

mission:**world**



REAL LIFE

THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT THE MISSION FIELD

May - June 2019 ::: The Great Commission Magazine of the BMA



REAL LIFE

THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT THE MISSION FIELD

BY: Dr. John David Smith
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bmamissions.org

Early in our ministry in the Cape Verde Islands, we were working on all the necessary documents for our residency there, setting up house, and endless other things. One day, I needed **one** document from a government office in order to accomplish everything on my list. I had submitted my request a few days earlier. I walked into the office as soon as they opened on Monday, eager to get lots done that day. I was glad to be the only person waiting in line. I was also happy to see that the four employees were seemingly sitting around with nothing to do, so certainly they had put their seal on my document...because that's **all** I needed. After a long wait, the gentleman in charge asked me if he could help me. I stated my purpose for being there to which he responded, "Come back in three days; it should be ready then." I was disappointed, angry, and imagined all the things I could say to him about how he was holding up my show! I refrained from saying anything; but as I

walked back home, I rehearsed several things in my mind that I would have liked to have said to him! This was one of many encounters that I would have with **myself** in adapting to a new culture. The areas that were painful to me were in the areas of me being task-oriented while they were people-oriented. Also, I was time-oriented, and they were event-oriented. Getting things done in a timely manner was at the very top of my list. I don't think it was even in the top ten on their list. Needless to say, this behind-the-scenes struggle with cultural adaptation caused me lots more frustration until I adjusted. This issue of *mission:world* is about opening to you a small window into the lives of missionaries so that you can see "Real Life: Things You Never Knew About the Mission Field." We trust that stories of "real life" frustrations and victories will give you new insights on how to pray for and support your missionaries.

BMA FAMILY OF MINISTRIES

To help fulfill the Great Commission, the people of the BMA have created a family of ministries. Each has a unique directive, but all have the same Great Commission purpose.

BMA Missions seeks to facilitate churches in fulfilling the Great Commission through assessment, training, coaching, and missionary care.

Lifeword assists in taking the gospel throughout the world through radio, television, the internet, and mobile devices.

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BMA Foundation is the endowment instrument for all of the ministries of the Baptist Missionary Association.

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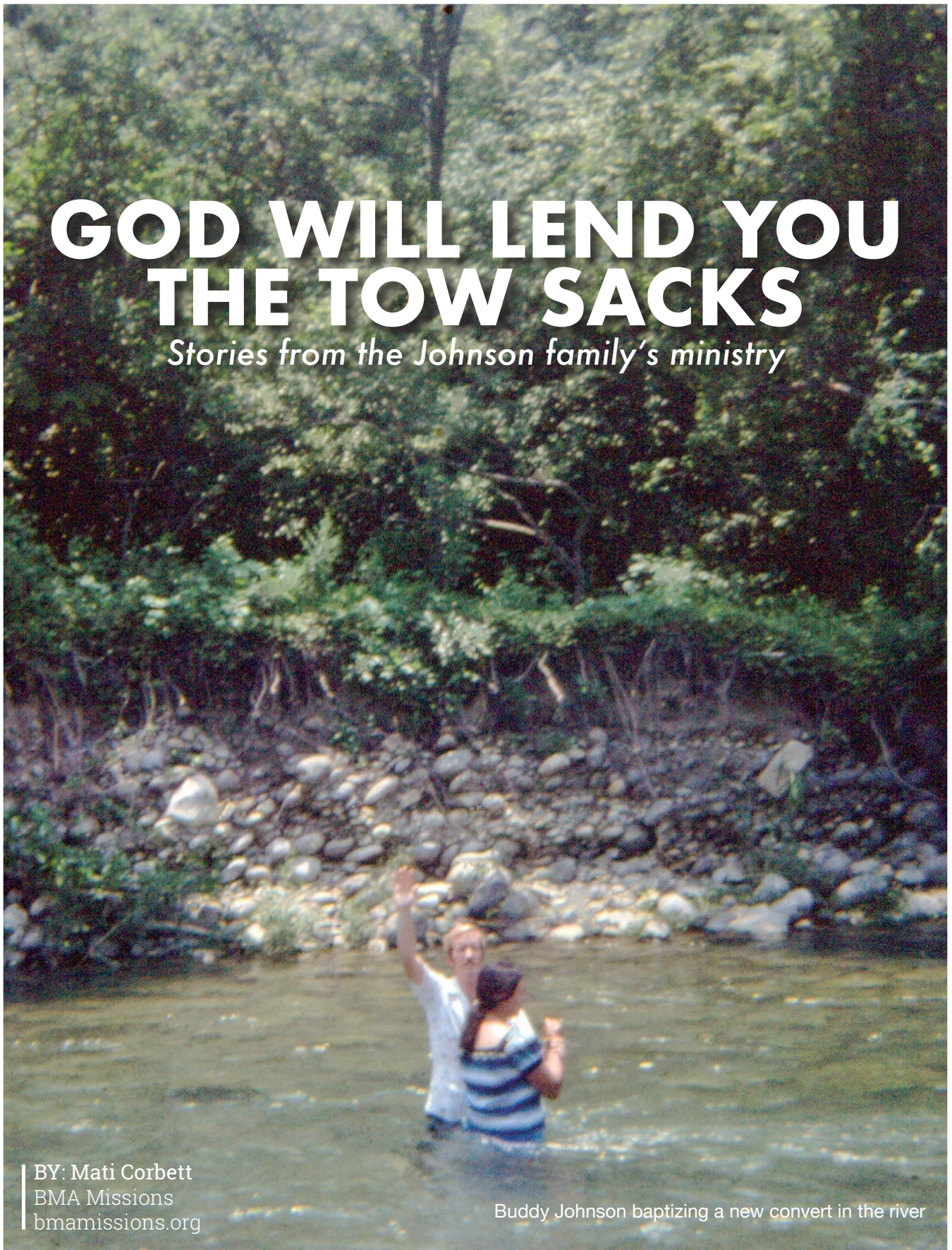
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GOD WILL LEND YOU THE TOW SACKS

Stories from the Johnson family's ministry



BY: Mati Corbett
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Buddy Johnson baptizing a new convert in the river

Buddy and Martha Johnson with their boys



These stories are taken from Buddy Johnson's book, *Tow Sacks*, which will soon be available for purchase. In this book, he talks about his family's call to the mission field in Mexico, their time serving in that country, and their eventual transition back to the United States. He details many stories about their international ministry, which stretched nearly thirty years, explaining throughout the book how "When God starts giving, He will even lend you the *Tow Sacks*."

Boys Selling Rats:

I had no idea that there would be a problem with our moving trailer as we traveled into another country. There was no problem with the contents, just the importation of the little trailer. We spent an entire day dealing with the border officials, and were finally permitted to continue our trip toward San Luis Potosí. We spent our very first night in Mexico in a little hotel in the town of San Fernando. We never forgot the emotions of that day and night. The remainder of the trip was rather uneventful until we stopped beside the isolated roadside for the boys to use the bathroom. There were no houses for miles, so I assumed this was a safe place to stop, and surely there would be no onlookers.

Much to our surprise, two small boys about nine or ten years of age appeared by us holding a couple of rats in their hands. These rats live in the roots of the "maguey" cactus plants, and they are edible by the local folks. Naturally, we did not buy the rats, but as we drove away, Martha asked:

"Did you see that?"

"Yeah," I said. "They were almost as big as squirrels."

"No," she exclaimed, "their eyes!"

"Naw, I didn't notice their eyes, just their tails and teeth."

"No, the boys' eyes!" she explained. "They were so empty, without sparkle, no joy. Their eyes were expressionless! Poor children," she moaned.

God was beginning to put in her heart something that He wanted her to try to change in the lives of little children. Before we even arrived to San Luis, God was preparing us for many years of service and work.

Robbed:

Upon arriving to our house [after going on a trip to visit several villages and share Christ], my full heart was immediately emptied! I opened the gate to our patio, which was padlocked, when my heart sank.

The door was open!

The glass had been broken and the door was standing wide open. As I entered, I thought, “Thank you, Lord, that Martha and the kids weren’t here,” as they were on a furlough in the United States. Every drawer in the kitchen was open and empty. I hurried to the bedroom and found a window broken there also. Our shoes, combs, brushes, jewelry, almost all my pants (yes, my pants) were gone!

I hurried outside to observe a make shift ladder leaning against the wall which enclosed our back yard. There I found a pair of my pants with the legs tied making a bag. The thieves had used my pants to make bags to carry the smaller things they had taken. Apparently, as they were passing pants loaded with goodies over the wall, they became frightened and dropped a pant full.

I was learning that “stuff” is not all that important. However, I filed a report with the police, who came, collected fingerprints, and promised to call me when they found our things. Great! That never happened! Stuff can be replaced, and only memories of that which had found new owners remained.



The Johnson boys

The Boys’ Blonde Hair:

In Mexico, every Monday is a time for a brief flag ceremony and a short program. This ceremony is known as the “honors” program. This happens at 8:00 o’clock every Monday morning in every school in Mexico, all doing the same thing at the same time.

The principal of the school at Benito Juarez Elementary School welcomed all the students on our first morning at this school during the honors program, and then he introduced our sons, Grady and Scott. Most of the children had never seen a person with blonde hair and white skin.

At recess that day, some of the little boys in the school decided that they wanted some of that blonde hair from our two boys! After school that day, Leonor, our neighbor, related to us how the Johnson boys had stood back-to-back and fought to keep their hair. Through the years, all five of our boys lost hair to some of their classmates.

Scott came home from school angry. He said, “I’m not going to salute that ole flag. It’s the wrong color.” He told Leonor that if she would bring it home, “My mama will put blue on it, and it will be red, white, and blue instead of red, white, and green.”

The First Baptist Church:

While I was trying to evangelize in the villages, I was also trying to be daddy to my boys and husband to my wife. My time with the boys was spent playing in the orange grove and singing with them. I was learning to play the guitar, and we had learned songs from church in San Luis. I would sit on the front porch in the afternoons and sing with the kids, and I must say that they could really sing well.

It happened that during the first evening or two, only the four of us would sing and our neighbors' kids would come and listen. I began to teach the songs to them, and they would invite other friends to come the next day. Before long, I had a pretty good group of kids singing on the front porch.

One Saturday evening, I told them to come back to our house at 10:00 o'clock Sunday morning. I told them that we would sing some more, and I would give them a booklet. The next day, fourteen of them came to our very first Sunday school. I had built some benches, so we moved the furniture and held our first service. This was the meager beginning of the "First Baptist Church." We continued to meet on Sunday mornings and I continued to work in the villages.

The Explosion:

It was in our new, bigger house in Huejutla that we had a horrible experience. Paul Robinson and a group of young singers from Nicaragua and Central America called "The Mensajeros Maranata" happened to be with us singing and preaching in our new mission.

It was really cold for our part of the world, and Martha was going to bake a cake for the guests. Paul and I were outside in the street talking and meeting passers-by. Martha had mixed all the ingredients of the cake, placed the batter in the cake pan, and was preparing to light the oven on the stove and bake the cake. She had become famous in town not only for her cakes, but also for her icing and decorations. I, too, was really looking forward to the cake and coffee later in the day.

All of our gas appliances ran on LP gas or propane. When there is a leak, the gas settles in the lowest part of the stove or appliance that is connected to it. This time, the cold weather had caused escaped gas to settle in the lower part of the stove. Everything was prepared for her to bake the cake. At the same time, she was defrosting the freezer of her refrigerator. She had scraped some ice from the freezer, and had a red, plastic bucket almost filled with the freezing water and ice from the freezer. So, as she struck a match and turned on the gas to the oven, BOOM, it happened. The stove exploded in her face, and I was horrified by the blast and the bloodcurdling screams that followed.

Paul and I raced to the kitchen and found her aflame! Martha's hair, sweater, and dishrag were all burning. I immediately turned off the oven while Paul slapped her in the head, trying to extinguish the burning hair. Huge clumps of hair fell to the floor. I hugged her and squatted down near the bucket of icy water, jammed her burning hands into the water, took the dish rag, wet it with the ice water, and placed it on her head. The polyester sweater was melted and stuck to the skin of her wrist and arms. I took her to the bed and began to cut the sweater from her and try to soothe the pain on her face and hands with the icy water.

Word about the accident spread rapidly, and the house was soon filled with inquisitive well-wishers. Each of them offered some sort of remedy for her burns. I both laughed and cried! There were bottles of "remedy," tubes of toothpaste, aloe vera, and oils. The "sábila," or aloe vera, turned out to be a blessing, and it seemed to soothe her pain more than anything else.

Thanks to our Lord, she healed with only a small scar on one of her wrists. Her hair grew back, her burns healed, and we praised our Lord for her healing. We never got to eat the cake! She did get a new stove out of the deal. This bad day became only a memory, one of which strengthened our lives.

Real Life at Lifeword:

Things You Never Knew About Your Media Ministry

BY: Holly Meriweather
Lifeword
lifeword.org



You are one of those “plugged-in” people of the Baptist Missionary Association (BMA). Readers like you are the ones who understand and are engaged in the ministries you support. For that we are truly thankful, and we do not take for granted that you are interested, informed, and prayerful about God’s kingdom work through our feeble efforts to bring Him glory and serve our churches.

When I began at Lifeworld five years ago, I thought I was one of those people...I was a Girls’ Missionary Auxiliary (GMA) girl for goodness’ sake! I had memorized verses and missionaries’ names and fields...I even grew up in a church attended by department leaders!

Boy, was I wrong....

It was January of 2014, and the BMA Global Ministry Center was literally under construction, like hammers and nails and sheetrock construction! The physical integration of the departments was six months away and BMA Missions staff would soon join Lifeworld and DiscipleGuide in Conway, Arkansas.

What an exciting time to begin serving the association; what a steep learning curve I was on; and what misconceptions I would have!

Yes, I used the term *servi*ng.

MISCONCEPTION #1: I WAS BEGINNING A NEW “JOB.”

Somewhere in the first few weeks, I began to hear terminology (from the many servant leaders around the building) that I was unfamiliar with. I heard things like...

“We serve the churches of the BMA.”

“We work for you.”

“We help you fulfill your Great Commission calling.”

Not only did I hear those words, but I also saw them in action. It changed everything about how I did my job...I mean, how I served.

It also set the stage for witnessing how my co-laborers went about their workdays and their attitudes as they did so. But I still had much more to learn, particularly about the skills of the people I was surrounded by and how God uses them in His kingdom work.

That first year of Lifeworld Sunday planning was an eye-opener. Before he was officially a part of the Lifeworld team, I worked with current Executive Director Donny Parrish to develop the 2014 theme, vision, and strategy for Lifeworld Sunday/Walk for the World, all for the purpose of fundraising.

MISCONCEPTION #2: DEVELOPMENT MEANS RAISING MONEY.

Brother Donny became director of Lifeword in 2017, but development has always been in his blood. He says, “Development is an on-going, 24-7 proposition for any support ministry like Lifeword. And it’s not about raising money. It’s about making friends. It’s about building relationships with pastors, church members, business people...folks who have a burden to get the gospel to the world...and then telling them your story. It takes time, effort, and strategic intent to keep an international ministry like Lifeword funded.

“I see my primary job as a vision caster, leader, and shepherd of this ministry. Leadership is getting people to believe in God’s vision. So, the first thing that I’ve had to do is ask God what He wants for Lifeword and her future. I believe that He led me to the Lifeword Cloud and transitioning Lifeword from a radio-based, audio-only ministry to becoming an internet-based, audio, video, and publishing ministry.

“Consequently, I spend much of my time with our team helping them work through problems and identifying “next steps” to accomplish God’s vision.”

In addition to Brother Donny, that development team currently consists of Director of Internet Broadcasting and Digital Strategy Jon Dodson and me, your Director of Church Connections. In the last five years it has been a blessing to build relationships with you, our church leaders and church members. We do not take for granted your support and encouragement.

MISCONCEPTION #3: A WORK WEEK IS FORTY HOURS LONG.

One of those relationship-builders is Director of Operations Luis Ortega, the only one of us who is bilingual, communicating with more of our global team members than anyone else. Here’s a behind-the-scenes look at one of the many aspects of his service to Lifeword:

“On any given day, I have the opportunity and blessing of interacting with godly men and women from literally around the world. I take advantage of various technologies to communicate with them, all the while spanning various time zones and crossing multiple cultural and language barriers. All to discuss and formulate partnerships and strategies in assisting them to reach their world for Christ.

“As you know, Lifeword partners with the local church and local associations in producing media to help make disciples of Jesus Christ in all nations. No day is the same and each brings its anomalies and idiosyncrasies. This is a good thing.

“It may surprise you that I do not use my desk phone to reach out to or interact with our team members and partners around the world. For most communication and collaboration, I use free technologies such as Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, FaceTime, SMS, email or, in rare occasions, the voice-over-IP telephone.

“In a day’s time it is not rare to go from speaking English to interacting with a Spanish speaker, a Garifuna, Quechua, Twi, Ewe, Arabic, Swahili, or Romanian speaker. On top of overcoming the language barrier in speaking to teammates, partners, or contributors across the pond, the cultural barriers and differences must be considered.

“That means going from interacting with someone from an honor- or shame-based culture to a fear-based culture or guilt-based culture or any mixture of these. There are frequent dangers of miscommunicating, misunderstanding, and misinterpreting, but by the grace of God those often are overcome, though at times they may require more dialogue.

“The other anomaly that plays into a global ministry is time zones. One person may be trying to sleep while other team members are just beginning their workday; another person is halfway through the day, wrapping up the day, or vice-versa and everything in between! Varying time zones mean it is not uncommon to be up late at night interacting with a team member from across the globe or keeping him up while one is starting his or her day.

“All this is done for the sake of forming partnerships and collaborating to fulfill the Great Commission of making the name of Jesus famous. It brings me great joy that the book of Revelation says one day ‘a great multitude, which no man [can] number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, [will stand] before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands’ (Revelation 7:9).”

Brother Luis is uniquely gifted for his role at Lifeworld, where he has served for almost twenty years. In addition to Donny Parrish, who has taught me so much about ministry, Luis has been a patient mentor, guide, and teacher in the areas of language, culture, and technology...that last one being the most painful learning curve I’ve had to navigate!

MISCONCEPTION #4: ACCOUNTANTS ARE ALL ABOUT THE NUMBERS.

Another mentor is Ellen Siler, who has been Lifeworld’s fund accountant for eleven years. She’s the team member who doesn’t have an office in the Lifeworld wing, because all HR (human resources) and accounting people in each ministry have offices together... Upstairs. Down the hallway. Something about privacy, sensitive material, etc.

Anyway, Ellen says she doesn’t mind. Probably because it’s quieter, and I can’t say that I blame her.

I hadn’t been at Lifeworld long before I realized she does so much more than open the mail, tally the checks, balance the books, and pay the bills. She is involved in development. She gets the fact that people and relationships are the lifeblood of Lifeworld.

Being the Mississippi girl that she is, the importance of hospitality and thank you cards was deeply ingrained in her. Not a day goes by that she doesn’t thank contributors to our ministry, usually through the mail, which is not the most common method anymore, for sure!

She sees the person behind the check or transaction. Her love for the people she serves is obvious, and I’m blessed to work alongside her even if we can’t work side by side.

These are my friends and “co-servers.” Despite all the misconceptions, I have settled into ministry at what has to be the best workplace in America. Please pray for the people who serve you here at Lifeworld, that God would receive glory as we take the gospel to the world through media and cutting-edge technology.



Lifeworld.org

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DR. JOHN DAVID SMITH



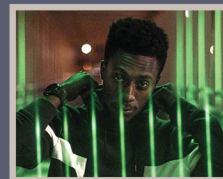
**SOAR VILLAGE/
YOUTH PASTOR KARAOKE**



THE RATLIFF BOYS
PRECON



SOAR BREAKOUTS



YUKON
SOAR VILLAGE ARTIST



DJ TruStorey
DJ

The image features two vintage suitcases resting on a dark, vertically-grained wooden surface. The top suitcase is made of worn, reddish-brown leather with visible stitching and metal latches. It has several small, colorful stickers on its surface. The bottom suitcase is black with a textured finish and also features metal latches and a handle. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the leather and wood.

NEW MISSIONARIES

BY: Eric Johnson
BMA Missions
bmamissions.org

Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.
Luke 10:2

The need for missionaries has always been great. In His time, as Jesus looked at the cities and towns before Him, He said that the harvest was plentiful, and the laborers were few. This continues to be true as we look across the landscape of humanity today.

The Greatest Need

The vast majority of people in the world do not know Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Our missionaries around the world can attest to the truth of that statement. Whether the religious majority in a country is Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, animistic, or Christian, most people in the world do not know Christ. In the United States most people know about Christ and may even say they are Christian, but it is evident that most of those same people do not have an abiding personal relationship with Jesus. In Latin America, most people would say they are Christian. Yet when asked what they are trusting in for salvation a great majority will answer that it is their own works that save them. This is in the so-called “Christian world.” In Asia and the Middle East, millions have not yet heard that there is a Savior who can give them eternal life.

The Lord’s Solution

Jesus said we need more workers!

God has blessed the work of Baptist Missionary Association (BMA) Missions. Today the gospel is being preached in almost 80 countries through BMA Missions efforts. By the grace of God, we have more American BMA missionaries than ever before in BMA of America history. Our churches are supporting close to 600 national church planters across the globe. Thousands of lives are being changed. Church multiplication is taking place. The name of Christ is being proclaimed to the nations; and yet with God, we can do more! We are doing more than we ever have and yet we must continue to send missionaries. Some of you reading this article may be used to plant churches in the future. Some of you may go. Laborers are surely needed.

As international director, I travel to many of the fields where we have missionaries. One of the common themes that I hear from people in other countries is one of thanksgiving. They ask us to thank our churches for sending missionaries to their people. One national pastor in Latin America expressed it this way, “BMA people are a sending people.” What an honor to be known as a people who send missionaries with the gospel to people who have not heard.

This year we are blessed to be sending missionaries to the Philippines, Romania, and Latin America. As you read about them, I ask if you would please do three things: 1) commit to pray for these missionaries and the people with whom they will share Jesus; 2) pray that the Lord would send more like them; 3) and pray about how you can be involved in supporting these individuals and BMA of America missions.



Cris and Alicia Samson
Philippines

Cris and Alicia are members of Good Hope Baptist Church in Columbia, Mississippi.

Alicia Ramshur was sent to the Philippines in 2010. During her time there, she married Cris Samson and they now have a baby boy (Benjamin). Cris is a church planter and they have begun serving the Lord together in the Philippines. Last year they returned to the United States so Alicia could finish her medical degree and take tests finalizing her medical licensing requirements. Cris and Alicia will be returning to the Philippines as a missionary couple. They intend to help struggling mission points that Cris is familiar with in evangelism and discipleship as well as provide medical assistance to the people in isolated areas where there is a need for health care workers. After their arrival in the Philippines they will be seeking the Lord's will for a new area where they will plant a church. From the beginning of the church plant, Cris intends to pour into young men who will be able to continue the work of the ministry. Pray for them. Pray for the Philippines. Pray that God would send more laborers for the harvest there.

Candra is a Member of Hopewell Baptist Church in El Dorado, Arkansas.

She will be going to Romania to serve alongside BMA missionaries Bryan and Pam Risner in the fall of 2019. The Risners have a vision for church planting among the Romanian and gypsy people of Romania. Candra has been to Romania and has been coordinating with BMA Missions and the Risners as she prepares for missionary service. Pray for Candra as she arrives in Romania. She will need to dedicate a substantial amount of time during her first year to learning the language and people of her new home. As a part of the BMA team in Romania, Candra is planning to assist the Risners by helping assimilate different people groups into the church, as well as helping develop discipleship strategies for children, teens, and women. Please keep Candra in your prayers as she embarks on the mission where God has led her. Pray for Romania. Pray that God would send more laborers for the harvest there.



Candra Barnett
Romania

Hannah is a member of Central Baptist Church in Prescott, Arkansas.

Over the next year Hannah will be studying Spanish in Costa Rica. In 2015, Hannah went on a short-term mission trip to Honduras. It was after this trip that Hannah believes the Lord opened her eyes to the needs of people and called her to get involved in missions. Hannah is a dental hygienist and is seeking the Lord's guidance as to a specific location where her gifts, talents, and education can be used to advance the cause of Christ. Pray for Hannah as she learns Spanish and the Lord continues to guide her in missions.

May BMA churches continue to be a sending people for the glory of God. Thank you for your efforts and support of BMA Missions.



Hannah McLelland
Latin America

...And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah 6:8

PASSPORT



People in the village of Santandrei, Romania



BY: Bryan Risner
BMA Missions
bmamissions.org

Ordinary People Serving an Extraordinary God

Pam and I have found ourselves describing the last sixteen months of our lives as a “whirlwind.” I can still remember sitting in my patrol car watching school traffic after our mission assessment training weekend. I had a smile on my face and was full of eagerness and kid-like excitement. I had no idea what was about to take place within our family of five.

I always had a feeling God was calling me to do something radical for Him, but I did not know what, where, or when. I grew up seeing all the Baptist Missionary Association (BMA) missionary pictures in the magazines and on the prayer calendars. They were like super heroes of the faith. I desired to serve in that way, but just did not know how that could happen; Pam would never do something like that. You cannot even imagine the excitement in my heart when God called us to Romania and our whole family answered “Yes!”

We have experienced many challenges over the last sixteen months. The first big challenge was the challenge of stepping into the unknown land of partnership development. October 2018 was the month that I started making phone calls—a lot of phone calls. These calls were requests to allow our family to share our vision of a church plant in Romania. These calls made me nervous, excited, and sometimes left me feeling defeated. I understood with each “no” that we were closer to our target moving date and further away from our deadline of raising our support. As head of our household I felt a lot of responsibility to quickly gain support. I wanted my wife and children to feel secure in our ability to survive financially with the days counting

down when Pam and I would resign from our jobs. I soon realized this was outside my control; it was a God-sized goal and He was the source of all our finances to begin with. We grew in our faith during the months of partnership development. We went weeks at a time hearing one “no” after another with no new supporters. God showed us that He often provides in unexpected ways from unexpected people.

Another challenge that caught us off guard was reacting to others’ opinions of us serving on the foreign field. We were surprised that our excitement for missions and our love for Romania was not everyone’s excitement. We had a few family members and friends that questioned our decision. Again, it was a way for God to grow our trust in Him. Some days He alone was our source of comfort and peace.

A challenge we faced as a couple and as a family was physical exhaustion. I worked fifty plus hours a week as a school resource officer and part-time student pastor for Calvary Baptist Church in Morrilton, Arkansas. Pam worked fulltime at the bank. And we still had the responsibilities of being parents. Our kids attended public school through the deputation process. We had the demands of activities and school events to meet as well. Traveling every weekend definitely took a toll on us physically; however, we would do it all over again. God used that time to knit our hearts to faithful supporters. We are forever grateful to the many who love and give so that we may love and give here in Romania.



Pam Risner with Romanian children in Santandrei

Another challenge we knew was coming was the sorting, packing, selling, and donating of earthly possessions. It seems simple, but when you get down to it, every item in your home has a memory attached to it. With the help of family and friends, and some shedding of tears, we sorted, packed, and donated. Only a few family heirlooms remain in storage. We listed our home for sale and trusted God to sell it. We ended up moving before it sold. Talk about crazy faith! It did sell about a month after being in Romania.

The challenge of a one-way flight was an altogether new adventure. We arrived in Romania on July 19, 2018. The days before are a blur. We had taken our teens to a conference out of state and had a two-day turn around before our flight. Mental and physical exhaustion had set in, emotions were high, and hearing “see you later” so many times had gotten hard. Although this was my fifth time to Romania and Pam’s third, something was very different about this trip. Once we had our “boots” on the ground, I started experiencing anxiety. Anxiety was a foreign concept for me. We learned about culture shock in missions’ class, but I honestly did not expect to encounter it myself so suddenly. We went from a familiar small town to knowing the names of only a few people. We went from knowing how to handle business (paying bills, buying groceries, transportation, fueling a vehicle, etc.) to everything being foreign. Everything was just so different. With a one-way flight we went from being independent to completely dependent on friends and strangers.

The began the challenge of our own internal dialogue. I remember asking myself: How do other missionaries do this? Am I cut out for this? What have I done to my wife and kids? In reality I knew that we were right where God wanted us. But in the moment, Satan had turned the dial on my internal dialogue, and I was smack dab in the middle of a battle of anxiety.

We faced the challenge of compound changes. September brought an even more complicated challenge. The kids started homeschooling and Pam and I started language school. Pam and our children had done very well up to this point. During this month the kids desperately missed classmates and Pam desperately missed the familiarity of home. Homeschooling was a real challenge for her. She lost ten pounds within a couple of weeks and was stressed to the max. If we were to have ever returned home, it would have been in September. God used this time to show us just how important your support staff really is. The BMA Missions’ office and our fellow missionaries stepped up and encouraged us during this time.

We endured the challenge of remembering our goals. The BMA Mission’s office had sent us to the field with three goals: grow our relationship with God, deepen our family relationship, and learn the language (culture)/homeschool. We really narrowed our focus to these three things. With each passing month the anxiety eased, our vision became clearer, and our Romanian vocabulary grew.

Now begins the challenge of preparing for ministry. Even though we knew ministry wasn't our priority at the moment, we had been prayerfully considering our ministry location. The Holy Spirit kept bringing our hearts back to the Roma communities here in our village. The opportunity arose for us to take up fulltime ministry right here in Santandrei. After much prayer and wise council, we have decided to start fulltime work here with the intention of planting a church. Initial programs and outreach will be centered around the children. Our initial focus will be on building connections with the children, encouraging attendance to school, and forming an afterschool program. Then we will pursue teens and adult Bible studies. These Bible study groups will be the foundation for our church. In recent months, land has been donated to the Roma community for a church. Our prayer is that a building will be constructed for after-school tutoring and Bible studies. This building will later become the church location of the Roma community.

We have a huge challenge ahead of us—we need workers. So far, Candra Barnett has joined our team.

Candra served with me in Romania in 2015, and we are excited to have her join us this summer. Please be in prayer for each person that we will be serving with to meet the needs of the Roma communities.

As we face the challenge of moving ahead, I take a step back and look at our lives over the last sixteen months. I know that God was with us the whole time. It is easy to see missionaries as superheroes. We see their smiling faces on social media; we watch amazing videos of what God is doing in their field; it seems as if they have it all together. Most people never will get the chance to see the “real life” of a missionary. If you take a walk in any village here in Romania, you will quickly see that life is more than material possessions, social status, or outward appearances. Life is hard, complicated, and bittersweet. To say hello, we often must say good-bye. If I could sum up our last sixteen months, I would say that I have been reminded that God often uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. We are definitely ordinary; but we are honored, humbled, and blessed to serve Him in an extraordinary way.



The Risners meeting some children recently in Santandrei, Romania



BY: Larry Wood
BMA Missions
bmamissions.org



Andy Slater and Larry Wood

IT'S OKAY, IT'S UKRAINE!

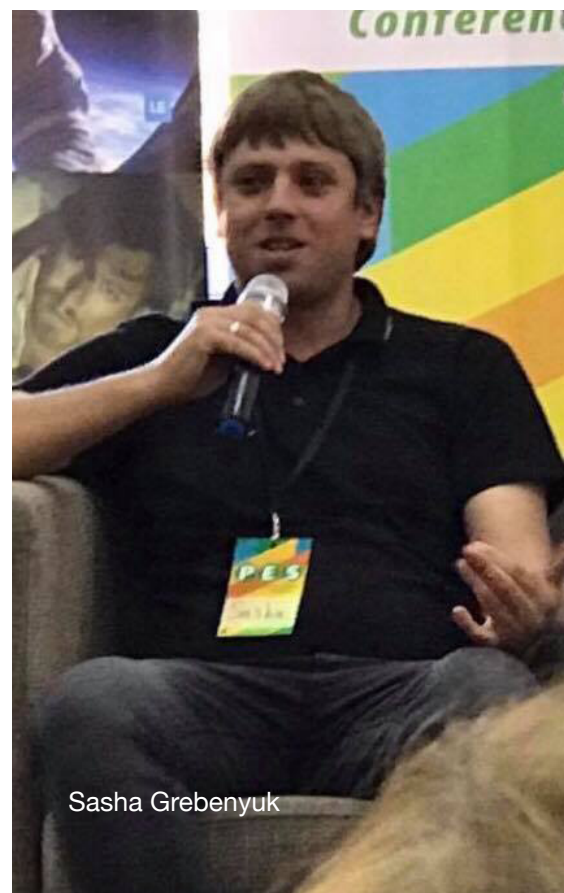
I know, you're thinking this is a strange title for an article in a missions-focused magazine but honestly, this saying pretty much sums up what it's like to live and work here on a day to day basis. Let me start by sharing the background of this saying for us.

Sasha Grebenyuk, a pastor and good friend, accompanied us to a business appointment on one

of our first days in the country. We were at a bank trying to get American dollars in order to pay our rent as our landlord would only take American money from us. We got in line and waited our turn. When we stepped to the window, Sasha told them what we needed only to be told they didn't have any American dollars. Sasha moved us to another line where we were told that yes, they had dollars, but they could not give them to us. Sasha went to a desk and had a conversation with someone who directed us to yet another window. We lined up for a third time, and when it was our turn, Sasha explained what we needed to do. Without pause she took our passports and asked how much we needed. I looked at Sasha with some bewilderment and he looked at me, shrugged his shoulders, and said, "It's okay, it's Ukraine!"

"It's okay, it's Ukraine" has become our response to most everything. Sometimes we say it laughing and sometimes through clenched teeth; either way it always puts the situation into perspective and reminds us to just be patient. Learning to live in a new culture is full of challenges, surprises, unexpected joy, and a few misunderstandings. Learning

the language is responsible for most of these. We go to language class five days a week and part of our homework is to practice speaking. We are not shy nor afraid to speak in public; usually that's a good thing, other times not. I was in a meeting one day and it was past lunchtime and the meeting showed no sign of stopping. So I said in my best Ukrainian that I was hungry.



Sasha Grebenyuk

One of the men got up and left the room and came right back but the meeting kept on, and it was getting really warm in the room. Again, I said I was hungry, and again the guy gets up, goes out, and comes right back and the meeting continues, and it got warmer. I tried again and the same thing happened. By now it was scorching in the room. Finally, I spoke in English and said “I’m hungry and it is burning up in here.” Roman, our interpreter, replied, “Really? Because for the last hour you’ve been telling us you were cold, and we’ve been turning up the heat.” The word for hungry and the word for cold is almost identical with the difference being the pronunciation of the first letter.

One evening we had some friends over for dinner. They arrived a few minutes early and Tammy was finishing up in the kitchen. Our guest complimented us about how good the food smelled and Tammy decided to speak Ukrainian to tell them what she was serving. She named everything off and we noticed a look of confusion which soon turned to laughter. Tammy told them she had prepared a favorite family recipe of dead corpse. Most people are extremely kind and patient with us and are astonished we would even try to speak their language. They take it as a huge gesture of kindness and respect for them that we would learn to speak in their native tongue. But we have had some experiences, very few, where they have been less than impressed and have laughed at us for even

trying. Sometimes we just want to give up and quit trying, and some days we feel very alone. All this to say, our life here is good. Some days are wild and crazy, some are fun, some are slow and painful; but we are glad to be living this life here with these wonderful people. It is worth it all.

Good communication can only be achieved if both parties understand what the other is trying to communicate, right? Well, we took our first night train ride from Lutsk to Uzhgorod. I booked our first part of the ride in a four-person compartment, which was fine. We got on the train at 10:00 o’clock in the evening and went to bed; all was well. Five hours later, we were to change trains and I had booked what I thought was a two-person compartment ride

for the remainder of the trip. We boarded the train at 3:00 o’clock in the morning when everyone else was asleep, and with Tammy in front of me, we started down this aisle with all of the beds in this car—78 to be exact! Tammy turned around and said to me, “I thought we were in a two-person compartment” to which I replied, “I did book that!” I am not sure where the miscommunication happened, but we did not have a two-person compartment. Instead we spent the night with 78 of our newest very best friends for the next twelve hours! We survived and we slept fine, but it was a real adventure finding out about the train system and how it worked. Also, prior to this trip, on all of our other train rides, there had been a snack cart. We had not eaten dinner when we



Larry and Tammy Wood



Larry and Tammy Wood eating dinner with new friends

got on the train at 10:00 o'clock p.m. and the next train did not have a snack cart on it either. We did not have a meal until 4:00 o'clock p.m. the following day. Needless to say, we have not left home without packing a snack bag since that day. We decided for the trip home we would try out the bus system and see what adventure that would hold for us.

It is hard to believe the bank incident took place almost a year ago. I remember that day being so frustrated just trying to take care of what I considered simple business. Sasha's words that day really opened my eyes to the type of culture we had committed to not only live and work in but to adopt as our own. My initial reaction to his comment was less than pleasant. It's not okay I thought to myself, I don't care where you are this is no way to do business. Fortunately, I kept those thoughts to myself due to a very disapproving look from my wife.

I'm glad I didn't speak my mind for I would have hurt the very people who were trying so hard to help me. You see, I began to realize that I was expecting them to behave like Americans and conduct business in the manner I considered correct. But I wasn't in America; I was in Ukraine and this is how they conduct business here and I had better get used to it. As I looked back on the situation, it became clear to me that I was not being treated any differently than anyone else, and had I complained it would have come across that I thought myself better than them. I am grateful Sasha spoke those words and I know now he was not trying to be funny. As politely as possible he was reminding me that I was not in Texas anymore and I shouldn't expect to be treated better than anyone else.

All of these stories have been a bit comical in nature, and they do seem comical to us

now, even though they might not have been at the time of happening. They have depicted a part of our everyday life here in Ukraine. Adapting to the culture sounds like a big adventure, and it is a lot of fun at times—but it comes with a great deal of challenges. These difficulties and challenges have been worth all of the tears, laughter, sadness, and homesickness we have experienced since we have been here because we are in Ukraine because of the call God has on our lives. We have said many times that the call is greater than the sadness or difficulty! This includes even the difficulty in immersing in the culture and learning the language. Praise be to the Lord for His mercies and grace for seeing us through these months on our new field of service. We are looking forward to the great things He has in store in the years to come here in Ukraine!

Do **WE** really
ever **PRAY** for
MORE laborers?



BY: Jimmy Walker
BMA Missions
bmamissions.org

Several months ago, I was reading in Matthew 9 where Jesus said: “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labour-ers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his har-vest” (Matthew 9:35-38).

I cannot tell you how many times I have heard or seen this passage. In fact, I would say that I have had verse 37 memorized and have quoted it for years. But as I was reading God drew me to verse 38. I do not know why but for some reason this verse is just not as familiar to me. “*Pray ye there-fore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*” When I think on these verses, I think about Jesus telling us that there are so many out there ready to say yes to Christ! But there are not enough workers telling them. Verse 39 is a command, and not just a command to pray, but a command to pray a certain prayer! Jesus is saying that people are waiting and ready to hear the gospel.

Now I don't know about you, but until a few months ago, I'll just admit that I have never prayed for more laborers to be sent out. I've prayed specifically for missionaries by name; I've prayed for evangelism and outreach events of which I've been a part; I've prayed for the lost; and I've prayed that God would give me more opportunities to share the gospel—but I've never prayed for more laborers. So, on that day reading Matthew 9, I committed to pray daily for more laborers. **I believe that if Jesus has given us something to specifically pray then He will answer that prayer and provide more laborers.** Let us commit together to pray for more laborers; and let us believe together that if God has called us to pray for this, then He will answer that prayer!

Laborers are needed not just here in the Philippines but all over the world. Here at the Baptist Mis-sionary Association (BMA) Bible College of the Philippines, our mission is to equip and to send out more laborers. This year we launched Mission 2:10, a plan to plant 200 churches in ten South-east Asian countries in the next ten years! Many of these countries are closed to the gospel. More than 650 million people live in these areas and only three percent know Christ. Would you pray with us for more laborers?

*“... I bring you good news of great joy
that will be for all the people”
Luke 2:10*

CHURCH PLANTING IN THE PHILIPPINES

Many of our BMA churches in the Philippines are multiplying themselves. Most have multiple mission churches and outreaches that will soon grow into self-supporting churches. Each of these new mission churches have faithful men who have said yes to God's call to fulfill the Great Com-mission! I'd like to introduce to you two of those men who have dedicated their lives to making disciples.



Pastor Kevin Berayo

Pastor Kevin Berayo

Kevin serves the Dos Hermanas Baptist Church as a church planter in the mountains on the Island of Negros. Kevin is 24 years old; he graduated from the BMA Bible College of the Philippines in 2016 and immediately went to work church-planting. Kevin currently has two church plants: the Aghu Baptist Mission and the Lanutan Baptist Mission. Both of these missions are in the mountains of Negros and serve rural farming communities. Because of the distance to these communities and the lack of transportation in these areas, it is nearly impossible for these people to get to a church each week. So, there is a great need for more churches in communities just like this. Pastor Kevin is faithful to preach the gospel each week and to meet with the church people and meet their needs as he is able. The Aghu Mission is an example of a church plant that was planted “pregnant.” As soon as they began meeting, a community just a few kilometers away also expressed the desire for a church there. Kevin prayed and felt led to plant a church in the Lanutan community as well. Since the start of these missions, Pastor Kevin has also begun small group Bible studies in the Lasigan village, Dos Hermanas, and one in the eastern part of Talisay. The hope is that these will grow into churches too! Each day, Pastor Kevin travels by motorcycle to these areas to evangelize and make disciples.



Alfred Jay-r Suico

Alfred Jay-r Suico

Pastor Alfred is 20 years old and a 2018 graduate of the BMA Bible College of the Philippines. He currently serves as interim pastor of Tigbagwan Baptist Mission on the Island of Leyte. The church is located at the top of a mountain, and the nearest town of Maasin is an hour away. This is the only evangelical church in this area. Each day Alfred goes house to house sharing the gospel and invit-ing people to church. He has started multiple Bibles studies and is faithful to disciple others week-ly. Many have come to faith in Christ because of his faithfulness. Pastor Alfred hopes to plant an-other church in the future.

Both of these young men are taking the gospel to places where there is no gospel presence. These places are hard to reach, but they will both tell you it is worth it. As my pastor Dr. Clif Johnson would say, “They have put their **yes** on the table and let God put it on the map!”

Mission 2:10
 200 CHURCHES . 10 COUNTRIES . 10 YEARS
 And the angel said unto them, fear not: for, behold,
 I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people
 LUKE 2:10



THE MIDDLE EAST: REACHING STUDENTS IS THE GOAL



BY: Joe Costa
BMA Missions
bmamissions.org

Joe Costa leading a Bible study

Having grown up in the mission field where I am currently serving, I would have thought that I had seen it all and knew everything there is to know about the Middle East and living in this region; but God has shown me that living in a country is something, serving its people is something else.

So far, my wife Mira and I have been living in Lebanon for almost a year and a half now and all we can say is “God is great.” He is such a gracious and merciful God to call an unqualified human being into ministry and use him for His glory. God has been with us through thick and thin, through happy and sad, through frustrations and victories, and we thank Him for every minute of it!

I think there are three main words that I would say didn't shock

me that they exist in the mission field, but instead challenged me to rely on God more and surrender even the smallest details to Him.

The first word is *patience*. Now I know what you're thinking: “Come on, Joe, patience is very general and universal and we all sometimes lack it.” Yes, I definitely am aware of that; but I think patience in the mission field takes a different form than it does at home. It becomes harder and more frustrating because deep down, without noticing, you the missionary want to please God so much that you want quick results, fast returns, and everything to work out the way you planned it, thought it, and even prayed about it. But like me, you will quickly learn in a very practical way that God doesn't work according to our time or



Joe and Mira Costa



Students participating in outreach at a local event in Lebanon

plans; rather He wants us to be the best versions of ourselves. And for that to happen, His will needs to simply be done. I heard brother Buddy Johnson once say, “Make sure in the mission field to write your plans in pencil so that God can erase and write His plans for your life and ministry.” So, in the past eighteen months God has taught Mira and I to listen to His voice day by day, to not falter when people don’t show up, and to know our limits. I think that is the hardest lesson I’ve learned—that I’m called to serve and to be faithful. I wasn’t called to bring in results or push for better numbers.

The second word God has challenged me with is *time*. In our line of “work” we obviously report to a number of people who keep an eye on us and keep us accountable to the work we are doing. Yet in the mission field, our time is mainly under our control as we try to manage our schedules and lives. So, in the time Mira and I have been in Lebanon, God has really challenged me as I have worked to be faithful to the call yet also to be present at home for my family and friends. I don’t think I really understood that struggle until I was knee deep in it. God has showed and is still showing me how to manage my time well and in a wisely manner. I also learned that the ministry is not about me, it’s only about Him. Day by day I discover how mistaken I am to think that God’s ministry in Lebanon, especially with young people, depends on what I do, who I talk

to, and what things I plan next. I’m learning little by little how dispensable I am and how sometimes things, dare I say, work better and smoother when I am not around. And even though it hurts sometimes, it is totally fine and completely okay because it’s His ministry and I am just a tool and a steward for His kingdom.

The final word I have been challenged with is *surprises*. Of course, I know that our God is an awesome God and that He is a living God; but I love how He surprises me with experiences that I do not expect, and showers me with mercies that I definitely do not deserve. I will share a story that happened to me a couple of months ago. I don’t usually count myself as an evangelist or as a person who is very comfortable in approaching complete strangers and talking about his faith. Typically, I am more pastoral and tend to take my time and focus more on discipleship. Yet, a couple of months ago, God took me by the hand and carried me way outside my comfort zone. As some of you know, Mira and I usually host a Wednesday Bible study at our house. One of those Wednesdays the main power line went out at our apartment complex and it was hours before it went back on. So we decided to move our Bible study to a nearby Starbucks. Some of us, me especially, were a bit frustrated about this because of the noise and the chaos at Starbucks. We started the Bible study, and that night’s main

question was “Do we really have free will if God is all-knowing?” While we were discussing the question, I noticed a young man across from us, looking at us and trying to hear what we were saying. I even noticed him hushing his friends just to hear what we were talking about. After a long and very nice discussion, we ended the meeting and were about to leave the coffee shop. Some of the guys noticed that this young man was outside taking a break from his studies, and they felt the need to approach him. We talked about it a bit, yet all of us were reluctant because we were just tired and ready to head home. But God had other plans. We noticed that our cars were parked near where he was standing. As we passed him, we continued contemplating whether we should approach him or not. Then in a very un-Joe-like manner, I put my hand on his shoulder and said, “Next time you need to pull up a chair and join us! We would have loved to hear your opinions!” He immediately replied, “Really? Because I have tons of questions!” We ended up standing in front of Starbucks and talking for at least an hour. After that we exchanged numbers and promised to meet soon. He then came to our house for a Wednesday meeting and I had the

privilege to meet him another time for coffee as we continued getting to know each other and discussing life. All this to say God is good and His love endures forever. I sometimes put myself in this box called “my plans for my ministry” but God through His grace and wisdom holds me by the hand and takes me out of that box and into His plans and reminds me why He called me to the Middle East.

Please continue to pray for us and for the Middle East. People are thirsty and are searching. They want to know the true God, and they want hope and grace. Pray for the Syrian refugee ministry and for the young people who attend the meetings. Pray for teenagers who are daily misguided by the media and peer-pressure. Pray that God will prepare their hearts so they may see Him and know Him. Also continue to pray for the young men and women we train for youth ministry so God may use them as tools to further His kingdom and be a light for many young people who are living in the dark.

And of course our final prayer request is for wisdom and guidance for Mira and I that we may continue to lean on Christ always and trust His leadership.



Small group meeting with Joe and Mira Costa at Christmas



BY: Paige Ferrell
 BMA Missions
 bmamissions.org



When you realize that God is calling you to the mission field and respond to that call, you have to come to grips with some things such as cold showers, lack of your favorite foods, and learning a new language. These are all things for which I tried to mentally prepare myself. But there are some things for which you simply cannot prepare.

I moved to Nicaragua in the fall of 2017 to begin the Piece of Hope. This ministry began with the vision of reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ through providing special education services to individuals in need and their families. When I relocated to Catarina, Nicaragua I knew one little boy who had a disability and just prayed that God would bring me more. I had no idea what was going



INTRODUCING JESUS THROUGH MEETING NEEDS

to happen in the coming months. Through lots of prayer and literally word of mouth, people in the area began searching me out to find help for their loved ones. My past experience and education is mostly with those who have autism but I was open to helping anyone God brought our way. Slowly God brought families to our doorstep to build relationships with so we could share the love of Jesus and the gospel. Some encounters have been easier than others, and some much more emotional.

One thing I quickly learned after beginning the program was that people not only didn't know what autism or other developmental disabilities were exactly, but they had never been exposed to someone who had these types of disabilities. After

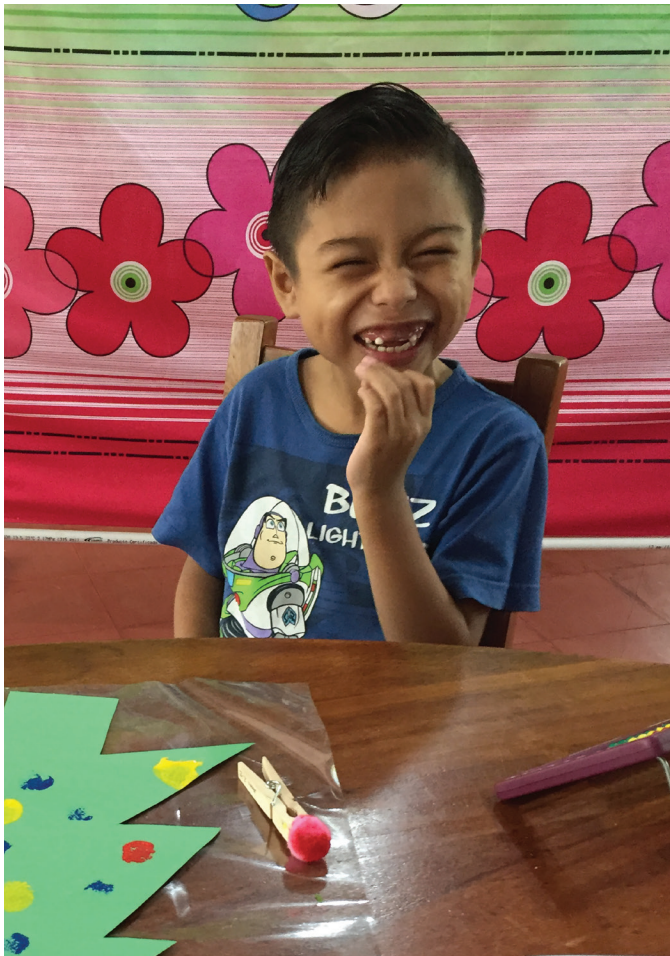




being approached by a mother who desperately wanted to get her autistic teenage son out of a terrible bullying situation, I learned that the general population thinks that autism or Down Syndrome is a sickness that is contagious. This line of thinking is so prevalent that in the public school where the boy was studying, other students' parents would come to the school and tell the teachers and administration that they didn't want their children to be in the same class for fear of contamination. As the school year was beginning, we got to invite all the parents at the local private Christian school for a time to learn more about autism and the new student who would be studying there. To all these parents, this mother got to explain that her son is God's creation and is simply different. The time ended with tears in the eyes of all. Since then, parents and students both have come to our door and simply asked to watch, get to know, and learn about the students that we help. Through this we have been able to share

that God makes everyone different and each with different abilities. We have built relationships with teachers, doctors, families, and other members of our community to use to share the gospel.

Another father came to our door one day in the spring of 2018 saying his son was five years old and didn't speak. This father was bitter and angry with God because people bullied his son and said he was worthless because he struggled academically. This little boy's sister Deborah, who is twelve years old, brings him to therapy every day because both of her parents work to provide for the family. Shortly after getting to know the family, I invited Deborah to the youth program at our church, called Intino. She quickly accepted. During her brother's therapy sessions, I formed a relationship with Deborah and asked her if she would allow me to go through the discipleship process with her. She happily accepted again. I have now been able to disciple Deborah, watch her accept Christ into her heart, and grow her



walk with Jesus Christ. After continually inviting the father to church events as well, he has begun coming to our weekly small group with the children and we are praying for him to become more involved in our church.

Before I knew that God was calling me to live in Nicaragua and begin the Piece of Hope ministry, I spent time with other missionaries here in Nicaragua. During this time, I learned that missions, or being a missionary, is much more than a job—it really is a lifestyle. I learned that missionaries are not perfect people; they are not better Christians than anyone else; they are simply doing what they can to live out what God has called us all to do—go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19). I have always had a passion for those who have special needs, and God has taught me how to use that passion and skill set to spread the gift of salvation.

So yes, when you move to the mission field there are crazy things that happen. Some days you wake up with no power and take your cold shower in the

dark. Some days scorpions fall from the ceiling in the classroom; and other days your house is flooded with inches of water due to a leaky roof. There are days that are all smiles and those days that you feel will never end. But when God is in the middle of it, there are always more blessings than struggles. Then, there are the times you lay in bed at night and realize all of the blessings God has put in your life...like every smiling face you see walk through the door, and every mother who gives you a tight hug because you are the first person to see that their child is really a person and has potential.

The biggest thing I never knew about coming to the mission field is the joy one can feel when one is in the middle of God's will.

To keep up with the Piece of Hope ministry, check out our Facebook page or shoot us an email and we will add you to the newsletter list! Please keep us in your prayers as we continue seeking God's will for this ministry and every family it reaches. God bless from Nicaragua.





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THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYING SPECIFICALLY

BY: Dr. Steve Crawley
Ministers Resource Services
bma-retirement.org

Ministers Resource Services (MRS) is an agency of the Baptist Missionary Association (BMA) whose mantra is to “serve those who serve.” MRS seeks to serve missionaries, pastors, and employees of BMA churches and entities in several ways. The primary way the agency serves is through assisting those mentioned by building their Future Funded Ministry reserves to ensure their ministry continues after their paychecks stop. Yet, at MRS we desire to expand our horizons beyond financial services. To that end, we wish to encourage our BMA constituency to establish a process of praying for your missionaries and pastor on a regular basis. Moreover, we encourage you to pray with specificity.

Praying specifically can result in a powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit in our lives and ministry. In July of 1887, one of the world’s leading theologians, Augustus H. Strong, and one of the world’s wealthiest men, John D. Rockefeller, paid a visit to Charles Haddon Spurgeon at his home in London, England. Following a two-hour visit with the “Prince of Preachers,” they surmised that the key to his success as a preacher hinged on the fact that he was “a man of prayer.” A study of Spurgeon’s life reveals without question that prayer was a foundational element of his ministry. On one occasion he stated, “Let me know the day when you give up praying for me, for then I must give up preaching.” Commenting on the weak prayers of the average church member, Spurgeon asserted that too often prayers are offered like one meandering aimlessly through a department store. He explained that people are often not sure of what they want when they walk through the door. They go here and there but are unintentional about what they are pursuing. They pick up this and that but often leave with nothing because they have not given thought to the purpose of their going. This metaphor is convicting, as I have often approached the throne of God without giving much thought to the supplications I am responsible for making. Such a lackadaisical approach to the throne of God results in vague prayers, which are often powerless and limits the work of God in our lives.

Praying specifically not only results in the manifestation of the Spirit in our lives but also brings more glory to God. For example, a cardinal rule of setting goals is that they should be specific and measurable within a certain time period. Following such actions allows one to pinpoint whether the goal has been met or not. Not following such actions stymies one’s ability to move forward toward their vision due to the uncertainty surrounding their objectives. Nebulous, imprecise prayers are somewhat similar to establishing unmeasurable goals. When we pray with such vagueness, it is hard to determine if the prayer was answered or not. Thus, we are not praying in such a way that God is glorified if the request does come to pass. Conversely, when we offer specific prayers and the request comes to pass, there is no doubt that God had to have intervened and, thus, He and He alone deserves the glory.

In our last edition of *mission:world*, we shared an article about *How to Be Your Pastor’s Most Valuable Player (MVP)*. Such a title is earned by those who are faithful to pray for their pastor daily. Likewise, we become our missionaries’ MVP when we pray for them on a regular basis. When we pray, however, let’s offer more than a vague prayer. I want to challenge us all to get to know our missionaries, their families, their needs, and let us pray specific prayers that will empower their work through the Holy Spirit, bringing success to their ministry and bringing glory to God.



BMA SEMINARY

Christ-centered since 1955

ABOUT US:

More than 60 years of growing and ministering supported by highly-credentialed faculty with earned doctorates and published research

CHRIST-CENTERED DISCIPLESHIP AND PREACHING:

More than just a tagline, BMA Seminary's Christ-Centered focus upon theology, preaching, discipleship, and ministry sets it apart from most other seminaries. Teaching and practice seek to follow the model set by Christ.

ACCREDITATION:

Because accreditation is so important, BMA Seminary is accredited by both a regional accrediting organization and a national faith-related accrediting organization.

BMA Seminary is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate, baccalaureate, and master degrees.

BMA Seminary is accredited by The Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, and the following degree programs are approved: Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Church Ministries, Master of Arts (Pastoral Theology), and Master of Arts (Religion).

AFFORDABILITY:

Tuition is \$220 per credit hour. BMA Seminary consistently has among the lowest costs of any ATS accredited seminary. Supporting churches, associations, auxiliaries, and individuals allow us to keep costs low so that anyone desiring a seminary education can receive one.

DEGREES:

Associate of Divinity (66 hours/22 courses)

Bachelor of Arts in Religion (66 hours/22 courses)

Master of Arts in Church Ministries (60 hours/20 courses)

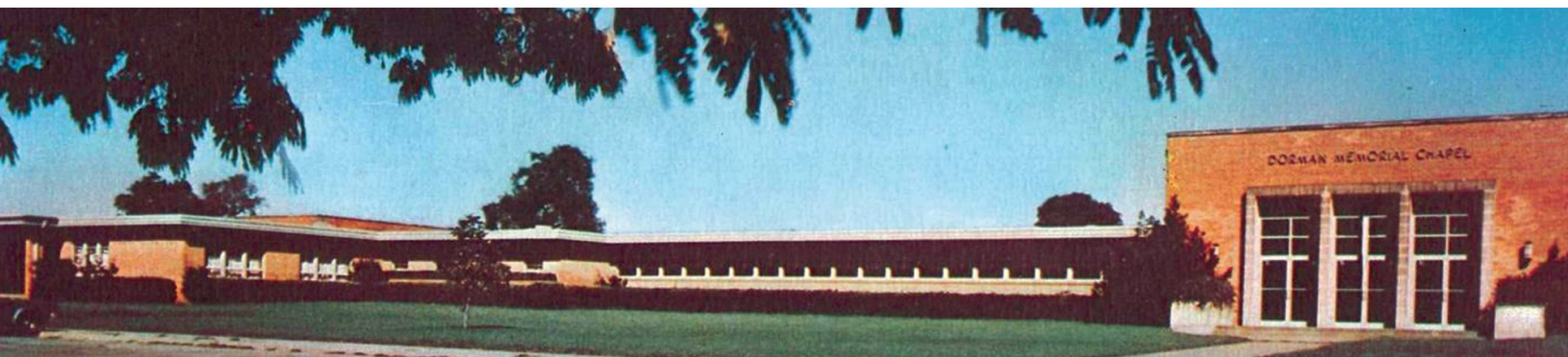
Master of Divinity (90 hours/30 courses)

Two degrees available 100% online (36 hours/12 courses):

Master of Arts (Pastoral Theology)

Master of Arts (Religion)

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BAPTIST MEDICAL MISSIONS INTERNATIONAL

SCHEDULE

- ✓ **HONDURAS**
May 31 - June 8
- ✓ **ATALAYA, PERU**
August 18 - 26
- ✓ **GREECE**
November 1 - 8
- ✓ **THAILAND**
January 2020



Volunteer: Physicians, dentists, nurses and other medical professionals are needed as volunteers to serve on the medical teams. In addition, other support personnel are needed to assist these medical professionals. If you are interested in volunteering to serve on a medical missions trip, please contact the BMMI office at angela@bmamissions.org



Give: BMMI is financed entirely through contributions. The financial needs of BMMI have increased proportionately to the growth in opportunities for service. Even if you cannot serve on a team, you can become a part of this exciting humanitarian and benevolent ministry through your donations.



Disaster Relief: Funds and volunteer relief teams are available through BMMI to provide emergency assistance and supplies to areas that experience natural disasters or catastrophic events. BMMI provides relief to areas where access to medical care, food, clothing, and other essential necessities of life have been temporarily interrupted or are not readily available. Go to bmamissions.org/disasterrelief for more information.

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Papua New Guinea: Jeremy Hambrice

Can you imagine never having interacted with a written text? What if you had never seen words on a page and thought that they could communicate a message with meaning? What if it was your job to create a written form for an unwritten language and teach an entire people group for the first time that when symbols are strung together they can communicate deep meaning? That is what is currently happening with our missionary team and the Wantakia people here in PNG. We have created an alphabet for their unwritten language and this month we are starting our first literacy class. This is all happening so that they can read God's Word in their own language. We are currently translating portions of the Scriptures and writing Bible lessons that we will use to teach the Wantakia at the end of the year. Would you pray that God would continue to help us with literacy, Bible lesson development, and Bible translation and that the hearts of the Wantakia would

continue to be prepared for this message? Thank you for your partnership with us!



Church Planting Training: Buddy Johnson

The Lord has blessed the Johnson family as we try to serve Him. Eric is busy as our BMA Director of International Missions, Grady is busy in his 25th year of mission work in Mexico, Scott is leading the Hispanic Ministry in his church in Tomball, Texas. Xochitl became an American Citizen December 12, 2018, Amanda married Judson Frazier, Jon and Ben are active in First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, TX, and Sara and Tom are planting their first church in Mexico. Taffy teaches Spanish at Global High, Waxahachie, TX, and she shares me with our work all over the world. The Lord has blessed our efforts in Church Planting Training in many countries and has restored my health after a few difficult months of illness. We appreciate your prayers for our family and for the ministry the Lord has given us go complete.



Ukraine:Larry Wood

We had a busy and wonderful holiday season here in Ukraine. We ended our first semester of Practical English School with an average attendance of one-hundred students. We have been able to establish many new relationships through this ministry and have had the privilege of sharing the gospel with some. Please pray for these that they would come to a clear understanding of who Jesus is and of their need of a Savior. Pray for us as we continue to answer their questions that the Holy Spirit will give us the right words to say. We also participate in two home Bible studies on a weekly basis. One of these we host in our home on Tuesday evenings and the other meets in another family's home on Wednesday evenings. We have made good progress with our Ukrainian language studies and are now trying to speak only Ukrainian in our home. Thank you for your continued prayers and support, we pray you have a blessed 2019!



Philippines: Doug Lee

It is final exams/graduation time at the Bible College. This year we adopted the same school schedule as in the states and a lot of other countries. Many Asian countries are switching over to this, so it was time for us to do the same. We are completing our school year with a strong finish, and are excited about our graduates who will be leaving to serve in various parts of the Philippines and Asia. Our 2:10 project is underway, and God is opening doors. Pray for us as we work on this project during the summer months, as well as VBS and other outreach programs at our two church-planting locations.



Jordan: Sam Jordan

God has blessed our family and ministry with great things. My daughter Noor is now at Samford University studying biology (pre-med). Our ministry is growing in many fields; our new church is growing in numbers and people are growing in the knowledge

of God and spiritually. Mercy Clinic is serving from 2300 to 2500 patients every month. The Women's Center is doing a great job among suffering women and helping ladies in general in their life skills. The school for Syrian children is seeing great results among the kids. And we're in the finishing stages of the new ministry center building and we believe it will be a vital place where people can come and get help as well as be prepared for life and ministry. Praise God for providing for our family and ministry. Praise God for the new believers. Praise God for our partners. Please pray that God will protect us and our work. Pray that God will give us wisdom to share The Good News. Pray that God will help us finish the new ministry center project very soon.



Papua New Guinea: BJ Sanders

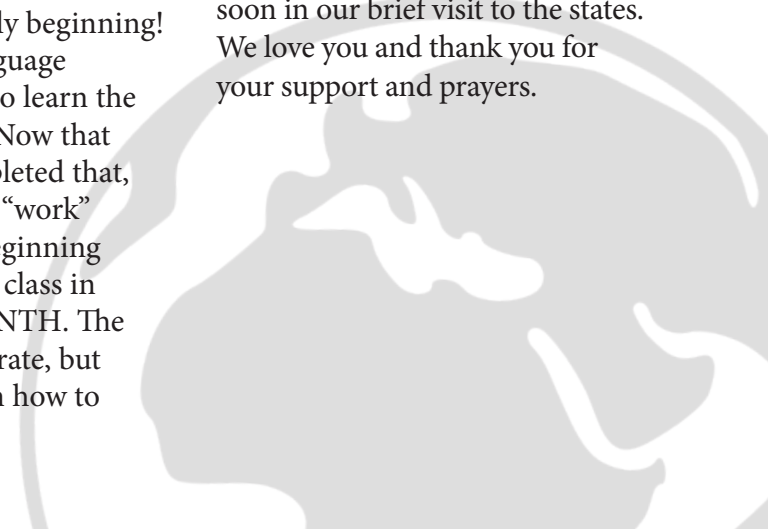
The "work" is finally beginning! We have been in language learning since 2014 to learn the Wantakia language. Now that we have finally completed that, it seems like the real "work" is starting. We are beginning the first ever literacy class in Wantakia THIS MONTH. The Wantakians are illiterate, but they will finally learn how to

read and write in their language. This is an important step before the teaching of God's Word, because when we do teach, they will be able to follow along for themselves and know that the missionaries aren't just telling them this story, but God is in their language! Please be praying for us!



Lebanon: Joe Costa

Hello everyone! Mira and I are so excited to be on our first furlough to the states since we've been on the mission field. We will be here for a month visiting churches, meeting old & new faces, and also raising funds to go back to the Middle East and continue the work. Please pray for protection as we travel this month. Also pray for our activities, events and camps during Summer. Pray that God would be preparing hearts and that His name may be lifted high. We hope to see you soon in our brief visit to the states. We love you and thank you for your support and prayers.





Philippines: Jimmy Walker

Our first year on the field has been rewarding and fruitful! The transition for our family has been as smooth as we could have asked for. The BMA Bible college of the Philippines continues to see an increase in enrollment, which means more laborers being sent out to the harvest. Several of our young men have expressed a desire to take the Gospel to the countries in Southeast Asia. Our hope is to plant 200 churches in these 10 countries in the next 10 years (Mission 2:10). Our students participate in evangelistic outreach on the

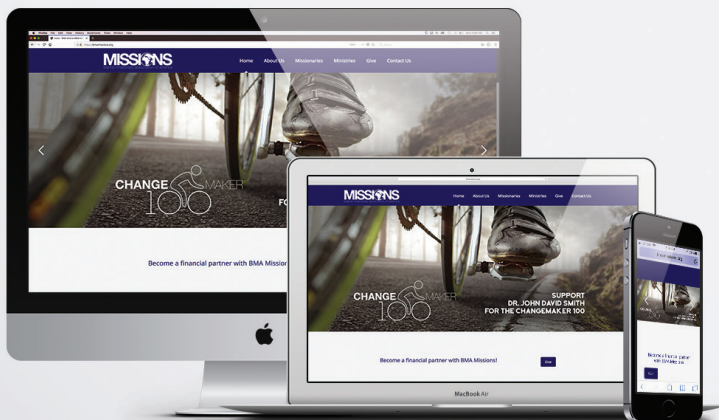
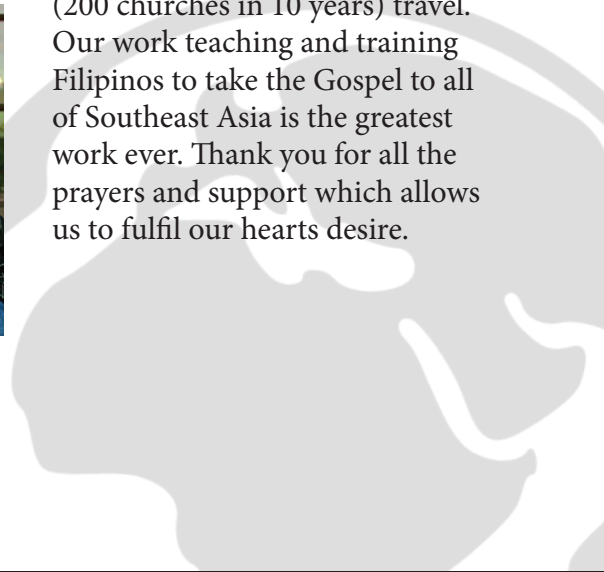
weekends through local churches. We have seen over 1,000 come to faith this school year! We ask that you pray for the church planting effort here in the Philippines as well as the countries of Southeast Asia. There are over 650 million people living in SE Asia and less than 3% are born-again believers. Thank you for your prayers and support! We are grateful to serve as your missionaries to the Philippines!



Philippines: Stan Scroggins

Here are some quick ministry update highlights: Our recent

“Choir Tour” to Dumaguete was very successful. We had great semester finals and a great start to the new semester. We experienced a Chicken Pocks quarantine. We finished the girl’s dorm renovations. We celebrated the anniversary of our mountain church plant. And we travelled with Baptist Medical Missions International to Laos. And coming up soon we have Academy startup, U.S. mission team visits, and Mission 2:10 (200 churches in 10 years) travel. Our work teaching and training Filipinos to take the Gospel to all of Southeast Asia is the greatest work ever. Thank you for all the prayers and support which allows us to fulfil our hearts desire.



To learn more about BMA missionaries and how to pray for them, go to

bmamissions.org/missionaries

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May - June 2019 :: The Great Commission Magazine of the BMA

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BIBLE-BASED DISCOVERY

process, **LED** by the **HOLY SPIRIT**,
driven by the **PASTOR**, supported by a
TEAM within the church, **DISCIPLLED**
by the pastor's **HUDDLE**, and
COACHED by the Activate staff.

Activate has partnered with **Sam Rainer** and the **Revitalization Network** to offer church health and pastor health assessments, as well as percept reports for pastors interested. Activate will continue to develop and provide materials, grow pastor huddles, host trainings, and provide coaching. Activate pastors are given suggestions but never told what to do. Pastors are free to go at their own pace.

ACTIVATE IS FOR

- Any church, whether thriving or struggling, newly planted or established
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Check out our website at BMAMISSIONS.ORG/ACTIVATE or contact your pastor advocate Heidi at heidi@bmaam.com to help you decide where to begin.