

# MESSAGE

Vol 67 | Issue 1 | 2019

abwe<sup>®</sup>  
INTERNATIONAL

# BUILDING

a legacy

---

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF PROJECT OFFICE MINISTRY

---

Letter from the  
**PRESIDENT**



## If We Build It...

It is the smell that surprises you. The powerful combination of bleach, sweat, sickness and chemicals come together to form the unique smell of an ABWE hospital.

As you begin to look around you see doctors praying with patients, nurses cleaning wounds, and counselors explaining the gospel to those laying in ward beds.

As my wife, Martha and I have spent the past year traveling to many ABWE mission fields, it's been thrilling to walk the corridors of many of the high-caliber ministry facilities our missionaries operate. Drawing from the expertise of trained architects, engineers, and skilled-laborers, missionaries have seen their dreams become a reality through the ministry of the ABWE Project Office.

As the saying goes, "if you build it, they will come"...and come they do. From our medical facilities—which serve tens of thousands of patients each year—to our schools and seminaries educating countless students, these buildings serve as a hub for many ABWE ministries working to multiply leaders, churches and missions movements.

This issue of *Message* is dedicated to the important work of construction and maintenance through the ABWE Project Office—a seemingly unlikely ministry path having a valuable kingdom impact.

 | ABWE President



Editor: Naomi Harward | ABWE PO Box 8585  
Art Director: Lauren Farr-Miller | Harrisburg, PA 17105-8585  
abwe.org | Email: info@abwe.org | Phone: 717.774.7000 | Fax: 717.774.1919

### WHO IS THE ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS FOR WORLD EVANGELISM (ABWE)?

ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. We are dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission by multiplying leaders, churches, and missions movements among every people. Currently, more than 1,000 ABWE missionaries are working to advance God's work in more than 70 countries by sharing the story of hope, building communities of faith, and serving the world with love.

### RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS

We encourage churches or others supporting ABWE or its missionaries to use material from the *Message* to mobilize church members for missions. Permission is granted to copy material as published or excerpt material without photos for these non-commercial purposes as long as this publication is credited as the source. Suggested credit: "ABWE *Message*. Used with permission." We request copies of material republished pursuant to this permitted use. All other rights are reserved by ABWE and permission for other commercial or non-commercial use requires written permission from the editor (communications@abwe.org).

**TO CHANGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION**, visit: [abwe.org/subscribe](http://abwe.org/subscribe)

**FEATURES**



**12**

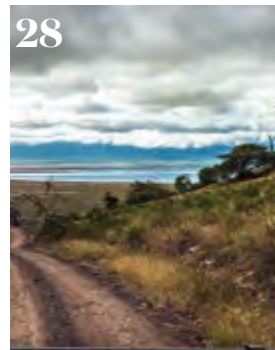
## Praying for Restoration

For more than 50 years, Memorial Christian Hospital has been healing the sick and speaking truth and love into the lives of the lost. As time and use wears heavily on the aging facility, the team eagerly anticipates a much-needed renewal and expansion.

**22**

## Better than DIY

For the past 25 years, the ABWE Project Office has helped missionaries with their building needs so that ABWE ministries can continue to thrive and grow.



**ON THE COVER:**  
gettyimages© mihalec

**31**

**DEPARTMENTS**

- 4 CONNECTIONS:**  
Stories and updates from around the ABWE world
- 10 LEGACIES: *Steve and Debi Douglas***  
Honoring missionaries who have faithfully served for 35 years
- 28 FIELDNOTES: *New Arrivals***  
Reflecting on an ABWE missionary family's first day on the field
- 30 FOCAL POINTS: *4 Ways God Uses Trials***  
Understanding how some of the best lessons come from the hardest situations
- 31 SPOTLIGHT: *Shedding Light on the Field***  
ABWE President Paul Davis, visits one of the many ministries in Africa during his most recent trip

**ONLINE**

-  [abwe.org/blog](https://abwe.org/blog)
-  [facebook.com/abweministries](https://facebook.com/abweministries)
-  [twitter.com/ABWE\\_intl](https://twitter.com/ABWE_intl)
-  [instagram | ABWE\\_intl](https://instagram.com/ABWE_intl)



©gettyimages/Ivan Marjanovic

CZECH REPUBLIC

# No One can Measure Their Days

“Jakub! Jakub! JAKUB!”

As ABWE missionary Steve Wendel and his wife, Cari, settled in with their six children for the long flight home after an exhausting (but blessed) time with family over the holidays, the cries of the woman several rows back startled them.

“First it was alarmed, but it escalated into hysteria. Each shout was more desperate,” Steve remembered.

Steve quickly recognized them as the young, hipster-looking couple who had boarded ahead of them just moments ago. Now, Jakub sat lifeless in his seat,

his body upright but limp, jaw hanging unhinged, eyes open yet vacant. His partner was shaking him, slapping his cheek, willing him to come back to her.

“As the passengers around him looked on with shocked stares, I began to pray.”

Slowly, some life returned to Jakub’s eyes and he regained a very disoriented, sub-par consciousness. The medics arrived to cart him off the plane, his partner following closely behind.

“It still affects me,” Steve said, “remembering those confused moments, wondering if I was watching a young and strong man mysteriously

die before my eyes, aware of everyone’s powerlessness.”

“How is it that I should be so mindful of this physical confrontation with death, when spiritual death abounds around me daily?” he continued. “May we never be as those confused bystanders, failing to interpret what we see around us. May we [instead] be a clear light to those who are perishing in darkness. May we each be reminded that this is our purpose daily as followers of Jesus Christ, for our days are short.” ■



*Steve and Cari Wendel and their family have served as church-planting missionaries in the Czech Republic since 2006.*

*“MAY WE BE A CLEAR LIGHT TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING IN DARKNESS. MAY WE EACH BE REMINDED THAT THIS IS OUR PURPOSE DAILY AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST, FOR OUR DAYS ARE SHORT.”*

**- STEVE WENDEL -**



**BRAZIL — MAICOL VENTER**

Recently Maicol Venter began serving as assistant coach to the Unico basketball team, who in 2018, took home their first state title in 17 years. ■



**SPAIN — KEITH & JODY HUDAK**

Keith Hudak was recently appointed by ABWE as a field team leader, overseeing the missionaries serving in Spain. ■



**PAPUA NEW GUINEA — BILL & LORI SMITH**

Earlier this year, Bill and Lori Smith saw 500 teens pack into their campus for a week-long evangelistic camp, which led to more than 160 teens committing or re-committing their lives to Christ. ■



**UKRAINE — MIRIAM WHEELER**

Following her January 9 hospitalization for a nearly-fatal pulmonary embolism, Miriam Wheeler continues to recover slowly but surely. She was discharged from the hospital January 18. ■



©judybowen

**MANGO, TOGO, WEST AFRICA — HOPE RADIO**

On October 18, 2018, people from all over northern Togo celebrated the newly-opened Christian radio station, Hope Radio. It had been years in the making.

Close to completion in April of 2017, the project faced a major setback when a storm destroyed the radio station’s roofs and 195-foot radio tower. But God graciously provided the funds and manpower needed, and by February of 2018, Hope Radio passed its first test run.

Strategically located near the border, Hope Radio reaches four countries with the gospel: Ghana to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, Benin in the east, and Togo, where the radio station is located. ■

*“RADIO MINISTRY CAN REACH INTO PEOPLE’S LIVES AND HOMES IN A WAY FEW OTHER MINISTRIES CAN. WE PRAY THAT GOD WILL DO GREAT THINGS THROUGH HOPE RADIO.”*

**-PAUL DAVIS, ABWE PRESIDENT-**



UNITED STATES

## Junk for Jesus

*Two weeks before her furlough, ABWE missionary nurse Jodi Boyd found herself working overtime sorting through the \$15,000 container of medical supplies sent to ABWE's Hospital of Hope in northern Togo, West Africa.*

“At least a quarter of the contents was junk that ended up being burned,” she said.

During her two-and-a-half years serving in the operating rooms at both of ABWE's hospitals in Togo, Jodi saw the frustrating disconnect between the supplies the facilities needed and the items being sent by donors in the U.S., which often were unusable, and created more work for missionaries as they had to sort them and figure out how to dispose of them.

When she returned home on furlough, Jodi realized God was calling her to a new line of ministry.

“In this age of [re-purposing], we all want to find a new home for our

cast-offs that does not involve a land-fill. But there is a limit to what we should be sending to charities,” Jodi wrote. “I end up getting a lot of ‘junk’ donated. My latest chart topper on the gross scale being a half-used tube of hemorrhoid cream. Eek.”

Since starting her medical procurement ministry in 2016, Jodi has worked with U.S.-based hospitals and donations centers to fill and ship containers of medical supplies to ABWE's medical facilities in West Africa and South Asia.

Each container can contain up to 200 boxes filled with dressings, IV tubing, syringes and other useful items. Boxes are inventoried by volunteers at a

warehouse, saving missionary hospital staff invaluable time and energy. Jodi has found thousands of dollars worth of usable goods to ship to all three hospitals and often pays next-to-nothing for them.

What began as a couple boxes and 1,200 square feet, taped off in the unfinished auditorium in Jodi's church, has rapidly grown into over 2,000 square feet of medical supplies.

“For two-and-a-half years I've had this wonderful free space to grow and figure out how this ministry works,” Jodi said. She now looks forward to seeing how God will continue to provide as the ministry expands and she moves her warehouse to a new, larger space. ■



UNITED STATES

## Miracle Monday

As the deadline approached, tense anticipation filled the air. With only one hour left, ABWE prefield missionaries Dave and Terri Fisher were fervently praying that, by some miracle, they would meet their missionary support requirement levels, so they could attend ABWE's Field Prep Seminar—a training requirement for all missionaries prior to heading to their mission field.

Three days earlier, they sat staring at their account. Their support amount remained unchanged at 71 percent. They needed to be 85 percent supported to attend the training.

Resigned, they moved the dates for attending field prep seminar on their calendar to the following spring—the third time since being accepted as missionaries to northern Chile. Anxious to finally get to the field, they met with their field team over Skype that week to pray that God would “show up and show off”.

The day before the deadline, the

Fishers had visited a new church, and been encouraged by the pastor and the congregation, confirming their call and spurring them on.

On Monday, their Facebook and email exploded.

“We began the day needing [about] \$400 a month in support,” Dave said. With every passing hour, that amount lowered as generous gifts poured in.

In 36 hours, Dave and Terri watched their support jump from 71 percent to 89 percent, exceeding the minimum support requirements to finally attend Field Prep.

“People were praying, literally all over the world, and God answered our prayers,” they said later.

Through God's continued provision, the Fishers were able to begin language school at Rio Grande Bible Insititue in January.

“As we continue to reflect on this ‘Miracle Monday’, we give God all the glory for the great things he has done!” ■



### PAPUA NEW GUINEA — GOROKA BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE

Goroka Baptist Bible College (GBBC) had 13 students graduate this past season, for a total of 450 GBBC graduates since it began in 1974.

To help offset the costs of providing a biblical college education to up-and-coming PNG pastors and teachers, the school sells coffee for \$15 per bag.

Visit [coffee4png.com](http://coffee4png.com) to order a bag today. ■



### ECUADOR — TACTICA MINISTRY

Through TACTICA Ministry, Jeff and Deanne Davoll saw 31 police commandos come to Christ in September, and 13 firefighters come to Christ in October. ■



# Upcoming events



## SOUTH AFRICA — BLESSING DURBAN

The ABWE Project Office had no idea the lasting impact their ministry would have when they set out to help blossoming churches in South Africa construct their first church buildings starting in 2000.

“[Their] help through the planning and construction phases of our church was invaluable,” said pastor Vic Willis of Fellowship Baptist Church in Durban, South Africa—the first church built through the ABWE initiative, the Blessing Durban Project.

Not only did Vic gain building skills he could then use later to help on other building projects, he also developed lasting friendships.

“The relationship I built with Bill Hanson (Director of the Project Office) and his wife Ginny over that year was incredible,” he said. “And the visiting teams were definitely a highlight of the projects.”

In South African culture, having a building signifies that your church is legitimate, Vic said. But many of the fledgling churches in the area lack the resources and the funds they need to construct their own buildings.

The Blessing Durban Project was created to serve not only as a financial aid for these churches, but also to assist in planning and construction, providing advice and resources, and recruiting teams to help with the finishing work.

Once local contractors built each building to roof-height, the Project Office would recruit volunteers to help with the roofing, electricity, plumbing, painting, doors, etc.

With just \$500,000, Blessing Durban has succeeded in fully constructing four church buildings in or near the Durban area.

Other projects have also stemmed from Blessing Durban and the Project Office’s work. Grace Baptist Church, one of the churches they built, now works in partnership with four missionary families to transform their community through the 7 Rivers Outreach project—a Zulu church plant and a 75-acre farm which provides micro-enterprise opportunities, training, and leadership development for Zulu pastors. ■

### GOOD SOIL SEMINAR

*Equipping you to share God’s story of redemption*

May 20–21, 2019

Good Soil Basic Seminar

Hooks for Hanging the Old and New Testament Storylines

May 22, 2019

Good Soil Trainer Certification Workshop

May 23–24, 2019

BibleStorying (Bible Storytelling)

**LEARNMORE** at

[goodsoil.com/training](http://goodsoil.com/training)

### ROOTS OF FAITH THEOLOGICAL TRAINING COURSES

*Unfolding God’s plan of redemption from Genesis through Revelation*

June 17–21, 2019

The Roots of Faith Old Testament

June 24–28, 2019

The Roots of Faith New Testament

**LEARNMORE** at

[goodsoil.com/roots](http://goodsoil.com/roots)

### 24 HOUR-DEMO

*Whether you’re just starting to get curious about missions or you’ve already embraced your call to the nations, 24-Hour DEMO is a great way to start your journey. Join us!*

July 5–6, 2019

October 24–25, 2019

October 25–26, 2019

**LEARNMORE** at

[abwe.org/demo](http://abwe.org/demo)



# Steve & Debi Douglas

CANDIDATE CLASS: 1983

COUNTRY SERVED IN: Peru



©gettyimages/travelview



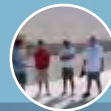
1983

Attended ABWE's candidate class



1985

Arrived on the field in Arequipa, Peru



1986

Beginnings of camp ministry, which continues independently to this day



Departed for language school  
1984



First pioneer church plant started  
1985



Began Bible Institute—it's now independent  
2000

**Q: How did God first call you to missions?**

**D:** I'm an MK from the jungles of Peru, and developed a burden for missions in my high school and college years at Baptist Bible College (BBC).

**S:** I grew up in a missions-minded church—Independent Baptist Church of Towanda, PA—and had an interest in the pastorate and missions. After making a missions trip to Peru and later completing studies at BBC, God confirmed that he was leading me to missions in Peru. He led us to Arequipa, the second-largest city of Peru. We arrived never having seen the city.

**Q: What moment had the biggest impact on your ministry?**

**A:** One moment was facing strong opposition in our first church plant—being threatened by the local priest, being investigated by the local “FBI” due to false accusations of being the leader of a sect, and petitions by the local priest to the authorities that our residency be revoked. It left its mark on us and reaffirmed our commitment to this ministry.

**Q: What is your favorite memory from the field?**

**A:** Seeing lives transformed by the power of the gospel, and new

leaders being trained and then leading churches and ministries is amazing. And seeing our children love the people and culture.

**Q: What is the best part of being a missionary?**

**A:** Having the opportunity to share God's love and message with so many people in Peru and South America.

[It is] a great blessing working with our Peru teammates, our Spanish South America team, and our local pastors and churches in all of these countries. [That teamwork] is biblical and necessary.

We are not mere colleagues—we are brothers and sisters in Christ, teammates and partners for the cause of Christ!

**Q: What advice would you give to a new missionary or someone considering missions?**

**A:** God has impacted our hearts with these five key concepts:

**Grace:** Follow God's leading, always attribute everything to his grace, and extend grace one to another.

**Fingerprints:** We all have unique fingerprints. Our focus is to leave our mark on others with love and

edification...with God's help and for his glory.

**Teamwork:** Don't make decisions alone or in a vacuum. Invite others to come alongside you to pray and offer perspective. Work with others in humility and submission. The Holy Spirit speaks through them as well.

**Paraklete:** We have not only been given the ministry of reconciliation, but also of “parakleting”, or aiding and helping others (1 Thess 5:11). We participate with the Holy Spirit in coming alongside a lost world and a growing church.

**Spiritual Life Focus:** Cultivate a deep walk with the Lord now. We must be careful not to drift through our Christian life and only do things for routine's sake. It is helpful to develop a spiritual plan for our character weaknesses and for ongoing growth. We need to constantly strengthen ourselves “head to toe” (Eph.6:10). ■

**LEARNHOW** you can start building your own legacy of faithfulness [abwe.org/go](http://abwe.org/go)

**MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS****2000**

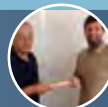
Began a missionary and pastors' wives fellowship

**2012**

Began teaching Essential Mission Components in Spanish

**2010**

Started a pastor and wife "care ministry"

**2012**

Appointed Regional Director of Spanish South America - serving in Arequipa



*“In February 1997 our team began to pray about the future ministry of Memorial Christian Hospital (MCH). Very quickly we coined the phrase “MCH Renewal Project”...as we sought the renewal of ourselves first and foremost, and the renewal of the facility when and if God gave direction.” This is the story of the years that followed.*

**— DR. STEVE, MCH CHIEF OF SURGERY**



WRITTEN BY  
NAOMI HARWARD

PHOTOGRAPHY  
COURTESY OF  
SAMARITAN'S PURSE

# PRAYING FOR RESTORATION

*“One, two, three, four, breathe. One, two, three, four, breathe. One, two, three...”*

The young husband looked at the short-term nurse, Ely, with desperation in his eyes as she coached him on how to time the breaths he was administering to his dying wife, Ma Sing.

Ma Sing\* had been severely ill for several days. Her family had waited far too long to make the two-day journey to Memorial Christian Hospital (MCH) to get her the care she so desperately needed. By the time she arrived at the hospital, her life was teetering dangerously on the line.

“I could see from a quick assessment that if we didn’t act quickly, she wouldn’t have much time left,” Ely said.

No one could identify the source of the infection that was now threatening her life, but it was clear that without surgery she would die. Oxygen was administered, labs were drawn, and Ma Sing was prepped for the operating room.

For weeks after the surgery Ma Sing’s husband and family members took turns administering breaths from a manual resuscitator, hoping that their breaths would bring life back to her struggling body.

With limited resources, the hospital lacks a ventilator machine, despite the urgent need for one. Patients who need to be intubated—and MCH sees many—must have family members available around the clock to give them manual breaths.

So day and night, Ma Sing’s loved ones forced air into her lungs and counted, “One, two, three, four, breathe...”

\*name changed for security

### MEMORIAL CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL

The beginnings of Memorial Christian Hospital in South Asia came in 1959. Recognizing the great physical needs and even greater spiritual needs of the people of East Pakistan, a small group of NGO team members followed God’s leading and founded MCH in 1966. Today it is one of the area’s major surgical resources, performing more than 2,000 surgeries and seeing over 50,000 patients a year.

But providing this underserved region with quality healthcare is not the hospital’s only purpose.

Even greater than its role as an emergency healthcare facility, MCH is also a unique and powerful avenue for spiritual change for a lost and dying people, says Dr. Steve, who has served at MCH for 22 years, and today serves as the hospital’s chief of surgery.

During a refugee crisis involving the Rohingya people in the summer of 2017, MCH was one of the main hospitals where refugees suffering from severe trauma wounds were referred to receive surgical care.

As the crisis unfolded, the outdated and aging facility quickly found itself overrun by the influx of injured and dying refugees—reaching and exceeding full capacity within days.

With the outstanding help of volunteers from the organization Samaritan’s Purse, however, the MCH staff rose to the occasion and demonstrated love and healing towards the hurting souls of hundreds of these refugee patients.

In doing so, MCH further strengthened its reputation as a place of compassion and healing in the Rohingya community—which staff had been prayerfully trying to reach with the truth for years.





Even greater than its role as an emergency healthcare facility, Memorial Christian Hospital is also a unique and powerful avenue for spiritual change for a lost and dying people.

News of the hospital’s impact during the crisis reached far and wide. When the President of Samaritan’s Purse, Franklin Graham, heard about the team’s involvement, he made plans to visit the facility to see for himself.

As a result of the work he saw being accomplished, Graham donated the remaining funds needed to complete a long-awaited renewal project that the MCH team had been working on for more than two decades.

The extensive, three-phase building project will replace the current facility with a new, 100-bed multi-level medical center, with room for additional expansion in the future as needed. The project includes an intensive care unit, nine operating rooms, three additional c-section/delivery rooms, a post-anesthesia care unit, an obstetrics wing, private rooms, an emergency room, and trauma services.

This expanded and updated building is a God-driven project over 22 years in the making.

### RENEWAL PROJECT

When Dr. Steve and his family arrived on the field in 1996, they were sobered by the aging facility where they had come to work.

“It was considerably more crowded and run-down than any of the old photos or the video we had seen,” Steve said.

More than 30 years of heavy use, combined with the ravages of the tropical climate and needs of the exploding population, had pushed the facility into inadequacy. And as medicine and technology rapidly advanced, so did the need for an updated facility.

But with little funding and even less construction know-how, the team had absolutely no idea where to start. So they decided to commit the proposed project to two years of prayer, seeking God’s guidance in what they would need to improve their facility for ministry.

“It wasn’t necessarily what I would have done,” Steve said, recalling the test of patience the team would experience as they committed to prayer—and only prayer—for two full years before they decided whether God would open the door to a new hospital project.

But through the years, mishaps, and miracles that followed, Steve said he could clearly see how the team had made the right decision in seeking God’s direction and blessing before ever discussing bricks and mortar.

# The wisest thing

**“THE WISEST THING WE DID WAS REALIZE WHAT WE DIDN’T KNOW.”**

**- DR. STEVE, MCH CHIEF OF SURGERY -**

“The wisest thing we did was realize what we didn’t know.”

During those two years of prayer, the regional director who oversaw the team reached out to the ABWE Project Office—a young initiative that had been started only three years prior, whose purpose was to help missionary teams with their construction and project management needs.

“All glory goes to God [for building this hospital]. But the Project Office gets a close second kudos and the tip of the hat,” Steve said. “They helped us build a multimillion-dollar facility.”

The Project Office’s first visit to South Asia in 1998 mostly served to guide the team’s future planning strategies, leaving them with several things to consider before breaking ground for a new hospital.

The wait was excruciating, Steve remembers. Their team was beginning to dwindle as many of the original members were retiring and leaving the field, and no one was being mobilized to replace them.

Even more discouraging was the fact that, with their resources limited even more by the extensive loss of teammates, they soon realized they would have to scrap the original plans and return to the drawing board.

As frustrating as it was, however, Steve said that now they can see how God was working it all in his perfect timing.

“If we had done anything between 1997 and July of 2010, we would have had colossal regret,” he said.

In the summer of 2010, newspapers announced that a nearby railway started by the British in the nineteenth century was scheduled to be completed.

Its path ran right through the middle of the hospital’s property, where the team had been planning to build.

Upon hearing the news, the team once again went to their knees in a concerted effort to pray that God would work through this seeming wrench in their plans.

In the end, the railway did not move—but plans for the facility did. The site for the future building was moved back to make room for the tracks.

The new plans, which would break ground in the summer of 2013, situated the hospital close to both the high-traffic highway and the new two-way national railway, promoting greater exposure and easier access to the hospital, and further confirming for Steve—and the rest of the team—that God was very much at work.

## BREAKING GROUND

“I’ve got a whole drawer filled with files about this ‘Memorial Christian Hospital’ project. Do I archive all of this?”

It was early March 2006.

Bill Hanson was clearing out the files in his predecessor, Ralph Gruenberg’s, office. After serving with his wife, Evelyn, for over a decade as the director of the project office, Ralph had retired. Bill and his wife, Ginny, would be taking his place.

As Bill sifted through the drawers of files left behind, he came across what Steve would describe later as “three feet of documents”, all pertaining to a project he was sure had long since been closed.



*The ability to share the truth intentionally, one-on-one with patients, is what Steve says the team is most looking forward to with the new project.*





**“HE SAID HE WAS AMAZED BY WHAT WE WERE DOING [HERE]. THEN HE SAID, ‘BUT WE CAN HELP YOU DO EVEN MORE.’”**

Noticing Steve’s name on several of the documents, Bill reached out to the doctor to see what he knew and how Bill could help. The conversation that followed resulted in reopening the project and Bill flying to MCH to see what that new project would entail. Within 48 hours of arriving, Bill could see how God was moving mightily through the hospital.

“He said he was amazed by what we were doing [here],” Steve said. “Then he said, ‘But we can help you do even more.’”

A building concept was submitted and approved that same year. The approved project cost was more than \$7 million.

“As a precious mercy to a weary and beleaguered team, who sometimes doubted whether their vision would ever materialize,”

Steve said, “God graciously provided more than half of the funding within 24 months of announcing the project.”

That earned them the approval to start contracting out and breaking ground.

But then, at the three-quarters funding mark, the money suddenly stopped flowing in. The team once again committed the project to prayer, trusting that God would bring the needed money in his perfect timing.

The team had no doubt that God would provide, but they never could have imagined just how mightily he would move. He brought in \$2 million through one of Steve’s trips to the United States.

And then he completed the funding with a crisis.



## “MAKE IT TWO MILLION”

“God works in miraculous ways,” Steve laughed.

In August of 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees poured over the country’s border, fleeing brutal persecution from the Myanmar government. Staff from Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières) switched to emergency mode and called Memorial Christian Hospital to warn them of the coming mayhem. In the days and months to follow, the country would be flooded with nearly 1-million Rohingya refugees, their bodies bruised and torn apart by bullets, land mines, and barbed wire.

Many were overwhelmed with the grief of seeing their loved ones killed before their eyes, while others desperately searched for the families from whom they had been separated in the frantic flight from Myanmar. All of them were frightened, lost souls in dire need of something more lifesaving than mere medical care.

God was not only at work in the refugees’ lives—He was also working through them. He used the work of MCH during the crisis to bring greater exposure to the hospital’s impact—exposure that would catch the attention of many around the world, including Franklin Graham and Kenny Isaacs, the president and (former) Vice President of Samaritan’s Purse. Both were also good friends of Steve’s.

Within ten minutes of touching down in-country in late January, 2018, Graham was blown away by the impact the hospital was making in the refugee community, even at its limited capacity.

As he stood with Steve looking at the half-finished new facility, Graham asked Steve what they needed to bring the project to a close.

They needed \$750,000 to complete the building. But Graham wasn’t satisfied to know simply what they needed to finish the shell of the multi-million-dollar project.



After witnessing the hospital’s impact first-hand, Samaritan’s Purse president, Franklin Graham, donated the funds needed to complete the MCH renewal project.



“What else do you need?” he pressed Steve.

They looked down at the future radiology lab. “Well, we are going to need a basic CT scanner,” the doctor replied.

“That put the amount at \$1.5 million,” Steve said later. “Then [Graham] said, ‘Let’s just round up. Let’s make it \$2 million.’”

Looking back, Steve still shakes his head at the miraculous way that God often works. He admitted that initially there was high anxiety about the logistics surrounding Franklin’s visit and the stress it caused for an already overburdened staff. But what had been perceived as being a potentially taxing event turned into another amusing example of God’s power.

“It was ... truly unbelievable,” he marvels.

### **NEW MINISTRY**

The MCH team faced plenty of practical challenges working in the old facility, but one of the greatest downsides was the limited opportunities to have spiritual conversations, Steve said.

He described their work in South Asia as a “tightrope walk”, juggling sensitivity to government and culture without downplaying life-saving truths. Speaking that truth within the hospital walls is no exception, and the busy, crowded atmosphere creates too much of a distracting environment to speak the truth effectively.

“One of the biggest issues the hospital staff face in sharing the truth in the current building is the lack of privacy,” Steve said. Oftentimes, when attempting to have a life-saving conversation with a patient, the staff are interrupted by the vocal opposition from the surrounding patients, who laugh at the truth or outright reject it.

The ability to share it intentionally, one-on-one with patients, is what Steve says the team is most looking forward to with the new project.

“God finished in a few years what should have taken six years or more to accomplish, [giving] the MCH hospital staff updated equipment and a more comfortable building to operate in.”

WHEN MA SING AND HER HUSBAND FOLLOWED UP  
SOME TIME LATER, THERE WAS AN OBVIOUS IMPROVEMENT IN BOTH OF THEM.  
THEIR SMILING FACES BEAMING WITH JOY, THEY EXPLAINED THAT  
**THEY HAD DECIDED TO FOLLOW JESUS.**

Follow Jesus

### GOD'S PROJECT

This new building will continue to operate as a platform for sharing truth to patients, just like Ma Sing, who come here for a second chance—but don't know that second chance could actually be eternal.

Though her recovery was slow, Ma Sing was eventually able to sit up and start breathing on her own for small periods of time.

"This young mother of two was at the point of death, and yet somehow, she was still fighting and gaining ground every day," Ely says. "To say her recovery was a miracle is [an] understatement."

But even as miracles were taking place on a physical level, an even greater miracle was at work in Ma Sing's soul.

"Over the course of her long stay, [Ma Sing] and her husband heard the truth many times. Their hearts were soft, and they responded that they needed time to think about this Good News."

When Ma Sing and her husband followed up some time later, there was an obvious improvement in both of them. Their smiling faces beaming with joy, they explained that they had decided to follow Jesus. Then they asked if someone could come to their village to help them share the truth with their fellow villagers.

Last November, a team from the hospital made that trek to the village. "The extended family and friends were eager to hear more about the Truth," Ely wrote.

The cause of Ma Sing's initial chest cavity infection was eventually identified—a swallowed fishbone that had perforated her esophagus, two weeks before her eleventh-hour journey to the hospital.

But in those crucial moments when she was so close to death, the medical team was baffled. "The only cause that would make sense did not apply to her," Ely wrote later. "[And] I wonder if perhaps God in his mercy afflicted this young woman so she and her family could receive eternal healing."

That is the kind of life-saving work that MCH has done, and will continue to do, for the people in the region. God has created a light in the darkness to bring hope and healing to those who were lost.

Now, they may now know his truth, and carry it back to their villages in their hearts and minds to share with others. ■



*Memorial Christian Hospital serves as a place of compassion and healing in the region.*



# BETTER THAN DIY

COMPILED BY  
NAOMI HARWARD

*Masonry. Carpentry. Engineering. Plumbing. Design.* On the mission field, people with these construction skills not only keep ministries running, they help build the Kingdom of God.

Started in 1993, the ABWE Project Office has provided professional engineering and building expertise to ABWE's missionaries and ministries around the world.

Currently, a team of 20 full-time missionaries oversee 44 construction projects in 21 countries, and have recruited and managed thousands of construction volunteers who have donated their time and skills over the past two decades.

From hospitals in Africa, to plane hangars in the Amazon jungle, to schools in war-torn regions, the project office stays busy easing the burden of logistics—helping missionaries navigate building codes, purchase land, and handle the intricacies of managing local contractors—so that ABWE ministries can continue to grow and thrive.

## PROJECT TYPES & AMOUNTS 2000 - 2018

A

### Maintenance & Auxiliary 100'S

*Boundary Walls, Generator Buildings, Guard Buildings, Water Towers, Well Projects, Electrical Infrastructure, Solar, Hospital Accessory Buildings, Maintenance Buildings, Remodeling Projects, Consultations, etc.*

B

### Schools/Seminaries 22

C

### Medical Facilities 5

D

### Housing 45

E

### Ministry Camps 3

F

### Disaster Relief 48

G

### Churches 26





## HELPING NEAR & FAR

### FLORIDA, U.S.

When Hurricane Katrina hit, ABWE's Project Office worked alongside volunteers to serve those impacted by the devastation. More recently, a project office team installed a new roof for a church in Florida in desperate need of repair. After years of supporting ABWE ministries, the church was surprised to find the mission providing them support as well.

Since the early 2000s, the project office has frequently sent teams around the world to help after deadly fires, earthquakes, tsunamis and other natural disasters—delivering practical assistance to those in need, and empowering local believers with opportunities to share the gospel.

### PAPUA NEW GUINEA

With the help of the project office, 20 work teams—or nearly 100 volunteers—traveled to Papua New Guinea to help create a mission base in the remote Simbai region. These teams were able to construct a carpentry workshop, a sawmill shed, and a generator house. They also built two missionary homes, remodeled a third, and built three church buildings.

As the Simbai mission outpost expanded its ministry, missionaries were able to focus on discipleship. As a result, there are now 20 churches in the area under national leadership.

**“VOLUNTEERS ARE KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF THESE PROJECTS—WE COULD NOT DO IT WITHOUT THEIR DEDICATION.”**

- BILL HANSON, DIRECTOR OF THE  
ABWE PROJECT OFFICE

# BETTER THAN DIY

WHAT MISSIONARIES HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE PROJECT OFFICE

01

*“Most missionaries do not have any construction experience. Those of us who do often lack in other areas—like design, architectural drawings, administration, finances, and the volunteers needed to help with the actual construction. This makes having a project office invaluable to ministry.”*

—BILL TOBIAS  
ABWE PROJECT OFFICE MISSIONARY

## 17 ACTIVE “SPECIAL RESOURCE PERSONNEL” WORK FOR THE PROJECT OFFICE

- *Part-time Engineers*
- *Architects*
- *Water Specialists*
- *Electricians*
- *Plumbers*
- *Mechanics*
- *And more*

02

ABWE MISSIONARY SERVING IN THE BALKANS

*“Knowing that many students were turned away [from an ABWE school] this year due to lack of capacity is enough to break your heart. But being a part of the solution of expanding this ministry brings endurance to carry on.”*



03

*“By bringing professional insight to the planning and construction process, we’ve seen quality facilities completed and used for God’s Kingdom. By working alongside men from various tribes and tongues, we’ve built relationships and shared Christ’s truth...We’ve had the opportunity to live out Christ’s love to those we encounter on a daily basis.”*

—FORMER CAREER COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGER, SERVING WITH THE ABWE PROJECT OFFICE





04

*“Beyond the bricks and mortar, we have enjoyed the opportunities to interact with the people who are a part of the building. I have shared my faith with contractors, planting seeds along the way.”*

—TIM HUNSICKER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE ABWE PROJECT OFFICE

## PROJECT OFFICE TIMELINE

'93

THE PROJECT OFFICE BEGINS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF RALPH AND EVELYN GRUENBERG.

'93

THE ABWE INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS BECOMES THE PROJECT OFFICE'S FIRST PROJECT.

'00

THE “BLESSING DURBAN PROJECT” STARTS TO BUILD ONE OF FOUR EVENTUAL CHURCHES.

'04

BILL AND GINNY HANSON ACCEPT THE ROLE OF PROJECT OFFICE DIRECTOR.

'06

TWO OF THE PROJECT OFFICE'S LARGEST BUILDING PROJECTS ARE APPROVED: MEMORIAL CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL IN SOUTH ASIA FOR \$7.6 MILLION AND THE HOSPITAL OF HOPE IN WEST AFRICA FOR \$5.5 MILLION.

'07

THE PROJECT OFFICE REACHES ITS PEAK AT 90 BUILDING PROJECTS IN 28 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.

'10

HAITI EARTHQUAKE RELIEF PROJECT BEGINS FOLLOWING THE 7.0 EARTHQUAKE IN JANUARY 2010—THE RELIEF EFFORTS CONTINUE INTO THIS YEAR.

'13

THE MCH BUILDING PROJECT BEGINS IN SOUTH ASIA. THE HOSPITAL OF HOPE PROJECT IS COMPLETED AND OPENS IN TOGO, WEST AFRICA.

# BETTER THAN DIY

IN 2018, ABWE HAD 44 ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 21 COUNTRIES

## 01 7 RIVERS OUTREACH

7 Rivers Outreach was created to bring help and hope to struggling areas in South Africa. In partnership with a local South African church built through the ABWE initiative, the “Blessing Durban Project”, four missionary families are transforming a community through a Zulu church plant and a 75-acre farm which provides micro-enterprise opportunities, training, and leadership development for Zulu pastors.

Plans for the current project include homes for orphans and vulnerable children, missionary housing, and more.



## 02 HÔPITAL BAPTISTE BIBLIQUE

Founded in 1985 in southern Togo, Hôpital Baptiste Biblique (HBB) currently provides care for nearly 20,000 patients a year.

In 2018 alone, staff at HBB:

- *treated over 2,700 in-patients, and an additional 16,796 out-patients*
- *assisted in 241 births, 82 of which were c-sections*
- *administered over 40,000 lab tests*
- *performed nearly 3,000 radiology procedures*
- *performed 2,358 operating room procedures*
- *filled over 65,000 patient prescriptions*

In addition to compassionate healthcare, HBB also runs a nursing school—a three-year program that trains local believers as nurses to serve at the hospital. It provides a stipend for each student to help them study full-time. Students serve daily in the hospital in addition to receiving traditional classroom training. Last year, the nursing school graduated 48 students.

More importantly, through compassionate, loving service, HBB has been making a kingdom impact. In 2018, the hospital team recorded more than 1,797 professions of faith.

200  
IN THE PAST 5 YEARS, ALMOST 200 PEOPLE VOLUNTEERED WITH THE  
PROJECT OFFICE. WILL YOU JOIN THEM?

[ABWE.ORG/GO](http://ABWE.ORG/GO)



### 03 NICARAGUA MINISTRY CENTER

Not only does the Nicaragua Ministry Center empower pastors to start churches in their communities, it also invites communities in. More than 20,000 people from different walks of life have set foot inside the center's gates to discover and experience God's love through retreats, youth camps, trainings, and seminars.

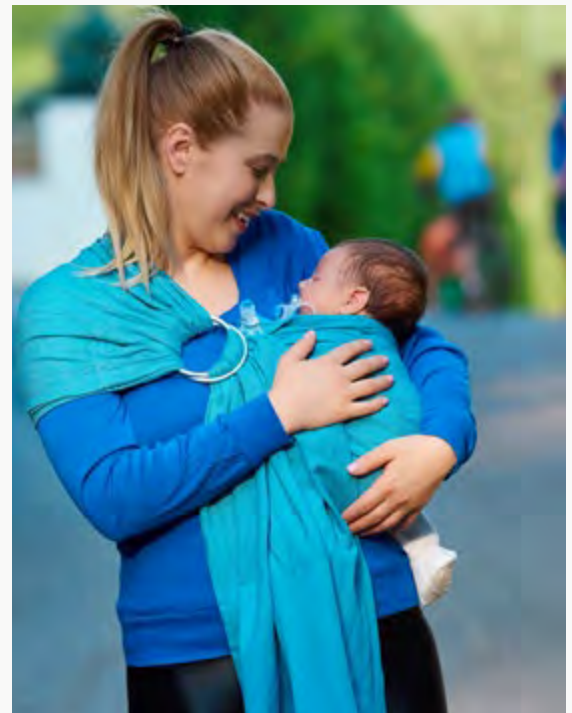
More than 8,000 youth have heard the gospel from ABWE missionaries serving in Nicaragua, resulting in over 1,000 professions of faith. The center has also been instrumental in the training of more than 75 youth leaders in dozens of local churches. Its ministry arm, the Institute for Church Planters, has trained over 80 Nicaraguan pastors and their wives in how to plant and grow local churches, resulting in more than 50 churches plants throughout the country.

### 04 CHOOSE LIFE PREGNANCY CENTER

According to 2018 statistics, 25 percent of pregnancies in Ukraine end in abortion. At least 500 abortions are performed every day, mostly on young women aged 20 and younger. The Choose Life Pregnancy Center, first opened in 2014, seeks to offer hope to women in crisis pregnancy situations by providing:

- *free pregnancy tests,*
- *individual counseling,*
- *parenting classes, and more*

In 2017, the Ukraine team began searching for a permanent building for the center. God provided that building the following year, as well as the hands to help restore it through the ABWE Project Office. In June of 2018, Choose Life Pregnancy opened the doors of its new building.





©gettyimages/Fredo de Luna

# New Arrivals

STEPHANIE BOON | MISSIONARY IN TANZANIA

*I watched our three little girls' bouncy, blonde curls deflate into frizzy, limp, matted balls the moment we stepped off the plane into the humid air of East Africa.*

It was as if those curls visibly depicted our lives up to that point—filled with excitement, anticipation, hope, dreams, and expectations, all flattened the moment we reached the Dar es Salaam airport.

The humidity overwhelmed us as the doors opened. It was raining. While we stood in line for our visas, I despondently watched our three babies playing and realized that the water dripping on my head was from a leak in the airport ceiling. I was tired and terrified.

We were here. All the waiting, planning, praying, and support raising had brought us to this point. It felt less romantic and fulfilling, and more like, “Okay, this has been fun, but let’s all go back home now.”

We loaded our luggage and split into separate vehicles, my husband and the girls in one, and I in the other. I remember asking how to buckle our one-year old’s car seat, only to be laughed at. We weaved in and out of traffic, soaking in a million new sights and scents. We spent one day in the big city before taking a bus to our new home four hours inland. I don’t remember much else about that day other than being greeted at a mall by a security officer, AK-47 in hand, wanting to play peek-a-boo with my baby.

Waving goodbye to the missionaries who had welcomed us, I remember the forlorn look on their faces. I’ve never been sent off to my death, but if I had, I imagine that is what it would look like—plastered smiles and robotic waves, with eyes seeming to silently

scream, “Run while you still have a chance.” *Should I answer the screams or just keep waving?*

I waved.

Rather than returning home like responsible parents, we took our family on a bus to a new town, in a new culture, with a new language, in a rented home that we didn’t even know how to find. I couldn’t even bring myself to spiritualize it by claiming we were “stepping out on faith”—no, it felt like we were just being regular old idiots.

We made it to Morogoro and started heading towards town. Our driver threw his hands up and stammered something in Swahili that I pretended to understand, though I only knew one word of the language. I crouched towards the front of the bus, vaguely remembering the directions to the house. I remembered that “mbele” meant “in front of,” so, in my loud, obnoxious, overconfident American voice, I yelled in the driver’s ear, “Mbele! Mbele! Mbele!” until we arrived at our location.

We unloaded our baggage with genuine excitement. We looked around and chose bedrooms, prolonging the glee another few minutes until we realized we needed actual food and water. I went to grab my Swahili-English dictionary, reaching past my far less-important mascara and sanitary wipes, only to realize I had left the dictionary back home in Mason, Ohio.

Mason. Stinking. Ohio.

I broke the news of the lost dictionary to the others. We didn’t have internet, so there was only one thing to do: just try something.

We decided to walk outside and simply see how far our English could get us. We asked the landlord’s gardener where to find a store. He took us by the hand and led us back into the house, pointing to the pantry (“stoo” in Swahili). That didn’t work, so we decided to pray—which, unfortunately, was often an afterthought during those trying first days.

After prayer, my husband bravely ventured out of the gate and into the unknown African soil on his own. The kids and I hugged him before sending him on his way. I felt certain it would be the last time I saw him. “Would he be considered a martyr if he died from stupidity on day one?” I wondered.

Thankfully, he returned with water and some kind of biscuits to hold us over for the night. We laid awake in bed, checking on the kids across the hall at least a dozen times, constantly worried we were being robbed. This restless cycle continued for months.

Life on the mission field isn’t easy, and infatuation with a new culture wears off quickly.

Our arrival was anything but ideal or even wise, but God was doing more in our imperfect and awkward arrival than we could see at the time. He was beginning a work here in this country and even more of a work within our hearts.

We have experienced hundreds of humorous, heart-wrenching, and horrifying moments along our cross-cultural journey. But through them all, we can look back and see the goodness in the Heavenly Father’s plan to use us—even in spite of ourselves. ■

*“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” (Romans 8:37, ESV)*

**“Okay,  
this has been fun,  
but let’s all go  
back home now.”**



*Stephanie Boon is an ABWE missionary who has lived in Tanzania with her amazing husband and five kids since 2012. She also spends a lot of her time at Sifa Threads ([sifathreads.com](http://sifathreads.com)) where she combines her love of design, counseling and helping young women find their value and identity in Christ.*



©gettyimages/recep-bg

## 5 Ways to Encourage a Missionary in a Restricted Access Country

HARRY GEBERT | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR SOUTH ASIA

### **What is a Restricted Access Country?**

Many missionaries are free to discuss their locations, circumstances, and work with friends and family back home. They can share details about the country they serve in and ask for prayer regarding the specifics of their work. Missionaries in Restricted Access Countries, however, have a unique set of circumstances that make it difficult for us to encourage and communicate with them.

Though these countries often have high numbers of unreached people groups, the governments are wary of western missionaries. They are watched closely and are forced to monitor their communication with friends and family. Any information shared on social media could result in an order to leave the country.

Restricted Access Countries do not issue visas for missionaries, making it more difficult for them to live and work there. Many missionaries obtain visas through their work in compassion and healthcare ministries, education, and community service. Others run their own businesses and organizations.

These extra stresses engender isolation and spiritual oppression, and increase the missionaries need for reminders that God has them in that special spot. They covet more from us as God's people to encourage them forward.

Here are five ways you can encourage missionaries in restricted access countries, despite the communication barriers between you.

**1. Get To Know Them.** Get their prayer updates and read their letters. Know the struggles they are facing.

**2. Respect The Restrictions.** Find out what email address, communications app, or special restricted social media site is safe for them. And find out what words you cannot say in your communications with them.

**3. Communicate and Encourage.** Missionaries need reminded of the Gospel, too. Encourage them with the promises of God throughout Scripture, and let them know you are thinking about them. Remind them that they are missed, loved, and prayed over.

**4. Really Pray.** Missionaries in restricted access countries face spiritual oppression every day, and they can be discouraged and tempted to doubt the goodness of their purpose. Pray for them, and pray often. Ask God to comfort them with his protection, restore them with his love, and guide them with his word.

### **5. Ask Them How You Can Help**

Find out what specific needs you and your church might help the missionary meet. From collecting supplies, raising funds, or offering business advice, participating in their work enables you to support the missionaries and further God's work there. ■



## Shedding Light on the Field

As local churches grew in maturity, ABWE missionaries in Togo saw the need for a school to disciple the next generation of believers. With the help of fellow missionaries and local believers, Harry and Bea Ward established the La Lumiere Christian elementary and middle school in 2006. La Lumiere now has 255 elementary students and 105 middle school students enrolled. It is part of an association of Togolese Christian churches that is reaching more than 3,700 students this school year.

ABWE President Paul Davis spent much of his first year in office traveling with his wife, Martha, along with Dave and Debbie Woodard (Vice President of Global Operations) to our mission fields to see the ministry impact of places like La Lumiere.

“I continue to be amazed by ABWE’s breadth and scope of ministry,” Paul reflected. “We are represented in schools, hospitals, churches, seminaries, and literacy clinics. I am so humbled to labor alongside these trustworthy servants of God!” ■



---

*About the Photographer* | LIZ ORTIZ, TOGO, WEST AFRICA

---

*Liz Ortiz is an ABWE media missionary serving in Togo, West Africa. She felt God calling her to missions at age nine. After graduating from Liberty University with a B.S. in studio and digital arts, she now uses her expertise to tell the stories of people who have been transformed by the gospel.*

THERE IS ANOTHER WAY TO HEAR FROM US!

## Did you know ABWE has a NEW BLOG?

- FIND VIDEOS
- PHOTOS
- MESSAGE STORIES
- ARTICLES ON MISSIONS, THEOLOGY & MISSIONARY LIFE
- AND PODCASTS

[abwe.org/blog](http://abwe.org/blog)