

spread the word

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MESSAGE

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Weakness Into Power

Every year, I have the amazing opportunity to hear the testimonies of men and women of faith who are surrendering their lives to missions. Their passion and their stories replenish my soul, and I am reminded how important the act of spiritual restoration is. We all must take time to care for our souls and that means putting our relationship with God at the center of our lives.

When the apostle Paul felt weak and worthless, God taught him one of the most profound truths of soul care and mission. God said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” Erwin McManus applied this scripture beautifully when he wrote, “The history of God’s people is not a record of God searching for courageous men and women who could handle the task, but God transforming the hearts of cowards.” Inadequate people make great candidates for mission service.

As you’ll discover in this issue of *Message*, our candidates are ordinary people — a computer programmer, a nurse, a stay-at-home mom — who’ve dedicated their lives to an extraordinary God. As they set their sights on the mission field and face the obstacles ahead, I pray that they will cleave to our mighty Creator. When they are at the edge of their strength and their feeble humanness is telling them to turn back, please pray they will rely on God to replenish their souls so we can marvel as His power is made perfect.

Jim O’Neill | President

Director of Communications: Leah Pickard : ABWE PO Box 8585
Editor: Ingela Hartman : Harrisburg, PA 17105-8585
Art Director: Lauren Miller : Phone: 717.774.7000 | Fax: 717.774.1919
Staff Writer: Paul Luce : www.abwe.org | Email: info@abwe.org



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. More than 900 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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ON THE COVER:

Photo overlay art of praying African woman, a river in Asia, and an African savanna sunset
©Joanna Garcia

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BRAZIL

Evangelistic Tea Outreach



©thinkstockphotos.com

“

We pray that as we continue to offer this tea annually, more and more of these ladies will desire to know God in a personal way.

Many people use coffee to help kick start their days, but in Brazil, ABWE missionary Cindy Richner is using tea to help kick start relationships.

Cindy and the ladies group from her church recently hosted their fifth annual ladies evangelistic tea in the city of Ivoti in southern Brazil. The event launched with 50 women in 2011 in the Richner's rented church facility, but every year attendance has grown, and this year, more than 150 women attended. The tea offers a great opportunity for women in the community to

carve time out of their busy lives to enjoy food, games, music, a short evangelistic message, and fellowship. It also gives the church an opportunity to strengthen its relationships with local women and open doors for sharing the gospel.

“It has been such a blessing to see so many ladies participate and learn more about God year after year,” Cindy said. “And I truly believe our ladies’ love and kindness to those who participate reflect Christ's love and grace.”

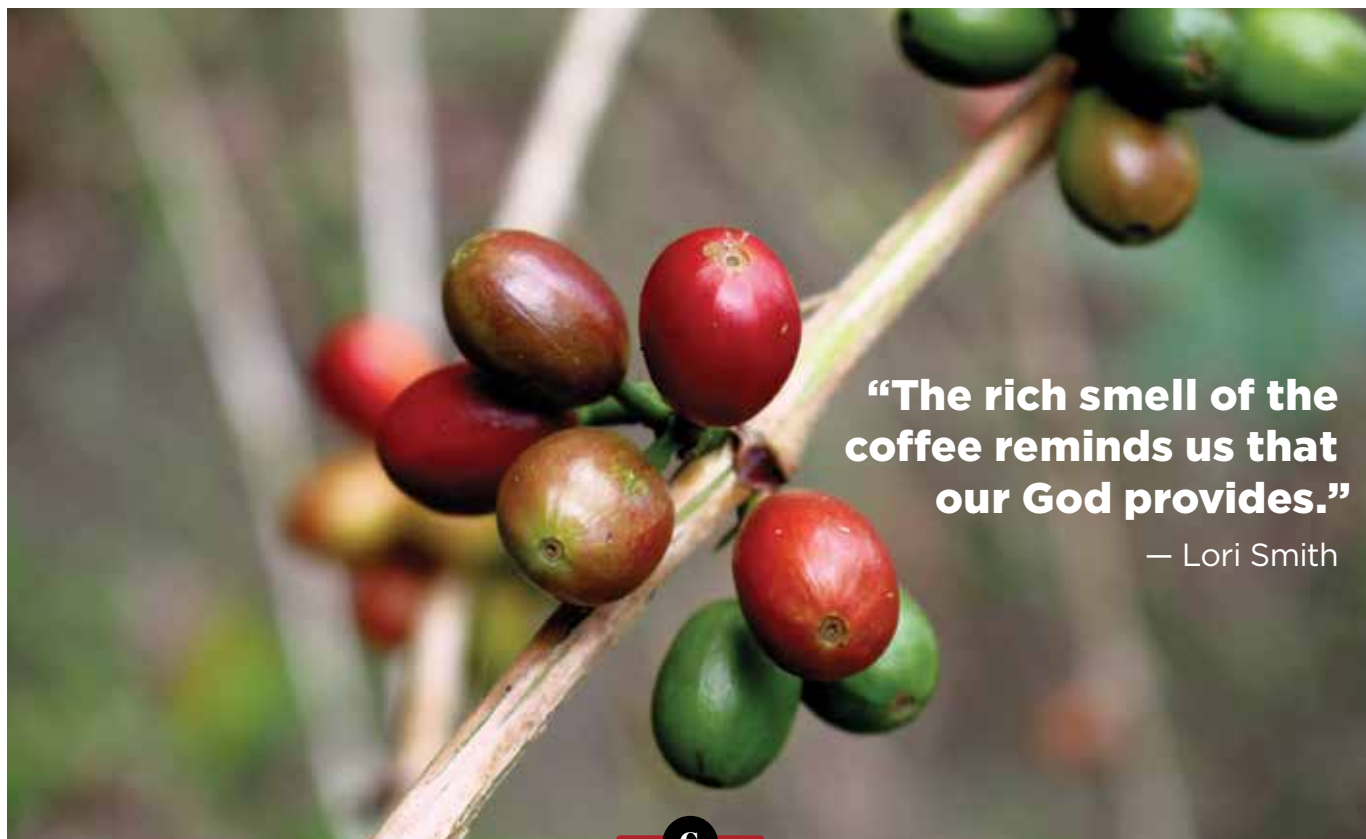
The tea has allowed women from the church to reach out to friends and neighbors like Loira. Loira's

brother helped start the church five years ago, and through the annual tea, she heard the gospel and got to know the church's caring members. Now Loira, along with her husband and 7-year-old son, faithfully attend Sunday services and church activities.

“We pray that as we continue to offer this tea annually, more and more of these ladies will desire to know God in a personal way,” Cindy said. “We also pray our relationships will be strengthened, and our church will be known in the community as a place of hope, love, and joy.” ■

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Energizing the Gospel



“The rich smell of the coffee reminds us that our God provides.”

— Lori Smith

C

For years, ABWE’s Goroka Baptist Bible College (GBBC) in Papua New Guinea has grown their own food to help meet the daily needs of its students, but a few years ago, the school leaders brewed up the idea of growing coffee.

The campus’ high elevation, tropical rains, shaded gardens, and rich soil made it perfect for producing a high-quality java. The college hoped that one day they could use the coffee to help fund the school and provide scholarships for its students,

but the growing process is very labor intensive.

It was approximately two years before part of the GBBC trees began sprouting tiny coffee cherry buds. When they did, the GBBC students — who help with the project to supplement their tuition costs — hand-picked them and removed the cherries’ bright red outer skins with a small coffee bean pulper machine.

Once removed, the beans were washed and the drying process began. It took about two days of drying in the

sun before the beans were ready to be sent to the coffee roaster, where another layer of husk was removed and the beans were roasted. Finally, the beans were packaged and ready to be sent around the world.

“We used to think it would be impossible for our coffee bushes to produce heavy crop after heavy crop in such amazing abundance. But our God makes the impossible possible,” said Lori Smith, ABWE missionary in Papua New Guinea. “Now, we are filled to the brim with beans

and the rich smell of the coffee reminds us that our God provides.”

All donations from the coffee are used to support the college and provide scholarships to Papua New Guinean believers. Whole bean or ground GBBC coffee is available in the USA, Australia, and Papua New Guinea for a suggested donation of \$15 per bag. ■

VISIT

www.abwe.org/coffee
to order GBBC coffee
or learn more



BRAZIL

The Skeleton Project

To the people who live in it, the building is known as the “Esqueleto” or the Skeleton. It is a fitting nickname for the abandoned 15-story high-rise in São Paulo,

Brazil, as only the bare bones of the structure are complete. The floors are riddled with holes where electrical wires and pipes would have gone, and where an elevator shaft would have run

like a spinal column, there is a gaping hole that goes all the way down to a growing trash pile in the intended parking garage. The Skeleton is a dark, smelly, ugly place where prostitution and drug deals can be witnessed, even in broad daylight. But it is also filled with beautiful children who need love — and most importantly a Savior.

God led ABWE Missionary Ashley Hancock to the Skeleton after she prayed for an opportunity to minister closer to her church. Ashley had been ministering to homeless crack-addicts in a slum an hour away when a friend told her about an abandoned building nearby that she thought people were living in.

When they went to check it out, they found fresh laundry hanging outside the dilapidated structure. Ashley felt God leading her, but based on her experience working in the slums, she knew they couldn’t just go inside without knowing someone who was in charge. They prayed for God to open the door.

After several more weeks of prayer, they went back, and as they were nervously praying about whether or not they should go in, they saw two ladies exiting the building. The women turned out to be veterinarians who ventured

into impoverished areas to care for animals.

“We are hoping to minister to the people here,” Ashley told them.

“Forget about it,” one of the vets said. “These people don’t want help and barely allow us to give vaccinations to the stray dogs here.”

The vets warned them that the Skeleton people were very angry and bitter. They told of people getting thrown off the 10th and 15th story because of disagreements, but added that if they were still interested in ministering there, they would need to speak to “Allison,” a transgender prostitute who was in charge. Allison knew everyone who went in and out of the building and was their key to gaining entry.

Despite the vets’ stories of caution, Ashley continued to feel God calling them to minister to this community. They returned a few weeks later to meet Allison, the de facto leader who had a thick, manly beard and a feminine figure. She was gruff at first, but after some discussion, Allison said she would allow Ashley and her team to come once a week to work with the building’s kids. She demanded that they introduce her to everyone who would be coming in with them and to let her know about any new helpers. Her rules were strict,

but she gave them the liberty to say what they wanted and told them to let her know if any residents gave them trouble so she could handle it.

Despite working in a place filled with so much darkness and the warring influence of macumba (a form of spiritism that often resembles voodoo), the blessings have outweighed the challenges from the very beginning. Shortly after getting the green light from Allison, Ashley and her team started setting up on the 13th floor because it was unused and furthest from the prolific prostitution and drug trafficking that plagued the lower floors. As they were sweeping and cleaning the debris of bricks and leftover construction materials that covered the floor, three little girls wandered up to see what they were doing.

“We’re getting the space ready for a weekly Bible study that we’re going to start here,” Ashley told them.

The girls immediately wanted to help and were eager to learn more about the Bible study. The next day, the same girls joined three other children for the first official meeting. Ashley and her crew decided to have the children create finger paintings that they would then use to decorate the stark cement walls.



“Every moment in the building has been amazing, and every day is a different blessing for us to be able to share Christ.”

As they created paintings about God’s love, the children’s eyes lit up and Ashley knew God was using her to do something important.

“God has opened doors for us to gain these people’s confidence,” Ashley said. “And contrary to what the two veterinarians said, the people have been very open to letting their children join us, and they have also been welcoming to us and open to hearing the gospel.”

Since that first week with six children, the ministry has steadily grown and now 15 kids faithfully attend each week, eager to learn more. Each child has a different story, but many beg on the streets for money or

wait outside stores asking for food. One has been attacked by a pit bull and another has teeth marks all over his body from the rats that bite him as he sleeps. But despite the odds being stacked against these children, Jesus is watching over them. He is using this ministry to tell them about the day they could all live together in His Father’s house.

“Every moment in the building has been amazing, and every day is a different blessing for us to be able to share Christ with them and to answer their many questions about God and the Bible,” Ashley said. ■

LEGACIES

Honoring 35 Years of Ministry



BOB & SHIRLEY CROPSEY

CANDIDATE CLASS: 1980

COUNTRY SERVED IN: Togo & South Asia

MINISTRY FOCUS: Medical Missions & Mobilization



“

You don't become a missionary by going across the ocean; be one where He has planted you today.”

MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS



1967

Married on August 19



1979

Bob completed his surgical residency



1983-93

Helped build, open, and operate the Karolyn Kempton Memorial Christian Hospital



Shirley graduated from nursing school and Bob graduated from undergrad

1969



Arrived in Togo and started a church plant in the village of Kpodzi

1983

AN INTERVIEW WITH **THE CROPSEYS****Q: How did God first call you to missions?**

Bob: As a junior high kid, God grabbed my attention through the story of a non-medical missionary whom God used in a major surgical emergency in a remote African village. The missionary was asked to come help a small boy who fell from a tree and was disemboweled by a branch that cut through his abdominal wall.

Bravely begging God to help him do something he had never seen or done before, the missionary managed to clean and return the bowel back into the abdomen, and then, he used a needle and a hair from a horse's tail to close the wound. The boy's miraculous recovery resulted in many coming to faith in Christ, and I thought if God could use someone with no medical training, how much greater could He use someone with training? From that day forward God began to put a passion in my heart to serve Him as a missionary surgeon.

Shirley: I was young when God touched my heart through a book my mom gave me about a little girl who was afraid to come to America because she didn't think anyone knew about God! Then God continued to speak to my heart through Naaman

and his little servant girl and other stories of the Bible.

Q: What experience really impacted you or your ministry?

Bob: Since we opened the hospital in southern Togo, it was clear that if it was going to have an eternal impact on our patients and their families we needed to disciple and train our staff to be passionate about sharing their faith. From doing that, we have seen hundreds and then thousands of people trust Christ each year. The fruit and joy was beyond anything we could have imagined and the need for sound churches where these new believers could grow in their faith spurred us to begin a Bible institute. Today, our graduates are now pastoring at more than 40 churches throughout the region.

We saw the amazing impact a healthcare ministry could have in Togo, and after we discovered the immense medical needs in northern Togo, God opened an unprecedented door for a new hospital in the Muslim-majority city of Mango. Today, the hospital cares for hundreds of people every day, and we have been excited to see the amazing response to the Good News through the passionate evangelism of the compassionate medical team.

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

Bob: Being the only career physician at the southern Togo hospital from 1998 through 2002, we used an apprenticeship approach to develop and train our hospital medical staff. One day, our midwife urged us to do an emergency c-section and brought the lady into the operating room. I knew it was time to put our apprentices' training to the test. Our Togolese anesthetist, operating room tech, and midwife worked together to perform a safe and excellent c-section — without our help. It was a very special realization that God had given them the skills necessary to help folks without missionary help. Their confident smiles were a beautiful sight!

Q: What advice would you give to people considering missions?

Shirley: Keep your call to missions fresh in your mind because it may be many years of preparation before you see it come to pass. Be flexible, keep your sense of humor, and stay close to the Lord so He can direct your path. You don't become a missionary by going across the ocean; be one where He has planted you today. ■

**1995**

Helped establish the ABWE Medical Missions Interface training program

**2003**

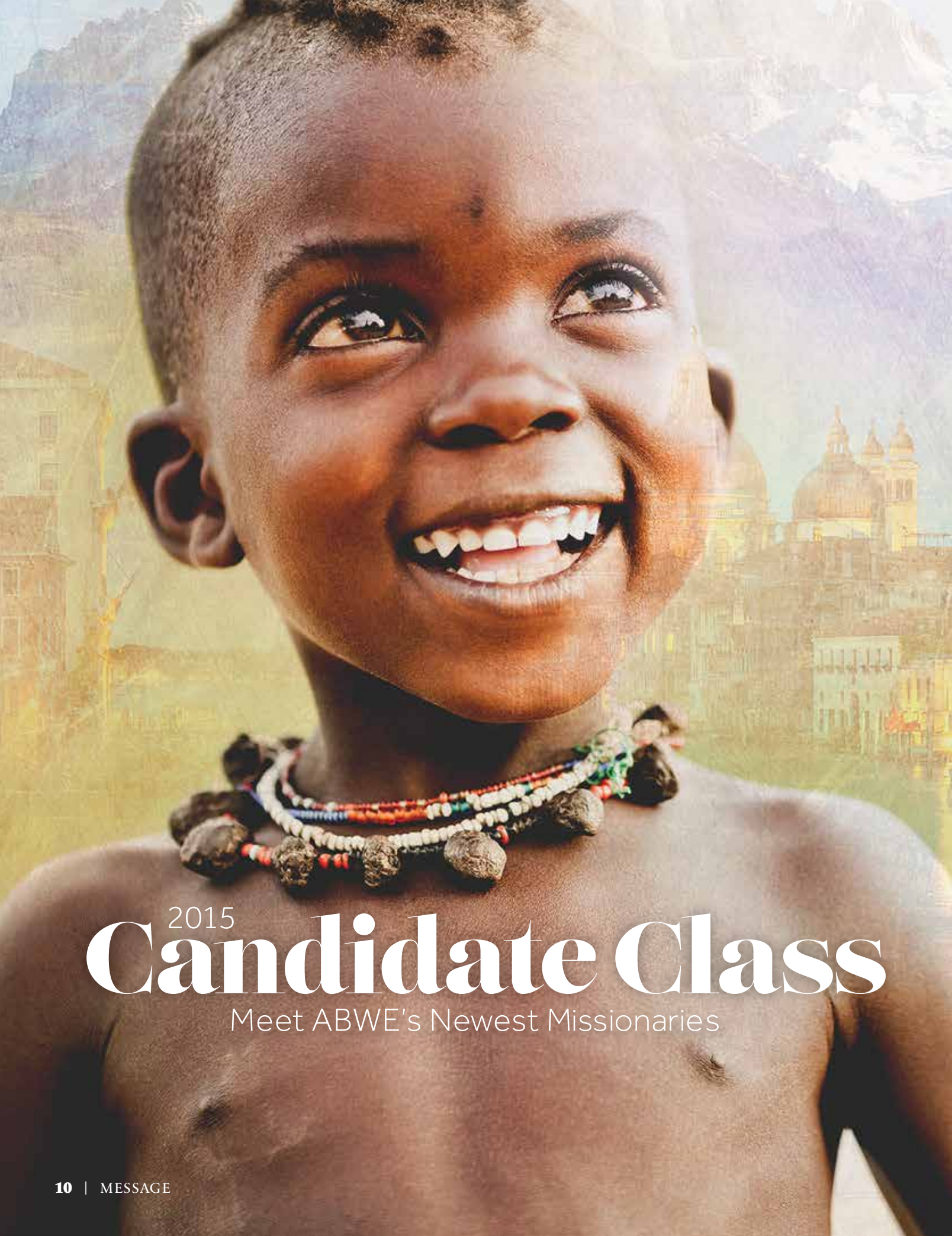
Returned to the US and helped with medical mobilization and leading short-term trips

**1998**

Went back to Togo and served as the only career doctor at the southern hospital for four years

**2009**

Aided with fundraising and recruitment for the Hospital of Hope in northern Togo



2015
Candidate Class

Meet ABWE's Newest Missionaries



Africa

Jon Edwards | Togo

www.elusivetangent.com

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Sterling, OH



Jon Edwards seemed to have it all: a nice car, a well-paying job as a self-employed computer consultant, and a rich church life. But he felt God was calling him to do more.

Jon talked with his pastor, and they both felt God was calling him to use his skills on the mission field. They started researching missions opportunities, and when they discovered ABWE's need for computer technicians at the Hospital of Hope, Jon knew God was at work. Six months later, he was on a plane to northern Togo for a short-term mission trip.

For nearly a year, Jon worked side-by-side with Cristoph, a Togolese believer who was a technician for the new hospital's computer systems. As the two became close friends, Jon learned of another need in Togo: church leadership training. While many people were being saved through the hospital's ministry, there was a lack of trained leaders who could disciple and organize these new believers into healthy churches.

"If the church is going to expand, they need effective leaders, and these leaders need access to training," said Jon.

When Jon returns to Togo, he will assist with the northern and southern hospitals' technical needs, and he also hopes to set up a computer lab to bring Bible training to church leaders in northern Togo.

Jon & Michelle Archer | Togo

www.archersintogo.com

Lakeside Baptist Church, Salem, VA



Jon gravitated to missions early on, and in high school, he went on mission trips to Mexico and Vietnam. He remained very involved in his church and with missions throughout high school, but he struggled in college. His faith began to slip, and after a rough breakup, he spiraled and

Africa

attempted to take his own life. Mercifully, a mentor stepped into his brokenness and began to disciple Jon. He showed him how to find God's peace, which was missing from Jon's life.

With newly strengthened faith, Jon went on a 12-week mission trip to the middle of the Sahara desert in Mali.

"The first day I was there the thermometer said 155 and they didn't have air conditioning," Jon said. "But I loved it."

That trip truly opened his heart to missions. Jon was ready to go where God would lead him, but the doors to the mission field kept closing so he began pursuing his other passion: youth ministry.

Jon married Michelle and began ministering to youth and helping at risk kids. Together, they counseled kids and families through hard issues, and they had the opportunity to lead several youth mission trips. Then, last year, God made it clear that his youth ministry was coming to a close. Jon and Michelle wrestled with what to do next and both rediscovered their deep calling and desire for missions.

"We have a heart for national pastors and missionaries," Jon said. "We want to come alongside them and help train, equip, and encourage them."

Josh & Melissa Vroman | Togo

First Baptist Church of Afton, Afton, NY

While other kids were dreaming of becoming an astronaut or famous singer, Melissa dreamed of being a nurse in Africa.

"As a kid, I saw the Feed the Children programs on TV and I was glued to the screen. Seeing the unnecessary suffering wrenched my heart," said Melissa. "I knew I needed to be where I was needed most, and I became a nurse so I could use those skills to help people."

Melissa's compassion for the children of Africa led her and Josh to adopt one of their five children from Ethiopia, but Melissa still felt called to do more. Then, Josh's cousin, an ABWE missionary in Togo, presented to their church, and Melissa couldn't sit still. She begged Josh to let them go visit



his cousin, and eventually he conceded, in hopes that it would pacify Melissa's urges. But in one week, Josh was hooked.

"Josh is very even-tempered, even through really exciting things, but he lit up like a firecracker in Togo," Melissa said.

Josh loved helping with the hospital's construction. He felt the joy of working with his hands for God as opposed sitting behind the wheel of a truck for a paycheck, and in 2013, they returned for a 16-month stint. Josh helped finish building the hospital, and Melissa helped create a training program for Togolese nurse's aids.

"We're excited to get back and help run and maintain the hospital that we helped build," Josh said.

Regan & Mellie Martin | South Africa

www.martinsonmission.org

Winnetka Bible Church, Winnetka, IL



Mellie was four-months pregnant with their fifth child when Regan returned from a mission trip and said, "I think the Lord is calling us to South Africa."

A bad car accident in college brought about a spiritual revival in Regan's life and his heart for missions grew. Then, he married Mellie, and together, they prayed for God to show them a mission field. But the timing never seemed right.

"I felt a readiness and willingness, but I was waiting for direction," Regan said. "That came in the last three years."

Regan had been teaching at a Christian school in Wisconsin, but moved to Chicago to step into an associate pastor role at a mission-minded church. One day, the lead pastor invited Regan on a mission trip to South Africa, and feeling the Lord's leading, he went.

On the trip, Regan ministered with an older couple, and he was burdened by the question of who would continue their ministry after they retired. When he returned, he passionately shared his experience with his wife, but Mellie met Regan's energy with exhaustion. She also felt called to missions, but they had five kids in six and a half years and Mellie was still



trying to understand her role as mother and wife. She was hesitant about the idea of moving their family halfway around the world, so she prayed.

“This whole process has forced me to reexamine my heart,” Mellie said. “I realized I hadn’t been really trusting in the Lord and I had to readjust my focus. Through doing that, I’ve seen God faithfully lead and provide for us each step of the way.”

The following year, Mellie went with Regan back to South Africa, and God filled their hearts with love for the country and its people.

Alison Dominguez | The Gambia

www.alisondominguez.abwe.org
West Cabarrus Church, Concord, NC



Alison was 30 years old when she found herself sitting in a church for just the third time in her life.

Alison had very little exposure to Christianity, but when she was struggling to rebuild after some significant life changes, her Christian neighbors embraced her. She leaned on them during the darkest period of her life, and when she mentioned being overwhelmed by housework she needed to do, her neighbors unexpectedly showed up to help.

“Why are you doing this?” Alison asked.

“This is God’s love for you,” they replied.

Alison soon accepted her neighbors’ invitation to church, and eventually was saved, baptized, and developed a desire to share God’s love with others. She was challenged by a sermon on the Great Commission and decided to use her skills as a physician assistant and her fluency in Spanish on a medical mission trip to Guatemala, where she discovered her love of sharing the gospel through medicine.

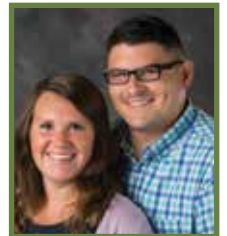
Several mission trips later, she knew God was calling her to do medical missions full time in an area of the world that would push her outside of her comfort zone. She prayed for direction and found the answers when she went on a short-term medical trip to The Gambia with ABWE.

“I fell in love with the people,” she said. “If I could have, I would have just stayed.”

When she returned home, Alison told her pastor she was ready to take the next step, and God has confirmed her calling each step of the way.

“There is no question The Gambia is where I’m supposed to be,” Alison said. “I know it’s not going to be easy, but I’m excited.”

Nathan & Lauren Bell | South Africa
Memorial Baptist Church, Columbus, OH



Nathan grew up in church, but never understood what it looked like to be a Christian in all aspects of life. He first got to see that on a mission trip to the Dominican Republic where the missionaries shared Christ’s love every day. Nathan felt convicted about his two-faced life, and after that trip, mentors at his church began discipling and pouring into him. Those experiences shaped him and gave him a heart for mentorship and discipleship. He felt called to help kids without Christ-like mentors.

Lauren also had a heart for kids, and through several mission trips, she felt called to teach abroad. Together, Nathan and Lauren went on a survey trip to South Africa to help work with the youth at a church plant. During that trip, they were also able visit different areas and ministries in the country, which led them to Hermanus.

“Hermanus is a city in desperate need of a Bible-believing church,” Nathan said. “A woman there has been praying for 30 years for a Baptist church, but the missionaries are just spread too thin to reach that area.”

Nathan and Lauren plan to help plant a church in Hermanus and minister to the youth in a nearby fishing village where kids have very few male role models since the men are often at sea.

“The culture in South Africa is very relational and so are we. We’re very much people people, so it felt like home,” Lauren said. “It was really hard to leave and we are excited to get back.”

Europe

Larry & Tricia Wilson | Europe

www.wordinheart.com

First Baptist Church, Willmar, MN



Ever since Larry and Tricia met at a Bible Study while attending community college, the gospel has been the center of their relationship. After they got married, they looked for opportunities to share their faith full time and joined a Bible translation ministry.

Larry spent the next 25 years serving as a vernacular media specialist, where he recorded translations of scripture in different languages for people who could not read. Although Larry and Tricia loved their ministry, they felt they were being called to a personal evangelism ministry. They began to investigate fields and opportunities and discovered ABWE.

“It’s just been a blessing to rest in God’s timing,” Larry said.

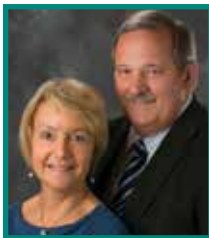
Larry and Tricia are praying about opportunities in Europe where they hope to use personal evangelism, discipleship, church restoration, and hospitality to share the light of the gospel in spiritually dark areas of Europe.

Ruth & Andy Bishop | Italy

Facebook: Andrew & Ruth

Bishop in Ancona

Cascades Baptist Church, Jackson, MI



Ruth and Andy arrived on the mission field 28 years ago with the vision to make disciples of the Italian people, but God has challenged them to look beyond their vision for Italy to see His vision for the ends of the earth.

Ruth grew up as an MK in Algeria, but moved to southern France after her father was ousted from the country. Her new French school had a second language requirement so Ruth enrolled in Italian because of their proximity. Every night she would tune into Trans World Radio Italy to see how much she

could understand, and while she thought she was learning the language, God was actually teaching her about the deep need there. After high school, she went to Bible school in Iowa to train to be a missionary in Italy and met Andy.

“I always felt burdened for missions in Europe,” said Andy. “It’s the continent where the gospel came to America, but it has become a very needy mission field.”

For the last two decades, Andy and Ruth have been leading a church in Ancona, a city on the eastern coast of Italy. Progress was slow for many years, and they wrestled with discouragement, but they were faithful to their call and built a small church of loyal members. Then a few years ago, a young man from Cameroon came into their lives.

He came to Ancona to study at the local university, and when he heard about a church run by other foreigners, he began attending. Then he began bringing friends with him, and they began bringing their friends.

“We felt God called us to make disciples of the Italian people, and then, we found ourselves leading a church where half of the people aren’t Italian,” Andy said. “At first, we said, ‘God, this isn’t what you called us to do,’ but we realized if He brought them to us then He wants us to work with them.”

Today, the Bishops are seeing more people coming to Christ, and they are seeing those changed lives rippling out and bringing more and more people to Christ.

“We’ve got the world coming to us,” said Ruth. “There are so many things happening right now and we want to get back. We’re excited to see what God is going to do next.”

Cristian & Michelle Harlea | Romania

www.harlea.abwe.org

Calvary Baptist Church, Hannibal, MO



Ever since she was a little girl, Michelle wanted to follow her father’s footsteps into ministry, and she spent



many summers on mission trips in different parts of the world. After graduating from college, Michelle was leading a children's ministry when she went on a 10-day mission trip to Romania. She saw the hurt and devastation of the orphan children there, and she felt compelled to return and help them. When she got back to the States, she immediately called her boss and told her about this door God had opened. To her surprise, her boss said, "That's amazing and perfect. I found your replacement while you were gone."

God had made it clear, so Michelle broke her lease, sold her stuff, raised support, and in less than four months, she moved to Romania to serve full time. She began working with an orphan ministry, while serving one day a week at a church plant — where she met Cristian.

Cristian grew up in Bucharest in a Christian family during the communist time. He faced significant persecution, but had always let his classmates' and professors' ridicule roll off his back. But one day, his heart began to change and he started to feel a burden for his unsaved peers. He prayed for direction, and at the age of 17, he felt God calling him to be an evangelist.

"God put a burden on my heart to see my nation reached for His kingdom," said Cristian. "There are so many villages in Romania that have no churches and no one sharing the gospel with them."

He went to a poor area outside the capital and his heart broke for the destitute people there. He began taking his friends out to teach the children, and eventually they started the small church plant where he met Michelle.

Cristian came to America for the first time nine days before he married Michelle, and he has been here for six years, completing his Bible degree and starting their family. Now, Michelle and Cristian are looking forward to starting their ministry in Romania where they plan to plant more churches and train local leaders.

"We pray that God will use us to start a missions movement within Romania and beyond," Cristian said.

Nahum O'Brien | Norway

www.nahum.abwe.org

Berean Baptist Church, Sciotoville, OH



While attending a Christian youth camp in junior high, Nahum felt the call to missions, but the widespread poverty and depravity he saw during his travels while in the Air Force caused him to question his call and his faith.

"When you go overseas and see these things, you realize the world is infected by sin," said Nahum. "I became angry, pessimistic, and couldn't reconcile the problem of sin, pain, and death with a good God."

Nahum fell into a self-serving lifestyle, but he soon hit rock bottom and realized his selfish way of life was unfulfilling. He was left with a heart full of questions, and he turned back to the only source of answers he knew: Jesus.

"The Scriptures say the world is the way it is because of sin — and the scary thing was that same sin existed in me," said Nahum. "The deeper I grew in the knowledge of my own personal sin, the more important the grace of God became to me."

With this realization, Nahum recommitted his life to Christ, and as his Air Force enlistment drew to a close, he decided to study God's answer for the problem of sin. He studied at Liberty University before going on to seminary.

While finishing his seminary degree this past August, he learned about the significant challenges facing the gospel in post-Christian Europe. Nahum feels called to use his education and life experiences to share the reason for his newfound optimism in Norway.

"Their post-modern culture really connected with me," said Nahum. "I really want to engage the Norwegian people with the gospel and share the hope that it has brought to my life."

Latin America

Jessica Bell | Brazil

www.jbellbrazil.org

Evangel Baptist Church, Taylor, MI



Jessica was deeply impacted by God's love at a young age, and when she was nine, she felt God calling her to missions. She prayed for direction, and God placed the country of Brazil on her heart — a country she knew nothing about.

Jessica told her parents, and together, they prayed. When her extremely protective parents felt at peace and supported her calling, Jessica knew it was further confirmation of God's will for her life.

Jessica recently graduated from Bible college and is now pursuing missions whole-heartedly. She hopes to channel her love of kids into a ministry that works with hurting children.

"I thrive working with people who are hurting and needing. That's my passion," Jessica said. "God loves us so much and I want to go out and share that love with others."

Chelsea Zeman | Nicaragua

www.chelseazeman.abwe.org

Edgewater Baptist Church, Chicago, IL



In high school, Chelsea went on a short-term mission trip to serve in an orphanage in Mexico, and the trip opened her eyes to how God could use her to help others. She realized she wanted to use her life to serve people and began pursuing nursing.

During her sophomore year of nursing school, Chelsea's professor invited her to join a medical research project that would take two trips a year to Nicaragua. She signed up, and while her first trip was only three days long, she completely fell in love with the work and the people. She went to Nicaragua many more times with the research project and spring-break medical mission trips.

"I was so happy to use my education to help people, but it dawned on me that we were only putting a Band-Aid on these people's problems. They have spiritual problems that run deeper than their medical problems," Chelsea said. "That's when my path shifted from medical to missions."

Chelsea is excited to use her medical skills to share the gospel and bring true healing to the people of Nicaragua.

"I've been there so much that Nicaragua feels like home," Chelsea said. "I'm really looking forward to going home and being able to serve the people there."

Bryan & Cari Surretts | Brazil

www.thesurretts.net

First Baptist Church, Waterville, MN



Cari grew up as a missionary kid in Brazil and was raised knowing the importance of mission work. After college and shortly after she met Bryan, Cari went to serve at the Amazon Baptist Hospital for one year. When she returned, they got married and started their family and their ministry. Life was good, but Cari's heart continued to burn for missions in Brazil.

"For years, I kept asking when we were going to go to Brazil, but Bryan kept putting me off. He said maybe someday, but he didn't feel like that's where he was being called," said Cari. "I was trying to be the Holy Spirit for him and it wasn't working. So I finally just put it in God's hands."

Bryan was very involved in local ministry as an assistant pastor, but his thinking started to shift in 2010. While visiting Cari's parents, who were still in Brazil and nearing retirement age, they met other missionaries in the area, who were also getting older and transitioning to different ministries.

"It seemed like everywhere we went we ran into a missionary who was retiring soon," Bryan said. "We began to pray that God would send new, younger missionaries to Brazil to replace all those who were retiring."

As they prayed, Cari kept feeling God pointing to them,



and then one day Bryan said, “I think God might be calling us to fill the need in Brazil.” Cari was overjoyed. They quickly pursued a three-month trip to Brazil to explore their call and potential ministry.

After visiting various teams and seeing ministries around the country, the Surretts felt God leading them to the middle-class city of Sorriso in the inland state of Mato Grosso. This rapidly-growing city has been overlooked by many ministries and Bryan and Cari hope to encourage, mentor, and train national pastors as very little biblical training exists in the area.

Craig & Cassandra Fisher | Nicaragua

www.fishers.abwe.org
*Fellowship Community Church,
Mt. Laurel, NJ*



Cassandra and Craig met in college while volunteering as leaders for the local Young Life outreach to high school students. They got married, had their first son, and a few years later, adopted a second and then third son from Guatemala. Their experiences of adopting and learning about their sons ignited their love for the Central American culture and people, and also allowed them to see the expansive brokenness in the world. Through that, they began developing a heart for the world, and when a visiting missionary told stories from the mission field, they felt God may be calling them to serve abroad.

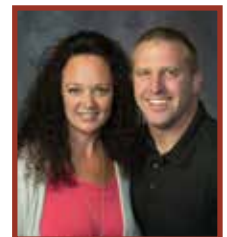
The idea of missions remained on their hearts as Craig continued to help run the family rental business and Cassandra home-schooled their children. As time went on, they became unsure if God was leading them to use their business as their ministry or to pursue missions in Central America. So they prayed.

“After much prayer and speaking with other missionaries and our pastors, God made our call clear,” Craig said. “You can’t sit around waiting for the next thing in life to happen. You have to let life be lived and trust God.”

Their faith and courage to make the decision for missions were reinforced after the Fishers went on a trip to Nicaragua and caught a vision for how they could serve the Lord. Their previous experiences had already helped them fall in love with the Latin American culture, language, and people, but their visit helped them to see how their skills could complement the ABWE Nicaragua team. Craig and Cassandra felt God confirm that Nicaragua was their mission field when they saw how quickly and eagerly their kids took to the community and the ministry.

Chad & Rachel Strong | Nicaragua

www.thestrongfamilyabwe.com
West Windsor Baptist Church, Windsor, NY



Rachel credits her and Chad’s salvation to a weird and persistent FedEx man.

Nearly every day for three years, he came into the office where Rachel worked. He got to know her through short exchanges and eventually he started asking deeper questions. One day he asked, “How do you know you’re going to heaven?”

Rachel felt affronted and told him that she was a good person, but he pressed further. Rachel was so annoyed by his questions that she resolved to read the Bible for herself.

Neither Chad nor Rachel had strong religious influences growing up. Religion was more of a tradition, and after 9/11, they had begun to view organized religion as the root of all the evil in the world. But as Rachel read through the Bible, her heart softened, and she shared what she was learning with Chad. Eventually they started looking for a church home and found a Baptist church where the pastor patiently answered all of their questions using Scripture.

That “weird” FedEx man helped lead Rachel and Chad to a saving faith in Jesus and now they are pursuing missions with six of their nine children — one biological and eight adopted — by their side.

“We always said we go to the mission field after our kids

Latin America

left the nest, but the kids kept coming,” said Chad. “And we just thought, why not now?”

A few years ago, Rachel called her old office and asked if the same FedEx man still delivered there. He did and Rachel was able to contact him.

“Many years ago, you asked me how I knew I would go to heaven. And I finally have an answer for you,” Rachel told him. “Because the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for me.”

Odir & Cynthia Brandão | Brazil

www.brandaos.abwe.org

Dayspring at Alton Road Baptist Church, Galloway, OH



Cynthia was born and raised on the mission field in São Paulo, and her family often joked she was more Brazilian than American. She loved helping her parents in their ministry, but in her senior year of high school, her whole world changed when her father suddenly passed away.

“I really looked up to my dad and always wanted to be like him, but through that trial, I realized that God is so much greater,” Cynthia said.

Cynthia returned to the states to attend college, and during her senior year, she felt God calling her to missions. She turned to ABWE for guidance and, wanting to confirm her call, she went on a two-year mission trip to a small city in Brazil. She enjoyed her time, but the experience was the polar opposite of the bustling city of São Paulo and it was a hard adjustment.

When those two years ended, she returned to her college as a web designer and graphic designer. She enjoyed the work but couldn't shake the gnawing feeling that God was calling her to do more.

In spite of her fear of returning to the field alone, Cynthia trusted God and arrived in São Paulo in 2013 to minister to the people she loved in the country she loved.

“I was living the missionary life and loving it. I discovered that God was all I needed,” Cynthia said. “And then God blessed me and showed me He had someone He wanted me to walk alongside.”

Odir grew up in the church but his first passion was writing. He went to college to pursue a career in journalism where he made friends at a campus church. One day, they invited him to preach, and having never preached before, Odir began studying his Bible with teaching in mind. That experience planted the seed for a dream that was never on his radar.

He began his career as a journalist, but after several years and much prayer, he eventually enrolled in seminary. He felt God calling him to be a pastor and prayed for direction. God led him to Cynthia, and together, they are eager to continue Cynthia's parents' ministry and legacy in the country they love.

David & Melanie Powley | Mexico

www.powleyjourney.abwe.org

Westerly Hills Baptist Church, Fort Mill, SC



As a pastor's daughter, Melanie grew up doing homework on the pews and became a teacher with the idea that one day she and her husband David would do ministry full time.

“I always said I'd do what God had for me,” said David.

In the meantime, they stayed busy in their local church and bought a home. As the years passed, Melanie started itching to move out of their small, starter home and into a larger one in a better neighborhood, but then she read a book that shifted her thinking.

“God showed me that my neighborhood was my mission field,” Melanie said. “He had planted me where I was supposed to be.”

As David and Melanie began to see their neighborhood as their mission field, God started to stretch and grow David. His pastor challenged him to become the youth pastor, and



while David was hesitant at first, God helped develop him into a leader and mentor.

After seven years of youth pastoring, David woke up in the middle of the night and felt God say, “You’re going to help Thomas Beard.” Thomas was a church-planting missionary in Montemorelos, Mexico, whom David and Melanie had known and supported for more than a decade.

David reached out to Thomas, and a few months later, the Powley family went down to see his ministry first hand. David was excited by the huge opportunity to help build up leaders in the local church and create a larger church-planting movement. The trip confirmed for David and Melanie that God was calling them to serve in Montemorelos full time.

“My mission statement in life is to help others,” David said. “That’s what I enjoy doing and I believe that’s what God has equipped me to do.”

Maicol & Mandy Venter | Brazil

www.theventerfamily.org
Denbigh Baptist Church,
Newport News, VA



During her third year of pre-med on a full scholarship, Mandy became serious about attending church, and her pastor’s wife challenged her to think about doing something big with her life. Then Mandy went on a mission trip to Honduras and saw all that she could do with the skills God had given her.

When she had completed her final exams, she met with her program director to discuss doing her medical internship in Africa.

“I know what I want to do with the rest of my life,” she told her director. “I want to serve God and I really would like to start now.”

Her director scoffed and told her that she would have to wait until she graduated. Something came over Mandy and she said, “Then, I guess I won’t graduate.”

Mandy traded her dream of becoming a physician assistant to prepare for full-time ministry at a Bible college. It was there that she met Maicol.

Maicol grew up in Brazil with an alcoholic father and used basketball to block out the drama at home. He would often play for 10 hours a day at a nearby court, and one day, he met a man who was mentoring a group of young players.

“He would walk around with a Bible and he had all this peace. I had never seen anything like it in my life, and I wanted to know why,” said Maicol.

That man was ABWE Missionary Dan Richner, and after three years of meeting with Maicol on the court and for an occasional soda, Dan invited Maicol to go to a weeklong Christian camp. Maicol had dropped out of high school to support his family by working at a bakery, and he couldn’t fathom giving up a paycheck. But when Dan offered to pay for him to go, Maicol went to camp and came to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Shortly after that, Cedarville University came down on a mission trip with their basketball team. Maicol was on the verge of signing a professional basketball contract in Brazil, but when Cedarville offered him a scholarship, he followed God’s calling. He played basketball and studied pre-seminary on a full scholarship before going on to seminary.

During his internship year, Maicol was encouraged to explore his passion to bring the gospel to his people, and Maicol and Mandy decided to do a two-year mission trip to Brazil.

“We got to work with the same missionaries who prayed for Maicol before he was ever saved,” Mandy said. “We have really seen the spiritual reality of the family of God.”

During their time in South Brazil — the least evangelized state in the country — they worked with other missionaries to plant a church. They are eager to return to church planting and sport ministries, and for others to join them.



Asia

Christina B. | South Asia

Straits Corners Baptist Church, Candor, New York

Christina has always had a knack for languages. She studied Hebrew, Greek, and Latin during high school and college, and enjoyed breaking the Bible down to the original text. She loved seeing the way root words could add new depth to God’s word, but it wasn’t until two years ago at a Christian retreat that she finally understood how big and unconditional God’s love is. Then, God turned her attention to those who don’t yet know His love. Christina was particularly drawn to Muslim women because they are in a religion and culture that doesn’t value them.

“Their own husbands consider them worthless, but they are precious to God,” Christina said.

Christina wants to use her talent and passion to do Bible translation in a Muslim area of South Asia so that more people can learn about God’s immense love in their own language.

Emily E. | South Asia

Zion Baptist Church, Irvona, PA

Emily was interested in missions for as long as she can remember, and in high school, God turned that interest into a passion through a mission trip to New York City. She went to college and had missions on her mind as she majored in English. Emily was excited about the prospect of packing her bags right after graduation and heading to an exotic country to be a Christian teacher. But that’s not what God had in mind.

“He kept me home — literally,” Emily said. “He took me back to the school I graduated from, to teach fifth-through-12th grade English and science.”

For the next three-and-a-half years, she taught at her alma mater and got plugged in at her church, but she never stopped waiting for God to open the door to the mission field.

“I said to God, ‘You’re supposed to open doors, and this is not door opening,’” Emily said. “But He was really teaching me what it means to be involved in the local church.”

Then, one day, ABWE South Africa missionaries Darin and Kathy Ishler visited Emily’s church and invited her to stay with them on the field. Emily jumped at the chance, and for two months she worked side-by-side with the Ishlers, helping them with young adult ministry and Sunday school.

When she returned to the states, Emily immediately signed up to attend ABWE’s 24-Hour D.E.M.O., a workshop that helps answer questions and guide potential missionaries.

“I knew that when it was time, God would tell me,” she said. “And as soon as I walked through the doors at ABWE, I felt God say, ‘It is now.’”

Garry & Tanya T. | South Asia

Community Baptist Church, Danbury, TX

After years of thinking he was a Christian because his mom compelled him to be baptized when he was 10, Garry truly accepted Christ as his Savior at 34 years old. Almost immediately after getting saved, he felt God wanted him to do something big, but Garry pushed the feeling away.

“I tried to stay in my little Christian comfort zone — teaching Sunday school, working with youth, and helping with mission trips,” Garry said. “I kept feeling challenged to turn my life over to God, but I wasn’t ready to pray that prayer.”

Then in 2013, Garry and Tanya went on a mission trip to India to do evangelism. It stretched them both and opened their eyes to an unreached part of the world where Jesus’ name isn’t widely known.

Towards the end of the trip, Garry saw a man accept Christ, and he wondered who would disciple this man and make sure he wasn’t forgotten. The thought weighed heavy on his heart as they returned home, but Garry’s thoughts of India began to fade as Tanya’s began to grow.

“India was a real turning point for me,” Tanya said.



“Then, a few months later, our pastor gave a sermon and challenged everyone to say yes to God. I committed and quickly felt God pointing me to missions.”

Tanya told Garry, but he was still unsure. Tanya told God that if He wanted them on the mission field, He would have to call Garry and He did. God started breaking down Garry’s defenses and excuses, and then, one day, he received an email about how medical missions was reaching people for Christ.

“God had me,” Garry said.

Together, they are following God’s leading to the Memorial Christian Hospital in South Asia where Tanya will apply her nursing degree and Garry will use his maintenance experience.

Greg & Rachel Vrugink | Thailand

www.vruginks.com

Grace Community Church, Hudsonville, MI



Greg grew up in a Christian home, but it wasn’t until high school that he came to know Jesus as his personal savior. Greg began hungrily reading the Bible, and one day, while studying the New Testament, he felt God calling him to missions. He went on a mission trip to Peru to see what missions was all about, and the following year, he went to China.

“China captured my heart,” Greg said.

When he returned, he started college and began working with a Chinese-American church. He also met Rachel.

Rachel’s life has been filled with challenges that would have broken most people, but for Rachel, it only deepened her faith. When she was 16, she was in a car accident that killed her 12-year-old sister and injured Rachel’s spinal chord, leaving her paralyzed. Then, a few years later, her mom died from cancer.

“It was a lot of trials in a short amount of time, but God really used those hardships to draw me to Himself and make me more like Him,” said Rachel.

Rachel, too, felt called to full-time ministry, and after

college, she joined Greg in China to disciple and teach English for three years.

Upon returning, Greg served as a pastor in two Chinese churches, but after six years, he began to feel God calling him to teach and train. God led him to an opportunity that would combine his calling with his passion for Asia. He will be teaching the Old Testament at ABWE’s Asia Biblical Theological Seminary, while Rachel will focus on raising their four children and finding opportunities to disciple others.

Joshua & Rebekah Morgan | Thailand

*First Baptist Church of Whitney Point,
Whitney Point, NY*



A mission trip to Bogotá, Colombia, in high school set Josh’s heart on fire for missions, but the idea of full-time missions was not new. His sister is an ABWE missionary in Thailand, and she had been trying to convince Josh to join her for years.

“Me and heat don’t get along very well. I told her if she made me an air-conditioned bubble I would go,” said Josh. “She never did that but she came up with another thing that I really love — basketball.”

In college, Josh joined a group that was hosting basketball camps in northern Thailand. In his final week, he met a six-year-old boy who smiled at him and Josh picked him up and put him on his shoulders. The two became instant friends even though they didn’t speak the same language. The whole day the little boy followed Josh around, and when it was time to go, he came running up to Josh, said something in Thai, and giggled. The translator told Josh the boy said he wanted to ride the white giant again when he came back.

“I climbed in the back of the truck laughing, but I didn’t think I’d be back,” Josh said. “But as we drove away, God really started working on my heart and I thought, ‘What



Asia

will happen to little kids like him if I didn't come back?"

Six trips later, Josh was hooked, and he came to ABWE to start the journey to the Thailand mission field. Then, he met Rebekah.

On one of their first dates, Josh unapologetically said he was called to missions in Thailand, and Josh knew Rebekah was the one when she casually responded, "That doesn't scare me."

In college, Rebekah's involvement with the youth and children's ministries at an inner-city multicultural church in Rochester, NY, pushed her out of her comfort zone. She helped with street and door-to-door outreach, and it planted a seed for missions. She told God she would go wherever He led her, and when she met Josh, her path became clear.

Josh and Rebekah are looking forward to giving more rides on the white giant and reaching the children of Thailand for Christ.

Teresa V. | South Asia

Reformation Baptist Church, Greeley, CO

After college, Teresa knew God was calling her to use her nursing degree to spread His love, and He led her to the Global Missions Health Conference in Kentucky. The conference was packed with hundreds of medical missions opportunities through dozens of organizations. It was a bit overwhelming, but one organization stood out.

"When I walked up to the ABWE booth, a man asked about my interest in missions. I told him I knew God had called me to missions and I knew He'd given me nursing as a tool for that, but I didn't know where," Teresa said. "He told me that ABWE is focused on building God's kingdom — not their own organization. He said they wanted me where God wanted me. I really appreciated that."

As the conference drew to a close, one of the speakers encouraged the attendees to ask God where He wanted them to go. As Teresa prayed, she felt God calling her to South Asia.

"I didn't know anything about the area, but God

continued to lay it on my heart," she said. "But when I looked through my materials and handouts, I realized I didn't have anything on South Asia."

Teresa visited the ABWE booth one final time and met a woman who had served as a missionary nurse in South Asia for the past 20 years. The two exchanged contact information, and the following year, Teresa went on a short-term mission trip to visit her and to see ABWE's hospital ministry in action.

"I loved how everything they do in the hospital is centered around Christ," Teresa said. "Yes, they offer some of the best healthcare in the country, but their driving goal is to make Christ known. I want to be a part of that."

Tom & Amy McVicker | Japan

www.mcvicker.abwe.org

*Hampstead Baptist Church,
Hampstead, MD*



When Tom was a lost young man, the Navy stationed him in Japan. Tom fell in love with the people and the culture, but had no plans of returning when his service was over. Little did he know that God had a different type of service in mind.

"While I was in the Navy, I wasn't seeing God's view for me because I was living for myself, but now I see the way He's been pointing to Japan throughout my life," Tom said.

Amy also felt the call to missions, and as Tom shared his love of Japan, she began to do research and was moved by the country's profound need. Less than 1 percent of Japanese are believers and many missionaries are so discouraged by the slow progress that they return home.

Their findings led Amy and Tom to pursue a two-week survey trip where Tom met Mr. Matsumoto, a Japanese man who wanted to practice his English. As they chatted, Tom got a glimpse into the challenges of sharing the gospel in the honor-based culture of Japan. Mr. Matsumoto



Open

said his son had become a vegetarian while he was away at college, and he was worried about how this would affect his son's life. He worried that his son would have to find a vegetarian wife, and when he got a job, Mr. Matsumoto feared his son would offend his employer by refusing to eat his food.

"He said it would be disgraceful and that's just being a vegetarian. That only affects one aspect of your life — whereas what Christ does in your life is all consuming," said Tom. "So when he was saying vegetarian, I was saying Christian, and it helped me understand what we're up against."

God also used that discussion and their time in the city of Kumamoto to show them an opportunity to work with thousands of college students who flock to the city's four universities. Just as Mr. Matsumoto realized with his son, Tom and Amy realized college is a critical time when young people are forming their own identities, and they felt the Lord guiding them to disciple these young people.

"Nine years ago, our pastor talked to us about being fishers of men, and they had a net that they cut it into pieces and handed out," Tom said, pulling the small tattered piece of netting out of his wallet. "This has been in my wallet ever since. It reminds me that we are all called to be fishers of men."

"We're all called to share the gospel — whether it's in our backyard or at work or across the ocean," Amy added.

Benjamin Candee | Open

Placerita Bible Church, Newhall, CA

Benjamin grew up convincing everyone around him — including himself — that he was a Christian. Right before he left for college, a close family friend ripped the veil away.

He told Benjamin's mom, "Your son is a heathen. Don't be surprised if he parties at school and gets many girls pregnant."



His mother was horrified, but Benjamin knew he was pegged. For the next two years, he struggled to be a Christian by his own effort and strength, but while teaching the books of Romans and James at a Bible study during his sophomore year of college, the Lord deeply convicted him of his sin and hypocrisy.

"I was big, biblical Ben on the outside, and prideful, lustful, selfish Ben on the inside," he said. "I repented, and I trusted Christ as my Lord and Savior, and that changed my life drastically."

On fire for the Lord, Benjamin wanted to become a church planter, but knowing he would need theological training, he went to seminary and prayed for God to direct him to a mission field. Doors seemed to keep closing so Benjamin returned home. He used his seminary degree to serve in his local church while he waited for God to lead him.

"It feels like He is opening the door now, and I'm ready to go wherever He would take me," said Benjamin.

Brian & Phyllis Hovey | Open

www.hoveyservingod.com

First Baptist Church, Waterville, MN



Phyllis thought full-time missions was only for preachers and church planters, but when a missionary came to her church and shared that there was a place for teachers on the mission field, it shifted her thinking. She began to pray for guidance and felt God leading her to a short-term orphan care mission trip to India — where she returned two more times.

When she came back from her third mission trip to India, she met her husband Brian at church.

Growing up, Brian had seen the legalistic side of religion and dropped out of the church to pursue the American dream. He graduated from college and got a good job as an engineer, but it wasn't enough. He felt completely broken



Open

and sank so low that he felt the only choice he had left was God or death. He chose God and gave his life fully to Christ. A few months later, he joined a friend on a mission trip to Togo to work on ABWE's northern hospital.

"When I returned, I knew I couldn't continue to settle," said Brian.

Phyllis and Brian began pursuing God together, and at their wedding, they asked guests to donate to a future mission trip instead of gifts. Then, ABWE helped guide them to the Santiago Christian Academy in Chile, where Phyllis taught and Brian did maintenance work.

As their two-year term was coming to a close, they felt God telling them it wasn't time to come home so they began moving toward a third year. Then, during their daily Scripture reading, they read a passage about the Israelites who were going into the promised land. There were two tribes who didn't want to complete the journey and chose to settle east of the Jordan instead.

Upon reading it, Brian turned to Phyllis and asked, "Do you think we're settling for east of the Jordan by not giving ourselves fully to serve the Lord?"

The thought unnerved Phyllis, and after much prayer, they saw that God was calling them to missions long term.

"I would challenge everyone to consider that there's a place for them on the mission field," Phyllis said.

Jordan & Abigale Matthews
| Nicaragua

www.matthewsministries.com
*Calvary Baptist Church,
Wisconsin Rapids, WI*



Growing up, Jordan knew how to act like a Christian. He went to church and memorized all of 1 John so his dad would buy him a car. But Jordan embraced living for himself, and in high school, his self-destructive

choices caught up with him. He was arrested for having drugs on school property and faced jail time. Fortunately, his father was friends with the chief of police and no charges were filed, but the incident shook Jordan to his core.

"Through that, I saw how much my family and the family of God loved me, and it helped me realize how much God loved me," Jordan said. "Knowing everything that God had saved me from, I surrendered my life to Christ and I devoted my life to serving Him."

Jordan felt God calling him to serve on the mission field, and when he met Abigale at church, he shared his plans. Abigale deeply respected Jordan's desire to serve God on the mission field, and she knew that God wanted her to share His love through nursing, but the idea of missions terrified her. That fear dissolved when she went on a short-term medical mission trip with her sister to Kenya.

"I got to use my nursing skills to share the love of Christ. It was amazing," Abigale said.

When she returned, she told Jordan, "I'm ready now. Let's go." Together, they are boldly following God's command to "Go."



2015 CANDIDATES

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Where they are going

"We owe Christ to the world

- TO THE **LEAST** PERSON & TO THE **GREATEST** PERSON

TO THE **RICHEST** PERSON & TO THE **POOREST** PERSON,

TO THE **BEST** PERSON & TO THE **WORST** PERSON.

We are in debt to the nations."

—DAVID PLATT, AUTHOR OF "RADICAL"

GO

WWW.ABWE.ORG/GO



every
single
day

FN

By **STEPHANIE KOZICK***ABWE missionary to Ireland*

Each year, around my birthday, I find myself thinking about all that has transpired. My thoughts often wander back to my twenty-something self who made a list of the things I wanted my life to include and the things I hoped to accomplish. This list is one of the most ironic things about my life because not one single item has been ticked off. Not one.

Now I could be all spiritual and say that I made the wrong list. I could tell you that life has been full of so many things I wish I had put on it because they are so much better; however, I don't think there was

anything wrong with my list. It was full of good things — things many of you may be enjoying in your own life, like marriage, children, and running my own company. But what I wish I had realized much sooner

in my journey (when God was prying this list from my tightly clenched fingers) is that no matter what life does or does not bring, He is always faithful to walk with me each step of the way.

“Single” and “missionary” are two words that currently play a significant role in my life, but neither made it onto my list so many years ago. When I tell people I work as a missionary supporting the work going on in churches in Dublin, Ireland, I am met with many gracious responses. The word “missionary” seems to receive the same welcome as the word “hero,” but as those who also bear this title know, I am just a normal person trying my best to do what God has asked of me.

On the other hand, the word “single” is not met with the same regard. When I tell people I’m single, I am frequently asked the same question: “How do you seem so okay with it?” While I don’t mind the question, it always makes me wonder what life would be like if singleness had not become something that one must struggle to find a way to only be okay with. What if it hadn’t somehow become the honorable mention of statuses? What if there was a way to reverse this perception and let future generations know that singleness can be a valuable, fulfilling, and God-given way to live one’s life — whether you’re missionary or not?

The older I get, the more I realize that no matter what our journey holds, we all have a lot more in common than we think. We are all striving to make a difference, and we each have passions we wish to pursue. We try to live a godly life, but we all struggle to find

balance between contentment and hoping for more. Community is a deep longing in all of us, and whether we are married or not, loneliness comes our way more often than we would like it to.

Now, I am not saying that there aren’t differences. And I’m not saying that I don’t dream of walking down the aisle or having a small person call me mom — because those seem like pretty awesome things to experience. Singleness is certainly a challenge at times, and singleness is an even bigger challenge when you are a missionary starting a new life in a new land with no family by your side. But what I am trying to say is that singleness is also a path that is full of opportunities, and it can be just as much of a blessing as marriage.

God is the giver of good and perfect gifts to all of His children, and singleness is not a consolation prize. At times, the gift of singleness may feel like it fits poorly, and some weeks I may wish it came with a return policy, but I continue to pray that God uses this gift to make a difference in the lives of those around me. The truth is, we all face the problem of what to do with our unmet expectations, and we are all better off when we are doing life together and encouraging each other on whatever path God has placed us on.

***“You make known
to me the path
of life; in your
presence there is
fullness of joy.”***

Psalm 16

Stephanie Kozick has been an ABWE missionary in Dublin, Ireland for seven years, working to build relationships and promote church planting and discipleship. She also serves as the administrative assistant to the ABWE Regional Administrator for Western Europe.





10 Things I Would Have Done Differently

..... According to **Tom Wolf**

ABWE missionary to South Africa and father of four

My daughter Chelsea recently posted a picture on Instagram of me speaking at Cedarville University and her caption read, “When I was younger I didn't always like being a pastor's kid, but today I couldn't have been prouder of my dad for sharing God's word and his heart for missions.”

Her words meant the world to me, because our journey as a family was far from perfect.

We went into missions in the late 90s, and it felt like there was a lot on the line — after all, people were sacrificing for us to pursue our calling. I was overzealous and insecure while I tried to find my feet as a missionary, church planter, and pastor. We quickly discovered that a church is a 24-hour operation, and I became more and more overwhelmed as our newly formed church grew.

Along with everything else was the important role of being a husband and a father to our four daughters. Missionaries are known for telling the positive sides of life on the mission field, but those early years weren't easy for us as family. There were many struggles that never made it to our prayer letters. Our girls were adjusting to living in South Africa, away from everything familiar, and we were all adjusting to life in the ministry “fishbowl” where all is observed and often judged.

It was overwhelming, and truth be known, I didn't handle it too well. I made mistakes. I didn't neglect

my family, but there were many times when they got my wimpy leftovers. I know that the past can never be redone, but if I could, here are the top 10 things I would have done differently:

1. *Forgiven more freely.*
2. *Played more and worked less.*
3. *Paid attention to the little things. They do matter.*
4. *Been more transparent about my weaknesses.*
5. *Stopped trying to make everyone happy and like me.*
6. *Laughed a lot more — at my blunders and myself.*
7. *Learned how to use the out-of-office email reply.*
8. *Spent more time working on the inside of me and less on the outside.*
9. *Told my girls “I don't have time” less and made them the priority.*
10. *Shared more about ministry life with our girls. They are brilliant, incredibly perceptive, and would have understood and prayed for me.*

I was far from a perfect father, but it is a reminder of how perfect our Father is. We cannot undo or redo the past, but we can allow our mistakes to help us realize how grateful we are for God's grace. It is through His grace that my wife and I have four beautiful grown daughters who are passionate about God and sharing His grace. ■



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Together Again

Resting in God's sovereignty is a rock solid truth that enables our family to serve Him in Liberia. Knowing God is in control gave us peace and rest through the Ebola crisis. We rejoiced when we were able to return and reunite with loved ones whom the Lord kept safe. Our daughter Sophia and her friends, God's Gift and Angel, picked up where they left off. Holding hands, they stood still long enough for us to snap this photo before they took off running and giggling."



Gary & Michelle Kittredge | ABWE missionaries to Liberia

Since 2012, Gary and Michelle, along with their three daughters, have been ministering in Liberia where they have been working to plant churches and raise up healthy faith communities through intentional discipleship, theological education, and local church outreach.

IF GOD CAN USE:

An Accountant



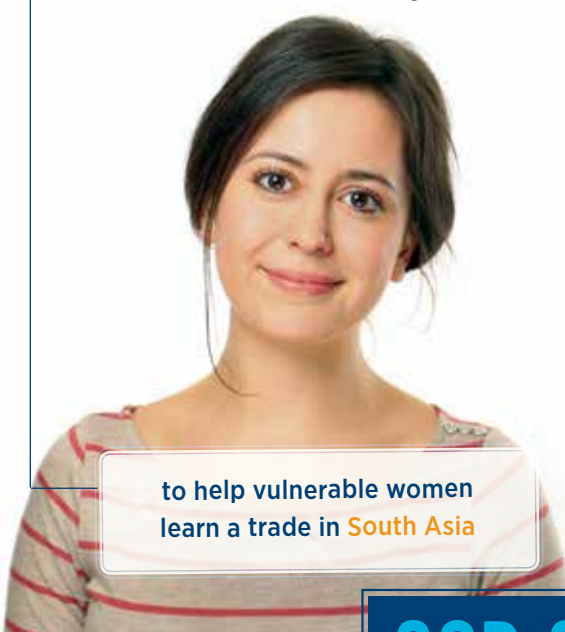
to manage finances and
share the gospel at a Christian
school in **Portugal**

A Widowed Mother



to minister to widows
of an ethnic genocide in
Central Europe

A Textiles Major



to help vulnerable women
learn a trade in **South Asia**

An Architect



to design churches, Christian
hospitals, and Bible schools
all over the world

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