



MISSION
to the
WORLD

Network

MISSION TO THE WORLD • PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA • WWW.MTW.ORG • FALL 2009

Ed Hartman didn't really intend to convince his daughter's Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) group at the University of Mississippi to come to Romania on their spring break mission project. But he wasn't disappointed when it turned out that way!

Last fall, students from RUF at Ole Miss were preparing for a short-term project to Nairobi, Kenya. At about the same time that logistical challenges were making that trip look doubtful, Ed and Emily Hartman were visiting their daughter, Katy, in

Oxford, Miss. During lunch with the Ole Miss RUF pastor, Les Newsom, Ed remembers talking about the amount of work they had in Romania and their lack of manpower. "So, we tried to convince Les to move to Romania," Ed recalls, tongue in cheek. "When that didn't work, we said we'd like to have a short-term team come visit. When Les told us that their Nairobi project wasn't working out, I said, 'Well, have I got a deal for you!'"

That "deal" resulted in 14 Ole Miss students, including Ed's daughter, Katy Hartman, traveling to Romania, where they got even more than they bargained for.

A Stunning Response

Arriving on Saturday, the students began preparing immediately for their work teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to Romanian students at the University of Transylvania that week. Sam Taaffe, an RUF intern who co-led the team from Ole Miss, remembers that

RUF STUDENTS: ADVANCING THE WORK IN

ROMANIA

by Susan Fikse



The first night of ESL classes at the University of Transylvania.

"Everyone was a bit ambiguous about how this was going to go. None of us had extensive ESL training," he says. "Our students weren't fresh on their English grammar from middle school and high school." But the students and the Romania MTW team discovered that God would do more than they could even ask or imagine.

Preparing for the ESL classes, Derek Ebbers (who heads the ESL ministry for the MTW team) and Ed Hartman (the MTW Romania team leader) met with the dean of the business faculty at the University of Transylvania. Much to their surprise and delight, the dean contacted all the right people for them

and opened doors for them to use three large classrooms for ESL classes.

However, 15 minutes before their 14 American visitors would begin teaching, the professor in charge had only allocated one classroom for ESL and rolled her eyes when the team insisted more space was needed. "She couldn't believe we would need capacity for more than 40 students," Ed recalls. "As students gathered, she quickly realized that there were more than 100 students congregating in the hall for ESL classes. She just sat there, stunned!" The professor not only gave the team the three promised classrooms, but seven more.

Sam explains that the conversational exercises during the ESL classes were designed to get at issues of the heart. These fruitful conversations continued each evening at a local coffee shop, where the Ole Miss team would gather with their Romanian ESL students. One of the University of Transylvania students said that this week spent learning English with American students was one of his best memories of college. Such a response was far beyond what the Ole Miss students anticipated, says Sam. "We didn't know what to expect and were nervous about our inexperience with ESL, but it was a



Touched by Network

Has God touched you through *Network*? Below is a story from *Network* reader Ken Scheffter from Mt. Airy Presbyterian Church in Maryland:

*I came home and supper was cooking, so I had a few minutes to read the *Network* cover article about a team's visit to Mexico. I realized that two parts would be wonderful to read at our missions team meeting that night: Dottie Ness' lesson about "carrying a burden of luxury and comfort" and Colleen Pfund's observation that "culture and language were no barrier."*

Later that evening, as I read these passages aloud to the team, I choked up because I had personally experienced both of these phenomena (yes, it's supernatural!) on trips to Belize and Zlin (Czech Republic) last year. The Scripture Dottie quoted hit home, zeroing right in on our crippling burden of comfort.

We look forward eagerly to what God will do in Fairmont, W.Va. You helped equip us by this article. Thank you!

Has *Network* impacted you or your ministry? Send your stories to network@mtw.org.

testament to God's grace and Him working far beyond our expectations."

Ed says his team's response was similar: "Our team is actually somewhat stunned over how things went, and can only attribute what we experienced to the faithfulness of the Lord to the prayers of many on our behalf." Since that first week of ESL classes, God has continued to exceed the team's expectations by providing a home on campus where the team can build on relationships with students as well as host Bible studies and hold worship services for a new church plant.

Mission: Watermelon

One of the most influential aspects of the week for the American students was their morning "watermelon sessions." The word for watermelon in Romanian is *pepene* and the MTW team used this word as an acronym to organize the content of its morning sessions: processing, experiencing, preparing, equipping, nurturing, and encouraging. In this way, the Romania MTW team was able to accomplish not only its ministry goals for the week, but also invest in the lives of 14 American students.

"While MTW is a church-planting organization, our conviction is that our

main responsibility in Romania is to train leaders of all sorts—in the family, in the university, in the political community, in the church," explains Ed. So, even as these Ole Miss students came to serve in Romania, Ed was thinking about how to contribute to their development as Christ-centered, kingdom-building leaders in their own spheres of influence.

"This is the first mission project where we weren't doing VBS or a building campaign," says Sam. "We were working with the team. We saw them building a community of people. And we were clearly reminded each day of what we were doing—we were beggars showing other beggars where to find food in the gospel."

While Ed Hartman may not have originally planned for Ole Miss students to end up in Romania, the fact that they learned about incarnational ministry, life on the mission field, and tasted the gospel in a new way was clearly no accident. ■

To learn more about the work in Romania, contact Ed Hartman at mtwromania@yahoo.com.



THE HIDDEN COSTS

of missions

by Melissa Kelley

For Rebecca, serving as a missionary in a remote part of the world requires an unusually personal sacrifice. She grew up Amish in the Midwest, wearing a head covering and living in a sheltered environment where she was the first woman in her family to attend college. Coming to Christ in her late teens was a liberating experience.

"When I became a Christian and took off my head covering, there was huge freedom in that," she said.

Little did she know that she would soon sense a call to missions with her husband to the Middle East, in an area where most women cover up with burqas and scarves.

"To put that scarf back on was something I had to work through," Rebecca said, now many years into her service in that Middle Eastern country. "It was certainly a loss of freedom. You actually become used to wearing it over time, but it wears you down in ways you're not aware of."

Following Christ's Call

Rebecca's example is just one of many ways missionaries experience the costs of following Christ's call onto the mission field. Others include the loss of cultural competence, family relationships, financial security, physical safety, and good medical care.

"Technology has changed things, but it used to be that when you went overseas no one would come see you, and staying in touch by phone was impossible," said Clay Quarterman, who has served in Ukraine for 15 of his 31 years as an MTW missionary. "My dad and I got our ham radio licenses years ago to be able to talk back and forth, since the phone call would have cost us \$2.50 per minute."

"Missionaries will tell you they don't have it harder than other Christians, but it's true that they are challenged

on a regular basis for faith-based solutions to everyday problems," said Jud Lamos, MTW's international director of Enterprise for Christian-Muslim Relations. "They are obviously less in control of the daily events in their lives."

Unexpected Costs

Some of the losses missionaries experience on the field are expected and can be planned for—with language school, spiritual mentorship, and cultural training. But there are also hidden losses that vary from missionary to missionary. "Recently, I attended a retreat with missionary women from all over the world," said Rebecca. "And several themes came through: dealing with aging parents back home, a sense of rootlessness, and a loss of natural beauty."

Some, like Rebecca and her husband, also face physical danger. They have lived through two wars and varying levels of animosity from locals. "Anybody who follows Christ has their own personal cost," says Rebecca. "We constantly have to say, 'God, what do you want?' And overall, it has been safer here than we expected. Anyone who desires to live righteously, anywhere, will be persecuted."

In the end, the work of the Lord prevails. "I've come more to terms with these real losses," says Rebecca, "but also more convinced of the call to be here—the need is here."

Clay agrees. "The Lord will protect us to do what He wants us to do. We look at the waves and forget that Jesus is in the boat. The safest place to be is in the boat." ■

To read the full version of this article, visit www.mtw.org/network.

Mentoring Program: Helping Interns Thrive

by Melanie Benedict



MTW's mentoring program, created as a result of feedback from interns returning from the field, continues to grow in its second year of existence.

"We noticed comments on [intern] evaluations saying, 'I wish I'd had someone to mentor me,'" said Opal Hardgrove, MTW's special projects promoter. "The mentoring program meets a felt need for interns."

The mentoring program, entitled "Thrive," began last year in conjunction with MTW's summer internship program. Now an increasing number of interns have the opportunity to be mentored during their two months on the field while they explore missions.

"A successful internship experience can also help steer interns into long-term service," said Opal. Many interns come to the field to investigate missions as a career. While on the field they often go through a host of emotions and thoughts about the future. With a mentor, they have someone to talk with about these issues.

Phillip Holmes, a student at Belhaven College who served as an MTW intern this summer in Thailand, can't imagine having served on the project without a mentor. "Having a support system was incredible," Phillip said. "It made the experience a lot smoother, and it was great to have someone to talk to when you're struggling and discouraged."

To Caleb Mahoney, a Dalton State College student who interned in Ireland this summer, the trip would not have been the same without a mentor. Caleb was in the midst of changing schools and healing from a broken relationship just prior to the project. "It helped having someone to talk to about my personal life," he said. "It was good to have an older, more spiritually mature man to guide me." Caleb plans to return to the field for a short project next summer.

But interns aren't the only ones to benefit from the mentoring program. Christiana Fitzpatrick served as a mentor in Belgium and found the experience to be powerful and gratifying. "It is an intense and incredibly rewarding way to spend a summer," Christiana said. "My greatest joy as a mentor is getting to see up close and personal the gospel being applied to students' lives as they interact with each other and see the broader vision of the kingdom."

The mentoring program continues to grow. The program started in 2008 with just four sites. This year MTW matched mentors with interns in seven countries, and is already working to expand the number of sites for 2010. ■



Face painting in Greece



Team Belgium

For more information on serving as an intern or a mentor, contact Opal Hardgrove at opal.hardgrove@mtw.org, or check the tick box on page 15.

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CMI & MTW: A 25-Year Partnership

by Katie Weaver

When missionary kid Beth Martin grew up attending Children's Ministry International (CMI) workshops at MTW retreats, she had no idea the impact it would have on her as an adult. "Even today, the songs, verses, and truths I was taught as a small child will come to mind." She adds, "I often find myself singing them to my own children!"

This year marks the 25th anniversary of MTW's partnership with CMI, an organization dedicated to biblically-based children's curriculums. Through this relationship, CMI has provided children's programs at MTW's worldwide conferences and events, while MTW has enabled CMI to "establish key relationships with missionary families who now translate the CMI material for work in their countries," according to CMI's director, Brad Winsted. "Our teachers at the MTW regional conferences come from the PCA and other Reformed churches that use our material, and we're always looking for more."

When Hank and Carolyn Thigpen founded Children's Ministry International (CMI) in 1981, they wanted to "teach teachers how to teach." However, they struggled to find support materials that were solidly biblical and systematic. Eventually, they created a curriculum based on the catechism for young children taken from the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Today, CMI's *The Bible Building Blocks of the Faith* encompasses 14 series, each with several groups of topical lessons. The lessons include memory verses, songs, review games, Bible lessons, and crafts.

Over the last 25 years, thanks to CMI's *Building Blocks*, hundreds, if not thousands, of MTW's missionary kids have received a solid foundation in the faith. "I was always amazed at how much they retained," explains Robin White, a long-time missionary with MTW, whose children—including Beth Martin—participated in CMI programs.

Robin White also remembers the importance of CMI curriculum to her family's work in Mexico. "We used it for teaching VBS out in the *colonias*. We even had moms who hung around at VBS and listened to the

Bible stories." And they weren't the only moms learning core truths from the engaging songs and colorful presentations. "I feel like I personally learned from teaching CMI," admits Robin.

Christine and Scott are MTW missionaries in a restricted-access country who have worked to translate CMI's *Building Blocks* curriculum into their area's local language. So far, Christine and Scott have published six of the curriculum books in the local language where they are being used by several churches. Christine loves that the materials are multi-sensory, adding that "the books have been a great guide and model for new teachers in learning the basic components of a Sunday school lesson."

From growing MTW's kids in the faith, to teaching new believers core truths in their own language, CMI's 25-year relationship with MTW has affected the hearts and minds of thousands of children and families across the globe. ■

To learn more about CMI, or to learn how to become a CMI teacher, visit www.childministry.com.

the Pettengills

FLOURISHING WITH THE HELP OF THE WEB

by Carter Davis

Often, determining God's will can feel like a daunting task. Our selfish natures take over—we hear what we want to hear. For MTW missionaries Mike and Erin Pettengill, though, God's plan to send them to the mission field came through loud and clear.

"It was clear that the Lord was calling us here," Mike recalled of his family's transition from life in California to La Ceiba, Honduras. "When the Creator of the universe shouts in your ear and makes it so very plain, you have no choice but to listen."

In the early stages of a faltering U.S. economy, the Pettengills—Mike, a policy director for the California State Senate, and Erin, a pediatric registered nurse and nurse manager—quickly and effortlessly sold their two-story house (with a pool), sold both cars (and four motorcycles), parted with most of their possessions, and walked away from six-figure-salary jobs.

"It should have been hard for us to leave, but the Lord kept blessing us and doing things for us in a timely manner," Mike added. "It was impossible to ignore."

As of November 2009, the Pettengills have been in La Ceiba—a new field for MTW—for 15 months, and are beginning their second full year on the field. Along with them are Sean and Lindsey McCann, who've been a part of the team since January 2009, and more missionaries are on the way.

In the time since the Pettengills landed on Honduran soil and the McCanns joined the team, the fledgling ministry has exploded with potential and promise. The team is primarily focused on church planting, but the scope has expanded considerably as a result of God's blessing.

"We've been focusing a lot on medical and mercy ministries with my wife's nursing background," Mike said.

"But we're focusing on teaching ESL classes, kids clubs, launching a discipleship program, supporting the local pastors in the community, and more. Within the next six months we'll be launching a theological seminary."

The short-term teams that helped out during the

summer contributed to a building campaign for some of the community's poorest people. Additionally, God brought resources from unexpected places. An offer of 250 brand-new pairs of women's sandals here, 14,000 (yes, 14,000) school supplies there—the La Ceiba team has been blessed by unlikely gifts. As a result, the team has integrated itself into the community in a relatively short time.



Erin with Oneida

Harnessing the Power of the Web

The opportunities that are cropping up in La Ceiba and beyond are indeed amazing and are helping to spread God's name to the unreached. A crucial piece of the puzzle, though, is the Web presence that the Pettengills and McCanns have developed.

Both families have developed detailed blogs, with photos, videos, and stories about the minutiae of daily





Team Honduras: the McCanns and the Pettengills.

life on the mission field. If you want to learn about (and pray for) Oneida, the nearly mute girl who is slowly transforming from the town's "beaten, stray dog" into someone who is treated with respect by those in the community and participating in Bible studies, you can. If you'd rather get a general update, you can get that, too. The amount and quality of information is astounding, and a more effective means of relaying these potentially mundane facts and figures would be hard to come by.

"In the time we've been here, we've taken thousands of photographs, and we've created 110 original videos about our ministry," Mike said. "The Lord has placed it on our heart that every one of us is called to fulfill the Great Commission. As a part of this, there are two types of Christians—goers and senders. The goers can't go if the senders aren't there, and the senders can't send if there's no one to go."

The team's videos on its YouTube page have received more than 76,000 views in 16 months—the kind of exposure that was unheard of several years ago—and the websites and blogs are visited frequently as well.

"If you're going to write us a check each month or are committing to pray for us on a regular basis, the least we can do is help facilitate you to glorify the Lord," Mike said.

"If you can learn more about the people we're working with, and you can begin to pray for people by name and get involved in the ministry through videos, photos, newsletters, or blogs, then we've done part of what we're being called to do. It's our responsibility to the people who support us through prayer and financially so that they know what they're supporting."

In just a little more than a year, God has blessed the La Ceiba team with "massive growth." MTW is sending more missionaries to join the team, and through the support of the senders, the goers in La Ceiba are feeling the love, thousands of miles away.

"We love knowing that people are getting that wrapped up in a Third World, poor, malnourished, unemployed, uneducated community," Mike said. "This is where we believe the Lord is calling us to die, and we are very happy about that." ❏



DEATH YIELDS LIFE IN BRAZIL

by Peggy Cross

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PEGGY CROSS

Pages and more pages swirled to the ground as these menacing words rang out: "Deny that you believe this Book or you will die on this very spot."

With tears in his eyes the Terena Indian recounted the story of his grandfather as though it happened yesterday. The pages ripped one by one were from his grandfather's Bible—the only Bible for miles around. The words were from men who hated what and Who this book represented, and who were set on stopping its advance in this area of Brazil.

"The price was paid," the Terena man continued. When his grandfather refused to deny his faith, he offered this reply to his captors before being killed. "For each page you have ripped out and trampled on this ground, I promise you that a Terena Indian will come to know and love the Savior of this book. You can silence me, but you will never be able to silence the message of this book."

April 4, 2009, had been circled on our calendar for a year. A special couple was to be married that day, children of a Brazilian pastor friend. Isn't it interesting how God can change our plans to His in an instant? The week prior to this wedding, we received an invitation to do a Living in Grace conference in the Terena Indian area of Agua Azul.

Missionaries sometimes need to get another perspective on what God is doing somewhere besides the small world that is their day-to-day. For us it was as though Jesus was saying, "Follow me. I want to show you something you need to see." We made our apologies to our friends and followed the Shepherd. What a loss it would have been if we had not gone!



Dr. Paul Long, in his book *The Man in the Leather Hat*, says the following about his relationship to the Javaé tribe in northern Brazil: "It is well worth the effort to sit with [God] among the Javaé. Because, as my old Indian friend told me, only when you sit with the Javaé will you understand them." Thus we sat with Him, lived in a Terena village, ate, prayed, sang, even laughed with them as they introduced us as "our very white guests." We worshiped our common Savior among the Terena for four days.

How do you, how did I perceive "Indians?" What mental images, what preconceived ideas do we hold? Do we believe that somehow they need Christ more than we do ... I do? They're savages, aren't they? How easily we forget that we have all gone astray, all of us have wandering hearts that need to be daily "fettered to the heart" of our Lord. This is the message of the Living in Grace Ministry of MTW. This was the message that we desired to share during this conference—that the gospel message is for the Christian as

well as those who are not yet part of His kingdom.

The Terena Indians are the first tribe in Brazil to have enthusiastically received the gospel message when it was brought by the South American Indian Mission in 1912. The first believers were baptized around 1917.

On the last morning of the conference we celebrated the Lord's Supper—the gospel set before us, the bread, the wine—"This is my body broken for you; do this in remembrance of me." As I looked around at the amazing sight of 500 Terena celebrating the One who had laid down His life for us, I could not help but imagine what heaven will be like, "from every tribe, gathered before the Throne, honoring the Lamb that was slain."

Not just one Terena, but many Terena have paid the price to follow Christ. They continue to believe that for every page of that Bible that was trampled on the ground so long ago, God will continue to use them—not only to reach their own

tribe, but also many others scattered about the vast country of Brazil.

Dr. Paul Long adds in his book: "How many Indians will be born, live their whole life in the jungle, die there, and never hear of Jesus Christ?" It's a daunting question. We met two Terena men who are preparing to bring Christ's message to these very people. One said, "I don't even have money to buy a tube of toothpaste, never mind having the resources to go where I know they have never heard of Christ. I do know though, when the time comes, the Lord will take me there."

Sometimes, even missionaries need to gain a new perspective on what God is doing. We so easily forget to follow the Shepherd, to carry the message of the gospel. This is the message He is seeking to bring to the lost sheep, but we forget that we need it too.

"All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing." (Colossians 1:6)

Open our eyes, Lord, to see what You are doing. ▣



Jerry and Peggy Cross, center, are MTW missionaries to Brazil.

VIEW FROM THE CHURCH:

MISSIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

by Murray Lee

*H*ow do you define missions? Our church's answer: "spreading the gospel in love through church planting, works of mercy, and correcting social injustice both in our immediate community and beyond."

At Cahaba Park Church in Birmingham, Ala. (founded in September 2007 and particularized in September 2008), missions was a key part of our vision from the very beginning, as highlighted in our vision statement. From that vision has flowed an abundance of opportunities to experience missions firsthand. During our first two years as a church body, Cahaba Park members have gone on seven mission projects: to Odessa, Ukraine (two times); Greystones and Dublin, Ireland; West Hartford, Conn. (two times); and locally in Bessemer, Ala.

Stories of the power of the gospel encourage us from these projects. This year in Odessa, Ukraine, our team worked in an orphanage of children with special needs, specifically children with autism. The team included an autism specialist and a couple with an autistic son. The training given to the Ukrainian adult workers of the orphanage was invaluable—7-year-old Sasha was told she would never talk, yet after a few days of working with our specialist, she was speaking a few sentences. God's healing love and grace was evident not only to this child, but also to the observing Ukrainian teachers.

In Connecticut, West Hartford's inner city is broken by poverty, drugs, and the absence of the love of Jesus. Invited by Christ Community Church (PCA), Cahaba Park has made two trips to West Hartford to bring VBS to the depressed area. By God's grace, Christ Community continues with two adult Bible studies and a weekly children's Bible club. The local church's mission to its own backyard has had a great impact for the gospel work in this community.

Cahaba Park seeks to continue our commitment to missions: the missions budget for 2010 is 13 percent of our overall budget; we currently support 15 missionary families and singles through both local and world evangelism and through church planting; and in 2010 we will go to five sites—Odessa, Ukraine; China; Ireland; West Hartford, Conn.; and Bessemer, Ala.—to spread the good news and love of the gospel. Additionally, Cahaba is supporting missions in our own backyard by helping start a new PCA church plant in the Birmingham area.

In all of this, it is only by His grace and for His glory. ■



Murray W. Lee is the founding pastor of Cahaba Park Church (PCA) in Birmingham, Ala.

Minuteman: Aiding Filipino Typhoon Victims

MTW announced a Minuteman appeal last month for Filipino victims devastated by Typhoon Ketsana in late September. More than three million people were affected, with 80 percent of the city of Manila underwater, and nearly 350 missing or confirmed dead.

Some of those hit hardest by the typhoon were MTW ministry partners and their families, churches, and ministries. In fact, the area where MTW is most involved was also the area hardest hit, and many families in at least 14 churches have been affected.



MTW missionary Sarah Taylor was in the Philippines when the typhoon hit. "I was stranded along with the pastors' wives. We took refuge on the second floor of one of our churches. We were

truly blessed. If we had been in Marikina (where other MTW missionaries formerly lived) . . . we might not have survived."

Sarah later received this email from a friend in Manila: "People were teary-eyed as they received relief goods. One lady even shared how thankful she was for matches that they received. There is no electricity in most houses, and water is scarce. Most of them are getting water from the dirty river."



MTW provides disaster relief at the invitation of the local church, and typically provides long-term assistance.

"We work in the shadow of the local church," said Oscar Aylor, director of MTW Mercy Ministries. "They will get the credit, and God gets the glory."

Funds donated to the Minuteman appeal for Typhoon Ketsana will help the local church provide housing, food, clothing, and water to those in need. Also, teams of trained disaster response volunteers may travel to the area after the initial assessment to provide medical care, construction, and crisis counseling help.

"These Minuteman funds will be money well spent," said Oscar. "They will help repair church facilities, get pastors back on their feet, and enable local churches to do outreach in their communities."

To learn more about MTW's Minuteman ministry, visit www.mtw.org/minuteman.

2010 PCA Global Missions Conference: New Details

Registration for the 2010 PCA Global Missions Conference will open in January and will, for the first time, include a group discount. The conference, co-sponsored by Covenant College, will be held November 5-7 in Chattanooga, Tenn.

The discount will apply to any group of six or more, but is designed especially for missions committees, families, churches, and students—a constituency the 2010 PCA Global Missions Conference particularly hopes to reach.

"We're hoping for a real student flavor this time," said Jack Beall, director of church resourcing for MTW. "Through our partnership with Covenant College we're going to provide a concert for college students on Saturday evening of the conference."

The 2010 conference will be the fourth of its kind hosted by MTW, and this year will feature a pre-conference hosted by MTW's Mercy Ministries group.

"As a church family, we're hoping to invite all PCA members to be involved in this grand adventure of missions," said Beall.

To learn more about the PCA Global Missions Conference, visit www.mtw.org.



Statement of Clarification

MTW missionary Dale Hollenbeck offers the following clarification to the Summer 2009 *Network* article, "Making Progress in Uganda":

The article stated that Uganda Bible Institute was "turned over to national leaders." Specifically, the duties of teaching and committee work that the missionaries fulfilled will now be handed over to national leaders. Uganda Bible Institute has always been led by a Ugandan principal, has had a majority of national teachers, and has operated under the oversight and ownership of the Ankole Diocese, Church of Uganda.



VIEW FROM THE FIELD:

Conflict and Reconciliation in Berlin

by Jay Eastman

The air was tense and the unspoken words hung in the air: "Maybe we shouldn't work together anymore." In one night, it seemed that three years of work were coming apart.

Ironically, frustration stemmed from blessing—God had given each of the three partnering families budding evangelistic ministries we desired to connect to our core church-planting group. One family wanted everyone more involved in a children's Bible club outreach. Another family sought to invest more in eight adult seekers and new believers. However, while we were all committed to evangelism, only some could easily connect with kids in children's outreach while others excelled at counseling and teaching adults. How could we work together practically when our expectations were so different?

"God arranged the members in the body.... If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body." (1 Corinthians 12:18-20)

Our problem was that we were disregarding the big picture and larger body. With good motives to see our own ministry niche grow, we had substituted our part for the entire body, then expected others to join us even if their gifting was different. We were seeing the situation from a selfish perspective instead of God's design—the greater vision of a body with many parts.

That night, under the weight of silent doubt and insecurity, Holly asked, "Isn't our unifying desire to seek God and reach this neighborhood for Jesus?" We agreed and

moved into prayer for that greater vision, praising God for the successes in each ministry, confessing our hurts as well as selfish sin, and asking for forgiveness.

As we prayed, God turned our apparent dissension into growth and expanded our view and practice of ministry. More clearly, we could appreciate the gifts of others and were excited to see those gifts used fully, instead of selfishly coveting more hands for our own area of ministry. Together, we agreed to connect our ministries by bringing the groups together for celebrations and fellowship events. We left the meeting more unified and hopeful than before.

Months later, we can still tend toward a narrowed, selfish vision as we seek to connect our diverse ministries in the community. We can still feel frustrated by the lack of workers and struggle to bring our contacts together in a natural way. But our prayer is that God continues to unify us through witnessing Him revitalizing broken lives and restoring relationships within our group and the community, giving us the strength to stick together as we complement each other for His glory. ■

To read more articles on reconciliation, visit www.mtw.org and click on the July 2009 issue of InVision.

Jay and Holly Eastman are MTW missionaries in Berlin, Germany.

Advanced Medical Leadership Training

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For more information, please contact
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Mission to the World is the mission-sending agency of the PCA, helping to fulfill the Great Commission by advancing Reformed and covenantal church-planting movements through word and deed in strategic areas worldwide.

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FROM THE COORDINATOR



Dr. Paul Kooistra

THE WAY GOD WORKS

Last night I celebrated the birthday of my 8-year-old grandson. I could only praise the Lord as I thought how my covenant God brings saving faith to one generation after another. Around the table sat believing grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, and even cousins. This is no coincidence. God really does work in generation after generation. When King David explains that he has leaned on God from before his birth (Psalm 71:6) he is acknowledging that his relationship with God is built not only on what God has done in his life, but on what God did in many lives before him.

God reminds us in Hebrews to be encouraged by the great crowd of believers who have gone before us. You can find encouragement in a mother like that of Moses, who was faithful even though she had little support. Or maybe it was a man whom your father worked with who witnessed to him, which in turn led to

your conversion. If you are the first believer in your family, what joy there is in contemplating the many lives who will come to Christ because of a work He began with you.

God's great missionary work is also a work in the present that is built on the past. David Brainerd died in 1747 at the age of 29. Yet the heart he displayed in his diary for the salvation of Native Americans influenced the Great Awakening through Jonathan Edwards and many others. Henry Martyn only lived one year longer than Brainerd and died in 1812. His life and ministry were greatly influenced by the diary of Brainerd, and he left a diary that in turn influenced many who followed him to give their lives to spread the gospel. Jim Elliot died 53 years ago at the hands of Waodani warriors he was attempting to evangelize in the jungle of Ecuador. He too was only 29, and had been influenced by the diaries of both

Brainerd and Martyn. In his diary on October 28, 1949, he wrote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

It is fair to say that more have become involved in missions in the last two and a half centuries because of these three men than any others—men who lived rather short lives, men who influenced the future from the past through their devotion to Christ and their concern for the lost recorded in their diaries. Men who influenced others and now have influenced us.

Does it not encourage you that this is God's way? He started working in your life long before you were born through the faith He was building in others, and He will work in the future in others through your present faith.

Paul D. Kooistra