

Message

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A quarterly publication of ABWE

~~Convicted. Evicted.~~
Redeemed





Big Opportunities in the Big City

Thirty-two years ago, my wife Sterling and I had our hearts set on serving as missionaries in New York City. After much prayer, God surprisingly led us to serve on a tiny island in the Philippines. We obediently heeded His call, but continued to pray for the world's cities.

Prayer has been a major part of our lives, and when we came to ABWE, we desired to infuse the mission family with dedicated times of intense prayer. Recently, we joined together for a 15-week prayer journey to intentionally focus on this central discipline of the gospel. As a mission, we want to make sure we are turning to prayer first and continually declaring our dependence on God, not on ourselves.

One of the burdens that God laid back on my heart during this time was the increasing importance of urban missions — and the role North American churches can play in taking the news of Christ to these cultural crossroads.

We want to challenge the idea of the mission field as a remote, far-away village. From high-tech urban jungles teeming with wealth to crowded third-world sprawling slums, the world's population is moving to the city, so the need for missionaries in these places — whether here, in America, or abroad — is greater than ever.

This issue of *Message* looks at that need and the impact ministries can have in reshaping the world's cities. Missionary Rob Cady is doing amazing work reaching ex-gang members in the largest city in Cambodia, while Dan Nichols is reshaping the idea of “church” right here in the U.S., in a small struggling Pennsylvania city.

While these two missionaries serve on opposite ends of the earth, their work highlights our belief that reaching people, whether in a rural village or a towering city, begins with one-on-one, authentic relationships.

Pray for us as we intentionally seek this end. And let us know how we can be praying for you.

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

ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. The objectives of ABWE are to establish indigenous Baptist churches and to train national pastors and leaders. About 1,000 missionaries serve with ABWE to advance God's work in 60 countries around the world by sharing the story of hope, building communities of faith and serving the world with love.

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Exploring a unique ministry in Cambodia that reaches gang members deported from America and sent to live in a country they have never seen

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Bonx, a former-gang member deported from America to Cambodia, stands outside his new home in Phnom Penh.

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THAILAND

HELPING THE LEAST OF THESE

It's not every day that the government of a 95 percent Buddhist country begs Christian missionaries to expand their ministry. But God is mighty.

After years of serving in Thailand, missionaries Ed and Darlene Weber felt God leading them to expand their ministries by building a home for orphaned and needy children. When they adopted their middle son, they shared the dream with their Thai social worker, and she jumped with excitement. There was no children's home of any kind in the entire province, and their town had some of the most severe cases of child abuse, neglect and abandonment. The Thai

Social Welfare office literally begged them to start the home as soon as possible.

Quickly, the dream of the Village of Hope came to life. Within 10 months, God brought in funds to purchase a piece of land, put fencing around the property, and start building. In January, they broke ground on the property's first home, the Hope House for Girls. The house will provide a safe home for 8-10 at-risk girls, giving them an opportunity to be raised with the healing peace of Christ.

LEARN MORE about the Weber's ministry
at webersinthailand.blogspot.com

TANZANIA

MENDING A BROKEN LIFE

Neema* stood in front of the tiny rural church in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Nervously, the 19-year-old girl shared the hard journey that had brought her here. As she spoke, Missionary Stephanie Boon shed tears of joy.

“I have never seen a person more transformed in my entire life than Neema,” Stephanie said.

Stephanie met Neema just 10 months ago. She was one of the first women to come to Sifa Threads, a unique ministry that teaches sewing, entrepreneurial skills and Bible-based discipleship. While many of the marginalized young women in the program were grateful for the opportunity to learn a trade and grow their faith, Neema was hard, caustic and unreceptive to Stephanie’s gift of friendship.

But she had good reason to be that way. She had gotten pregnant out of wedlock, and in Tanzanian culture, a single pregnant woman is one of the lowest levels of social outcasts. She was damaged goods — unmarriageable and unemployable. Neema was raised by a single-mother who worked as a prostitute, and Neema was afraid her once bright future was about to go dark.

Seeing Neema’s brokenness, Stephanie was unrelenting in her love for her. She accompanied Neema to a local midwife and watched as the hardened young woman heard her baby’s heartbeat for the first time. Stephanie could see Neema softening and beginning to love the life inside of her.

Neema was falling in love with the idea of motherhood when she went into labor three months early. She delivered a baby boy, but he was too small and died just three days later. Neema was heartbroken, but rather than let her despair break her, she turned to Jesus.

Not long after losing her son, Neema shared her powerful testimony with the church. “God used that pain to wake me up. Now that I have had a son and watched him die, I know how much God loves me.”

With the training she received at Sifa, Neema now dreams of opening her own sewing business and discipleship ministry. “All I want to do with my life is live it for Him,” she said. “I’m done living for myself.”

**Names have been changed for security reasons*



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LEARN MORE about Sifa Threads at facebook.com/SifaThreads

“All I want to do is live my life for him. I am done living for myself.”



CONNECTIONS

Ministry Snapshots from Around the World

ROMANIA

STARTING A REVOLUTION

Home to hundreds of churches, missionaries and passionate believers, Romania is an island of faith in an area of the world with little-to-no exposure to the gospel. Seeing the vast need all around them, ABWE Missionary Tom Graef and Romanian Baptist Union Missions Leader Alex Vlasin, along with other key partners, tried to start a movement that would send missionaries out beyond Romania's borders. But, time after time, they

hit roadblocks. They patiently waited for years, until God moved at a recent conference.

It all started when ABWE Board Member and Pastor Dr. Jerry Kroll presented the groundbreaking missions seminar "Leading a World-Mission Church" to nearly 160 Romanian pastors and missionaries. As he taught, Tom said "the Holy Spirit was coming over the crowd and opening their hearts." At one point, Dr. Kroll's

Romanian translator was so moved by what he was conveying that he broke down in tears and couldn't continue. His message about the need for a missions movement out of Romania struck a chord.

At the end of the conference, the members of the Romanian Baptist Union not only voted to create a missions agency, but they proclaimed 2014 as the "Year of Missions" and vowed to promote missions in all of their churches.



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CHURCH BY MOONLIGHT

Photograph | *ABWE Missionary Lynn Porter*

In the remote town of Apayacu near the banks of the Amazon River, this small church hosts various retreats throughout the year to help educate, empower and reach the region's inhabitants. While ABWE missionaries planted the church, these events are often totally planned and run by Peruvian believers. On this moonlit night, the church was hosting a retreat that drew more than 50 women from various river towns to hear and discuss the gospel.



BRAZIL

PLANE, BUT NOT SIMPLE

In North America, entire shopping malls spring up overnight, but deep in the Amazon jungle of Brazil, building is an arduous task. ABWE Missionaries Lloyd Peace and Dr. Chip Phillips know this truth intimately. For nearly six months, their team has worked to build a taxiway and hangar to house their new Super Petrel LS amphibious plane.

With no Home Depot down the street or construction crews, all digging and leveling was done manually by the local missionary team. Fifteen truckloads of sand were

compacted by hand to level the floor before pouring the concrete.

The hangar was hard earned, but the plane is an answer to prayer. It will allow them to travel faster and farther than their boat. Right now they can only travel up to 30 miles from their home base at the Amazon Baptist Hospital in Santo Antônio do Içá, but the plane will allow them to travel and minister to people living up to 150 miles in any direction. Lloyd and Chip are eager to see how God will use this plane to open new doors and ministries.

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LIBERIA



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

In a tiny, remote village along the St. John River in Liberia, missionary Gary Kittredge and his team are overcoming physical and cultural obstacles to spread the gospel.

While Garjaws Town is just a 16-minute helicopter ride from the Kittredges' home, the village is cut off from the outside world. If Gary were to travel by land, the journey would require a 6-hour drive, followed by a 2-3 hour walk down a secluded bush path.

But the journey isn't the only difficulty. One of the greatest challenges in Garjaws Town is illiteracy. The villagers are mostly farmers who scratch out a meager living and have little-to-no access to education. Even the few who are able to read and write are functionally illiterate when it comes to comprehension.

"The other major obstacle is that Liberia is entrenched in the traditional African religious worldview. This merges different and sometimes contradictory beliefs, including spiritism, fetishism and witchcraft," said Gary. "It also combines misunderstood or distorted Christian teachings, which leads to many professions of Christ, but very little fruit of a changed life."

Last August, Gary and fellow missionary Stephen Poindexter kicked off their first teaching in Garjaws Town

by placing a 600-foot long orange timeline through the middle of the village. Then, they hung 100 cards from ABWE's Roots of Faith materials that chronologically tell the key stories from the Bible. Driven by curiosity, the villagers came out to look at the cards, and then Gary and Stephen shared an overview of God's story from the beginning into the future.

"Our goal is to have the Liberians learn the story, understand key truths from the story, and apply the truth in a way that changes their lives and their worldview. We believe illiteracy can be addressed by having a more intentional approach to Bible-telling," said Gary.

Since the first teaching, missionary Stefan Elser has flown Gary to the village once a month, and more and more people are coming out to listen each time. Currently, there are about 25-30 people who come regularly, and many come from villages located up to 7 hours away.

"Garjaws Town will, God willing, continue to be an ongoing monthly ministry for our team," said Gary. "We believe this area has great potential for the team to impact Liberians for Christ."

LEARN MORE about Roots of Faith at www.goodsoil.org

MIDDLE EAST

PERSISTENT LOVE

Noor* was a troublemaker. She was an obstinate worker in a clothing factory run by an ABWE ministry team in the Middle East. Noor was rude, treated the other workers badly, stole, acted like a child when she didn't get her way, and resisted the team at every turn. But the team continued to pray for patience and kept trying to reach her.

Despite the deep hurt Noor's behavior caused, ABWE national partners Maysa* and her husband decided to visit Noor, in hopes of chipping away at her hostility. Surprisingly, she welcomed them enthusiastically. Her daughter was sick and Noor had seen the impact their prayers had after a previous visit they had with her. Noor tried to reproduce their results by going to a local Muslim leader who prescribed a mix of listening to Quranic chanting and fasting from a variety of foods and music. But it didn't help, so she asked Maysa to pray for her daughter and do her "magic" again.

Maysa used the opportunity to explain that they didn't have any power within themselves, but because of Jesus, they have a relationship and an audience with God. The idea intrigued her, and Noor began to think and read about what she said. God was working in her heart, but she still had a lot of questions. Her thoughts were betraying everything she had believed to be true.

Noor was desperate for someone to talk to and agreed to meet with Maysa and her husband for further conversation. For four hours, they answered questions, discussed, and shared the chronological explanation of the Bible. Finally, Maysa felt it was time to ask if Noor was ready to accept Jesus as her Savior. She nodded and Maysa led this once resistant and hostile woman to Christ.

When Maysa visited Noor four days later, the change was miraculous. "I am new! I don't even know who I am anymore. Everything is different, and there is a peace that I've never felt before." Then, Noor asked, "Why did you stay with me? I was evil to you."



“I am new! I don't even know who I am anymore.”

“It wasn't us that was staying with you. We have nothing good to offer,” Maysa said. “It is all because of Jesus living inside us and giving us a relationship with God that allows us to do and be good. We prayed for you all the time, and God wouldn't let us leave you.”

“Tell me who else you are praying for,” Noor replied. “I want to tell them about Jesus.”

**Names have been changed for security reasons*



LEGACIES

Honoring 35 Years of Ministry



John & Yvonne Baab

Candidate Class: 1977 & 1978
Countries Served In: Brazil



In 1967, Yvonne felt the Lord call her to full-time ministry, and a few months later, she led her mother to the Lord. After getting her bachelor's and teaching for a few years, Yvonne went on a short-term missions trip to Brazil and fell in love with the country. She knew that's where God wanted her, and in 1979, she bravely left for the mission field of São Paulo.

John also felt the call to missions. After earning a bachelor's degree in mathematics and a Master of Theology, he heeded his calling and left for Bahia, Brazil.

God brought John and Yvonne together through ABWE, and their relationship blossomed after getting to know each other at the 1978 Missionary Enrichment Conference. They were married a few years later in 1981, and together, the Baabs have ministered in many churches and

church plants in Bahia. One of their biggest contributions to the field was founding the Bahia Bible College in 2000. The school is producing graduates who continue the impactful work John and Yvonne started.

Favorite Memory from the Field:

“Of course, our favorite memory would have to be how God used ABWE to bring us together. Yvonne was accepted in 1977 to go to São Paulo, Brazil. The following year, she was all set to go — except she was waiting on her visa! Knowing she was still in the country, her director asked if she would like to go to ABWE's candidate class interviews to hear the testimonies. She never dreamed that was where she would meet her future husband.”

Ministry-Shaping Story:

“In 1997, we were asked to help set up a Bible college in our city

of Salvador, Brazil. Most of the Bible colleges in the area were much more liberal theologically. It was a big undertaking, but by the grace of God and with the help of our missionary and Brazilian colleagues, the Bahia Baptist Bible College began its first classes in 2000. Since then, our primary ministry has been directing and teaching in the college as well as being very involved in several local churches. Our former students and graduates are serving as pastors, missionaries, and workers in a variety of ministries.”

Advice to New Missionaries:

“The New Testament is full of ‘one-another’s.’ Don’t pretend everything is great if you are crumbling inside. Everyone has times when they should say, ‘I need help.’ With every spiritual victory, you’ll be better able to minister to those who also have needs.”



Paul & Patty Collier

Candidate Class: 1976

Country Served In: Paraguay
& Costa Rica

Becoming a missionary wasn't part of Paul's original plan. He went to college with the intentions of studying law. However, after meeting some Christians, Paul put his trust in Christ, and the radical change in his life amazed him. He got involved in local ministry, and when he graduated, he went on to seminary.

While in seminary, Paul met Patty, who was working on a bachelor's in education. Brought together by their faith and interest in missions, Paul and Patty were married in 1975. They immediately began pursuing the mission field and clearly felt God calling them to Paraguay.

In 1978, they left for Paraguay where they served for 21 years in a church-planting ministry. Both Paul and Patty were effective in evangelism and discipleship, but even then, Paul desired to lead the church to the next level of growth

and ministry. In 1999, the Colliers transferred to Costa Rica to open the field and begin a new church-planting ministry.

Favorite Memory from the Field:

"While in Paraguay, I joined a gym. My trainer was a 19-year-old who had been crowned Mr. Teen Peru the year before. To be blunt, he was a mess. He was heavily involved with steroids and women, and he had a huge ego.

Despite that, I began a friendship that I sincerely thought would go nowhere. Over the next months, our conversations slowly became centered on spiritual things. The whole church was praying for him and his family, and then one Sunday, he finally showed up at church. That was more than 20 years ago. Today, he thrives in his faith with his wife and son, and he is a leader in his church." — Paul

Ministry-Shaping Story:

"I was an arrogant, know-it-all in college. Someone invited me to Bible study, and I was gloriously saved. The next spring my church was having a missionary conference. God spoke to my heart through a missionary to Puerto Rico. His presentation broke my heart, and I realized that I had to give God my future! I did, and now I'm rejoicing in the 37 years of service He's allowed me with Patty, my dear helpmeet!"

Advice to New Missionaries:

"Learn everything about the culture. Love the people as equals. Treat the national men in the ministry as equals. Let everything in your ministry be aimed at strengthening and empowering the national Christians and churches."



LEGACIES

Honoring 35 Years of Ministry



Kenneth & Renny Snare

Candidate Class: 1978

Countries Served In: Brazil



Renny and Ken met in college and were married in 1973. Ken was a music teacher, and the couple got involved in the music ministry at their church. Slowly, they began to feel God's tug toward missions. When they learned of ABWE's interest in developing a music program at the seminary in São Paulo, Brazil, they knew that was where they were supposed to be.

In 1982, Renny and Ken headed to the field and began music ministries in local churches around the city. They faithfully served for many years, until six years ago when God led them to step out and start a church in a growing, but poorer, section of the city. From meager beginnings, the Snares have helped grow that church and have purchased land for a future building.

Favorite Memory from the Field:

"I didn't feel as though we had sacrificed to serve the Lord on the mission field until our first daughter went to college in the United States. When her birthday came around, I tearfully thought, 'Will anyone even know?' Then I discovered that a family member had 'coincidentally' called, not realizing it was my daughter's birthday. Later, her friends took her out for supper. It was the first of many times that the Lord showed me that even though I would have preferred for it to have been my hands, God can use the hands of others to comfort and to meet the needs of my children." — *Renny*

Ministry-Shaping Story:

"Throughout our time on the field, the Lord keeps teaching

us that ministry is all about relationships. Early on in our career, our family was held at gunpoint in our house for an hour and a half while being robbed. They took many things, including our wedding rings, but they left our marriage intact! We didn't lose anything important. Things can be replaced, or we can just live without them, but it is relationships that matter."

Advice to New Missionaries:

"Our premise has been, 'If the ministry succeeds and the family fails, then we have failed.' Sometimes, as a helpmeet, we need to gently nudge our husbands toward home."

— *Renny*



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NORTH AMERICA: THE NEW FRONTIER

By **Ingela Hartman**

Wilkes-Barre, Pa. looks like most cities in North America — a patchwork of stores, office buildings, schools and neighborhoods. But Wilkes-Barre is not just a city. It is a mission field.

Restored Church looks like most churches in North America — four walls, fanned pew seating, stained glass and a stage. But it's more than just a building. It's the birthplace of a missions movement.

What started as a house church in a tiny apartment two years ago has blossomed into a grassroots campaign for Christ in the hard-up coal town and reflects ABWE's passion to spread the gospel throughout North America.

The Start of Something Great

Restored Church was started by Dan Nichols and Tim Walker. Their partnership began just three years earlier on the heels of Tim's failed church plant in Wilkes-Barre and Dan's broken engagement. Both men were feeling lost, downtrodden and unsure of their next move, but as the former college friends talked, they began to feel God calling them to start something new together.

© Bryan Shattuck

“It’s hard to find someone who matches up with your ministry style. It’s like dating,” said Dan. “A lot of church plants fail each year in America, and I think that often stems from issues with ministry philosophy.”

But Tim and Dan were a match.

They told their church in Scranton that they wanted to head up a new church plant. Their church leaders admired their youthful enthusiasm, but wanted to let them build their skills on a small scale first. “They sent us out to Springville, Pa., which is like population three,” said Dan.

Undeterred, Dan and Tim hit the ground running and started a house church with the simple strategy of connecting with people. Their first Sunday, just 12 people gathered in a living room. But as they built stronger relationships, their numbers began to grow. Slowly, their humble house church flourished, and several people accepted Christ.

When their year in Springville ended, they felt ready to take all the things they learned and apply it in a bigger context.

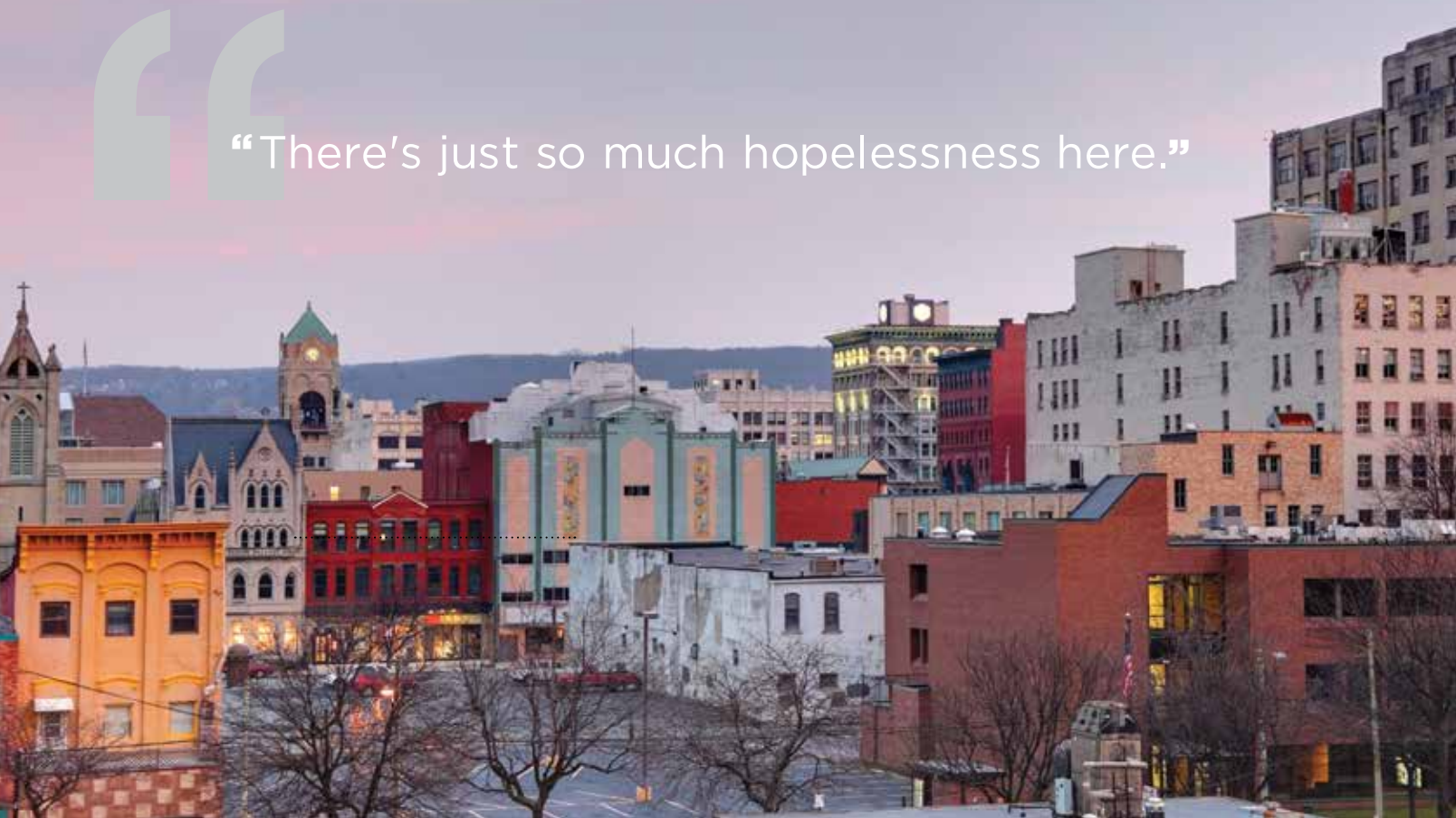
Tim and Dan set out with renewed spirits to plant a church in the needy city of Wilkes-Barre.

A Foreign Land

Wilkes-Barre's population first exploded in the 19th century with the discovery of rich anthracite coal reserves. It reigned as an industrial and economic force in America for several decades, and a number of franchises planted their roots in the city, including Vulcan Iron Works, Woolworth's, Planter's Peanuts and Bell Telephone.

While Wilkes-Barre's coal industry brought prosperity to the region and the city managed to survive several destructive floods, it could not survive America's switch to other energy sources. Most coal operations left by the end of World War II, and the city has floundered ever since. Residents battle against an 8.3 percent unemployment rate, and 25 percent live below the poverty line.

“There’s just so much hopelessness here.”





Tim Walker (left) and Dan Nichols (right), co-founders and co-pastors of Restored Church, share a heart for the city of Wilkes-Barre, where 25 percent of residents are living below the poverty line.



“There’s just so much hopelessness here,” said Dan.

Believing that the best way to change a community is to be a part of it, Dan moved into a downtown Wilkes-Barre apartment on a Friday night in 2012. The skinny pastor’s-kid from the suburbs of Cleveland had no idea he had just jumped into the deep end.

“The first night there, all I could hear was bottles breaking and girls screaming.” Dan had moved across the street from King’s College in an infamous party section known as Meyer’s Court. His immediate neighbors were a drug dealer, a Wiccan witch, a Megan’s Law sex offender, a heroin dealer and a girl who often spent the night under one of the city’s bridges.

While most people would have run back to their small house church in Springville, Dan knew this is why he was there. He was resolved to give every man, woman and child in Wilkes-Barre the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel. As he waited for Tim to graduate from college, Dan spent his first two months getting to know the people around him. He ate at local restaurants, volunteered and played basketball at the YMCA.

Eventually, Tim, Dan and two other launch team members began inviting people to attend a house church in Dan’s

tiny apartment. The idea of a house church was a hard sell in a city that predominantly viewed church as something that happened in large cathedrals on Sunday. But Dan believes church isn’t just about sitting in a pew once a week. “We want people to know it’s not about religious observance. It’s about community. Jesus wants us in community.”

So Dan and Tim began to grow a small community of seekers. Their first meeting had a meager turn out, but as relationships deepened and grew, so did the attendance. After the first two months, they had 50 people packing into Dan’s tiny place for house church.

One man who started attending was Carl*. Tim had met him while working as a chaplain at a local rescue mission. Carl was an alcoholic and drug addict on an upswing of recovery. He had been clean for several months and started coming to the house church regularly. For the first time, he learned about the full forgiveness that Christ offers, and his faith began to grow. He was making amazing strides until one day when his addictions won out.

He relapsed hard.

{CONTINUED}





“Everyone else in my life has left me and given up on me, but Restored Church will not give up on me.”

After years of struggling and failing, and high on a dangerous cocktail of drugs and alcohol, he got to a point where he tried to kill himself. Dan and Tim spent over five hours talking to Carl on the phone, looking for him and putting him in jail so he couldn't harm himself.

When Tim visited him the next morning, Carl was exhausted and sober, but more than anything, he was surprised to see him. “You are the first people to never give up on me,” Carl said. “Everyone else in my life has left me and given up on me, but Restored Church will not give up on me.”

For Dan and Tim, that is what their ministry is all about. “We're about discipleship, so we call out sin, but our message is that there are no perfect people,” said Dan. “Jesus wants to change us and make us more like Him, but we believe in sticking with people, even though they are imperfect.”

With that philosophy in mind, the Restored team has created a community where people from all walks of life are welcome and wanted. They have addicts, like Carl, suburban families, blue-collar workers, successful businessmen and homeless people, all worshipping together.

In the year since Carl's relapse and suicide attempt, Restored Church has been caring for him and discipling him. Carl's faith is growing and he has been clean for more than 13 months. He is now training to become a drug and alcohol counselor, and recently, Carl became an intern at the same rescue mission where he met Tim just two years ago.

“It's amazing to see the transformations that are happening because of Jesus,” said Dan.



© Bryan Shattuck



© Tim Walker



© Angelo Andia

(Top)
Restored Church hosted a concert with Audio Adrenaline, Disciple, and Stellar Kart in partnership with Youth for Christ.

(Far Left)
Restored Church's grand opening had more than 400 people in attendance.

(Left)
The Restored Church team has gotten innovative in finding ways to start conversations, including haircuts.

Reaching People

In just two years, Restored Church has developed a home base in an old cathedral, a large group of people who attend every Sunday, and seven house churches where people come together throughout the week to study the Bible and connect. More than 400 people attended the church's grand opening last September, and they had more than 180 people at their largest Sunday morning service in 2014.

"We are focused on connecting with people through authentic relationships," said Tim. "We're loving people on purpose," Dan added.

God has provided a strong team of volunteers and support staff, including Dan's new wife Joy, but Restored Church is also empowering its members to be missionaries in their city.

"We want to transform church from just a Sunday activity by mobilizing people to

share the gospel through their every day interactions and relationships," said Tim. "We want people to be missionaries in their sphere of influence."

To help start conversations and build relationships with the people in their community, the Restored team has handed out free water bottles on 100-degree days, paid parking meters, given out free coffee, done yard cleanups and organized free games and crafts at a local park. They have also created events to draw their neighbors in, including holding a concert with Audio Adrenaline, hosting a public discussion with an atheist and starting a neighborhood kids club.

The North American Missions Field

Just like missionaries serving around the world, North America missionaries face unique challenges within the culture where they minister.

{CONTINUED}



© Dan Nichols

Dan says that one of the biggest challenges of being a missionary in North America is that Christians often focus on the small differences that divide believers rather than focusing on what really matters — “sharing the gospel with people who desperately need it.”

Additionally, Dan believes many churches haven’t fully grasped that America is moving from being a Christian nation to being a post-Christian one. Churches that don’t recognize that shift and adapt will have an increasingly hard time reaching the people around them.

“The American church needs to learn to be more missional because we’re losing people,” Dan said. “It’s hard for some people to imagine, but right now, Africa has better stats on church attendance and

new believers than America — a historically Christian nation.”

This is a hot topic for Doug Martin, Director for North America at ABWE, who has been working to change the way people think of the North American mission field.

As North America becomes more diverse, Doug says the same techniques that worked 20 years ago aren’t working anymore. “We need to start by building relationships, and in order to do that, we need to know what’s important to people. This rings true in successfully crossing generational, cultural and economic gaps.”

He believes Christians need to start approaching missions in North America the same way they would approach an unknown African village. They must learn about the people. What’s important to them? What’s

Kids and church members enjoy the summer block party organized by Restored Church in downtown Wilkes-Barre.



www.restoredchurch.org



© Bryan Shattuck

Dan Nichols, ABWE missionary and co-pastor at Restored Church, preaches a sermon to his growing church and shares his heart for city-wide missions.

their culture? How do they think? Only then can believers begin to know the best way to connect and reach people.

“I’ll ask, ‘What if I told you we have 100 missionaries ready to go to Iraq?’ and people think that is very exciting,” said Doug. “And then I ask, ‘What if I told you that you have 100 Iraqis in your neighborhood who aren’t being reached?’ And their faces fall. The opportunity is the same, so why isn’t that as exciting to people?”

Doug thinks it’s because many people don’t feel equipped. As a result, ABWE has spent the past three years developing training seminars and tools to help churches and their members connect with and understand new generations and new cultures springing up in their communities. From urbanites and athletes, to Hispanics and Muslims, the trainings focus on how to build strong

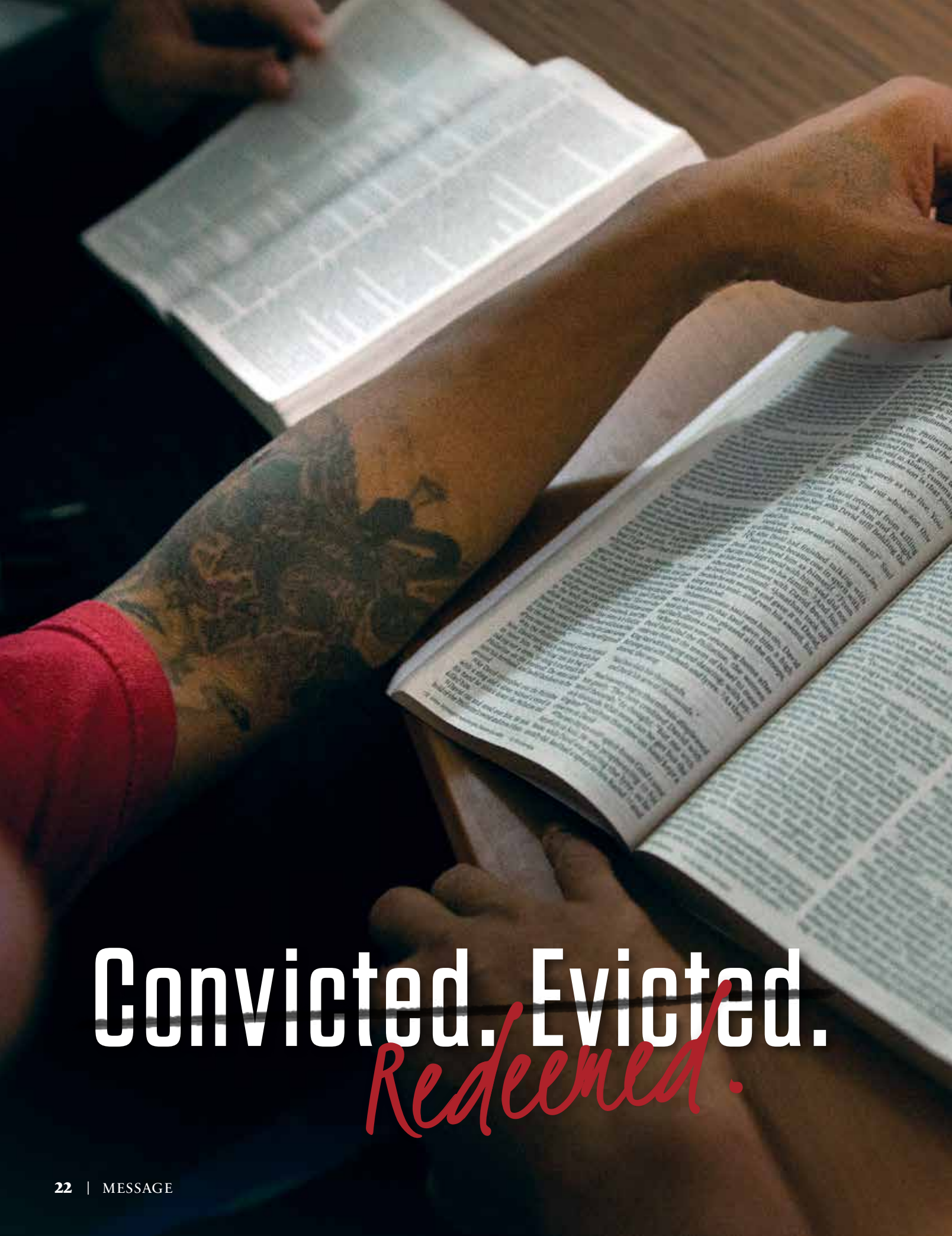
relationships and reach these unique people groups with the gospel.

Dan, along with ABWE’s 61 missionaries ministering in North America, is working hard to make an impact on the mission field where God has called him. He prays that others will also see the need around them and respond to God’s heart for reaching this part of the world.

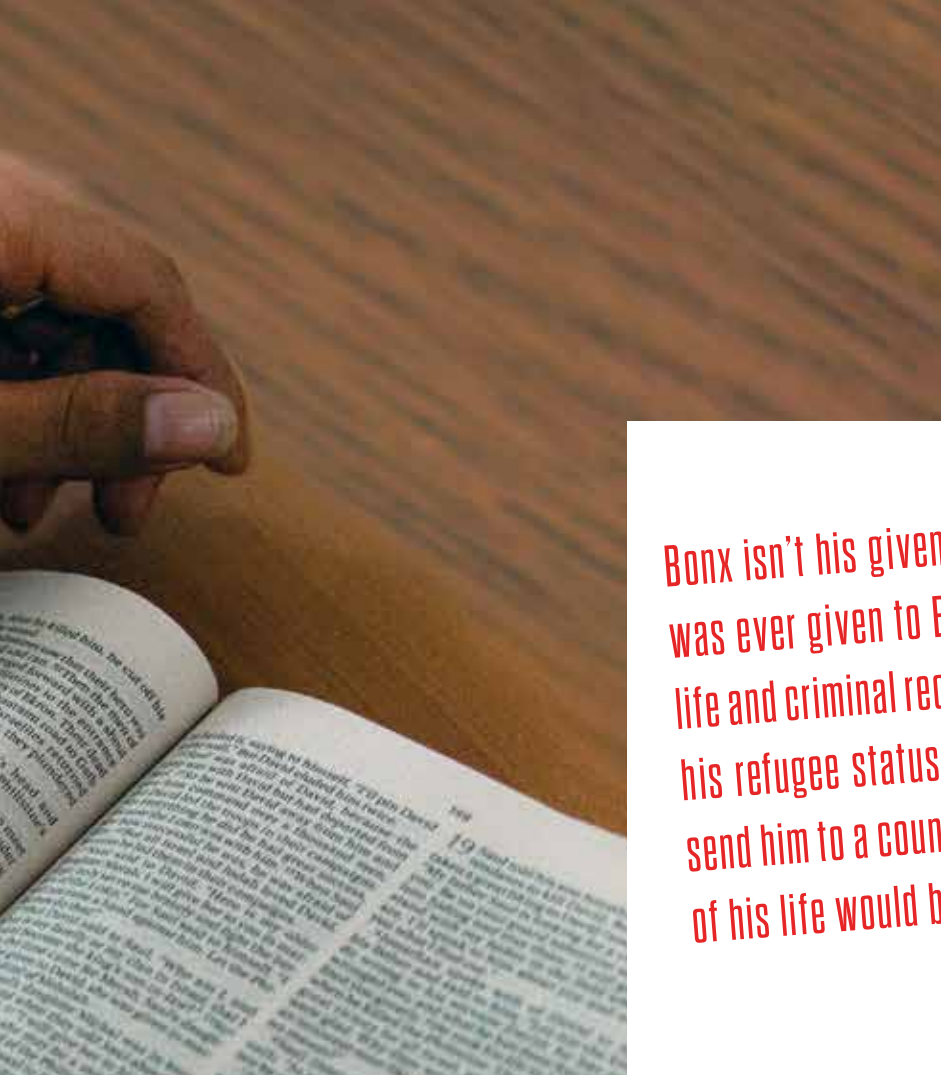
“Many American Christians need a change of perspective about where missions work needs to happen and what it looks like,” said Doug. “Missions isn’t something that only happens in foreign languages far away from home. It can begin with our neighbors. It can happen wherever we are. The exciting fact is that we live in a country where we can be a part of reaching across cultures, without ever crossing any borders. We can be missionaries every day.” ■

LEARN MORE

about serving opportunities in North America at www.abwe.org/serve/regions/north-america



Convicted. Evicted. *Redeemed.*



By **Ingela Hartman**

Bonx isn't his given name. But then again, hardly anything was ever given to Bonx. And five years ago, when his gang life and criminal record prompted the United States to revoke his refugee status, rip him from his wife and children, and send him to a country he'd never been to, he thought the rest of his life would be about what had been taken away.

Then, he met Rob.



ABWE missionary Rob Cady has always gravitated towards city life. He loved the diversity of people and the diversity of ways to share the gospel. So when God called him and his wife Kristi to Phnom Penh, the largest city in Cambodia, he was excited. Cambodia was unique because it had only recently been opened up to missionaries after many years of civil war. Christianity had all but been extinguished in the country so when the Cady's arrived in 1997, they immediately got to work. They learned the difficult Cambodian language, started Bible studies and soon they had established New Heart Baptist church on the south side of the city. Rob was laying the

All photography by Hannah Reyes



“Rob started to notice an influx of tough, tattoo-covered men moving into the city.”

foundation for a long-term career in church building and planting, but God had something else in mind.

In 2002, Rob started to notice an influx of tough, tattoo-covered men moving into the city. They looked like Cambodians, but until a few years ago, they had never set foot in the country. They spoke perfect American English and had names like Wicked, Diablo, Tear Drop, K9, Thai and Bonx.

Rob was intrigued, but it wasn't until 2007 that God opened a door for him to learn their stories. The in-laws of one of Rob's

Bible school students were renting rooms to two of these men, and Rob went to meet them. Slowly, Rob started getting to know them and began connecting with more of these former American gang members.

Nearly eight years later, Rob always wears gang-neutral colors and proudly responds to the nickname Pastor Narc. His once tightly trimmed goatee is now a long and bushy beard, and he lights up when he talks about his “homies” and the relationships he's built with them over the years.

ABWE missionary Rob Cady rides on Bonx's motorbike through the bustling city street of Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capitol and largest city.



Seeking Refuge

Homies is a common slang word in American street culture meaning friend or brother. While the word is most closely associated with gang culture, its origin has a few theories. One suggests that the term began as “homeboy” to refer to another soldier who was from the same hometown during the Vietnam War — the same war where Rob’s homies’ story began.

In 1975, Cambodia entered into one of the darkest chapters of its tumultuous history when communist dictator Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge army seized power of the country after it had become politically unstable from U.S. bombing during the Vietnam War. Pol Pot immediately began a radical social experiment to create a communist agrarian utopia by “purifying” the society. All foreign influences — capitalism, Western culture, city life — were to be destroyed. All businesses were closed, religion banned, education halted and health care eliminated.

Purges were conducted throughout Cambodia to eliminate remnants of the old society, including killing the educated, the wealthy, religious leaders and devotees and anyone suspected of disloyalty.

In addition, Pol Pot’s army forcibly evacuated everyone living in Cambodia’s cities to the countryside. Thousands died along the way and those who survived were put into slave labor where they were starved and forced to work 18-hour days. Millions died in the “killing fields” from overwork, malnutrition and disease.

After four ghastly years, Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1979 and freed the Cambodian people from Pol Pot’s reign of terror. Thousands immediately fled to refugee camps in nearby countries, and many, still too terrified to return to their country where an estimated 1–3 million people died at the hands of corrupt leadership, accepted refugee status in the United States, France or Australia.



SNAPSHOT: Phnom Penh



- Phnom Penh is home to about **2.2 million** of Cambodia’s population of more than **14.8 million**
- The **city area has grown fourfold** since the end of Pol Pot’s reign in 1979
- More than **90%** of the people in Phnom Penh are **Buddhist**
- **Christianity was practically wiped out** when Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge army took over the country in 1975, but it has been slowly growing in recent years
- The official language of Cambodia is **Khmer**



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“I didn't believe in anything.”

Convicted Americans

Bonx's parents were two of the more than 600,000 Cambodians who fled after Pol Pot lost power. Bonx was born in a refugee camp in the Philippines in 1980, but came to America when he was just one month old. His parents received refugee status in the United States and moved into a rough but cheap neighborhood in San Diego.

Despite a more stable government, Bonx's life was far from peaceful. Bonx and his sister were raised by a war-damaged and violent father. “My dad always used to abuse my mom when I was a child, but as I grew up, my dad would beat me,” said Bonx.

When he was 12, Bonx's dad was sent to prison and Bonx said it was like being set free. “I didn't care about school anymore. I started ditching school, hanging out with a bunch of my homeboys. We joined a gang and started stealing cars and dealing drugs. Then we went to carrying guns and doing violence. And getting stuff done back to us.”

In 2000, Bonx was arrested and incarcerated for attempting to shoot a rival gang member. He was sentenced to four years in the state penitentiary, and while he was there, God started working on his heart through one of his bunkmates who was a Christian. “He always used to try to get me to go to church and to give me the Bible to read. And I

told him I was a Buddhist, which I wasn't. I didn't believe in anything. I didn't care at the time.”

When he got out of prison, Bonx tried to get his life on track. He met and married his wife. Together, they had two beautiful children, and God continued to work on Bonx. His wife was a Christian who constantly asked him to come to church with her. Occasionally, he went along, but he still wasn't ready.

Then, in 2008, Bonx's whole world turned upside down. Immigration picked him up and told him he was being returned to a country he had never stepped foot in — Cambodia.

Evicted From Home

In 1988, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act made it possible for immigrants and asylum-seekers convicted of crimes categorized as “aggravated felonies” to be deported. The list of crimes in this category was limited to serious offenses, such as murder and drug trafficking. But in 1996, the Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act expanded the definition to include lesser crimes and reduced the minimum sentence from five years to one — meaning that any immigrant issued a one-year prison sentence could be instantly deportable.

While both acts gave the right for Cambodian refugee criminals to be extradited, there was no





Bonx holds up photos of his wife and child that he was forced to leave behind in America when he was deported back to Cambodia.

agreement between the United States and Cambodian governments until a treaty that regulated deportation was signed in 2002. Suddenly, certain Cambodian refugees, who had been residing legally in the United States for more than two decades, found themselves eligible for deportation to a country they had never seen.

A Stranger in His Homeland

Bonx was ripped from his family and the only home he'd ever known. "It was bad," said Bonx. "I lost my wife and two kids."

When returnees, like Bonx, first arrive in Cambodia, they are shell-shocked. They enter a foreign culture with no family, no support network and limited skills. Many try to do the gang thing at first, but gangs don't work the same way in Cambodia as they do in America. Cambodian gangs

are smaller and normally involve protecting a certain area. They aren't the national gangs that give their gang members credibility and security.

"Their time here has been really difficult. A couple of the guys didn't know any of the Cambodian language at all," said Rob. "They're covered in tattoos and very despised here. They're looked at as gang-members so no one really wants to do anything with them."

Not only do these deportees struggle with culture shock, they struggle with feelings of injustice about their situation. They have already admitted their crime and served their time in America, and now, they feel like they are being punished forever for their crimes. They refer to themselves as "exiles" instead of "deportees" because they feel like Americans who have been cast out from their home.



Hope is in short supply in this little community of exiles and suicide is rather endemic. It was the suicide of one of Rob's friends that opened his eyes to the serious need, and in January 2008, he hosted his first Wednesday Bible study lunch for returnees.

"I don't want any more homies killing themselves," Rob said. "I tell them when they're hitting the bottom come see me. If you have no hope, trust in the hope I have."

Reaching Homies

"With these guys, what you see is what you get," said Rob. "If I ask them if they're going to heaven or hell, they all say they're going to hell. They just know it. I tell them, 'Jesus would have spent time with you. He didn't spend time with Pharisees. He spent time with the sinners who knew they were sinners.'"

On Sundays, Rob holds a small church service in his home, and on Wednesdays, he hosts two Bible study lunches for returnees. In total, about 32 men and 3 women join him at his regular meetings. The rest of the week Rob rotates through his complete roster

of returnees and tries to meet with all of them individually or in small groups.

Breaking down barriers is hard in any ministry, but it's particularly challenging in gang ministry. Even though their gang lines are blurred now that they're away from the United States, Rob struggled to get them to open up in front of rival gang members. He learned to meet with them one-on-one or within their subgroups to get straight answers on their more personal questions.

Sometimes they grab a cup of coffee. Sometimes they meet for a meal or go to movies. It's normally American movies and food for a taste of home, but it's not about the activity. It's about connecting with them. "I just try to find opportunities to talk about Christ with these dudes. I seek not to push them if they're not ready, but they know that's why I'm there."

Working with these men, Rob has had to learn a whole new vocabulary. He tries to speak to them in their terminology and share the gospel in ways they understand. "We talk a lot about getting tight with Jesus. I'll say



"They refer to themselves as exiles."



“Jesus is your fall guy.
He took the rap for you.”

things like, ‘Jesus is your fall guy. He took the rap for you. Jesus willingly became the fall guy.’”

Finding Honest Work

A few returnees are doing well with the help of relatives, but most are barely surviving. Rob offers practical help with things like resume writing and job interview skills. Many struggle with reading, interview skills and low self-esteem. Some never learned how to read or write well in English, and some, like a returnee called Thai, barely speak any Cambodian.

Thai was born in a refugee camp in Thailand, but grew up in Stockton, California. He married an American woman and had five children. He had done some time in prison, but for the last few years, he had been holding down a job and caring for his family. He wanted to change, and he was making serious progress when he got deported. His wife was left alone to care for their five young children.

Thai was heartbroken and dejected. “I literally had nobody here,” said Thai. “I didn’t know one soul when I first got here.”

He spoke very little Cambodian, never finished college and had a very low opinion of himself. Rob worked with Thai to improve his interview skills, helping him with confidence, composure and eye contact. As a result, Thai landed a job teaching English as a second language at a large international school in Phnom Penh.

“If I helped them do their resume and get a job, that’s wonderful,” said Rob. “But if I did that and didn’t tell them about Jesus, I have done them no favors.”

A Clean Slate

Bonx got to know Rob six months after arriving in the country when another returnee invited him to a dinner at Rob’s house. Bonx went for the food, and then, he also started going to Rob’s Bible study lunches on Wednesdays.

“The only reason I went was for lunch. It was free food. But as I was there, I would hear about the Bible and how Jesus came and sacrificed himself for us sinners.”

For nearly two years, Bonx ate and listened to Rob talk about a man named Jesus. The words began to take



Missionaries Rob and Kristi Cady host many Bible studies at their dining room table over American food to give Rob’s homies a taste of home.

root, and in 2010, he accepted Christ as his Savior.

For Bonx, it wasn't like an instant light switch, but little by little he submitted pieces of his life to the Lord. "I used to be an alcoholic. I used to smoke. I used to hang out a lot and go out partying, bar hopping, girls. After believing in the Lord, reading the Bible and praying, I gave all that up."

Because Bonx is forbidden to return to the United States, he and his American wife divorced. After a few years in his new country he married a Cambodian girl, but their relationship was tumultuous and volatile.

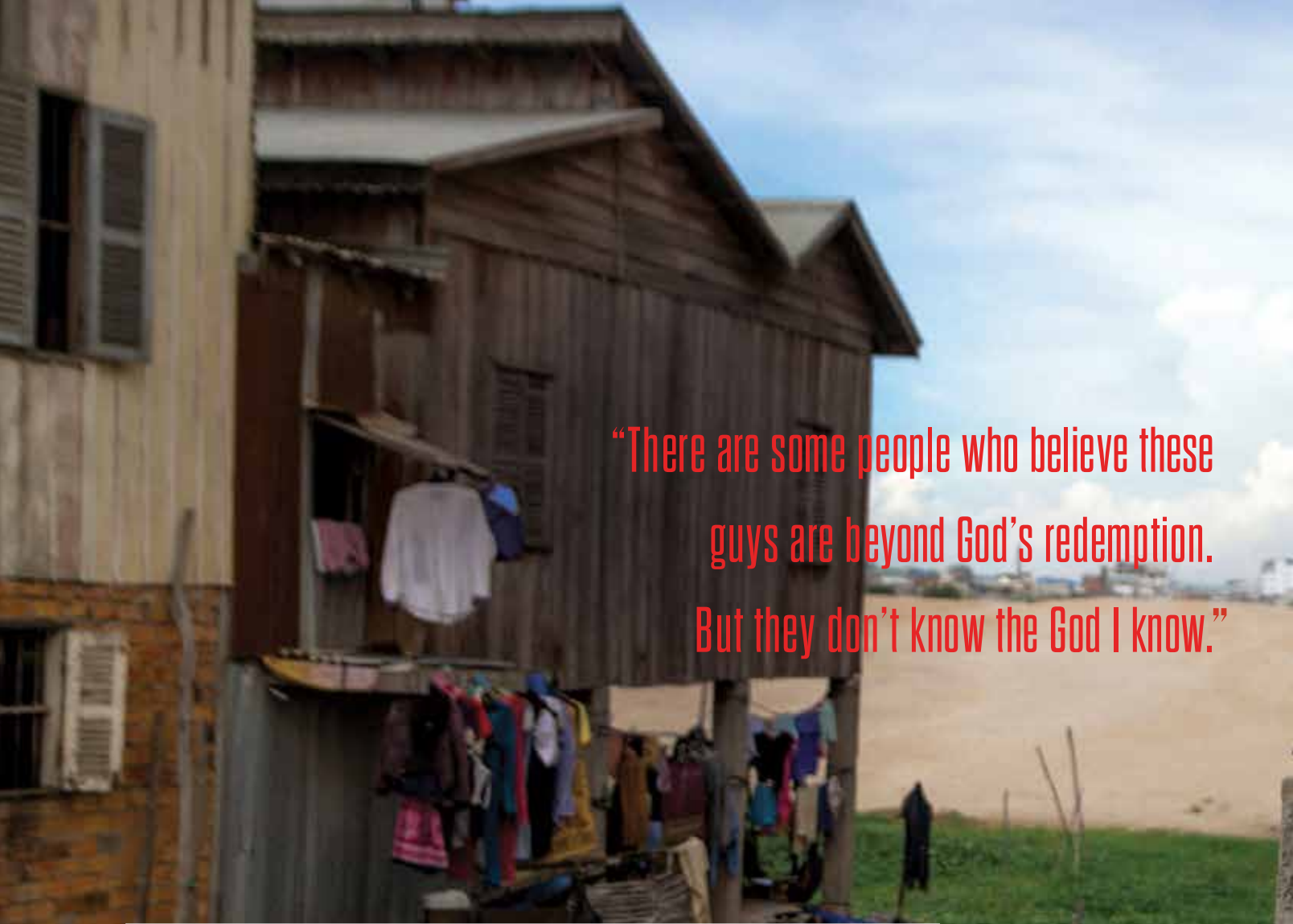
"My wife and I would argue all the time because I would go out drinking and do bad things. But ever since I became a believer, me and my

wife have better communications. We work things through and talk about our problems with each other. Everything is changing slowly. I have better people around me now who help guide me spiritually with the Lord. My wife isn't a believer, but I'm hoping that in the future she will become one, too. Only God can know."

The change in Bonx has been self-evident. He stopped getting into trouble with the other returnees and started telling them about Jesus. "That's the power of the gospel to change lives," said Rob. "I'm just so pleased with him. He's a good man."

Bonx's wife was so astonished by his transformation that she went to Rob and told him she wanted to





“There are some people who believe these guys are beyond God’s redemption. But they don’t know the God I know.”

“know about this Jesus that caused her husband to change so much.” Rob saw God opening another door to reach more people, and Rob and Kristi started a Bible study in Cambodian for the wives and girlfriends of his homies.

Follow Him

While many of these former thugs try to refrain from cursing, drinking and doing drugs when Rob is around, Rob says he’s not there to make them moral people. He’s there to tell them about Jesus. “They think they have to clean up their act before they come to Jesus. And I say, ‘That’s wrong, just come. Matthew uses the phrase ‘Follow him’ and that’s what Jesus asks us to do.’”

Bonx isn’t the only one being transformed through Rob’s ministry. K9, who now goes by his real name Kimho, came from Seattle and was a member of a notoriously violent gang called the Bloods. He was a staunch atheist when Rob first met him, but Rob continued to spend time with him. In gang culture respect is earned, not granted, and Kimho kept watching Rob. He saw the way he genuinely cared for each and every one of these outcast criminals. Even when they fell short of Rob’s expectations, Kimho saw how he refused to give up on them.

Slowly, Rob’s love and words started working their way into Kimho’s heart. Then, one October day in 2010, Rob

received an e-mail that simply said, “I just want you to have joy in the knowledge that I have become a Christian.”

Since then, Kimho, who was known for being promiscuous, married his girlfriend. Together, they had a baby boy and have another one on the way. Kimho is eager to learn more and raise his children in the Word.

“There are some people who believe these guys are beyond God’s redemption. But they don’t know the God I know,” said Rob. “It’s been amazing to see God working in these men’s lives — men who earlier wouldn’t have given God the time of day.”

Today, there are 420 returnees in Cambodia, with another 10–15 being returned each month. All told, there are more 2,000 on the list to be deported back. By the end of 2014, there will be more than 500 American returnees in Cambodia, and about 250 are living in the city of Phnom Penh. Rob prays to know and reach all of them, and he is currently working to establish three more sites on the north, east and west sides of the city for new Bible studies.

“I tell them that maybe God imported them here to reach others,” said Rob. “I pray every day that God will build this ministry up and open more opportunities within and beyond our city limits.” ■

LEARN MORE about how you can support the Cadys’ work with returnees in Cambodia at www.abwe.org/cambodia



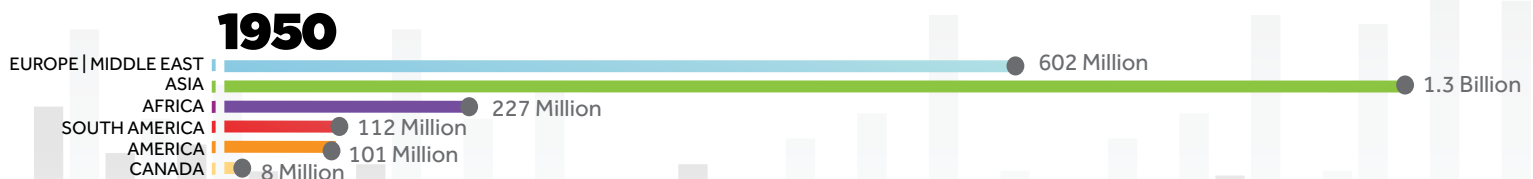
URBANIZATION

Around the world, more and more people are gravitating to cities for job opportunities, education, and culture. More than 50 percent of the world population now lives in urban areas and that number is expected to grow rapidly over the next few decades. Between 2011 and 2050, the world population is expected to increase by 2.3 billion and the population living in urban areas is projected to gain 2.6 billion — meaning the urban areas of the world are expected to absorb all the population growth expected over the next four decades while also drawing in some of the rural population. This global phenomenon will greatly impact the way people view and do missions work.

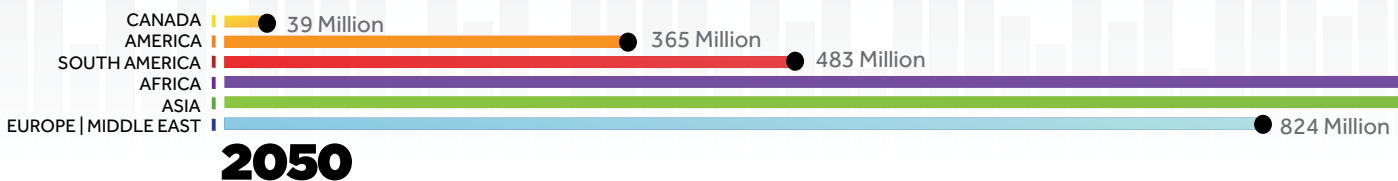
MOST POPULATED URBAN AREAS by Region



50% of the world's population lives in urban areas. In 2050, it will be closer to 72%.



POPULATION GROWTH 1950-2050

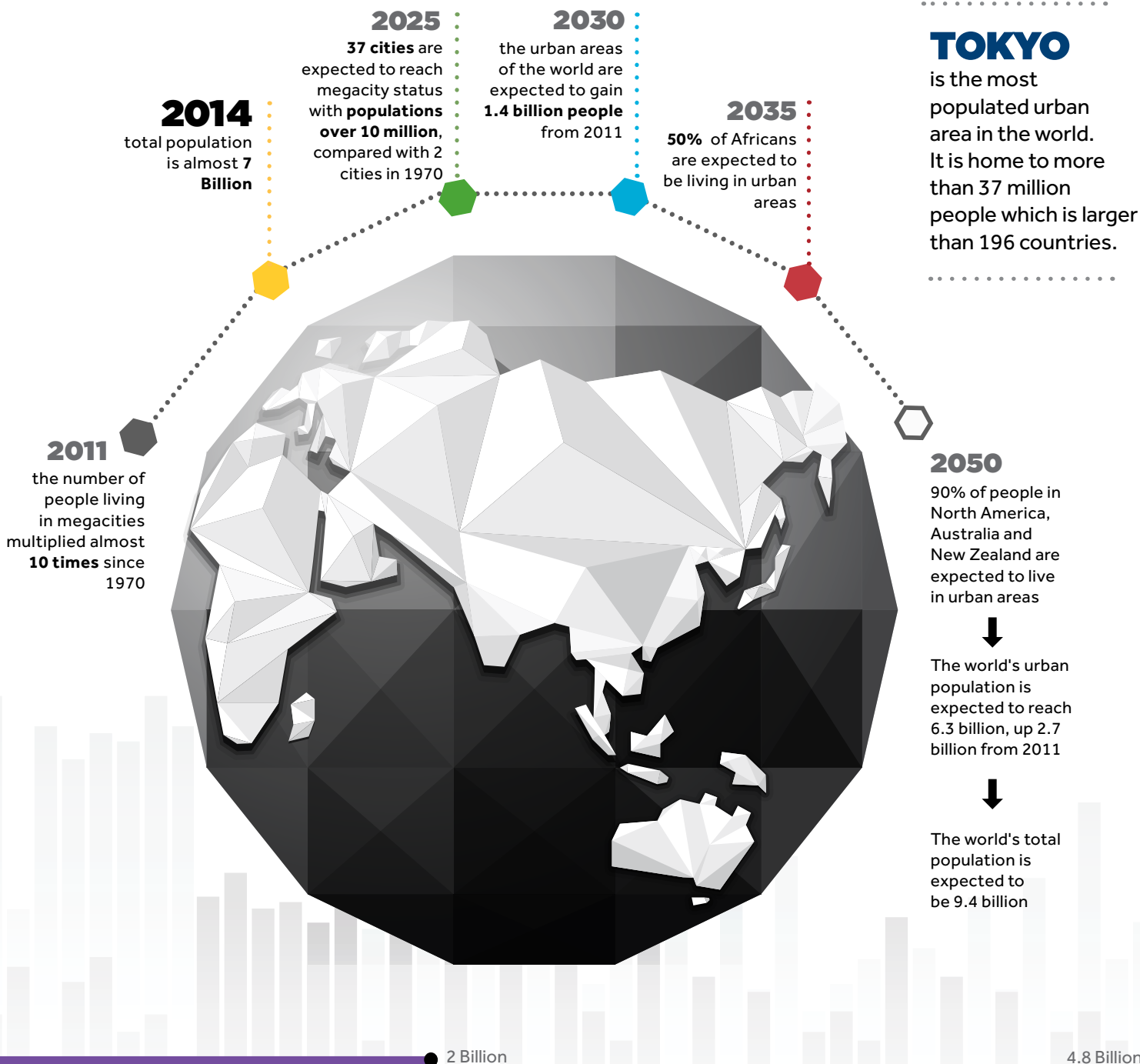


Percentage of People Living in Urban Areas



BY 2025

CHINA	70% of the people in China will live in cities with more than 1 million people	221 cities with more than 1 million	→	400 million new city dwellers	→	more than the population of the US
	INDIA	46% of the people in India will live in cities with more than 1 million people	68 cities with more than 1 million	→	215 million new city dwellers	→





**Hello
goodbyes.**

By Tara McComas | *ABWE Prefield Missionary and Missionary Kid*

As a missionary kid, a huge part of my life has been goodbyes. Unless God is working in your heart, this can really mess you up. Trust me. I moved to South Africa with my parents at the age of 14, and I intimately know the struggles of saying goodbye to your friends, family and your whole idea of home. I used to think that it would get easier one day. But it doesn't. I used to think that if I could ignore how hard goodbyes were and be strong that it would somehow make it better. But it didn't.

Now an adult with a family of my own, goodbyes still remain a big part of my life. Recently, my parents visited us in Cedarville, Ohio, and we had the rare blessing to spend time with them. It was so sweet to see my son Finnegan save up all the spare change he could find to take my Dad (his Papaw) out for ice cream. He had so much fun being with them for a couple of days, but eventually, as we always do, we had to say goodbye.

Over the last 13 years of being an MK and now as an appointed missionary raising support to bring my own family to the mission field, the Lord has taught me so much about goodbyes. I have learned that it's okay to mourn the ice cream trips that will not happen over the coming months. I have learned to grieve over the times that will not be shared together and deeply miss the lazy afternoon chats with my mom. But it's still hard.

Given my history and struggles with goodbyes, you might ask why on earth

would I want this life for my own children? My answer is simple: obedience and love.

I want my life to be so marked by faithfulness and obedience to the Lord that my children will see that. And I pray that the Lord would use it to bless their lives. I have received so many blessings in my life by the faithful and hard choices my parents made.

The second reason is love. While there are a lot of challenges to sharing the gospel in South Africa, and I'm not excited to return to the anxiety of living in a high-crime area or the heaviness of working with impoverished people, my husband Wade and I love ministering there. We love the people. But it is not that love that makes me content to put my family into this. I am doing it because I love the Lord.

While there have been many times when the sacrifice of missions has seemed too much, God has shown me that there is nothing too great to sacrifice for Him. His love toward me was so great that when I was dirty and sinful, He chose me. Jesus loved me. Christ died for me. What can I possibly offer that would be greater than this? I pray constantly that one day my kids will understand that all the hard goodbyes are worth it.



LEARN MORE about Tara & Wade McComas' ministry at teammccomas.com



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Calling all City Boys

By Steve Mayo

Are you a city-boy or a country-boy? Until recently, my answer to that question was consistent with the American dream; I was born in the city, but I wanted to live in the country. Nature, fresh air and plenty of personal space. It sounded appealing.

My dream came true when my wife Sue and I received our first missionary assignment to Budgewoi, Australia. It was an idyllic seaside village where the sound of ocean waves pushed rhythmically onto the shore, the glow of a century-old lighthouse rolled gently across the neighborhood, and kookaburras laughed in the tall eucalypts surrounding our house. We thought it was paradise.

But the locals didn't seem to agree. Every weekday a pilgrimage of commuters left Budgewoi for Sydney. Why? Because the city is where the jobs are. It's where the services are. It's where the trendsetters are. And soon we were also drawn into the magnetic orb of the big city for greater ministry opportunities.

Our first months living among the overwhelming throngs of urbanites made us long to go back to relaxing Budgewoi. The city was filled with clogged roads, crowded shops and housing costs that were (and still are) frightening. But God called us to world evangelism.

Ministering in a global city — where culture, commerce and influence intersect — has allowed us and our teammates to reach more people in more places than we ever dreamed possible. Slowly our hearts grew, not just for our city, but for the cities of the world. Sue and I accepted the role of Regional Administrator for Asia and the Pacific, and our hearts began to beat for Bangkok, Jakarta, Manila, Phnom

Penh, Singapore and Tokyo. We pray that these cities, along with Sydney, will become hubs for the gospel and that they will produce culturally-diverse and missions-focused churches.

ABWE's team in Sydney has shown us what can be achieved when the strategic advantage of global cities is leveraged. But even with all their successes, they are falling behind. The rate of urban population growth far outpaces the rate of church planting. The complexities of urban subcultures conceal unreached people groups beneath skyscrapers.

While we still need workers to reach remote villages with no running water, more than ever before, we need workers to reach technology-flooded cities. With urban living on the rise, we need workers who can reach people where lost sheep are concentrated in unprecedented numbers.

Today, when someone asks if I'm a city-boy or country-boy, I answer with conviction, "Thank God, I'm a city-boy."



Steve and Sue Mayo are ABWE Regional Administrator of the Asia Pacific region working from their home in Sydney, Australia.

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Nothing is more important than sharing the story of hope. That's why, when you name ABWE in your will or trust, you're taking a simple — yet life altering — step toward serving the world with love.



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