The 2019 theme I have chosen for BIMI is *Moving Forward by Faith*. As Christians, we need to be continually moving. However, just moving is not enough; we must be moving forward. Obviously, as we move forward, it is imperative that we do so *by faith*. In this editorial, I would like to emphasize the key words of this theme as they relate to the Great Commission.

First, the word *moving* is a word of action. There is no room for apathy, indifference, or laziness when considering the task of going *into all the world* and preaching the Gospel *to every creature* (Mark 16:15). The first part of the Great Commission is the word *Go*—another action word. If we do not obey this part of Christ’s command, the rest of the job will be left undone. Sadly, many Christians today seem to be motivated and energized about many things other than reaching the world with the good news of salvation. Considering the fields that are *white already to harvest* (John 4:35), we cannot afford to sit still and assume that the job will somehow be accomplished by someone else sometime in the future. Every Christian needs to take an *active* role in winning the world to Christ. As you read this article, ask yourself the question “What am I deliberately doing in my life right now to obey the Great Commission?”

The second word of our theme is *forward*, which is a word of direction. We should always be advancing the cause of Christ. To stand still or move backward is unacceptable and unthinkable when considering the enormity of the harvest. Sadly, many Christians are “stuck” in the past. Although it is true that the past is a wonderful place to visit, it is nonetheless a terrible place to live. We cannot be content with what has been accomplished in the “good ol’ days,” but we must look to the future and realize there is still much more to be done. It is important that we forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before (Philippians 3:13). Additionally, just as going backward is not an option, so also
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Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6)

As we look toward the rest of this year and the final days before the Lord returns, please join me in moving forward by faith. Let us not allow the world, the flesh, or the devil to lull us into inactivity. We cannot sit still because sitting still is synonymous with moving backward. It is essential that we go forward and not around the many Red Sea encounters we will experience during our Great Commission journey. Moving forward by faith not only pleases God (Hebrews 11:6a) but also compels us to earnestly seek God, Who is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6b). W
I remember when I was young and wanted to be a missionary just like my Sunday school teacher. She led me to the Lord. Her family would travel a long way every Sunday morning to teach us about the Lord Jesus. Many Sunday afternoons my mother would cook for them and their children.

As the years passed, our family of five prepared for future full-time service by teaching Sunday school classes and serving the Lord. Later, God called Paul, my husband, to go to Bible college. That was the first step of total surrender. Those years going to Bible college and living in Greenville, South Carolina, were some of the best of our lives. The Lord was preparing us to help people and their families.

There were difficulties that prepared our family for an entirely new way of life. It was exciting to be with people who were preparing for the service of the Lord. We met wonderful people whom the Lord put in our path to help us when we were in need. These memories are special to our family. We remember those who helped our sons get jobs when they were older and had families of their own. We knew the Lord always made a way.

Our lives changed during this time. We went to Bible college, not knowing what the Lord was preparing us for or what we would do after finishing Bible college. We continued to wait upon the Lord to show what He was preparing for us.

While still in college, we were in a missions conference with Jimmy Rose, a BIMI missionary to Brazil. The Lord called Paul to go to Brazil, South America. To be a missionary was a prayer request I had asked of the Lord when I was very young and He answered that prayer. This step was what the Lord had prepared us for in Bible college.

We soon began to make plans for the most exciting journey of our lives. Paul and I worked during the week and traveled on the weekends, sharing the call from the Lord with willing churches that wanted to be a part of the call for our family. We met gracious and kind servants of the Lord. Many took us into their homes for a night instead of sending us to a hotel.

It was amazing how well three little boys stayed in the back seat of the car for hours at a time. One Sunday night after service, we were back on the road again and it was time to get the boys something to drink after a whole day without rest and sitting for several hours. We stopped where there were machines on the outside of the store. My husband put the money in to get one drink and five came out! He took the extra drinks into the store to return them to the attendant. The attendant told him he could have them all—without knowing there were five of us!

The Lord spoke to many willing hearts who became a part of our memories and we will treasure them for life. May 2018 marked 40 years that we have been missionaries in Brazil. Each step we took, the Lord led, watched over, and guided us to make the right decisions. I am grateful that He led me to the right man who would have the call of the Lord to be a missionary.
While we lived this amazing life in a foreign country, numerous blessings came our way. It is wonderful to live in another culture and observe their ways of life. We learned to eat different foods and fruits that were delicious. I had to learn how to cook in a new way. When we have open and willing hearts, we learn and live the Word of God as it speaks to us, telling us that *all things work together for good to them that love God* (Romans 8:28).

This wonderful life cannot be replaced with anything else that would be better for our family. It has given us lifelong friends who speak another language. The Lord helped us learn Portuguese in order to communicate with them and tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ. Many had never heard about Jesus Christ the Lord. We would not have had these blessings and an opportunity to travel to another country without the calling of the Lord.

I am thankful for the church where we heard about the will of God for a Christian’s life—telling others about Jesus. I am grateful the Lord led us to tell our neighbors about the Lord when we were young. I am grateful for the memories we will carry with us for as long as we live. Everywhere we went was a training ground to prepare for the mission field—teaching things that would prepare our minds and hearts for what we would encounter on our journey.

The blessings are innumerable for those who, *being in the way*, let the Lord lead them. We never know whom we may bless. To be used of the Lord to be a blessing to others always turned into a blessing for us. We rejoice in the knowledge expressed by the writer of Luke 6:38, *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.* For *with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

Paul & Sharon Pritchard
On March 15, 1979, I landed our Beechcraft Queenaire at Pearls Airport in Grenada. Little did I realize the severity of the situation I would find. Dictator Maurice Bishop had just pulled off a coup with his New Jewel Movement and the People’s Revolutionary Army. Just a few days earlier, the Medlin family had contacted me to facilitate their leaving the island. Upon arrival, I parked the airplane on the side of the tarmac. As I departed down the air stair door, 15 Grenadian soldiers in Cuban military attire greeted me. Each was equipped with an AK-47 rifle, locked, and loaded. One young man stuck the muzzle into my nose while another pushed his muzzle into my stomach. I watched as they proceeded to ravage through the interior of the airplane.

The reality that the Caribbean was changing fast was confirmed that day. For two days I was followed around by a government agent. When the Medlin family and I left Grenada that week, I wondered if Grenada would ever open again to missionaries. The communist/socialist influence was causing a domino effect in the islands. Many were being influenced by Liberation Theology and the doors of opportunity were quickly closing in the Caribbean.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle (Psalm 24:7–8).

We serve the LORD strong and mighty! Although doors were closing, God had a plan to re-open them and reignite a desire to see souls saved and churches established in the islands. Joseph and Donalie Childers answered God’s call to the islands and joined BIMI in June 2012. By 2016, they were in Grenada, assisting a national pastor as they sought a location to start a new church in Grenville. Although Grenville is the second largest town in Grenada, no independent Baptist church had been started in this needy area.

The Lord provided an upstairs area over a café, located right in front of the oldest Catholic church building in town. An
appropriate name was given to the church, Lifeline Baptist Church. The people of Grenville can associate with this name since many are fishermen in the Atlantic.

After Missionary Coco Chan was denied a visa to Trinidad, God opened the door for her to join Joseph and Donalie Childers in Grenada. The doors have opened for her to share the Gospel in the youth correctional center and in schools. Every month, the Childers and Coco have seen many professions of faith. God is doing a wonderful work!

Although I left Grenada 39 years ago, wondering what would be the fate of this politically torn island, today Lifeline Baptist Church sits about one mile from where those young Grenadians accosted me. No doubt we serve the King of Glory—STRONG AND MIGHTY. 🙏
My name is Savannah Jellison and I was born into a military home in 2001. A little later in 2013 my parents became missionaries. That makes me a Military Kid AND a Missionary Kid. Let me tell you what it means to me to be both.

What would being a Military Kid entail? Well, I will start with where we have lived. I was born in Alamogordo, New Mexico (I have actually been asked if that is even in America!). When I was almost two, we moved to Landstuhl, Germany. I loved Germany. While we were there, we moved four times in eight years. You might be thinking, “Wow, you guys did a lot of moving,” but I LOVED IT! Some military families move even more than we did and some hardly ever move. The ever-changing surroundings and circumstances help build a camaraderie between the individual military families, creating one giant military family. MKs help each other make friends at school, at church, and in the community. Moms unite and talk about past experiences and help each other like no other community. Now, do not think military life is a bed of roses. Many moms, dads, and children struggle with the constant change and the ever impending possibility of the military member being gone for extended periods of time. I have just chosen to think about what I have and not what I am losing.

Military life was not candy canes and lollipops for me. My dad was in the Air Force for just over 18 years. We added up all the times he was deployed, temporary duty, or on a remote assignment and the total was almost seven years! I remember some days were harder than others. My mom is the best military mom in the world! (I may be a little biased.) She would do fun things with us while Dad was gone, just to make it a little easier for us to cope. I am blessed that my dad always came back safe but that is not the case for everybody.

Every military family knows that if something major is going to go wrong, it happens when the military member is gone. I cannot go into every situation but this happened to us as well. All my brothers have had to go to the emergency room while Dad was gone. We have had serious car issues. The washing machine would break down. It was always something. We knew it would happen and just depended on our military and church families for support.

While I love being a Military Kid, I also love being a Missionary Kid. However, they are VERY different lifestyles. In 2005, my parents surrendered to missions at a conference in Rothenburg, Germany. Then, in 2012, God confirmed with my dad that it would be military missions. In 2013, we moved to Okinawa, Japan, and began working in a military church. We loved it there so much! My parents saw the great need for a church on the north end of the island, and God led us to go on deputation so we could start a new work.

What is deputation? It is a time when missionaries travel all over to different churches
and present the ministry to which God has called them. It is a time for the people of God to see our hearts toward the ministry so they will pray for us and possibly support us financially. I enjoyed the time we spent on deputation. We had the opportunity to go to places we had never been before. We even got to have some fun along the way by visiting some national treasures like Carlsbad Caverns, the Grand Canyon, and Yellowstone National Park. While it was fun, it did get trying sometimes, such as all the driving (over 120,000 miles in two years), being in new places almost every service, sleeping in so many different beds, and doing school in our truck. However, God used that time to teach me things I could not have learned anywhere else, and I was blessed with new friends along the way.

We were on deputation for two years and I was so excited to finally hear that we were at full support! This was great news. We could finally go back home! This was one of the things I thought about most while on deputation, getting back home. When we finally made it back to Okinawa, things were a little busy. My parents had already found a house for us. It is right on the beach—literally! Our front yard is the Pacific Ocean. We started a Wednesday night Bible study and one of the first people to come was one of our neighbors. We have a church building now and have had as many as 39 in services.

We have had some bumps along the way and some hard things to go through, but if through all this I only learned one thing, it would be that MY GOD is DEFINITELY BIG ENOUGH! He will take care of me in every season, good or bad! I found this verse like a hidden treasure in a hard time and I want to share it with you: 

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness (Isaiah 41:10).

What does it mean to be a Military Kid and a Missionary Kid? We are doubly blessed! We get to see God protect us through so many different circumstances. We get to see God provide for us in so many different ways. We get to see God be God. He ALWAYS keeps His Word!
Thai Buddhism is a mix of pure Buddhism and local animistic beliefs in spirits, omens, relics, sacred objects, fortune telling, astrology, and sorcery. This syncretism forms an important part of the worldview and belief system of Thai people. It is this understanding of spiritual reality that Thai people bring to the table when they come to church for the first time, go to an evangelistic rally, or hear a Gospel presentation. This article will look at the Sinner’s Prayer from a fundamentally animistic worldview. While the Sinner’s Prayer is designed to help people become Christians, here in Thailand (as in other similar places) it many times has the opposite effect.

At its core, animism believes it can use religious rituals and ceremonies to manipulate the spirit world into doing what the animist wants it to do, whether that be warding off evil or inviting blessing. Animism is not a heart religion where it is important that one really believes something from the depth of his being. Animism is not about devotion or love for a particular deity or spirit. Animism is not about a relationship with his Creator. Animism is not about conforming one’s life to a moral standard that has come down from heaven through God’s Word. Animism does not require one to repent of his sins (critical for salvation). All it requires is the performance of some religious rituals in order to cause the spiritual powers that be to bring about the desired blessings in one’s life. It is about external things done in order to get what one wants.

However, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is about a change in heart that recognizes that one not only does sin but that one is sin. It is a change of priorities from one’s own priorities to God’s priorities. It is about God’s plan for what one’s life should be like, not about using religious ceremonies to manipulate a god into helping accomplish one’s own ideas of what a happy life should be like. Animism at its core is all about self. Whatever gets the job done to help the animist achieve his idea of the good life is what he will do.

What happens when Thai folk Buddhists are invited to say the Sinner’s Prayer?

How would people from a primarily animistic worldview, such as Thai folk Buddhists, understand an invitation to say the Sinner’s Prayer? Why does the Sinner’s Prayer, as commonly practiced, fail to bring about understanding and conversion among Thai Buddhists and other animistic believers?
1) The Sinner’s Prayer is just another religious ritual that might help get what one wants.

When Thai people hear an invitation to say the Sinner’s Prayer, they may reason like this: “Perhaps this Christian ceremony will help bring me into good graces with the spirits. What is there to lose? Why not say this prayer that the Christian teacher seems so eager to have me pray? There might be something to this foreign religion after all. I can try out this foreign Jesus ceremony for a while and see if I get something from it. If it works, great. If Jesus does not work, I will just move on. Nothing lost, nothing gained.” Many Thais think Christianity is a Western foreign religion. Therefore, it is fine for foreigners but it is not for the Thai. Consequently, it takes time for some barriers to come down before a Sinner’s Prayer will have meaning.

2) The Sinner’s Prayer is viewed as a magical incantation.

In animism, it is not important to understand the actual words said in a prayer or spell since the power of the prayer is in the sacredness of the words themselves, not in understanding them. Chanting at the Buddhist temple is in the ancient language of Pali that the common person does not understand. However, as long as they hear the monks chanting or say the words themselves, merit is gained. When asked to say the Sinner’s Prayer, a person will more likely than not think the words of the Sinner’s Prayer itself are powerful, magical words that will bring about blessings. What the words mean are largely secondary and inconsequential. Going through the motions or ceremony is all that matters. The ceremony itself is viewed as important. However, the words are not from the heart but rather from their own lusts and desires.

3) The words in the Sinner’s Prayer are automatically redefined by the listener to fit with their animistic worldview.

Christian evangelists use words like God, sin, heaven, hell, and eternal life with the assumption that their listeners will pour into those words the same meaning the Christian is pouring into them. However, when the listeners come from a radically different worldview and belief system, that is a poor assumption. Although the words of the Sinner’s Prayer indicate (in the mind of the evangelist) commitment to Christ, the Thai Buddhist hears and interprets those words based on what he has been taught at home, at school, and at the Buddhist temple. The thinking may go like this: “There could be some kind of god or another spirit out there, and maybe he can help me. At the very least, maybe this Jesus can help lessen the suffering in my life, which can be hell on earth. I can invite Jesus to be my savior from my problems and difficulties; I have asked all sorts of other spirits to help me, so why not this one?” Many times evangelism only goes skin deep and does not reach the heart. This leaves all the misunderstandings of the Gospel untouched and the conversion is superficial.

I am sure the majority of Christians who lead Thai Buddhists to say the Sinner’s Prayer are genuinely trying to help them, but it is a misguided effort. It takes a long time for people from a completely non-Christian background to understand the true nature of the Gospel and to come to the point where they can truly put their faith in Jesus Christ, the true God for eternal life.
After commuting for six months from Dublin to Waterford, Ireland, our family relocated to the city of Waterford. Our church was meeting in a local hotel for our Sunday church services. The mid-week service was held primarily in our home and at other times in the home of a church family. The hotel meeting rooms were affordable and had served us well for over 12 years. The Lord had given us many opportunities of outreach while meeting in the hotel as well as kind favor with the hotel management.

Church ministry in rented facilities that are used or occupied by others requires a lot of extra work that comes with having to set everything up before services, tear it down at the end of the service, and haul it all away. I am thankful for a family that has been willing to get up earlier to help haul in the needed items for the service, such as hymnbooks and the keyboard.

As a church, we had been praying for a very long time to be able to find a suitable meeting place for our church that we could have 24/7. There was nothing available in the right place for the right price. In 2016, the Lord seemed to be closing the door at the hotel. Due to various circumstances, it became necessary for us to diligently seek out a new place to meet. Proverbs 3:5–6 say, *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* These verses have been a guide to us, especially during the search for a new meeting place. As we moved through the weeks of 2017, the Lord began opening a new door of opportunity. A unit in a retail park had become available for rent. The location was great and since it was in a retail park, there was also plenty of parking that can often be a great difficulty to find in Ireland.

Who would have thought an abandoned hair salon could become our church meeting place? Well, stranger things have happened. As we investigated the building, it was in rough shape. The ceiling tiles were stained and several were cracked and broken. Several light fixtures had been taken down. Though it had two bathrooms, one was unfinished. On top of that, the building was vacated and all the salon equipment left behind. That
included the rotten food in the little refrigerator and the moldy sandwich in the microwave, along with all the cut hair on the floor! The floor was an oak laminate that was in decent shape except for the fact that it was buckled up about five or six inches high in one section across the whole width of the main room. Needless to say, there was plenty of work to be done to transform a mess into a church.

The monthly rent would be a stretch, but as a church, we believed that by God’s grace we could handle it. The funds for setting the building up were another story. Since we had been meeting in the hotel, we had no need to purchase our own tables or chairs. What a blessing it was when some of our supporting churches wrote, saying that they were giving special offerings to help meet our needs to get up and going! We praise the Lord for funds that made it possible to purchase 40 chairs, ten tables, new ceiling tiles, programmable heating units, wallpaper, paint, pulpit building materials, and other incidental needs! The church family came together on a Saturday and cleaned the place out. We hauled out 35 large trash can bags of rubbish and all the old ceiling tiles. We were able to sell the inherited salon chairs and use the money to pay for the dumpster.

A place that was once used to cut and style hair in the midst of all the latest talk of the town had now been transformed into a church building where people could come and hear the preaching of the Word of God and the life-changing message of the Gospel. We praise the Lord for a new meeting place, a church family willing to work on the transforming cleanup operation, and supporting friends and churches who have prayed and given for this purpose!

Don & Lisa Thatcher
Tom and Carolyn Pace arrived in Peru in July 1967—more than 51 years ago! After language school the Paces gained experience by helping veteran BIMI missionaries Doug and Mildred Craig in a new church plant in Chosica. They moved in 1972 to the small Andean mountain village of Jauja, located in the Mantaro Valley (altitude 11,000 feet). Tom and Carolyn were the only gringos in town and some residents thought they were CIA agents sent there to keep an eye on growing communistic activity among the people. Little by little the true purpose of their coming to Jauja began to be revealed as they faithfully and consistently preached the Gospel through words and deeds. It would be impossible to tell everything the Lord has done through the ministry of Tom and Carolyn Pace in Peru, but here are a few remarkable testimonies of some of the things God has been doing the last 51 years—and counting!

In those early days in Jauja, three prominent men in the local Communist Movement opposed Tom and Carolyn, propagating the rumor that they were “American spies.” However, by the grace of God, all three of these men were eventually saved! Juan P. was a local miner and labor union activist. After he was saved, his activism continued, but instead of organizing communist leaning labor unions, he began organizing Gospel ministries in the surrounding mining towns and villages high up in the Andes. Juan R., who had also been a radical labor leader and a card-carrying Communist, was saved and became a linguist and Bible translator. Moisés, heavily steeped in leftist doctrine, was saved and consequently abandoned his ungodly beliefs for Bible doctrine, eventually becoming the pastor of the church the Paces planted in Jauja.

In addition to Communism, other common foes of the Gospel—alcoholism, drug addiction, and false cults—were also prevalent in Jauja. Word had gotten around that the American missionaries had Bibles for sale. The Paces were the only ones in town who sold Bibles. When Señor Rivas, a convert to Mormonism, wanted a Bible, the local Mormon elders sent him to them to buy one. As Tom showed him some Bibles, Señor Rivas shared his “testimony” about how he had been persuaded to embrace Mormonism. A respected principal of a local school, Señor Rivas spoke about how he had “given up” on religion and was living a wasted life until the Mormons “rescued” him. After he had selected the Bible he wanted, Tom asked if he would like some pointers on reading it. He gladly accepted the help and they turned to the “I AM” verses in the Gospel of John. Señor Rivas was fascinated! When they got to John 14:6, Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me, Señor Rivas stopped short and read it over again, then repeated it several times and exclaimed: “That is it; that is it; that is what I am looking for.” The light of the Gospel brought him to his knees in the living room of the Paces’ house as he surrendered his life to Christ. Señor Rivas
went back to his Mormon Sunday school class and started teaching the Bible way of salvation, but the elders soon stopped that and kicked him out. After that, “Brother Rivas” began to look up some of his Mormon friends and was instrumental in converting many of them from Mormonism to Christianity as he shared the truth about how Christ had changed his life.

The Paces remained in the Mantaro Valley until 1985 when the Lord led them to relocate to Lima, the capital city of Peru, where they continue to faithfully serve the Lord in an area of the city called La Molina. The Lord has raised up a vibrant church that is now under the leadership of a national pastor and averages around 650 every Sunday. There is also an English-speaking Christian day school with more than 300 students and a senior citizen literacy ministry using the Bible as a textbook. The church in La Molina has sent out several pastors to plant other churches in Lima and around Peru. All of these ministries continue to contribute to the growing tally of many thousands of souls led to Christ over the years through the presence and influence of Tom and Carolyn Pace.

Carolyn heads up the adult literacy ministry. They are working in nine different senior citizen centers around the city. Unable to read, most of these people have relied all their lives on good works, keeping the Ten Commandments, and receiving the sacraments of the Catholic church to get them to heaven. Last year BIMI was able to help pay for large-print copies of the Gospels to use as textbooks in the government-run senior citizen centers. What an amazing door the Lord has opened! Only the Lord can open the hearts and minds of these senior adults so that they will be able to understand that if man can work for his salvation, then Christ died in vain (Galatians 2:21). These people have lived all their lives under the shadow of religion; thus, salvation by grace alone is not an easy concept to accept. Now, as the seniors learn to read God’s Word, little by little, the Gospel is dispelling that shadow of religion and replacing it with the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ.

Through the ministry in La Molina, Brother Tom met Roberto, a world-class high jumper who had represented Peru in the Olympic Games in Russia and Mexico. Sadly, Roberto had fallen victim to alcoholism and drug addiction. By the time Tom met him, he had already been saved and had begun the difficult struggle to overcome his addictions. Tom began to disciple Roberto, and through the power of Christ and the fellowship with other believers, he was able to overcome those vices. Roberto surrendered to the call of God and became a pastor while continuing to compete and win a world high jump championship in the World Masters Athletics Division.

Today, Roberto, now in his 70s, serves as the La Molina church’s Senior Citizens Pastor. Having competed in athletic events all over the world, Roberto continues to use his athletic ability to train senior citizens for competitions. Before each training session Roberto shares the Gospel. Born to an Arabian family in Bethlehem, Israel, Roberto now has a burden to get the Gospel to his own people, the Palestinians.

The church in La Molina is doing much to extend the Gospel far beyond their community. Through the church’s strong Faith Promise missions commitment, they have sent Peruvian missionaries to Ecuador, Germany, China, Kurdistan, Iran, Morocco, India, Mozambique, and Houston, Texas. The Paces were sent to Peru more than 50 years ago. Now their church in Peru is sending Peruvians to the uttermost part of the world! And they went forth, and preached everywhere (Mark 16:20).

Now in his late 70s, Tom has recently taken on a new challenge as the missionary/pastor of a relatively new church plant, designed to reach English-speaking Peruvians and the English-speaking expatriate community in Lima. As we said at the beginning—51 Years and Counting! ☝️
When the phone rings late at night, it often brings bad news. Such was the case when the phone rang late one night for Carlos and Susan Arce, BIMI missionaries in Venezuela. The bad news was that it seemed inevitable that their beloved Camp Papagayo was about to be destroyed by a raging wild fire!

BIMI missionaries Wayne and Francis Witherell, who are the parents of Susan Arce, originally purchased the camp property in 1985. A lot of hard work and sacrifice had gone into developing the camp over the years. Camp Papagayo is host to around 20 different weeks of camp every year, including children’s camps, youth camps, men’s camps, women’s camps, and family camps. These camps are conducted by various independent Baptist churches from all around Venezuela, including many that have been started as a direct result of the church and Bible institute ministry in the city of Barquisimeto, led by Brother Arce.

Speaking of how God is using Camp Papagayo, Brother Arce recently stated, “It would not be exaggerating if we said that more than one thousand have been saved from all over Venezuela. Also, many have been called into full-time service and hundreds of Christians have gotten their lives straightened out with the Lord at camp. Camp Papagayo is treasured by our people because so many remember the call of God they received and the decisions they made in that place.”

As one might imagine, when Brother Carlos and his wife got that chilling phone call in the night, they immediately felt a stabbing pain in their hearts as it seemed inevitable that Camp Papagayo was about to be reduced to ashes.
Here is the story in Brother Carlos Arce's own words:

Around 12:30 at night I got a phone call and the voice said, "Preacher, behind and at the right side of the campground there is a fire burning the fields and it is reaching 6–8 meters high, and it is heading towards our campground!" My wife and I started to pray and give instructions on what to do if the fire reached the campground. I was thinking that to get to the camp would take two hours, which would be too late to help. The firemen were called, but there was no response. We continued to pray. Pictures and videos of the fire were sent to me, and the fire continued to get closer to the camp. I cried out to our God, "Lord, send your angels to protect, that not one little bit of the camp gets burned. You know how much work and sacrifice went into building this camp for Your honor and glory and how many souls have been saved here and lives changed. Please do not allow it to burn down and be destroyed."

The lights went out, the main cables for telephones were burned, and there was no communication. We kept praying and praying. Then about 3:00 in the morning, without rain and the bush being very dry, the fire died out! When people went to check to make sure there were no live sparks, they saw that all around the camp the fields were burned but not one spark or flame came into the camp! It was as if there were an invisible wall around the camp to stop the flames from coming in. If you could see from above, you would see the marks of the fire all around the camp, but the camp itself was intact without any burned areas at all. So precise and clear is our God, and we want to give Him all the praise and glory for His mercies and protection.

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Matthew 17:20
When missionaries arrive on the field, they experience a deluge of emotions. First is exhaustion. They have spent two to three years traveling around the United States, raising support in order to fulfill God’s calling on their lives. Next is excitement. Moving to a new country brings with it a new culture, new foods, new language, and new opportunities, all exciting at first, but then reality sets in. This is not a vacation. There is no going back. This is their reality now. On a personal level, this is a heavy realization that can often bring fear.

The real work begins when the missionary determines to learn how to live and minister in this foreign culture. All of those things that once brought excitement are now frustrating and difficult to deal with. They can become discontent with the food and opportunities. The language is a barrier everywhere they go, and it is difficult to understand why this culture does not just do things the way it is done in their home country. You know, the right way. At this point, the missionary is at a very pivotal moment in ministry. What he is about to do will either hinder or help his ministry. The ability to adapt is one of the missionary’s greatest attributes. However, he does not know if he can adapt until he is in a position where he needs to adapt.

One of the greatest barriers to the Gospel a missionary will face is the culture. This is not just a modern problem. As we study the ministry of Jesus, we see him adapting his approach to presenting the truth of the
Gospel when he meets the woman at the well. He used her Samaritan heritage and the well itself where she was drawing water as a way to enter into a Gospel conversation. Every time we see Jesus use a parable in his teachings, we understand that He is contextualizing or adapting his approach to presenting the Gospel based upon who the audience was. However, we need to understand that He was not changing the truth to fit his audience, rather, He used different methods and approaches in order to best convey unchangeable truth.

We see this same contextualization or adapting in the ministry of Paul. Paul says, **To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you** (1 Corinthians 9:22–23). Paul was giving the Corinthian believers some insight into his ministry methodology and his desire to break down man-made barriers to the Gospel. When he stood at Mars Hill in Athens, Greece, Paul developed an entire Gospel discourse and approach based upon what he observed of the Athenians’ character and their worship, **Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you** (Acts 17:22–23). Paul was not changing the truth of the Gospel; he merely adapted his approach to presenting the Gospel to the people to whom he was ministering at that present time.
The problem today is that there is a movement that is seeking to change truth in order to make it more palatable to the masses. For this reason, we shy away from biblical contextualizing for fear of being seen as one who is seeking to change the truth. Let us remember that there are many cultures in this world due to man’s efforts at the Tower of Babel when God confounded the languages. We must understand that it is our duty to reach through these culture barriers so that we, like Paul, might by all means save some.

As missionaries serving on a foreign field, we see and feel the reality of these cultural barriers. We live with them every day. We search for ways to break through them for the Gospel’s sake. We desperately desire to see men and women and boys and girls place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Often, we think there has to be some magical formula we could use, but that is not the case.

A Spaniard once told us, “It’s not about you getting to know us; it is about us getting to know you.” One of the greatest compliments we have received is that they thought we were Spaniards. They are watching. They want to see how we respond to their food, their language, and their culture. They want to see how we respond when we find ourselves in an uncomfortable situation. Granted, all of these things should be accomplished under the umbrella of being biblical. Remember, we do not change truth. We search for ways to adapt personally and for ways to best present the truth of the Gospel in a culture that is not our own.

As we adapt to the culture in which we live, we find that we return to the way things began. We are excited once again about the food, the language, the opportunities, and the culture. We find there are fewer and fewer barriers we must find a way through to present the Gospel effectively. It is no longer hard work to live and minister in a foreign culture—but a pleasure.

This is not just something that missionaries must do, but it is something all Christians must do. Wherever you find yourself, there will be cultural barriers to the Gospel. We are different because we are called to be a peculiar people; yet, this does not mean we cannot be relatable. We must find ways to relate to those around us in order to break through these barriers for the gospel’s sake.
It is with great joy that we announce that Phase 1 of the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Bible Distribution is complete! When we first began to give Bibles to the students of PNG, the magnitude was overwhelming. Distributing Bibles to all of the secondary schools would be a massive undertaking. It was necessary to raise $810,000 for Phase 1. God is so good and God’s people responded over and above what we could ask or think. Bibles have been purchased for the secondary schools and another 500,000 for the primary schools (56% of the Bibles needed for all the primary schools). Donors have contributed over $2.3 million. Thank you! The only secondary schools that have not received their Bibles are in the earthquake area and the schools are not open. We are continuing to pray for the needed $1.5 million to complete Phase 2 (primary schools).

Please keep all the workers in your prayers as we attempt to accomplish this project. Only eternity will truly reveal the impact of this Bible Distribution. It has been said numerous times, “You cannot have a harvest if you do not sow the seed, and the most fertile soil stays barren if the seed is not sown.”

Many have asked what they can do to help.

1. Pray for travel safety for the distribution teams.
2. Pray that God’s Word will find good ground.
3. Continue to give—$3 puts a Bible into a student’s hand.
4. Share this tremendous project with others.
5. Pray about coming to help distribute. Spots available for men only at this time. Contact Alan Brooks for information at alanb@bimi.org or (423) 504-3132.
I recently received the following story from one of our national pastors.

Each student and each teacher is receiving this precious gift with thankful hearts. The pastors in East New Britain (a province in PNG) are working together to give out the Word of God free of charge.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to our donors: churches, groups, individuals, and coordinators. You are always in our prayer of thanksgiving for your kind hearts. One particular Deputy Head Teacher was quoted as saying that he was going to start a devotional routine for all the students/teachers to read in sequence and to understand the first seven (7) pages of the book (the plan of salvation). A principal of a big school of around 1,500 recipients said that he can now relate with students through the WORD OF GOD because they have one version, the King James Bible, a love gift from you to them. (edited for clarity)

I look forward to the day we can say, “Phase 2 is done!” Only God can do what has been done and, Lord willing, will be done. W

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<tr>
<th>--STATISTICAL UPDATE--</th>
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<tr>
<td>605,000 — Bibles in country at this time</td>
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<tr>
<td>450,000 — Bibles distributed</td>
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<td>165,000 — Bibles ordered and on the way to PNG</td>
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<td>770,000 — Bibles in country by June 2019</td>
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<td>344 — Secondary schools completed (all done that can be done at this time)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3,700 — Total primary schools in country</td>
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<td>240 — Primary schools completed (more being done every day)</td>
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<td>(+ 16 Universities/Colleges receiving Bibles)</td>
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22
Missionary Emeritus Dr. Grant Carter went Home to be with the Lord on Monday, August 20, 2018. He joined BIMI in 1975 and retired in December 2017, having faithfully served 42 years. His specific mission field was to the African American community. Brother Carter organized seven churches and five Bible institutes to train men for the ministry.

BIMI Missionary Ruth Owens (57) went Home to be with the Lord on Friday, July 13, 2018. Ruth was a native-born Mexican, born in Ciudad Mante, Tamaulipas, Mexico. She was raised in a strong Christian family who came to Christ because of the Gospel ministry of missionaries in Mexico. Ruth was very active in her local church and was a teacher and principal of two schools in rural Mexico when she met BIMI Missionary Larry Owens who was in Mexico for language school.

Ruth and Larry were married January 31, 1986. They began their missionary service in Argentina in 1987, ministering first in Buenos Aries for a year, then moving to San Miguel de Tucumán, where they have been faithfully serving the Lord for 30 years.

Ruth’s family was gloriously saved due to the direct ministry of missionaries to her country and three of her uncles are preachers. As a missionary herself, she faithfully carried on the spiritual heritage she had received.

Joyce Touchton and her husband, Ken, joined BIMI in 1961. Before going to the island of Abaco, they served in the Caicos Islands with Jim Cooper, who at that time was an independent missionary. Their 38-year ministry in the Caribbean witnessed the establishment of five churches and a correspondence ministry that reached 15 to 17 inhabited islands. They established Calvary Baptist Church and Academy where many students came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Upon hearing of the death of Joyce, former students from Calvary Baptist Academy wrote words of comfort to the family. One student wrote, “You couldn’t find a sweeter heart than hers, and I can still hear her voice after all these years. She invested her time and love into so many of us kids, and I’m forever grateful.”

During their 36 years with BIMI, Ken and Joyce also served on the council of BIMI of the Bahamas. They retired in 1999.

Missionary Emeritus Larry Simensen went Home to be with the Lord on Sunday, November 25, 2018. Brother Larry spent 20 years in the Air Force, where he was saved as a young man in Okinawa, Japan. Larry and his wife, Phyllis, joined BIMI in June 1989. They served with the military ministries for 29 years. During that time, they faithfully served in Puerto Rico and Germany.

Memorial Gifts have been received in memory of

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jimmie Clarice Dans</td>
<td>by Jim Lilley</td>
<td>Chick Harris by Patricia Henderson</td>
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<td>William Godfrey</td>
<td>by Philadelphia Baptist Church</td>
<td>Gene Pendleton by Patricia Henderson</td>
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<td>Clyde Simpson</td>
<td>by Iglesia Bautista La Fe</td>
<td>Guy Savoie by Anne Auldridge</td>
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<td>Pastor Caswell</td>
<td>by Friendship Baptist Church</td>
<td>Hope Belmont by Fellowship Baptist Church</td>
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<td>Louise Monday</td>
<td>by Patricia Anderson</td>
<td>Joshua Kelsey by Jerry Kelsey</td>
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<td>Betty Holland</td>
<td>by Patricia Anderson</td>
<td>Arlyene Kelsey by Jerry Kelsey</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Jiles</td>
<td>by Patricia Anderson</td>
<td>Francis Weaver by Jeremy &amp; Laura Weary</td>
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<td>William Danner</td>
<td>by Bible Baptist Church</td>
<td>Francis Weaver by Pastor &amp; Mrs Harkless O’Bryant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy Stutz Martin</td>
<td>by Faith Baptist Church</td>
<td>Bob Garrison by Patricia Henderson</td>
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Do you get tired of writing monthly support checks?
Have you ever forgotten to send in monthly support?
Has your monthly support check ever been lost or delayed in the mail?

Help your missionaries by guaranteeing the timely arrival of monthly support!

Baptist International Missions, Inc., offers the convenience of check-free giving to those who regularly support its missionaries and ministries. ACH Debit allows you to authorize BIMI to withdraw your monthly support directly from your checking or savings account. You will save time, postage, check expense, and any postal delays connected with your regular giving. With ACH Debit you can be sure your support always arrives in a timely fashion. Monthly withdrawals will be made from your account until you notify us of a change. You may discontinue the program at any time.

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