to deal with a serious disciplinary matter resulting in the dismissal of a couple from further service with the C&MA. King showed remarkable ability to manage crises and make tough decisions with fairness and grace.

### **The Bangkok Conference**

Top on the list of King's many accomplishments was introducing and applying the indigenous church policy of self-support, self-governance, and self-propagation throughout the Alliance world. Such was the purpose of a conference convened in Bangkok, Thailand, in 1955 for church and mission leaders from India and the Far East fields. But, unfortunately, there

Top on the list of King's many accomplishments was introducing and applying the indigenous church policy of self-support, self-governance, and self-propagation throughout the Alliance world.

were few mission field leaders on the same page as King in the early fifties, nor was there much support among those giving leadership to the C&MA at its NYC headquarters office.

King understood the policy could not be imposed but must be caught "as iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17). Paul Morris from India said the way King organized the Bangkok conference "was a stroke of genius." The National Churches who were doing the right job, primarily in the Philippines and Vietnam, were put on exhibit and reported what they were doing, particularly regarding self-support.<sup>13</sup> The conference functioned like the epicentre of an earthquake, having a ripple effect throughout the churches of Asia and far beyond.<sup>14</sup> Changes began to happen as the delegates returned to their home countries. By 1960, King was able to report, "All C&MA overseas pastors were entirely dependent on national resources for financial support. They were also in the process of launching and supporting their own missions programs."<sup>15</sup> King felt funding for missionary endeavours should be "as close to the grassroots as possible," thereby assuring the accountability and responsibility of the local church for the Great Commission task.

## **Vice President – Division of Overseas Ministries (1956-1978)**

A.C. Snead retired from active service at the 1956 General Council in Omaha after almost 37 years in the Foreign Department. Louis King was elected to take the reins of the department at the same Council. "In God's providence, 1956 marked the beginning of an explosive period of Alliance missions and National Church growth worldwide. Leading the advance would be a man who neither sought nor desired the role of foreign secretary. Yet he did not shrink from the responsibility, quietly convinced that *the call of the church was the call of the Lord*."<sup>16</sup>

### **Alliance World Fellowship**

As the indigenous church model was being embraced by National Churches on all Alliance fields, the need to form a world body was finding expression in regional conferences held regularly following the Bangkok conference. As VP of Overseas Ministries, Louis King was tasked with seeing how this could happen, with a suggested target date following General Council in May 1975.

President Nathan Bailey identified a further reason for creating a world body, to

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<sup>13</sup> 2004:12

<sup>14</sup> 2004:19

<sup>15</sup> 2004:20

<sup>16</sup> cf. Niklaus 2004:158-9

strengthen National Church bodies to withstand ecumenical pressures. He wrote, "The autonomy of the overseas churches has left them open to the overtures of associations such as the World Council of Churches, with their assurance of financial and personal gain in the form of salaries and scholarships."

The founding conference took place May 20-23, 1975, in Nyack with nearly 100 participants from Alliance churches in 34 nations. Adriaan Stringer, conference moderator and former Dutch missionary to Congo, chaired with exceptional skill the 13-member committee drafting the constitution. Conferees unanimously approved their work and then broke into spontaneous applause.

The seven-page document affirmed the organization of a global community of National Churches called The Alliance World Fellowship. It was specifically defined as a non-legislative fellowship, neither authoritative nor a physical entity.<sup>17</sup>

### **C&MA President (1978-1987)**

At the 1978 Birmingham General Council, Louis King was elected on the second ballot as the seventh president of the C&MA. Again, it was the case of an unsought position. However, he believed the presidency could be the way to accomplish specific goals he had. He refused to encourage his candidacy, however. "I always came to an election where my name was being considered as if I were not going to be chosen. So if it didn't happen, I was free from worry and apprehension of what might have been. I placed it in the Lord's hands. It was His business, not mine, and I would be content with the outcome."<sup>18</sup>

As Alliance president, King recognized the urgency to plant churches in urban centres worldwide. During his tenure, cities in the Middle East witnessed a resurgence of spiritual growth. Also, during his time as president, two church-planting efforts—the centennial doubling campaign, as well as the "Easter 100 Churches" project—were successful. All of which contributed to the crowning achievement he wrote of in 1980.

"The indigenous church concept and our eventual faithful adherence



King in his office, date unknown.  
Courtesy C&MA-USA archives.

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<sup>17</sup> cf. Niklaus 2004:269-74

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 2004:283



King with newly-elected first President of the C&MA in Canada, Mel Sylvester, 1980.

Courtesy C&MA archives.

to it is our crowning glory. Our early adoption of it has made us a unique phenomenon in missionary history. It should therefore be rehearsed in perpetuity, just as the Jews ever commemorate their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. For us and for the national churches it has been like a mighty deliverance from bondage."<sup>19</sup> This is echoed by the Alliance in Canada.

Dr. King helped to part amicably with their American colleagues as the Canadian C&MA became an autonomous, missionary-sending denomination. "He who had vigorously implemented the policy of indigenous overseas churches, stood alone among the senior Alliance officials from the USA, to speak favourably of a self-governing Alliance in Canada."<sup>20</sup>

At the historic founding General Assembly taking place in Winnipeg in June 1980, Dr. King delivered the

<sup>19</sup> Niklaus 2004:323

<sup>20</sup> Reynolds 1992:434



King at the commissioning of the newly-elected first President of the C&MA in Canada, Mel Sylvester, 1980. Courtesy C&MA archives.



charge to the newly commissioned President of the C&MA in Canada, Rev. Melvin P. Sylvester. I was present as the token missionary on the original 12-member Canadian Board of Directors, serving as a member-at-large during my studies (1980-82) at the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission, Pasadena, CA.<sup>21</sup>

## **Reflections on Louis King's Legacy**

Dr. Arnold Cook reflected at length on Louis King's legacy after attending his memorial service in 2004. I include his thoughts below.

"Last month I attended the funeral of a long-term mentor, Dr. L.L. King. More importantly, he mentored The Christian and Missionary Alliance. King was a household name for all our missionaries who served from 1960 to 1990. Like A.W. Tozer, King was larger than the C&MA. His visionary strategy to wean national churches off of Mission subsidy transformed us from a colonial Mission in the 1950s into a growing indigenous church-planting missionary movement for the next four decades of the 20th century.

His tenacious passion to develop indigenous national churches literally reshaped Alliance missions. This culminated in the birth of The Alliance World Fellowship in 1975, now a dynamic organization of 45 autonomous Alliance denominations in 45 countries. Through King's cross pollination conferences with other Missions in the 60s and 70s, his strategy for moving national churches toward full autonomy became the basic policy of many Missions.

My wife and I were missionaries during the "King Era" in Latin America, 1961–1978. We saw and felt his impact in two areas, first when Dr. King visited us in our first term. We were planting an urban church. I was serving as the pastor—which was a no-no even in 1964. He tersely reminded me, "Arnold, it must turn out right," which, by interpretation, meant: "You must be sure that a national pastor replaces you soon."

He visited us again in our second term in another city. I showed him the Union Seminary where I was teaching national leaders. I was anxious to have him see the Student Reading Room across from the large university. The good doctor was unimpressed. He simply asked: "Arnold, how do these activities relate to the planting of an indigenous national church in that city?" Obviously King did not sit

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,1992:430

in New York and strategize. He was committed to visiting the ground troops. (He once trekked several days to visit personnel in what used to be known as Irian Jaya, Indonesia.)

Following my missionary career and 19 years at the National Office of the C&MA Canada, I served four years as the president of the Alliance World Fellowship (AWF).

The Alliance World Fellowship felt the impact of King's indigenous policy. "L.L.", (as many called him) sensed the need of these newly established autonomous national churches to feel a part of the larger Alliance family. The AWF became King's answer. Founded in 1975, its focus was on fellowship. Conferences continue to be held every four years on different continents.

The second area where I felt the impact of mentor King was when I met with my committee of six outstanding national leaders representing the five regions of AWF. I was profoundly thankful for the vision of L.L. King. I was also pleasantly surprised to discover that the greatest desire of these leaders was to find ways to send their own missionaries from each of their regions. Missions full circle! In April of 2004 in the Netherlands, AWF held its eighth quadrennial conference in Europe. My most recent joy in ministry was to hand over the AWF leadership to a godly young Dutch leader."<sup>22</sup>

## Retirement and Later Years (1987-2004)

King retired from the ministry in 1987, shortly after turning over the presidency to his own protégé, Dr. David Rambo. King was one of the most influential Alliance



King with David Rambo, date unknown.  
Courtesy C&MA-USA archives.

leaders since A.B. Simpson. When he died on November 11, 2004, at a retirement home in Florida, King left a lasting legacy of C&MA commitment to missions and the Fourfold Gospel. This commitment is profoundly captured in his description of the cause he so faithfully served, "The Alliance is a unique missionary denomination, a

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.kneillfoster.com/Cook/editorials/MyMentor.html>

maverick movement into whose soul the Head of the Church breathed "Go!" from the very start."

## Some Final Take-Aways

- Career dreams are great but even better is finding and fulfilling God's dreams.
- Unsought leadership roles happen in God's Kingdom – from the bottom up.
- The right life partner makes all the difference in a life the counts for eternity.

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## Resources

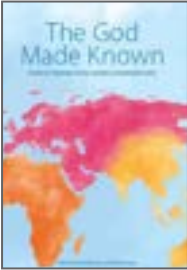
- Listen to Dr. King preaching in Regina in 1987 [Red Hot for Missions](#)
- Listen to a [podcast](#) where Ron Brown and Ray Downy discuss Louis King



## More Stories of Those Who Went

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

In Chapter 4, Grace Jordan (a pseudonym), tells of "Tibet: A Vision Revisited." Chapter 19, by Elmer and Muriel Entz, tells of God's purpose for them.



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

In Chapter 5, Thomas Ford (a pseudonym) provides insights into ministry in China.



***Leading By Serving*** by Elmer Entz

Elmer and Muriel Entz were missionaries to India with the C&MA for over four decades. Others have described them as models of authentic servanthood, loving and supportive through changing times. Their authenticity, consistency, integrity and loyalty have been of inestimable value.



***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 this key people to be reached before Christ’s return.

# Canadian Alliance Missions Engagement

## More 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**

What joy to read through *The God Made Known*, written by and about people I've worked with or heard about over the past 35 years. These men and women are my heroes, choosing to respond to God's call to make Jesus known among the least-reached people of the world. In my work as Director of Member Care, I often got to see the price they paid for choosing to live in some of the most challenging areas of the world, with new and strange diseases, environmental hazards, inadequate infrastructures, increased violence and often unstable governments. I am grateful to those who have taken the time to write their stories. And I praise God for the fruit that He has borne through the lives of these His saints.

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

*The 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>



***On Mission: Stories of Those Who Went, Volumes 1 and 2***

contain the stories of more Canadian Alliance international workers. These books celebrate the redeeming work of God and at the same time provide some accountability to the people of God who faithfully provided sons and daughters, finances and prayer, for the mission of God.

They describe how missionaries in obedience to God's call engaged in His redeeming activities all over the world by going to some of the toughest and most difficult places. They persevered, some under horrible conditions, having survived traumatic events, in order to see communities of faith established amongst least-reached peoples.

Today, we rejoice, that in many nations of the world there are vibrant congregations, some small, some large that are living out the Gospel in their communities.



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**Around the globe Alliance workers are actively reaching out to the least-reached people groups of this world. The Global Advance Fund is the primary means of providing for our workers.**

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# On mission

## STORIES OF THOSE WHO WENT

Like you, I love giving to missions.

We've all understood the theme running through Scripture about God reaching out to all nations. So we, the people of God across Canada, have been giving to missions for a very long time. Yet, I sometimes wonder what God has been doing with all our resources – prayers and finances, daughters and sons.

ON MISSION tells the stories of what God has been accomplishing in Argentina, Russia, the Philippines, West Africa, Eastern Europe, Cuba, Vietnam and Mexico. These are stories written by our colleagues who were sent by us to bring good news to the nations.

This book is a way of saying thank you...to YOU!

**Compiled by Ronald Brown**

Cover Design: Dan Nel

Cover Photography

Joel Dunn, Fabien Bazzanega

& Will Stewart



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