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For many months now, the entire world has been focused on finding a cure for COVID-19. That focus intensified proportionately with the spread of the virus and the subsequent deaths. As human beings, our mortality is emphasized during epidemics, plagues, and calamities. As Christians, the immortality of human souls should be emphasized when we see these tragic events unfold around the globe. Our focus on promoting God’s cure for the worldwide virus called Sin should intensify proportionately with the spread of that virus and the subsequent deaths. While scientists work to find cures for the physical needs of humanity, believers need to make known God’s remedy for the spiritual need of mankind.

When I was a child, I enjoyed watching old westerns on television. I remember in a few of those shows a traveling “doctor” would come to town selling an elixir he claimed would cure everything from the common cold to cancer. In the next scene, the town’s people were flocking to the wagon of the smooth-talking salesman to quickly purchase his sure-fire remedy for their ailments. Later in the episode, after everyone discovered that the “medicine” they purchased was a hoax, the traveling “doctor” was run out of town—and told to never come back.

We may laugh as we watch actors portray situations like the one I just described. However, the sad fact is that the scenario mentioned above is being played out spiritually in our world today. Tragically, many people are flocking to illegitimate spiritual “doctors” who are selling a cure-all elixir for spiritual health. Anyone who is claiming to have a cure other than Jesus Christ is selling “snake oil.” Jesus is the only genuine cure for the eternally devastating virus called Sin. Experiencing God’s saving health is the only way we can be cured from the Sin Virus. God has an “eternal healthcare plan” available to anyone desiring to be healed. There are three main parts to this plan that I would like to emphasize in this editorial.

First, Jesus Christ is the all-knowing, all-caring Chief Physician. The Lord has never made a misdiagnosis or prescribed a wrong medication. His bedside manner is beyond kind, empathetic, and loving. King David declared that God is the One Who forgiveth all our iniquities and healeth all our diseases (Psalm 103:3). Scripture also declares that He healeth the broken in...
heart, and bindeth up their wounds (Psalm 147:3). All those who submit themselves to the care of the Chief Physician will be able to say with the psalmist, O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me (Psalm 30:2).

Second, Jesus Christ Himself is the exclusive, guaranteed, and CERTIFIED PRESCRIPTION for eternal, saving health. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6). He also proclaimed, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die (John 11:25-26). Christ Jesus is our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). God made Jesus sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Anyone and everyone who takes the prescription offered by God shall be saved (Romans 10:13).

Finally, because Jesus is the certified prescription, He is also the COMPLETE PAYMENT for the prescription. When doctors write a prescription, they do not normally pay for the prescription. However, the Chief Physician not only wrote the prescription, He also paid for it. The price has been paid in full by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the One Who was despised and rejected of men. He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows and was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Because He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and since the chastisement of our peace was upon him, we can say with all confidence that with his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:3–5).

Mankind can only attain true saving health by personally meeting with the Chief Physician, taking His certified prescription, and accepting the complete payment. This truth should cause all of us who have experienced saving health to intensify our focus on the Great Commission. There is a spiritual, global pandemic and a world of people who do not know about God’s eternal healthcare plan. He has given us the responsibility to inform every creature about the universal cure available for the Sin Virus. God has indeed commissioned us to make His way...known upon earth, His saving health among all nations (Psalm 67:2).
When I was a young man, the Lord gave me a calling to return home after more than a decade in America. As my wife and I reflected on the things the Lord has done for us during our short time in ministry, we were reminded of the instance when Jesus commanded a man to return to his people. Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee (Mark 5:19). Similarly to that man’s calling in Mark, I count it a blessing that the Lord wanted me to return to my home nation and share His Good News with my people. Being called to return to my country has been one of the greatest blessings of my life; however, there were a few factors I did not anticipate when I surrendered to follow God’s will. Thankfully, the things that took a “native” man by surprise were already factored into God’s perfect plan.

In my eagerness to return home to the Dominican Republic, I had no anticipation of having cultural challenges. Often, I heard people speak of cultural shock, but the term was foreign to me. How much can things change in a couple of years? I learned the hard way that it is not whether things changed, but it is the fact that I changed. Interaction with a different culture had utterly altered my way of thinking and living. It was customary for me as a boy to deal with the incredibly warm weather, spontaneous routines, and unplanned visits and activities. Nevertheless, by the time I returned to the Dominican, my life had a new normal. In this transitional season that I had not anticipated, the Lord
taught my wife and me a lot about people. Even if people from Nagua might do things differently than we would, they are loved by God just the same (even if they add ketchup to their pizza). Returning home had nothing to do with altering how people did things in the Dominican. Instead, it was about teaching them to see and examine even the ordinary occurrences of life from the only perspective that matters—God’s perspective.

In addition to the cultural challenges, we experienced the challenge of church planting. In the three years that we have served in the Dominican Republic, we have seen a difference in people’s openness to the Gospel from one city to another. For our first few months in Santo Domingo, it seemed to us as if people were open to the truth, and we were eager to share it with them. Nevertheless, as the Lord relocated us to the town of Nagua, we came to know another facet of the Dominican people—many of them have a traditional Catholic background and a closed group of social acquaintances. Over time, we noticed that they are not initially open to the Gospel (anything other than Catholicism is not welcome). However, we have learned that the best way to reach them is through creating meaningful relationships first. On many occasions, we witnessed people simply trusting the Lord, but in our local sphere, we noticed the effectiveness of reaching them by building a relationship first. Being a people person as Jesus was has helped each of us build credibility among those whom God called us to serve.

The title for this article is *The Challenge of Going Home*, and I would love to finish by adding a second part to that theme—*But the Blessings of Following the Lord*. The key to everything I have learned these last couple of years is that following God is an ongoing process, but its end is delightful. Fulfillment is only obtainable as one takes the step of obedience and embarks on his own God-given journey. At its core, world missions is about people—people boundlessly loved by God to the point of giving His own Son’s life for them. Surely, it is possible to look beyond the obstacles and see that God is leading us to take the next step of obedience. In our earthly journey, we must see that even if people do things differently than we would, they are worthy of our time, sacrifice, and love because that is exactly what Christ modeled for us. Pam and I love the calling the Lord has given us and the people He has entrusted us to reach. The Dominican people are warm and welcoming; but more importantly, they are deeply loved by God. Our prayer is that God will continue to guide and call more servants to this ripe field so more of our people can come to the saving, factual knowledge of Christ.
And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him (Leviticus 19:33). An interesting aspect of our church ministry is working with refugees from a rich assortment of countries. Twelve different nationalities are represented in our church. Last year we hosted an International Day and celebrated with singing and testimonies from each nationality and country of origin. The local paper published an article about this event.

Our church is located in the northern part of Bavaria in lower Franconia, Germany. It is in a rural and traditional setting. When the German government opened the doors to the country with few restrictions in the beginning, multitudes of refugees flowed in, primarily from Muslim countries. The government began to redirect refugees to rural areas and established refugee homes. I was part of a group in our city who helped with new arrivals and that allowed us direct contact with the refugees. Our church has been open and receptive since the beginning to help these often desperate people. We put on Christmas programs and other events for those in the homes. Those who converted from Islam to Jesus have been primarily Iranians who fled their country and came to Germany. There are Iranian Christian churches in the larger cities in Germany. We have baptized those who have trusted Christ and endeavored to disciple them. A young Iranian man has married a local German girl. Together, they serve in our Iranian outreach and coordinate the translation and ministry to the refugees.

Many times a refugee or a refugee couple has received a court order to leave the country. We have gone to court with them as a witness and in each of the seven recent cases, the appeals have been decided positively. At this point, we have not lost a refugee.

In June 2019, as a church family, we decided to provide church asylum to an Iranian family of three. They had received a letter of deportation and had no chance of staying in Germany. The parents had trusted Christ in Iran and then fled to Europe. Since the Middle Ages there has been a tacit agreement by the German government (Remember Victor Hugo’s The Hunchback of Notre Dame?) to allow people to enter into church asylum to avoid the repression from the State. Our church heartily agreed to help, providing a travel trailer on the church playground for living quarters and providing all necessary living expenses, including medical and dental costs. They are
not to leave the church property for 18 months until the case goes before a German court to decide if they can stay in the country. Our people regularly give German lessons, have activities, and fellowship with them. It has been amazing to see God’s hand provide for the spiritual, emotional, and financial needs of this family through our church people, from outside sources, and from friends.

This experience of helping refugees who cannot do anything in return has been a blessing for our congregation and for me as well. Germans have been accused of being xenophobic (having a fear of outsiders) and perhaps there is a bit of truth in that. Our people, though, have rallied behind our refugees and received them and shown them the love of Jesus. It is true that love has hands and feet!

There have been challenges over the years since our arrival in 1991 in just working in the German culture with its differences and now in recent years with the 12 different cultures with inherent language barriers, tastes, preferences, and predispositions. It is a reflection of God’s extreme love for variety and for the nations. Our people—including the refugees—look forward to the day when all nations will be represented before the throne of the Lamb and praise Him forever. We are getting a little foretaste now in our little corner of the world!

Editor’s note: In a recent prayer letter the Dubbes state that Church asylum has ended: The Iranian family that lived on the church property for almost a year and a half are now in a refugee home awaiting the legal process for residency in Germany. A German judge ruled in their favor that they would not be deported before a court hearing.
We arrived in Scotland in August 2017 after two and a half years of deputation. We spent our first year working with another missionary family and were involved in the ministry right away. I preached and led singing. Sarah sang specials, played the piano, and kept the nursery for the church. We went soul winning every week and passed out tracts. A few months after Sarah gave birth to Jocelyn, she started a walking meet-up group called Strolling Mums to meet other local moms with their kids and to share the Gospel and invite them to church.

After a year, we ventured out on our own into Aberdeen, Scotland, and started Open Door Baptist Church. We put out 10,000 mailers with invitations to our meet and greets and our Sunday and Wednesday services. A few families came to our meet and greets to see who we were. They were excited to see a new church being started. We had three families our first Sunday and one family at our first Wednesday Bible Study. The church continued to grow as we went out each week passing out tracts and inviting people to church.

In the first year of the new church plant, we were blessed to see souls saved and have our first baptism service. This greatly encouraged the church. In the spring, a church mission group came and helped host a Super Spring Spectacular (kids/teen event). Over 80 kids, 15 teens, and 40 adults attended. It was an amazing event and the community got to know a little about who Open Door Baptist Church is and to hear the Gospel clearly presented.

That summer we had a Family and Friend Day Sunday. It was our largest Sunday since we started the church with over 42 in attendance. Some of the families had come to our Super Spring Spectacular and others were invited by our church folks. In August, we held a Missions’ Month and introduced Faith Promise missions. This was a new concept for our church people, but after hearing God’s Word preached and hearing from some visiting church planters, they promised over £4000 a year. God is good!

We had our one year anniversary in October 2019. We reflected on all God had done and the souls who had been saved and baptized. Some church members gave their testimonies to encourage those who were not saved to accept Christ as their Savior. At the end of the service, a young teenager who had been coming since we started raised his hand and came to accept Christ! He and others started to go out with me week after week to pass out tracts in Aberdeen.

Three groups from the States were scheduled to be with us in 2020, but COVID-19 happened and we had to reschedule for 2021. During the isolation, we were able to continue services on livestream to Facebook and YouTube.

Our church has remained faithful and we have gained new families as well. A woman from a nearby town watched our services and trusted
Christ! Our oldest daughter, Madelyn, also heard the Gospel clearly and accepted Christ! It may have been a difficult time for many, but we continued to stay encouraged by having Zoom fellowships and trivia nights. Sarah started a Zoom book study with the church ladies, and ladies from her Strolling Mums group have also joined in. We held our first in-person service in July and had a good number of people come to the outdoor church service. One visitor who came said, “This is home.” Praise the Lord!

Although they speak English, we learned quickly that we spoke American. The people, the food, the culture, and the language are so different in many ways. It is a culture and people that it takes time to gain their trust. After time in showing people that we care, they began to accept the things we tell them from God’s Word. We did not come to Scotland to give the people our advice or opinions; we came to give them the truths from God’s Word and how powerful it is—still changing lives! *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it* (1 Thessalonians 5:24). God is still working, and we are happy to be in the center of God’s perfect will for our lives.  

Outdoor Service
After walking down the halls of the BIMI Home Office, a young missionary sits in a Candidate School class. The images of the various people groups whose pictures hang on the walls continue to resonate in his mind. It is for these individual souls for whom Christ died that we surrender our lives to preach the Gospel—those who are lost and blind and those who are looking for hope.

One such person is Litia, known to most people as Nana. She grew up Methodist and eventually married a Catholic man. She was born on the small island of Rabi in Fiji with a population of only 2,000 people. Litia was sprinkled as a baby as so many other island people have been.

She told me, “I was an average Catholic woman who tried to observe and take part in the rituals of the church. I always believed that I would be going to purgatory if I was not a good Catholic following the rules of the church.”

In July 2017, she was invited to an evangelistic meeting with Dr. W. L. Smith where she heard the Gospel for the first time. After receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as her personal Savior, she said, “My life changed instantly.”

Sometime after her salvation, Litia got a call from some of the ladies at the Catholic church. They asked, “What have we done to offend you? Why have you stopped coming to church?” With joy in her heart, Litia replied, “You have not offended me; I have found the truth and if you come to my house, I will tell you all about it.”

What a joy and blessing to see the change Jesus made in the life of a sinner! Litia now has a peace . . . which passeth all understanding (Philippians 4:7).
When our family felt the call of God to surrender to the field of Cambodia, we could have never imagined the scope of ministry He would entrust to our care. Through His providence, God had allowed us to enjoy 19 years of fruitful ministry in the States amongst Cambodian refugees in the Midwest as well as Southern California prior to arriving in Cambodia in 2005. However, once we arrived on the foreign field, we soon discovered the culture was much more intense than what we had previously experienced while serving in the States. It was immediately apparent that the practice of ancestral worship as well as pressure from the Buddhist and Muslim leaders to conform to the community norm would be formidable foes seeking to prevent the lost from coming to Christ. We took comfort in Matthew 28:19–20 and believed that Jesus’ promise to be with us was as certain as His command to go!

When we planted our present church, we began with a small group of five teenage young men and a couple of ladies whom we had won to Christ. I remember negotiating with our landlord for the right to hold church services in the living room of our rented home. He was concerned that his house would be flooded with strangers coming and going but we assured him that we did not foresee the church ever growing larger than 30 people at the most. That sounded reasonable to him since the only type of Christian he had met was a “rice-Christian”—someone who attends church long enough to get whatever physical help the church is providing without ever truly turning to God from idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Over the past several years, God has blessed His work far beyond our abilities and faithfulness. As we contemplate the hundreds of Buddhist, Muslim, and Animist folks who have trusted Christ and who are living faithfully for the Lord, we are reminded of the words of Christ when He promised Peter in Matthew 16:18, *I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* How prone we are to overestimate our own role on the mission field while at the same time to underestimate the awesome plan God intends to bring to fulfillment through the power of the Gospel as it is preached to those whose hearts and minds are blinded by the god of this world.
We are privileged to lead a team of missionaries who were reached with the Gospel in our home church in Long Beach, California. We could have never imagined that some of the junior high Cambodian young people whom God allowed us and others to impact from 1990–2003 would one day grow up, marry each other, graduate from Bible college, recognize the call of God upon their lives to return to the country where their parents had fled from the Khmer Rouge Communist regime some 25 years earlier, successfully complete the sometimes grueling ministry of deputation, and then one day serve together with us here in Cambodia!

I clearly remember Dr. Don Sisk coming to preach at our home church in Long Beach back around 1991 and challenging my pastor, Dr. Joe Esposito, and our leaders with his conviction that God would one day call Cambodian-Americans to the mission field from our very own church. I thank God for the insight God gave him and for his loving but firm admonition to obey the command to not just win souls locally but to develop a biblical missions ministry in the local church that supported missionaries all around the world while at the same time anticipated the day when God would one day call our own members to the foreign field. God has truly blended together a team of national believers with these co-laborers from our home church who have known each other for over two decades and who are knit together with us in love and the common purpose to glorify Christ by making His name known in some of the most spiritually dark places in the 10/40 Window.

Though we were content to simply rent facilities for our church services and various ministries, we began to realize that once our lease was up it was likely that our rent was going to double. As we began looking around for facilities that would accommodate our young church, it was evident we were being squeezed out of the rapidly rising Phnom Penh rental market. In August 2019 after meeting with a supporting pastor and great friend who came to visit us here on the field, we came to the conviction that God would have us to purchase land and build our own building.

After looking at several properties downtown, we realized that unless God miraculously provided, there would be no way for us to purchase a plot of land let alone build a building. We began looking at property that was somewhat more affordable at the edge of town. Though it would require our people to travel one hour each way to get to church, it seemed that God was leading us to purchase the property. We placed a down payment of $10,000 from money our church had saved for land and were given 60 days to come up with the remaining balance. Our faith was about to be tested as well as strengthened in ways we could have never anticipated! Through generous friends and local churches in the States, we were able to pay off the balance of $75,000 well before the deadline! Then came the challenge of building a building on the .4 acre plot of land the Lord had provided.
The greatest blessing of our lives has been to see the way the Lord has provided for the needs of our building project through the sacrificial giving of our members here in Cambodia as well as through the generous gifts of God’s people abroad. Over the past 14 months we have been so encouraged by supporting pastors and friends who have helped to provide for building materials and supplies that have enabled us to complete the building debt free. Truly, God has strengthened our faith and conviction that He desires to continue to use our local church here on the field as well as the churches that have been planted through our local church to win souls, make disciples, and train the next generation to reach this part of the world with the Gospel!

Since we began our building project, we have been greatly encouraged to see the faith and dedication of so many of the nationals who have been saved through the work here in Cambodia. Their desire to center their family life around the life of their local church has been such a blessing. We have had a number of families purchase their own plots of land and build homes right across the street from our new facilities. We currently have nearly 80 of our members living within a stone’s throw of our new building. We have to believe that God desires for Pacific Baptist Church of Cambodia to shine brightly in this dark and hopeless part of the world. Would you please pray for us to have the power of God as we strive to be salt and light while we lovingly establish bridge-building relationships with the lost among the Khmer, Cham, and Kuy people groups—believing they will be won to Christ?
When our family first moved to New Zealand in January 2018, I had no aspirations to have a Chinese ministry. I was not even aware there was a sizeable Chinese population in the city of Christchurch! Little did we realize God had different plans.

Two Chinese women walked in for our Sunday afternoon service in April 2018. One of them was teaching the Chinese language to one of our teen girls named Chloe. Chloe had invited her to come for a service several times, and now she came and brought a friend. There was one problem! While their English was good, the sermon moved too quickly for them to really grasp what was being said. As I discussed this with a layman in our church named Warren, he made a suggestion. We have a weekly Friday night Bible Study. He offered to go through some basic discipleship material with them at a slower pace while I taught the main study. We set it up and invited the ladies back.

Two Fridays later, those two women returned with two more friends, and the weekly Friday Chinese Bible Study was born. Slowly, over the course of a couple of months, the numbers rose from four to nine or ten. Warren moved very slowly through basic Bible truths, starting with a thorough understanding of the Gospel. Most had never heard this before, so there were questions—lots of questions. Many Friday nights Warren and I would sit with some of the Chinese after the Bible Study and answer questions—questions about creation, God, Jesus, the Bible, faith, sin, and salvation.
It seemed as though we might only answer questions and never actually see anyone saved. I can remember getting a bit discouraged after several months had passed with no apparent progress. Then one night, I was having a conversation with one of the ladies named Kristen who had been coming. I had just answered three or four new questions, but she still was not ready to be saved. I must have looked a little sad because she finished the conversation by saying, “Pastor, please keep being patient with us. We are getting close.”

It was just a few weeks later when Kristen trusted Christ, along with her husband, Feng. Mike and Jin were saved and then Tony. In November 2018, we baptized these five and they became our “core” group of Chinese believers. All five are still faithfully attending, growing, and witnessing.

They are not the only ones who have been saved. David got saved not long after. Jonathan was attending our Bible studies and then he moved to Auckland before we could see him trust Christ. We passed his information to a Kiwi pastor friend, Paul Brinkman. A few weeks later, I received a text from Pastor Brinkman that Jonathan had trusted Christ! He has since moved back and been baptized. Then there were Steven and Lynn. Lily trusted Christ and is now back in China. Earlier this year, Fiona trusted Jesus. Her husband, Tiger, maintained that he was not quite ready, though we constantly witnessed to him. He made the decision to be saved on September 28. Just a few days before, Liam trusted Christ, and back in August John was saved.

We now have 15–20 Chinese coming every Friday night, many still searching for the truth. Warren still teaches while I do the English study with an advanced discipleship class at 6:00 for the believers and a broader study at 7:00 for everyone else.

In July, we started a Sunday worship service just for the Chinese. We sing together and they learn songs they have never heard before. We take an offering and they give. I preach and our translator, Jackie, translates. We hold an invitation at the end and invite those who are still not saved to trust Christ. At the same time we encourage those who are saved to be obedient to the way the Holy Spirit is leading them. It is not unusual to spend time answering more questions after the service to help those curious unbelievers learn more.

Many still need the Lord, and we pray for them regularly. We are hopeful that in the next few months we will see many of these trust Christ.

Yes, we have seen Kiwis come to the Lord. We have seen good numerical and spiritual growth amongst our English-speaking congregation. God has been blessing the church as a whole. As I look back on nearly three years of ministry in Christchurch, the one thing that always surprises me most is what God has done in using our church to reach Chinese people. By His grace, we will continue to answer their questions; preach the Gospel; and see them saved, baptized, and discipled for the glory of God.
MEET THE
2020 CANDIDATES

DANIEL & RAQUEL AKUOKOH • GHANA
TOM & JEN BEHMAN
PHILIPPINES
ALAN & JAMIE BRADLEY
USA

MARK BYERS
GERMANY
ANDREW & SHAWN CANAVAN
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND
KATIE DILFER
SOUTH AFRICA

PETER & ZIRLENE DOOLITTLE • BRAZIL
JOSH & BETHANY FURAN
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND
JOHN & DIANA KLINK
MEXICO

BRANDON & KATHY LANE • HONDURAS
BILL & HEATHER LAVENDER • MILITARY
SETH & SUSANA LUNDAY • BRAZIL
What a journey! We had to reschedule the 2020 Candidate School three different times due to the COVID-19 conditions around the country.

What a triumph! We just finished our first ever COVID Candidate School. We had a total of 72 missionaries take part in a virtual approval process and school the week of December 6 through 11.

What a cause! The world today lies in turmoil, chaos, and confusion. However, God is still calling missionaries to the cause of Christ (to reach the world with the Gospel). The cause of Christ is unstoppable in that He is still calling missionaries to reach the lost world.

What a future! These missionaries will have a future influence in the lives of unsaved people in thirty countries and fields around the world. Please pray for them during their deputation and on-field ministry.
India is among the top three nations in the world that has been worst hit by the COVID-19 virus. Those of us living in the southern part of India were put under lockdown for about two months and then a variety of restrictions for the last four months. At first the police came down hard on quarantine violators by beating with bamboo canes those who ventured out into the streets. Normal noise levels came down to an eerie quiet for those two months, something we had never experienced before in our city. The air was cleaner and the birds seemed happier. On the other side of this scenario, the country’s economy was hit hard and many people lost their jobs because industry had decreased production. Restaurants, general stores, gas stations, places of worship, virtually all things were shut down. The only businesses allowed to open were shops that sold groceries and medicines.

It is sad that in the last six months we have lost 13 people whom we have known for years. We are not sure how many of them passed on because of the virus, but we have never had such a loss in a short period of time. Many of our church folk have lost jobs, and some are in a bad way financially. While we are careful as to how we use church funds, we felt that under the circumstances our church folk who were really in need, especially senior citizens and single mothers, were going to be helped financially. Many individuals within the church were happy to step in.

As a church we knew we needed to reach out to the community. Initially, we were not exactly sure how to do that. Then we heard of several hundred migrant workers who had come as laborers to our city and were trying to go back to their homes in different states because they had lost their jobs. Their lack of food and basic amenities was really pathetic. The government was making arrangements for designated trains to transport migrant workers from southern India to northern India; however, because there are many states involved, it had to be coordinated to perfection. While that was in the final stages of development, the workers needed help and this is where our church as well as many others stepped in to help feed these workers till they could get their designated trains. We thank God that our church was able to provide over 800 meals to these workers!

We, as a local body of believers, found a new way to worship God collectively—online. We have had many opportunities to minister online both corporately as well as individually. Praise God! I have been able to answer from the Word of God questions asked by people from different faiths. One common question was about the end of time. Gathering online has its benefits. First of all, people from different states within India as well as from other countries were able to join us for church. In addition, many people who were restricted or not allowed to attend church are now able to join in. While my wife and younger son take Sunday school in the Kannada language on Saturday afternoons, my older son has Sunday school on Friday afternoons. This makes it convenient for children living in the Middle East to come online because Friday is a holiday there. While gathering online is convenient under the circumstances, I believe the best option is to be in church in person. We are looking forward to reuniting with our church folk in the very near future. \[18\]
“Happy New Year!” The greeting felt forced as 2019 gave way to 2020. You see, months before the COVID-19 pandemic turned the world upside down, a measles epidemic had already done so to our two tiny island nations in the South Pacific. Samoa and American Samoa were in crisis as young lives were lost daily for weeks on end.

Lockdowns and school closures reached us months before becoming, sadly, familiar around the world. Our school year runs from January to December, so this meant graduation ceremonies were unceremoniously canceled. As Christmas approached, the only bells ringing were the village calls to prayer as yet another child was laid to rest and another family sang dirges instead of carols. In our two countries whose combined population is only about the size of Buffalo, New York, or Madison, Wisconsin, everyone knew someone who had lost a child or children. As our televisions, radios, and social media broadcasted non-stop updates and commentary, our conversations were consumed with the latest counts and gravest accounts of disease and death.

As a missionary overseeing two churches, one in Samoa and the other in American Samoa, I had already become accustomed to the logistically challenging bi-weekly trips between the two works—two hours by car, an hour by ferry, another by car, and 45 minutes to fly to the next country. It was always a full, exhausting day, starting with that 3:00 a.m. alarm in order to catch the 6:00 a.m. ferry. Now, with the measles epidemic raging, regulations were changing minute-by-minute. I needed this medical clearance from that clinic—no, wait; they are requiring a new one from the main hospital in the capital. Do I have enough time to run and get it and be back in time for my plane? Then the rush back to the airport and the temperature checks and extra forms to fill and waiting on the ones ahead of us trying to argue their way through the latest restrictions.

By mid-January, though, things were returning to normal. Not for everyone, of course, as many continued to grieve, but flights and ferries were back on regular schedules. As long as we carried our official immunization cards and did not have a fever, we could travel back and forth freely. Schools could re-open for the new school year. Churches could congregate. Overseas visitors were welcome. A sense of normalcy, at least to some degree, had returned. Little did we know how brief it would be. All I know in retrospect is that God opened the window just wide enough for a very important event in the life of our church in Asau village on the island of Savai’i in Samoa and for a very fruitful Bible distribution project on the island of Tutuila in American Samoa.

For over a year, we had been planning the
tenth anniversary of Asau Baptist Church that would fall on the first Sunday of February. We would be installing our first local senior pastor, Sopo Tanielu. We would also be ordaining an assistant pastor, Ropati Tumanuvao. I would be turning the church completely over to their leadership. Asau Baptist Church was ready to go from mission church to fully autonomous.

I had the privilege to lead Sopo to the Lord in my living room in January 2010. A month later, he was the first man to be baptized and added to the church on its opening day. How humbling and gratifying to watch him grow over the last ten years! He eagerly attended services, hungered for the Word, was readily discipled, and later underwent a full program of training through our Bible college. Brother Ropati joined the church a few years later and has been very faithful in his studies and service. As church-planting missionaries, this was our dream come true—go to the field, preach the Gospel, win souls, disciple believers, train national men for the ministry, ordain them as preachers of the Gospel, and see God work marvelously.

The epidemic was over, but the pandemic was just beginning. With everyone still raw and reeling from the measles outbreak, neither government was taking chances. Full tests would be needed, followed by a three-day delay before traveling. The new restrictions were announced and implemented immediately on the morning of my departure while I was already at the airport to return for the ordination. However, God moved on both sides, allowing me to leave American Samoa and enter Samoa a few long hours later. To God be the glory!

A week after that great anniversary celebration, I returned to the church in American Samoa to prepare for an incoming shipment of 15,000 Samoan Bibles and to help the church establish its pastor search committee. I got there just days before the shipment arrived and had time to prepare, obtaining a letter from the Treasurer of American Samoa to waive all customs and processing fees, saving thousands of dollars.

As Pastors Sopo and Ropati rose into new leadership over in Samoa and Bible distributions and the pastor search continued in American Samoa, COVID-19 cases mushroomed into a pandemic. With Emi in Samoa working in the school ministry and me in American Samoa, I knew more stringent restrictions were coming. It was time to get back. With ticket in hand, I was all set to go, but before I could even get to the airport, both governments issued proclamations. All international travel, even between our two
island nations, was closed immediately without exception. Even our Lieutenant Governor en route home from the United States mainland remained stranded for months in Hawaii. I was now stuck in American Samoa, while my wife was back at home in Samoa!

With churches and schools closed, workweeks reduced, and business hours and occupancy levels reduced, Emi and I just encouraged one another to do what we could for the Lord while apart. She rallied her teachers and they all did weekly home visits to bring students their assignments. Great opportunities were created to visit and pray with families and to give them the Gospel.

Meanwhile, we distributed nearly all 15,000 of those Bibles! I cannot tell you how many people we were able to witness to as the world raged about COVID-19. Since we could not go house-to-house with all the social distancing requirements, God opened other ways. Several of the large stores allowed us to set up distribution centers in the front of their stores. There were times we had crowds and the word spread all over the island. People began contacting us day and night to get their copies. The threat of COVID-19 breaching our shores made many mindful of eternal matters. Praise God that everyone who got a copy of God’s Word in his or her own language also got the special inserts with the plan of salvation and other helps! My friend and distribution partner, Pastor Mac, and I earned nicknames in American Samoa. Wherever we went, people would say, “Hey, you are the Bible guys.” I like that.

Emi and I would remain apart for nearly four months, encouraging one another through phone calls and wondering if we would ever be reunited. Finally, in mid-June, flights only between our two countries opened again.

What a sweet reunion Emi and I had at the wharf! As we took that two-hour drive back to the house, we asked one another, “Was it worth it? If we had it to do all over again, would we?” As much as we missed each other, we both agreed that we would. We had seen all that God did in both ministries, how He opened those windows just wide enough and long enough at the most critical times and how He kept our hearts united through it all.

What can God do on tiny islands in the middle of an epidemic and a pandemic? More than I could ever have imagined!
We recently received a message as a testimony to the love of Christ being shown through our missionaries Chuck and Susan Sligh, serving in Grafenwoehr (GRAF), Germany. The message is as follows:

Our daughter, Liz, recently returned to Prague, where she is teaching English. She left Europe on March 11. She was in the middle of renewing her work visa that was expiring April 30. Embassy officials advised her to return to Prague before April 30 or she would not be able to re-enter.

This was very difficult due to the Prague airport being closed to all but medical supply aircraft. She decided to fly to Germany and then take a train (with four transfers) to Prague.

Long story short, her final train transfer was cancelled and she was stranded in the forest at the border of the Czech Republic and Germany at an isolated train station in the night with all of the hotels closed due to COVID-19.

God had His eye on my little lost lamb. I knew no one in Germany, but I recalled a Bible Study that I attended where a quiet young mom shared that she was new to the United States and lonely for her family in Germany.

I reached out to her to see if she had any family or friends who could help my daughter. She reached out to Pastor Sligh in Germany, who guided Lizzy to a train bound for his town. At 1 a.m., this seventy-plus-year-old man picked Lizzy up from the train station, took her to a little apartment on the church grounds where she could stay the night, and gave her German currency for morning coffee and bread from a shop near the church.

The pastor then arranged for a church member to drive Liz to the border the next day. One of Lizzy’s students drove two hours from the center of Prague to intercept her on the other side and take her back to her apartment in the city center.
Her work visa allowed her to re-enter the country. She arrived on April 29—one day before her visa expired!

I was so moved by the kindness of Chuck Sligh! I keep asking myself, “Would I pick up a stranger from a foreign country at 1 a.m. in the midst of this pandemic?” I sure pray I would!

Susan writes: “The young German mom (Sarah) mentioned was one of our converts early in our ministry here in GRAF. Her husband got out of the military, got a job on post, then they relocated to California where he is from. The couple was a vibrant part of Grace Baptist Church as they grew and grew. We still miss them and stay in touch. What a small world it can be in God’s Kingdom!”

Chuck and Susan have faithfully served with BIMI for over 38 years in various cities in Europe, based on the needs of the ever-changing military ministry. Grace Baptist Church, Grafenwoehr, under the direction of Brother Sligh, just celebrated its 16th year of loving and serving the people in that community. May God call more laborers such as these to love and serve people!

HOW CAN YOU HAVE A MINISTRY TO THE MILITARY?

By Bryan Baggett

As Christians and as Americans, many folks wonder how they might have an opportunity to minister to our local servicemen and women and their families. It is a question often posed in cities around the nation, especially those cities near military installations. Of course, there are a variety of ways to show the love of Christ to any individual, but here is one example of a family that God used to impact a military child’s life for His glory. This is an email received from that now grown man:

I doubt that you would remember me since it has been roughly 35 years since I have seen you. I went to Bible Baptist Church for about five months when I was 15 years old. I believe you were a year older than I.

My dad was in the military and we had just left Heidelberg, Germany. He had a year left before his retirement and was stationed at Fort Campbell. Because his time was so short, we were not on the base. My home was generally a mess, but when we moved there, we looked for a church anyway. I had kind of grown up in my Christianity, meaning that I had been saved at a young age but it really became alive in a military church in Germany. Leaving that church had left me lost and empty. At 15 I was at a crucial time in my life. I was going to a public high school. I had already tried out through spring training and was set to be starter on their football team and had become extremely popular in a very short period of time. None of this was good for me nor was I ready for all of the temptations. I was angry and bitter at God for taking me from the place that I loved so much and people who had invested so much in me.

The very first time we visited Bible Baptist Church, probably at your parents urging, you invited me to go out to lunch with your family. Normally, I would say no for sure as I did not know you and at the time had no desire to get back involved in any church. But I did not say no. I said yes and we went to a seafood restaurant. None of that mattered. What mattered is I saw your family and they were very real and they were kind and it was a great challenge to me.
Two weeks later, you asked me to spend the night at your house. Again, something normally I would never do but for whatever reason, I did. Your family and you became a great encouragement to me.

I do not remember a single sermon over those five months. I do not remember a single youth event, but I have over the course of 35 years used the illustration of you and your family as real Christianity, real kindness, and real compassion hundreds of times.

As a result of that simple act of kindness, my life went one way when it had gotten on the pathway to go another. I have long wanted to thank you, so I thank my God for the remembrance of you and your family (Philippians 1:3).

The greatest tool at your disposal for ministry to anyone is how you live your life. Choose to love others and to reach out beyond those with whom you are comfortable and that you know. Open your hearts and homes to strangers.

As military personnel and their families move in and out of communities, they are facing so many changes and in some cases real hardships. It is the responsibility of the body of Christ to reach out, to love, and to serve—even if you never receive an email like this one. Only in heaven will it be revealed how God used our lives when submitted to Him for His glory.
So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isaiah 55:11).

My wife, Lidia, and I are BIMI missionaries in Brazil. Lidia is Brazilian and comes from a third-generation Christian family. That might not seem so impressive, but it is quite rare in Brazil, a country that has been a Roman Catholic stronghold for centuries. Our first BIMI missionaries to Brazil came at considerable peril since most cities and towns were dominated by the Catholic Church that until recently was quite open in its persecution of evangelical Christians.

The story of how Lidia’s family came to know the Lord is quite fascinating. Many years ago, her grandfather’s family was living in a small laid-back town in the mountains of the state of Minas Gerais. One bright day, an American missionary rode through their town on a horse and wagon, distributing Bibles to the population. That same day, the priest went by every home confiscating the Bibles. When he came to Lidia’s grandfather’s house, one of the daughters who was the only one home and did not know her father had hidden the Bible in the loft told the priest and his entourage that they did not have one. All the other Bibles in town were confiscated.

It was through the reading of God’s Word that Lidia’s grandfather and his family came to know the true Gospel and eventually all accepted Christ as their personal Savior. The family later moved from the country to the city of Orlandia around the time that missionary Bobby Powell was starting the first Baptist church in that town. Later, other BIMI missionaries, Dan Johnson and Phil Allen, would help in that ministry.

Who was this missionary distributing Bibles on horse and wagon? Only the Lord knows! Yet, the fruit of his labor endures for generations!

Sr. Antonio Pereira Dias, Lidia’s grandfather, was called Home to be with the Lord in his sleep in 1992. He was 84 years old. The day before, he had practiced with the church choir and then gone to the local bus station to hand out Gospel tracts as was his habit. There are stories of people who approached him and said that they were saved after reading the tract he had handed them years before.

Today, there are children and grandchildren of his family who are serving the Lord all over Brazil. His granddaughters Lidia and Ruth are missionaries and grandson Josias is a Brazilian pastor and married to my sister Lisa (yes, brother and sister married brother and sister). All have been trained in churches and Bible institutes started by BIMI missionaries in Brazil. Only in eternity will we know how many souls have been saved as a result of that one Bible, given by one unnamed missionary on horse, who drove through the hills of Minas Gerais, handing out Bibles many years ago!

Author’s note: My parents, Larry and Lydabelle Barrett, along with my sister and me, came to Brazil in 1976. Later, three other children were born to them in Brazil. In 2001, my wife and I were accepted into the BIMI family, officially making me a second-generation missionary to Brazil. As our children and nieces and nephews are also serving the Lord here, there are now three generations of Barretts in Brazil—23 members and counting!
Lidia's grandparents

Three generations of Barretts
If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that (James 4:15).

God has done a wonderful work in Paraguay. He brought Christians for Worldwide Evangelism (CWE) and the Iglesia Bautista Sin Fronteras (IBSF) together in His time to do His work.

I am Clint Vernoy. My wife, Rita, and I have been missionaries with BIMI for 36 years in South America. We were first in Venezuela and are now in Paraguay. Over the years, we have been involved in three different building projects for churches. Our project with CWE was the fourth. This project was obviously done according to the Lord’s will, moving both CWE and us to join together at this time.

Our project was approved by CWE in October 2019 but only if we could do it during the first quarter of 2020. The only time IBSF could do the build was March 2020. COVID-19 brought the world to a halt in March 2020, but COVID-19 has no effect on the will of God.

• All the materials for construction were purchased before the worldwide shut down. Luck, planning, or God?
• Group one of the CWE work teams arrived March 15, 2020, a week before Paraguay closed its borders to international travel. Luck, planning, or God?
• Because we changed the accommodations for the group in February and they stayed at the property next door to the construction site rather than across town where originally planned, they were in compliance with all health guidelines and restrictions that came into effect in Paraguay on March 16, the day after their arrival. Luck, planning, or God?
• With only a one-minute commute/walk to the worksite and by working with joy and fervor from sunrise to sundown and more, the workers were able to complete 75% of work scheduled to take 21 days in 4 1/2 days. Luck, planning, or God?
• The airline cancelled and rescheduled flights for the group three times and then cancelled and said, “Sorry, we cannot help you get home!” The group was then able to fly out using the last seats on a State Department repatriation flight, the last flight to the United States before Paraguay closed the airport to all commercial flights. Luck, planning, or God?

I see what the author of the book of James is saying. To plan is important, but, to trust in God and live in obedience to His will without fear is crucial. I thank God for CWE and their planning. I thank God for the group of believers who came willing to do this or that, believing that God would keep and protect. I thank God for the promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. I thank God for the testimony to the neighborhood of the work and love of Christians towards the world—love that does not change even in the midst of the storm named Pandemic COVID-19. Remember, the storms we are in that seem so bad are to God just like another walk across the lake. We just need to get out of the boat and join Him and show His greatness.
LUCK, PLANNING, OR GOD?
Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints (Psalm 116:15).

Wayne Witherell, retired Missionary (94), went Home to be with the Lord on Sunday, July 5, 2020. Wayne and his wife, Frances, surrendered to be missionaries to Peru as independent missionaries and then joined BIMI in 1971. The Witherells also served in Spain and Venezuela and Puerto Rico. After 30 years, they retired; however, retirement was not for them so they reenlisted as missionaries and returned to South America.

Wayne's daughter wrote the following about her dad: “He was a Jack-of-all trades, a musician, an artist, and a missionary for 52 years, but most of all, he was a child of God who lived and served Him everywhere he went. He never passed up an opportunity to share the Gospel with people.”

On August 31, 2020 Faye Biggerstaff Painter, a faithful servant of the Lord, went home to Heaven. Faye and her husband Dale Painter joined BIMI in 1977. They would move many times during their ministry with the USA division of BIMI. Faye and her husband planted three churches and pastored mission churches in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina. She loved to witness from door to door during their ministry and knocked on hundreds of doors telling people about Jesus and leading many to Lord. Shortly before her Homegoing Faye told her doctor, “Whether I live or whether I die I am the Lord's. My time is in his hands.”

Roland and Sandra Simeonsson, Emeritus Missionaries, went Home to be with the Lord only two hours apart on Saturday, October 10, 2020. Roland and his wife, Sandra, were approved as BIMI missionaries to Japan in 1970. They spent 10 years as missionaries in Japan prior to joining BIMI. Roland and Sandra served as missionaries until their retirement in January 2017. Long after they could have retired, the Simeonssons continued to start churches and reach the Japanese people both in Japan and in Hawaii.

They leave behind a legacy of Gamagori Baptist Church, Hikarinosono Preschool, and Fukkatsuen Memorial Gardens, along with helping build seven additional churches in Japan and completing several missions in China. Their love and commitment to the Japanese people spanned multi-generations.

BIMI Missionary Steven Anner (69) went Home to be with the Lord on Tuesday afternoon, October 20, 2020. Steven and his first wife Cathy had a heart for missions and joined BIMI in 1996. They served as missionaries in Mexico. Cathy went home to be with the Lord in 2009. Steven resigned from BIMI in order to meet the needs of their son, Jonathan. The Lord brought a single missionary into Steven's life and he married Debra Kay George. Steven and Debra joined BIMI in 2014 as missionaries to Honduras. Over the past six years, they served the Lord together in a number of Spanish-speaking ministries. Due to health issues, they returned to the States. While waiting to get back into Honduras, Steven contracted COVID-19 and he finished his course.
Garland Cofield, Retired Missionary (93) went Home to be with the Lord on Sunday, October 25, 2020. He was a pastor, musician, builder, and pilot. While pastoring in Michigan, he would take young men from his church to help a missionary in Canada. The Lord was working in his heart concerning missions. Garland took a survey trip to Canada in 1964, and he and his wife Reba applied to be missionaries with BIMI. They were accepted by BIMI in 1965.

The Lord gave the Cofields a burden to reach young people. They built a youth camp in Canada that could only be reached by plane or by an old logging road. That camp became the Camp of the Woods. Thousands of young people and families were reached through the ministry of this camp. Because of the Camp of the Woods, many staff and teen campers were called to missions in Canada.

Retired Missionary Jerry Reece (83) went Home to be with the Lord on Sunday, October 25, 2020. Jerry and his wife, Gail, joined BIMI in 1966. They were some of the first BIMI missionaries to Nicaragua. Jerry and Gail served in Nicaragua for four years and in El Salvador for ten years, planting churches and Bible institutes. Since 1980, Jerry continued serving the Lord in a ministry of writing, translating, and printing Gospel tracts and Spanish literature.

Missionary Kathy Anderson (51) went Home to be with the Lord October 28, 2020. Kathy and her husband, Rick, both felt the call to serve the Lord as missionaries. They joined BIMI in 1999 and began to serve the Lord in Peru. Kathy was the daughter of Tom and Carolyn Pace, BIMI missionaries in Peru. As a 12-year-old, Kathy taught Sunday school and worked with young people. She taught in the Christian School in Lima, Peru. Kathy and Rick served alongside her parents in the various ministries that her parents began. She fought a good fight, she finished her course, and she kept the faith. In short, she finished strong and leaves behind a wonderful testimony of a life fully dedicated to God.
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