

MESSAGE



Sent to Need

War and Revival

Struck Down, but
Not Destroyed

‘Come Over and Help Us’

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WHO IS ABWE?

ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. Supported by a network of 400 like-minded churches, we are a global family of ministries, dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission by multiplying leaders, churches, and missions movements among every people. Currently, more than 1,000 ABWE missionaries are reaching the lost in 84 countries through evangelism, discipleship, church planting, leadership development, and national partnerships.

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EDITORIAL

FROM THE PRESIDENT



‘Come Over and Help Us’

BY PAUL L. DAVIS | ABWE PRESIDENT

These days, it seems I could throw a stone and hit two or three “help wanted” signs.

Maybe it’s different where you live. But where I live, there is no shortage of available work. Many businesses are still reeling from the “Great Resignation” indirectly triggered by the pandemic response.

Some of these organizations are feeling for the first time a sensation with which those of us in ministry are well-acquainted: the feeling you get when the needs around you outnumber your personnel. Even Jesus knew what it meant to be short on manpower, commenting as he looked out over the masses, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Matthew 9:37).

Unlike the businesses where I live, my missionary friends overseas can’t easily hang a “help wanted” sign in their window. They’re dependent on the Lord and on his church to be raising up workers for the field.

As I meet with our missionaries and see the many fertile grounds around the globe that need new seed sowers, I’ve often thought of Paul’s vision of the man from Macedonia in Acts 16. The apostle had made multiple attempts to take the gospel east, but the Holy Spirit prevented him. Finally, he ends up on the west coast of modern-day Turkey in Troas. In the night, a Macedonian man appears to him, pleading, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (v. 9). Paul concluded God had called him to preach the gospel in Macedonia, and off he went.

History would never be the same. Upon landing in Philippi, Paul led Lydia to the Lord (Acts 16:14-15)—the first European Christian convert named in Scripture. It’s difficult to imagine how church history might have unfolded had the gospel not landed in Europe and continued its westward march.

Many Christians sitting in our pews are waiting to hear God’s call to the nations. Yet for many of them, what they truly need is not a direct divine voice, but the voice of a fellow man—or woman—echoing the words of the Macedonian, “Come over and help us.”

This issue of Message Magazine is devoted to the missionaries calling out to their fellow believers for this kind of help. We see deep physical and spiritual needs around the world, and faithful missionary teams are already engaged in the work. They simply need more laborers.

Maybe you’ve been waiting to see the words “help wanted” posted prominently somewhere you’ve dreamed of. Consider this that sign.

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A Live Global team hands out toothbrushes to displaced people in Turkey.

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Connections

Forbidden Soup

BY KATELYN HAWKINS

LOCATION: UNITED STATES

JAMES & MELISSA FIFE

Togo

“A young Moba man who had been listening to Hope Radio asked for a Scripture SD card so he could listen to the Bible in his heart language. It also included the Jesus Film, which he promptly took home to share with his whole family and neighbors. God will accomplish his will, even through a tiny phone screen.”



OTO & SARAH GUANILO

Argentina

“Our church hosted a youth camp as an outreach event. Although the electricity and water were cut off throughout the week due to high temperatures, the Lord blessed us with a beautiful week of salvation. Of the 65 campers, 18 trusted Christ. Since then, we have been visiting the campers weekly and inviting them to our youth ministries. We rejoice at seeing true fruit of salvation in their lives.”

Ilyas stared in surprise as one of his dinner companions reached over the table and plunged his fingers into his bowl.

“Why did you just stick your hand in my soup?” he exclaimed.

The Afghan couple seated across from him had requested to meet at a local restaurant. They were intrigued by Ilyas’ faith and sought a safe place to talk about the Bible, away from the prying eyes of other Muslims who would object to keeping company with a “Jesus follower.”

Ilyas actively shares Christ in his community. As part of ABWE’s Afghan Initiative, he and his family relocated to the US in 2022 after fleeing the Taliban and resettled in a city with a large Muslim population to reach fellow refugees with the gospel.

Before the meal, the couple peppered him with questions



about Jesus, the Bible, and the Trinity. After several hours of discussion, their food arrived. Ilyas reached for his bowl. He had ordered a soup that contained pork, a food forbidden for Muslims—but before he took his first bite, the man reached into the soup, pulled out a piece of pork, and ate it with his wife.

“We eat this pork to show you that we are no longer Muslims,” he declared. “We believe everything that you’re saying about Jesus is true, and we are now brothers.”

God is working in the Afghan community. Pray for Ilyas and the other Afghan Initiative ministry leaders as they boldly share the gospel. ■

COME AND HELP US:

Work directly with national partners, equipping, assisting, and discipling them to reach communities that North Americans cannot easily access. Take your next step at abwe.org/help-afghans.

The Unreached Within Reach in South Africa

BY KATELYN HAWKINS

LOCATION: SOUTH AFRICA



Every few days, Travis crosses the street, dodging a stream of taxis and cars, and steps into another culture. Men call out greetings from the convenience stores and coffee shops lining the road, while veiled women watch from tented stalls offering discount clothing and bags. Travis approaches a group of men, rekindling a conversation started earlier that week over steaming cups of tea.

This urban sector of South Africa is heavily populated by refugees from the Horn of Africa, members of a highly unreached people group. Since the late 1990s, they have fled civil war, famine, and terrorism, undertaking dangerous journeys by boat or truck in search of employment in South Africa. Islam is deeply entrenched in their cultures, where 99 percent of the population is Muslim, and conversion is punishable by death.

“It would be hard—next to impossible—for me to go into their country and have a productive ministry, but here in South Africa, they’re within our reach,” said Travis.

Travis began interacting with this unreached people group in 2016, initiating conversations with vendors and residents and looking for opportunities to challenge Islamic traditions with the hope of the gospel.

“We use their business and what they’re doing as a means to engage with people,” he continued. “It’s a very suspicious community, very closed off, but as we spend more time with people and get into relationships with them, it becomes very normal that we’re there.”

Travis and other ministry leaders follow up with those who express interest in

the gospel, inviting them to Bible studies and churches away from the restrictions of their community. Concurrently, he seeks to mobilize the South African church to join him, sensing the urgency to reach, teach, and disciple new believers to carry the gospel back to family members in their homeland.

“To me it’s a win-win,” said Ron Washer, executive director for Africa. “We’re reaching the most difficult people group probably in the world, but we’re doing it in a safe, open society with great support. So why not do it?”

Editor’s Note: Travis’ name has been changed for security. ■

COME AND HELP US:

Use your social skills, creativity, and perseverance to reach unreached people groups, making contacts, building relationships, and engaging individuals in gospel conversations. Take your next step at abwe.org/go.



LLOYD & ATHENA PEACE
Brazil

“On the weekends, Lloyd assists an indigenous church with missionary outreach to their own tribe. On Fridays he flies national church leaders to minister in communities along the Amazon otherwise accessible only by boat, where they spend the weekend leading services, making home visits, and teaching Bible classes in areas that do not have qualified church leaders. He returns on Mondays to pick them up and drop them off in their home communities. He shares that it is a blessing to see local believers prioritize missionary endeavors.”



CLIFF & ALI REYNOLDS
England

“As our son, Caleb, plays American football on our community team and Cliff serves as a coach, we have built relationships with their teammates. We invited our church to attend the season opener, and 35 believers showed up to cheer and begin gospel conversations with the families on the sidelines. We were so thankful to show them that a church is a family.”

Losing a Leg to Gain His Soul

After witch doctors failed, a devastating injury leads a farmer to the Great Physician.

BY DR. JACK KEHL AND KATELYN HAWKINS

LOCATION: TOGO

A shot exploded through the night sky. Honoré fell to the ground, a searing pain radiating from his leg.

Honoré, a Togolese farmer, was walking to his village after a day's work in his field as darkness fell. Mistaking his movements for the rustles of an animal, a hunter fired upon him, the bullet shattering his tibia and nearly severing his right leg below the knee.

Honoré lay in the bush for a day before anyone heard his cries for help. A family member discovered him and transported him to his house, where the village witch doctor applied traditional remedies to his injuries. After two weeks, gangrene set in.

By the time Honoré was taken to Hôpital Baptiste Biblique (HBB), he was near death. Moved with compassion, the HBB staff operated, and God spared his life. Then, Honoré's life was saved eternally when he heard the gospel and embraced Christ during his hospitalization.

"He is able to smile despite having lost his leg because he now belongs to Jesus and has a sure and steadfast hope for all eternity," said HBB surgeon Dr. Jack Kehl.

HBB provides medical and spiritual care to over 20,000 patients annually.



Photo: Dr. Jack Kehl

By God's grace and the generous contributions of nearly 1,100 donors, the HBB Vision Project was fully funded in 2023, paving the way for expansions that will double the in-patient capacity, provide new facilities, and upgrade hospital equipment. These expansions will also enable HBB to begin training African surgeons in January 2024.

"Our team is thankful for God's provision for vital renovation and expansion at HBB," said Jack. "We have no doubt that God is at work and trust that he will multiply our impact in southern Togo as we make disciples for the glory of Jesus Christ. This harvest field is plentiful, and our laborers are too few. We are praying to the Lord of the harvest." ■

COME AND HELP US:

Use your training as a doctor, surgeon, pharmacist, nurse, physical therapist, laboratory technician, radiology technician, maintenance supervisor, project manager, construction worker, or administrator to serve in an ABWE hospital, showing Christ's love to patients with limited access to healthcare. Take your next step at abwe.org/go.

Church Growth and the Unexpected Blessing of Technology

Online services developed during COVID lockdowns lead to church growth in Western Europe.

BY KATELYN HAWKINS

LOCATION: PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

Pastor Carlos Martins looked up as an unfamiliar couple walked through the church doors. He greeted the couple warmly, silently wondering how they already seemed to know him. They quickly explained that they had faithfully watched the church's online services for six months during the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, and now that the church had resumed meeting in person, they wanted to attend.

"Today they are active and serving members of our church," he reported.

Carlos, pastor of Igreja Baptista de Linda-a-Velha in Portugal, is one of several ABWE ministry partners who have witnessed church growth after streaming their services during the pandemic.

"Many of our churches had two to five times the number of viewers as in-person attenders," related ABWE Regional Director Kyle Farran. "Now after COVID, we are seeing the fruit."

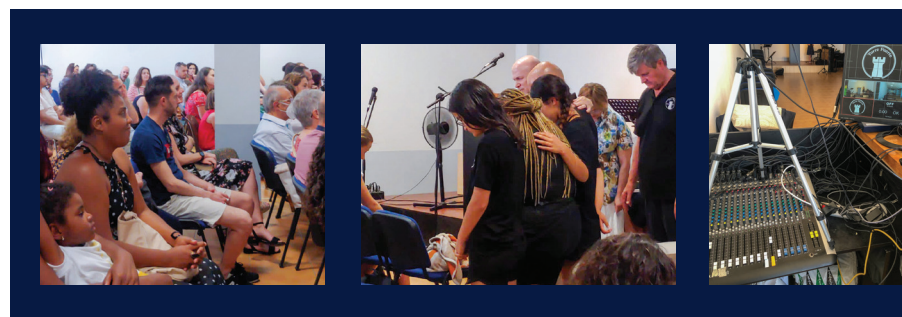
An ABWE church plant near Madrid, Spain, Iglesia Evangélica de Torres de la Alameda, has almost doubled in size, from around 40 attending in 2020 to 70 in 2023. During a recent baptism service, over 125 people squeezed into the church—one third of whom were unsaved friends and family members who heard testimonies of God's saving grace.

The church developed online services in 2020. When children were pro-

hibited from leaving their apartments during lockdowns, ABWE missionaries organized online events, partnering with other local churches. Their virtual Easter egg hunt reached almost 500 viewers—and all heard the gospel message. When restrictions lifted, the

"Today it is a ministry where several people from our church serve," said Carlos.

These churches' ministry expands far beyond the online sphere. Thomas, one of those baptized in Spain, came to Christ during the pandemic. Distraught



Photos: Caleb Hague

children's and youth ministries grew as families who had joined online started attending in person.

Other Spaniards, finding the Catholic church increasingly unrelatable, were curious about the Bible but did not feel comfortable walking into an evangelical church. Listening to sermons online allowed them to try it out from the privacy of their home.

"The most encouraging thing is that many Spanish believers who could never get their friends to come to our building can now send the sermons to their friends," said missionaries Caleb and Krystie Hague. "Their friends are responding to the messages, and they'll visit."

Recognizing the impact, many churches have continued streaming their services, using the equipment and technical knowledge developed during lockdowns.

over his recent divorce and isolated by social distancing, he began attending church at the recommendation of believing neighbors and trusted Christ. He is now enrolled in seminary and assists in the men's ministry to disciple others.

Kyle affirmed: "You never know what God is doing behind the scenes." ■

COME AND HELP US:

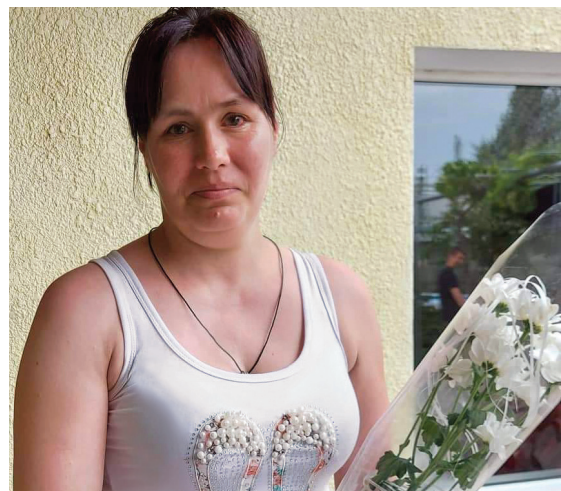
Join a church planting team and combine your skills in Bible teaching with creativity to develop unique ways to engage a community for Christ. Take your next step at abwe.org/go.

War and Revival

Amid ongoing war, local churches in Ukraine are witnessing long prayed-for salvations.

BY KATELYN HAWKINS

LOCATION: UKRAINE



Oksana trusted Christ and was baptized during the war in Ukraine.

War in Ukraine was not the first crisis in Oksana's life. Her plans had already been interrupted once before—eight years ago, when she unexpectedly discovered she was pregnant.

As she contemplated her options, she heard about the Choose Life Center in her home city of Odesa. Drawn by the kindness of the Ukrainian staff and ABWE missionary Holly F., she completed the center's prenatal program, joined their evangelistic Bible studies, and began attending church. Her interest in the gospel faded, however, as her son was born and spiritual questions were no longer a priority.

When Russian missiles began to barrage Ukraine in 2022, the onslaught only added to the growing chaos in Oksana's life. Stress from her three children, work, and her husband's alcoholism compounded. Aware of her difficulties, Holly invited

her to pick up aid packets distributed at the center and at the church's daily outreach services. Oksana began attending the church, quickly connecting with one of the ladies and meeting with a pastor. This time her heart was ready: the church held the answers she was seeking, and she trusted Christ.

The next time Oksana saw Holly, she greeted her excitedly: "Can you believe the message finally reached my heart?"

Oksana was baptized a few months later and is now faithfully praying for the salvation of her husband and attending Crossroads Church in Odesa.

The Church Stands Strong

After a year and a half of enduring full-scale war, the Ukrainian church continues to grow.

"Yes, they are physically, spiritually, and emotionally exhausted from regular air raid sirens, power outages, and constant news of death and

A growing evening Bible study meets at Crossroads Church in Odesa.



Photos: Holly F.



“We pray for the war to end, but for the revival to continue.”

Holly F.



Photos: Holly F.

destruction, but they aren't hiding in bomb shelters. They're living and serving,” reported ABWE Ukraine team leader Mike G.

Since February 2022, ABWE missionaries and national partners have distributed aid, provided blankets to internally displaced people, and transported food, medical supplies, and Bibles to hard-hit villages. Kyiv Theological Seminary continues to train church leaders, and the Christian Medical Association organizes mobile clinics in areas without sufficient medical care. Through the Ukraine Crisis Fund, ABWE has shipped over 5,400 pounds of medicines to aid their efforts.

At the center stands the Ukrainian church. One Kyiv church providing food to 700 people each week related that many are hungry for the gospel: “Our church has tripled in size in the last six months, and we have rented a larger building to accommodate them.”

Crossroads Church has adapted their focus to meet the changing needs of their community. Initially holding evangelistic services six days a week and offering hot meals and aid packets, they expanded to a second location when the situation

improved in fall 2022 and restarted Bible studies, baptism classes, addiction recovery groups, and children's and youth ministries.

“Now our church has so many new believers that we're forming discipleship groups,” said Holly.

Crossroads recently baptized 10 people and is considering planting a third church. They marvel at how God is working amid crisis.

“We pray for the war to end,” conveyed Holly, “but for the revival to continue.” ■

Top Left: Thirteen new Ukrainian believers were baptized at Crossroads Church.

Above: The Christian Medical Association organizes mobile clinics in areas lacking medical care.

COME AND HELP US:

Use your firm foundation in Christ to disciple new believers, walking with them through issues of life and faith. Or, employ your medical or counseling experience to reach families through crisis pregnancy ministries. Take your next step at abwe.org/go.



Graduates to Glory

**“Precious in the sight of the
Lord is the death of his saints.”**

Psalm 116:15

In 2023, the Lord called three active, long-term missionaries home. We honor them together as a global family.

BY CALEB GORTON

Bibiana Morgan

February 23, 1954 – April 23, 2023

Sending Church: Indian Rocks Baptist Church, Largo, Fla.

Ministry Locations: Liberia, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia



Photo: Morgan family

Growing up as one of 12 children, Bibiana doubtless experienced crowded rooms and busy schedules in her early years. Amid the bustle, however, the Lord was at work. At the age of 16, she came to faith through hearing the Word at a Sunday service with her mother. From that moment, her life was not her own, but the Lord's.

In the years following her conversion, Bibiana developed a deep passion for missions. As a native of St. Lucia, she had always felt a particular call to bring Christ to the St. Lucian people, but the

winding road of God's providence did not initially give her that opportunity.

After their initial appointment to Liberia in 2000 and a brief period of service in Trinidad and Tobago, Bibiana's desire came to fruition when she and her husband, Peter, transferred to St. Lucia in September 2002.

Bibiana displayed steadfastness in her labor for the Lord in St. Lucia and to her final hour. She considered it a high privilege to serve her Lord, which abundantly overflowed in countless ways to countless people. She was involved in

Bible studies, youth camps, marriage seminars, women's retreats, abuse counseling, English lessons, music classes, and soccer ministry.

Though the news of terminal illness is always grave, Bibiana knew it was not the end, but the beginning. When the doctor told her that she did not have long to live, she said, "Oh, don't worry about me, doctor. I am ready to die and go to be with my Savior, Jesus Christ."

Becky Sterken

May 2, 1966 – April 12, 2023

Sending Church: Shelby Road Baptist Church, Shelby, Mich.

Ministry Location: Central America and the Caribbean



Photo: Sterken family

The daughter of a Michigan pastor, Becky heard the gospel from virtually the moment she was born. The Lord blessed those ordinary means of grace, and she professed faith at the age of four. When she committed her life to the service of the Lord as a teenager, Becky could only imagine how the Lord would use her in the years to come.

The heart for missions and the local church that marked her early years deepened throughout her life, and in July 2010, Becky and her husband, Mark, received an appointment to serve with

Live Global in Central America and the Caribbean. She joyfully carried out that calling, working alongside national pastors to strengthen and encourage the local church and the indigenous community.

Becky lived a life that impacted those around her, and as her life drew to a close, that impact was only magnified. Even as she was plagued by the constant pain of cancer, her face was marked by an equally constant smile. Her hope and joy in the face of such dire circumstances deeply touched those around her.

As she enjoys the glories of heaven, her life is still pointing people to Christ. The testimony of Becky's faith opened many doors for gospel proclamation. One six-year-old girl in particular, who heard the story of Becky's life at her memorial service, is now trusting in Christ for salvation because of Becky's faithful bearing of the standard of her Lord.

Les Collins

October 17, 1956 – February 14, 2023

Sending Church: Woodside Bible Church, Troy, Mich.

Ministry Location: South Asia



Photo: Collins family

A man of faith, Les Collins maximized his years on the mission field for the glory of God. As someone who entered overseas ministry later in life, Les leaves an impact outweighing the number of his years of service.

His first experience of missions was a short-term trip to South Asia from 1999–2000. The Lord used that trip to ignite in Les and his wife, Debbie, a desire for missions which he carried to the end.

A facilities manager by profession, Les did not restrict his service to campus maintenance. He actively sought

opportunities to preach to and disciple those among whom he worked. This passion was exemplified by his joyful undertaking of the tedious task of learning the local language as an adult to share the gospel with locals in their own tongue.

During his tenure in South Asia, he was involved in the construction of the mission hospital. When the time came for its dedication, however, Les was gravely ill. As a patient in the hospital, he asked to be relocated to a room with a window from which he could see the dedication tent. Still too far from such

a significant event for those he so dearly loved, Les mustered the strength to walk the 200 yards to the tent and back to the hospital to sit alongside those to whom he had devoted his life.

Les lived a life of diligent labor and is now enjoying eternal rest and worship. ■

Why Stewardship Matters in Missions

Stewardship is more than just one of many responsibilities—it is our divine calling to faithfully manage what has been entrusted to us. As devoted followers of Christ, we are called to steward God’s resources for his glory and the advancement of his kingdom. The heart of God for the nations is revealed in Scripture, culminating in the Great Commission—the solemn charge to share the gospel and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20).

Scripture reminds us of the importance of supporting missionaries, our fellow workers for the truth (3 John 8). Legacy giving presents a unique opportunity to invest in ministries dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission. By leaving a lasting legacy through your will, you extend your impact beyond this earthly journey, enabling the gospel work that ignites passionate discipleship and spreads the light of Christ to the darkest corners of the world.

Envision the eternities impacted, the cultures changed, and the nations reached as your planned gift continues to fuel missions for generations to come. Your partnership, demonstrated through thoughtful financial planning, becomes a powerful testament of faith, obedience, and unwavering commitment to the Great Commission.

Our moments are fleeting. Embrace the divine calling to stewardship and join us in fulfilling Christ’s mission for the next generation. As you consider your role in this divine endeavor, may you hear the Lord say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:23). ■

**TALK TO OUR
TEAM ABOUT LEAVING
A LEGACY**



Duane Early

Chief Development Officer
717.909.2394



Greg Heath

Director of Legacy Giving
616.822.2714

Or email
advancement@abwe.org

It's Never Been Easier to Help a Missionary

Every missionary needs biblical training, accountability, leadership, encouragement, help communicating with their supporters, and guidance when something goes wrong.

You can meet those needs with one gift to the Global Gospel Fund.

The Global Gospel Fund helps missionaries every day by providing these crucial services.

Why? So missionaries can be free to focus on the ministry God called them to.

Here are a few things partners like you accomplished recently through the fund:

- Helped send a new team to an unreached people group in Asia
- Saved a pregnancy center in Peru from shutting down
- Supported medical missions in the Philippines
- Funded grants for church planters in North America

Your gift makes a real difference to 1,000 missionaries across the world. Become a partner today and help a missionary succeed in ministry.

abwe.org/give-now



GLOBAL GOSPEL FUND

**MULTIPLY
YOUR
IMPACT**

abwe.org/give-now

Photo: Jordan Timpy



Celebrating God's Abounding Grace

2022 FINANCIAL REPORT

We don't often use the word "abound" today.

Yet Paul uses it twice in 2 Corinthians 9:8: "God is able to make all grace *abound* to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may *abound* in every good work." God gives us abounding grace so that we can, in turn, abound in good works.

We saw that in 2022 in a stunning way. Despite setbacks from global economic instability, the Lord raised up an army of generous Christ-followers giving sacrificially at levels surpassing that of the years prior. Why? So we can abound in good works—being busy about the work of missions.

To all who have faithfully given: *thank you*. Through you, God is providing in incredible ways for the work of missions.

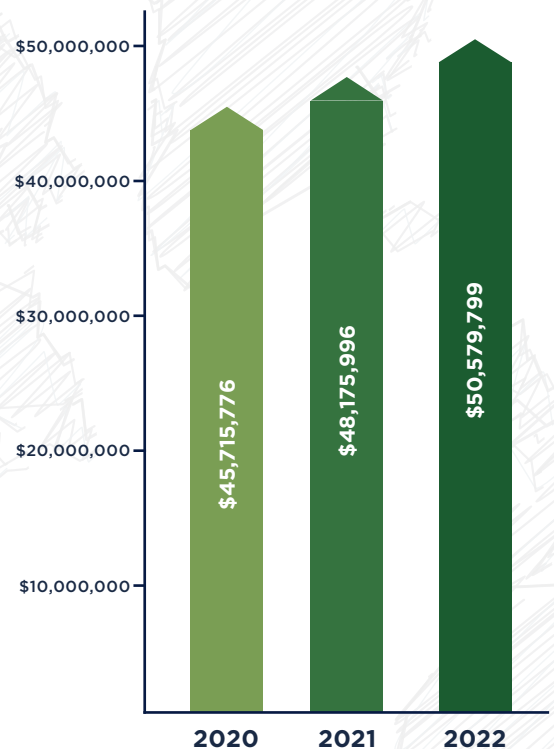
Yet his greatest provision is not merely financial. It's what Paul describes in the verse above: grace. It's God's kindness to us—in saving us, and in empowering us to keep on serving him.

Once more, on behalf of every ABWE missionary and ministry: thank you.



Paul L. Davis
President, ABWE

DONOR GENEROSITY



STORIES OF IMPACT

UKRAINE CRISIS FUND

Raised in 2022: \$1,773,382.07

National partners and churches throughout Eastern Europe are receiving physical aid to help them in outreach to Ukrainian refugees, and locals are noticing. One ministry partner remarked that refugees are saying that "no one treats them like Christians do, and they feel God's love to them."

Read more on **pg. 8**



GLOBAL GOSPEL FUND

Raised in 2022: \$516,422.86

Total Needed: \$400,000.00

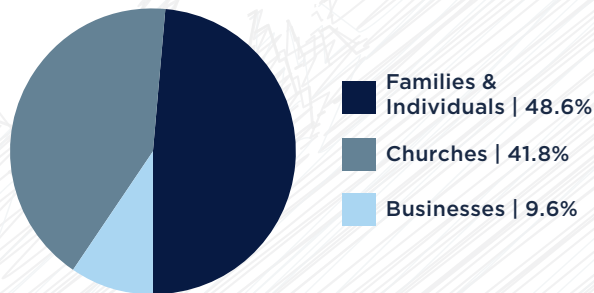
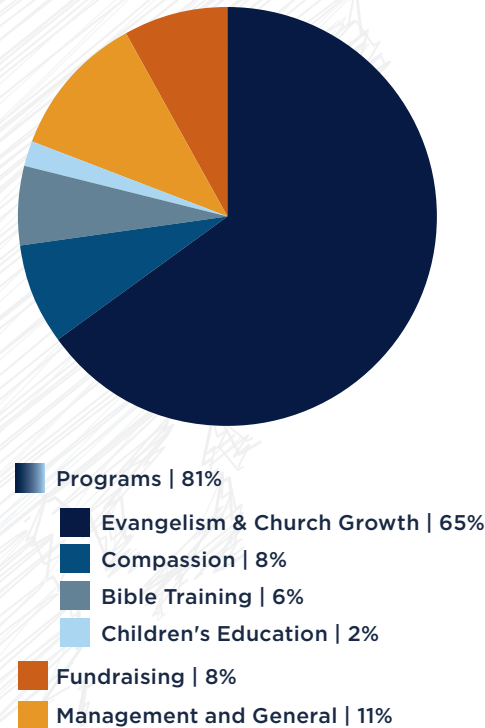
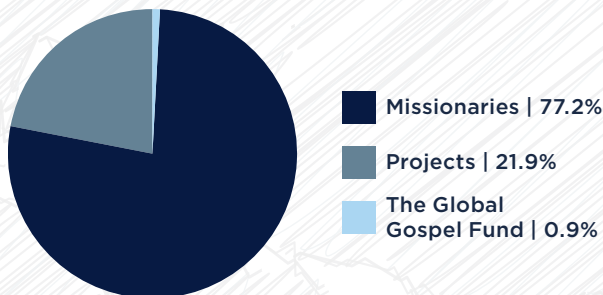
The Global Gospel Fund helps missionaries with vital care and support services so that they are free to focus on making disciples and building up the local church.

Learn more at
abwe.org/message/GGF



WHO SUPPORTS ABWE?

(% of total giving)

**HOW FUNDS WERE USED****WHAT DID THEY SUPPORT?**

*Complete and audited financial statements are available at abwe.org/abwe-annual-financial-statements.

**HÔPITAL BAPTISTE BIBLIQUE
VISION PROJECT (TOGO)****Total Raised: \$8,300,291.80****Total Needed: \$8,260,000.00**

FULLY
FUNDED
**THANK
YOU!**

"God has supplied the funds to complete the HBB Vision Project! Praise the Lord! Having the Vision Project completed will allow more medical personnel to be part of the ministry there and will also allow them to serve more patients, which is the key to getting the gospel out. People come to us knowing they have a physical need but not knowing that they have a spiritual need as well. It will open doors to more people."

— Ron Washer, executive director for Africa, ABWE GO

Read more on **pg. 6**

GOROKA PROJECT**Raised in 2022: \$353,719.26****Total Needed: \$6,700,000.00**

With over 500 graduates to date—many working as pastors, church planters, and lay leaders—the expansion of Goroka Baptist Bible College and the Seigu Medical Clinic will have a dramatic effect on training the next generation of Christian leaders in Papua New Guinea.

Learn more at abwe.org/message/goroka

Read more on **pg. 26**

Photos (L to R): Nathan Jones, Liz Ortiz, Hannah Strayer, Jordan Timpy

Struck Down, but Not Destroyed

BY KATELYN HAWKINS

Persevering through the devastation of the February 2023 earthquake, the Turkish church rises as a testimony of faith, served by ABWE workers on the front lines.

“In one minute, it was all gone.”

Two Turkish brothers, gray-haired, mustachioed, and sorrowful, led their visitors toward the crumbling rubble of a house hurled upside down. They pointed to a crushed stairway, filled in with chunks of cement, fragments of tile coating the ground outside.

“The staircase collapsed as we were running out the door. The portico collapsed and just missed us, and we found ourselves out in the cold rain, watching our house crumble right next to us, and our businesses.”

The ruins of their life’s work extended down the street: a car dealership, a candy shop, a grocery store, all destroyed. Surveying the panorama of devastation, the men turned slowly, motioning to each flattened apartment building and relating the number of people they knew who had perished in each one. In their neighborhood outside of Antakya, very few buildings still stood.

Following the earthquake, the brothers, patriarchs of a family of 14, had lived with their family in a single tent pitched next to the rubble. They had met their visitors—a four-man team from Live Global—almost two weeks previously, when they had pulled into their street with sleeping bags and additional tents for the family. Although the brothers conveyed their need for shoes, handing over a paper scrap with each family member’s size painstakingly recorded, they were surprised when the team returned to fulfill their promise, carrying boxes of shoes and bags of food. The family shared glasses of tea with their guests, and when they proved willing to listen, they shared their grief.

Overwhelmed with loss, the brothers looked at them: “What do we do now?”

Shaken Foundations

When the magnitude 7.8 earthquake rocked southern Turkey and northern Syria in the predawn hours of February 6, 2023, many were left struggling to escape. Nine hours later, a magnitude 7.5 struck the same region, toppling already-damaged structures and increasing the loss of life.

Jonathan, an ABWE worker in the region, saw notifications of the quakes on his phone. “When we started hearing about the devastation, we weren’t getting the complete view of what happened,” he recalled.

The mountainous terrain, combined with fractured roads and unusually cold temperatures, freezing rain, and snow, delayed rescue efforts. The Turkish government later announced that

Editor’s Note: Several names of ABWE personnel and Live Global national partners have been changed for security.



Jeff, a Live Global director, surveys the earthquake damage in southern Turkey.

Two Turkish brothers show their destroyed home to a visiting Live Global team.



10 provinces experienced a state of emergency, and more than 50,000 people had been killed.


In a nation reported by the Joshua Project to be over 96 percent Muslim and 99 percent unreached, the spiritual implications are tragic.

Although few in Turkey today have opportunity to hear the gospel, the region was once a vibrant center of Christianity. The hard-hit city of Antakya, the site of New Testament

Antioch and the place Christ-followers were first called Christians, was evangelized by Jewish believers displaced by persecution and Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene reaching the Gentile population. As “a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11:24), its congregation, led by Barnabas and Paul, became a pillar in the early church and pioneers in spreading the gospel, commissioning the first missionary journeys.

This strong foundation was shaken, however, as the city was struck by disaster and invasions in the sixth century and later fell to the advancing force of Islam. The Christian population crumbled, only a remnant remaining in the modern Middle East.

But on February 6, churches throughout Turkey—despite their small size—immediately acted to aid their countrymen.



“As someone serving here, you feel kind of helpless, like what do you do, how do you help,” said Jonathan. “The reality of work in Turkey is that there are maybe 10,000 believers in the entire country of 85-plus million. . . . [B]ut in our congregation, everyone knew we had to do something. Churches came together—not just churches within the country, but believers worldwide helped, and are continuing to help.”

As an initial response, ABWE personnel channeled funds through the Middle East Compassion Fund to trusted Christian leaders in the affected area. These local pastors organized efforts to distribute hot meals, groceries, toiletries, diapers, and infant formula. When one reported that many had been forced to flee their homes in their pajamas and had no access to clean undergarments, the ABWE team supplied thousands of undergarments for men, women, and children.

From the beginning, ABWE workers prioritized partnering with churches on the ground able to provide long-term physical and spiritual care in their community. “We might have one chance of being light, being salt, and possibly having a gospel opportunity, but the churches that remain there are going to have a continued ability to do that,” explained Jonathan.

A Modern Tentmaking Ministry

One urgent need quickly surfaced: temporary shelters for residents who had lost their homes but needed to remain in their towns. As over 10,000 after-

shocks added to their unstable situation, many became terrified of staying in an enclosed structure. The solution, a local church informed Jonathan, was to fabricate tents. With high costs and scarcity limiting options for pre-made tents, the church sent Jonathan a design to duplicate. He and the church he leads immediately got to work, following in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul as tentmakers.

Scouring the city for supplies, they found galvanized piping at a scrap yard and contracted a welder to fashion pieces for the frame.

“We were having to piece the tents together,” he recalled.

It took several days to perfect the design. Once they had a model, they took it to an industrial tailor who specialized in canvas coverings for vehicles. With the tailor, they designed a thick canvas cover that could withstand cold and wind and permit cooking inside with a wood stove. The result was a family-sized, 9-by-12-foot dwelling made for half the price and much stronger.

When they had finished 10 tents, they loaded them into a van with relief supplies and drove them to Antakya. Navigating through streets narrowed by rubble and crushed cars, they distributed the tents, primarily to families who had to stay close to livestock or crops. To connect their ministry to the local church, each tent had a sticker explaining that it had been donated through the Protestant churches.

“The Turkish mentality is that to be Turkish is to be Muslim,” Jonathan explained. “So for anyone to talk about a Turkish Christian, they literally say, ‘What? That’s impossible.’ So we’re showing them that this thing they didn’t think could exist does exist, and the people they think of as the enemy are showing them love.”

Another ABWE couple, Gabriel and Sarah, traveled to a different location

“They couldn’t believe that believers from across the world were being so generous and coming to help when so many other Muslim countries were not.”

Sarah

ABWE workers designed, built, and delivered tents to help families in need of shelter.



Photos: ABWE personnel



Photo: ABWE personnel

to set up a tent city organized by fellow believers. In the evenings, they sat with groups of women, listening to their stories and showing them love as they lamented together over cups of tea.

“We had a few conversations about our hope and beliefs and were able to pray for them,” noted Sarah. “They couldn’t believe that believers from across the world were being so generous and coming to help when so many other Muslim countries were not.”

The Voice of Jesus

One ABWE team serving with Live Global experienced the unique power of relationships to open doors for sharing the gospel. When the earthquake struck, Robin, a Live Global partner from North Africa serving Syrian refugees in Turkey, traveled down to Antakya to assist an international team of believers at a relief center.

“Robin has something none of the people at the center have, and that’s the ability to speak Arabic,” said Jeff, a Live Global director. In this region near the Turkish-Syrian border, Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees alike speak Arabic rather than Turkish, complicating relief work.

On Robin’s third trip to the area, he was joined by Jeff and two other men from the US. Equipped with rented vans and Robin’s ability to communicate, they delivered hygiene bags and food staples to contacts from the center and Robin’s previous visits. With each delivery, they were greeted warmly and invited to sit for tea or coffee according to the generosity of Turkish hospitality, even if their hosts were staying in tents or damaged buildings.

“People wanted fellowship and community. They wanted to debrief their story, or they wanted to forget it and

ABWE personnel partnered with local churches to distribute undergarments, hygiene bags, and food to people affected by the earthquake.

“I want to know more about [Jesus].”

Turkish volunteer

enjoy making new friends and drinking tea,” explained Jeff. “Everyone had a story of loss. The man out for an early run, returning to find his whole family gone. The young surgeon who watched patients die when the earthquake cut off utilities. The elderly woman who lost 60 members of her family.”

Part of Robin’s strategy is to keep going back, showing Christ’s compassion, and building the relationships crucial to ministry in the Middle East. Many of the people they visited connected with Robin on social media, urging him to stay in touch. Drawing from experience in the region and the direction of the Holy Spirit, he looks for opportunities to start sharing the gospel in a culturally appropriate manner.

“We are likely to be the only Christians that these people may ever have a conversation with,” said Jeff.

The testimony of their love extended even to Turkish Muslims with whom they partnered to distribute aid. One young man volunteered in a warehouse loading trucks, even though he had lost his house and several family members. Touched by how many from around the world had come to help, he realized that he shouldn’t feel sorry for himself but join their efforts. When Jeff and Robin noticed he was working without sufficient clothing for the cold, they bought him a coat and shoes when they left the city to resupply. He responded with overwhelming delight at their care. As the volunteers shared the gospel with him as they worked, he pondered what he heard and saw enacted.

“I’m hearing Jesus’ voice,” he told Robin. “I’m hearing him speak to me, and I want to know more about him.”

Open Doors

The opportunities to minister through existing partnerships are growing. In Syria, where little international aid can enter due to 12 years of war and counting, Live Global partner Malik helped get funds to a Syrian pastor distributing food and ministering to traumatized children.

In both Turkey and Syria, ABWE workers and national partners have faithfully continued ministry in the spirit of the early church at Antioch, which itself sent aid to believers suffering from natural disaster (see Acts 11:28-29), serving the Lord today through crisis relief.

“It’s a daunting task for the tiny Turkish church, but even with a task so big, the church didn’t back down,” said Jonathan. “And a lot of doors have opened up for the churches.”

They continue to show Christ’s love by helping the hurting and speaking the

gospel when hearts are ready, trusting God to rebuild his church in this spiritually dark region.

Jonathan added, “Being a testimony for Christ again in the first place that Christians were called Christians is a really special opportunity.” ■

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Photo: ABWE personnel

ABWE workers and national partners show Christ’s love and speak the gospel when hearts are ready



Sent to Need

BY STEPHANIE BOON

After 11 years in Tanzania, I can say that our greatest occasions for ministry and our strongest relationships have developed from our times of need.

There is a particular kind of faith and character built from being in need. For most of us, it is far more comfortable to serve. Serving grants us a state of control. Need, however, forces us to relinquish control and depend on others to provide. More importantly, it requires us to rely upon God. Time and again, our God has revealed his power and provided his strength in our neediest times. During those times, we have been tremendously blessed and supported by our Tanzanian brothers and sisters. The moments we would never want to describe in a newsletter are often when God is most at work.

One of those not-for-the-newsletter moments happened over 11 years ago, before our missionary sandals had even fully soaked up the stains of red African soil. We visited a small orphanage just down the road from our language school. A skinny teenage boy named Joseph welcomed us at the gate. We arrived with a Kiswahili children's Bible and plans to read stories to the children. Only we couldn't pronounce the unfamiliar words well enough to be understood. Joseph heard our struggle and gently took the book from our hands. He read the stories to the children as we sat to the side, mortified and humiliated that we couldn't even read a simple book.

But Joseph wasn't embarrassed. He was proud that he was able to help us. In fact, he began coming to our home on weekends to help us continue to learn Kiswahili. Weekends turned into weeks, and weeks into months, and eventually Joseph left his home at the orphanage and became a permanent member of our family.

Fast forward to today. Not only did our inability to read a children's book bring us a son; it brought us a ministry partner. Joseph heard the gospel and came to know Jesus. The more he learned about his Savior, the more burdened he became for the lost. Through ministries he started, hundreds of children, youth, and their parents have been saved. Countless young men have been discipled. Medical ministries offer care to the sick and injured in our city and in villages throughout Tanzania. I look at our son, who is now a remarkable married man and new father, and stand in awe of God's sovereign plan that came forth from our desperate need.

Back then, we didn't write in our newsletter: "This week we went to an orphanage and failed at reading the easiest children's Bible available, but God will do something miraculous from this." We had no idea that, in our moment of "failure," God's redemptive plan was at work in Joseph's life and in many other lives. I wish we knew that being in need was one of the greatest tools that God had given us.

Now, looking back, I could fill a book with stories of God working through our neediness. As valuable as it was to plan, dream, and cast visions for ministry, God's plan was for us to learn the humility of Christ, who arrived on earth fully God yet fully human, a helpless and needy baby.

For all of those considering missions, currently serving as missionaries, or following Christ in your homeland: May God grant us the faith necessary to admit our need, and may it all—even the failures and sitting on the sidelines—be for his glory. ■



Stephanie Boon serves in Tanzania with her husband, Aaron. Stephanie works with Sifa Threads, where they equip women through the gospel, artisanal training, and tools to launch their own business.

“Not only did our inability to read a children’s book bring us a son; it brought us a ministry partner.”

Can We Leave Our Nation to Save It?

BY ALEX KOCHAN

Our love for our own nation can coincide with our involvement in global missions.

William Carey's (1761-1834) heart broke for India. Yet he also yearned for spiritual renewal in Europe, writing that Europe's example was "a thousand times worse" than the superstitions of Hinduism (Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, Banner of Truth, 1971, 140). Part of Carey's motive in going to the subcontinent may have been, according to one unverified quote, "to save England from spiritual collapse."

We too know the sorrow that comes with seeing spiritual decay in our midst. One tempting response would be to get our own house in order first before turning our focus toward global missions. Yet why did Carey, assuming the accounts are true, think he could leave his home country to save it? This strategic retreat commends itself to us in three ways.

1. To Stir Jealousy

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, longed above all for the salvation of his Jewish

kinsmen—such that he would have even cut himself off from Christ to somehow save them (Romans 9:3). Yet he knew that God had closed their hearts and opened the Gentiles' (Acts 18:6, 28:25-28). His solution was to draw attention to his Gentile ministry, provoking the Jews to holy jealousy and thereby winning them (Romans 11:13-14). Likewise, our neighbors might not grasp the gravity of our gospel until we put shoe leather to it. When we go out for the sake of Christ's name among the nations, we magnify the surpassing worth of Christ to our watching countrymen. Perhaps the Lord would use our act of going to turn hearts toward him.

Of course, God's Word always accomplishes its purpose (Isaiah 55:11)—and sometimes that purpose is to witness not to salvation but judgment. When Jesus sent his disciples out on short-term mission to the Jewish nation, he told them to shake the dust from their feet as a sign

against towns that rejected them (Matthew 10:14). Jesus too was rejected by his hometown (Matthew 13:57).

Whether our witness sparks jealousy or portends judgment, our consolation is that God is glorified. Paul tells us that God desires to make known the full range of his attributes—both mercy and justice (Romans 9:22-24). And when God is glorified, his people rejoice, and his lost sheep may yet be drawn to him.

2. To Catalyze Revival

David Livingstone (1813-1873), the famed missionary physician, remarked, "The best remedy for a sick church is to put it on a missionary diet." History and Scripture both attest that the healthiest churches are sending churches. Like spouses who quickly discover the depths of their selfishness when they become first-time parents, churches who send their sons and daughters on mission will find themselves growing in sincer-



ity, self-sacrifice, and boldness in witness. A church that thinks globally is also a church equipped to act locally—and, should the Lord deem fit, see revival as the fruit of its gospel preaching.

3. To Save Senders

When Jewish Christians from Cyprus fled to Antioch from the wave of persecution following Stephen's martyrdom, the church they planted in Antioch became the first to send missionaries back to Cyprus (Acts 11:19-21; 13:4). In essence, God's plan to reach Cyprus had meant leaving Cyprus first.

What if winning the nations today is part of God's plan to reach our own

nation in future generations? Already we hear reports of churches in Africa and Asia sending missionaries to North America. What if we said to these brothers, like the man from Macedonia, "Come over and help us"? When the flood of God's judgment eventually subsides in the West, should we not be ready with an ark full of gospel preachers ready to be fruitful and multiply?

In sum: following Carey's lead, we need not pit our love for our nation against God's heart for all the nations. Perhaps, if we are willing to pour out our lives for the ends of the earth, the Lord may pour out blessings back on our land. ■



Alex Kocman is the director of communications and media for ABWE. He serves as general editor for Message Magazine and co-hosts The Missions Podcast. He lives in Pennsylvania with his wife and three children.



Photo: Jordan Timpy

Torch Bearers for the Next Generation

BY JORDAN TIMPY

LOCATION: PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Papua New Guinea can feel like a spiritually dark place, given its culture of brutal tribal violence, animism, and ancestor worship, but when I entered the campus of Goroka Baptist Bible College (GBBC), the shadows receded. GBBC shines like a light, and its students are torch bearers.

At GBBC, men train to become church planters to spread the gospel to unreached villages and people groups. Their passion portrays hope for the people of Papua New Guinea. But when I met the women at the college studying to become primary school teachers and incorporating the gospel into their lesson plans, I saw hope for future generations.

Marian (pictured above) departed from the expected road of marrying young and serving a husband to instead enroll at GBBC and wholly serve God.

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“It’s God’s calling for my life,” she explained. “When I graduate from GBBC, I wish to become a Christian school teacher and to teach God’s Word to the kids.”

The mission of GBBC is to train tomorrow’s Christian leaders today, and godly women like Marian demonstrate that Christians can use any profession to transform their culture and the world. ■



Jordan Timpy is a professional photographer, videographer, and co-owner of Agape Visuals. He and his wife, Cassie, capture stories of hope for ministries worldwide, helping them visually communicate their mission and impact.

Our Great Cloud of Witnesses



“Why are you weeping?” Steve asked in the local pidgin language.

The pilot had not been in Papua New Guinea long when, one September morning in 1995, he flew to the Bundi area and began to practice his new language skills with locals near the airstrip. One woman approached, limping forward on crutches to interrogate the newly minted missionary.

“Who are you, and why are you here?” she asked.

“My name is Steve Aholt, and I’m a Baptist missionary,” came the reply. “I’m here to see if you guys want a Baptist church in this village.”

The woman broke down in tears, explaining: “I’ve been praying for 17 years that God would send a Baptist missionary to our village to start a Baptist church. And you’re an answer to my prayer.”

Later, Steve did the math. His journey to the mission field had not been straightforward. Yet it had been exactly 17 years since he had first begun

to yield to the growing burden the Lord was placing in his heart for cross-cultural missions. Now he understood that he wasn’t the only one in whom the Spirit had been at work all those years ago.

“When you feel the prompting of the Holy Spirit, be ready to say yes and be willing to go if he wants you to go,” Steve remarked recently. “If he sends you and calls you somewhere, he’s gonna provide for everything that you have need of.”

That winding journey was not over.

Steve recounts a fateful phone call one day while working at the airport. “It’s Tyler,” Steve’s brother announced. Their 25-year-old son, back home in the US, had been killed in an accident.

“[T]he Lord gave me peace right away . . . absent from the body, present with the Lord,” Steve recalled.

Steve and Sandy Aholt persevered through tragedy and ministered faithfully in Papua New Guinea for 24 years. ■



For 2,000 years, Christ has been extending his kingdom through ordinary, faithful people. Their blood, sweat, and tears are the seeds of the global church. The gospel is spreading across the world, saving sinners, renewing nations, and changing everything.

But today, many in the modern church are weak, torn, comfortable.

The Book of Hebrews says we’re surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses watching us from heaven, spurring us on. The stories of these faithful Christ-followers who’ve gone before us are what we need to wake up and return to our first love for Christ’s mission.

Hear the rest of the Aholts’ incredible story. Tune in to the Cloud of Witnesses podcast, available now, to be inspired, challenged, and encouraged in your own walk of faith. Join host Alex Kocman as he unveils the lives of remarkable individuals who have played significant roles in advancing Christ’s kingdom throughout the century-long history of ABWE.

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