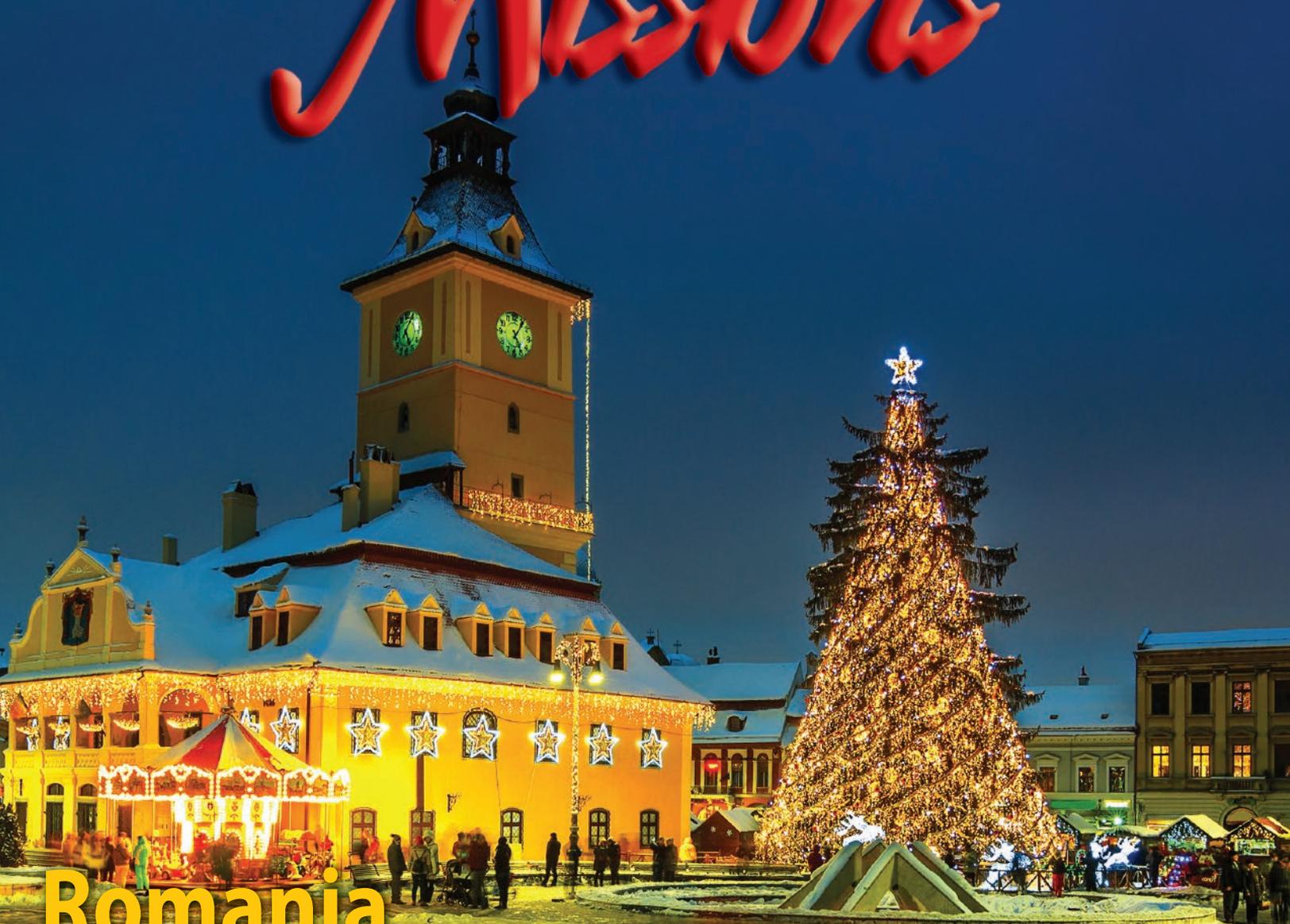


# Missions



## Romania

CMML Visits  
Five Ministries

**Alaska**  
A Ninja Course  
Builds Relationships

**Bahamas**  
Disaster Relief  
Brings Hope

**Around the World**  
How Missionaries  
Celebrate Christmas



BY DR. TERRY GILPIN

## Giving to God This Christmas

The sign in the window said it all: “What do you give the man who has everything?” The smaller writing that followed made a list of what it called “dude-oriented stuff.” Interestingly, batteries made the top of that list, presumably to run the innumerable appliances and toys that already fill his cupboards.

Gifts, giving, and Christmas all go together somehow. Christmas is great fun as gifts are given and received, but it is all too easy to forget what makes this time of year so special, what the deeper meaning of Christmas is, and why gifts are given.

In Luke 16:5, the unjust steward attempts to resolve his financial woes by rewriting the debts due from several of his master’s creditors. He asks, “How much do you owe my master?” When we turn that question to ourselves, we realize the huge debt we owe to the One Who is God’s indescribable gift.

So what can we give to a God Who has everything?

### Give thanks

1 Thessalonians 5:18 exhorts us, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Words, of course, can be cheap and may mean very little. On the other hand, what can our heavenly Father value more than expressions of gratitude from redeemed hearts that savor the blessing of sins forgiven and peace with God?

The quality of our thanks will be readily measured by the depth of our devotion. Consider Luke 7:47, which reads, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much,” and 2 Corinthians 9:15, which says, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” Perhaps our thanksgiving is best heard Sunday by Sunday when we meet together for the specific purpose of saying thank you in worshipful appreciation for all He has done.

### Give honor

In Samuel’s early days, God stated plainly, “Those who honor me I will honor.” (1 Samuel 2:30) What does it mean to “honor” God? W. E. Vine’s dictionary tells us that the word signifies an

appreciation of an object’s value and preciousness. As we meditate on these things, honor ascends to our Father like the smoke from the Old Testament offerings, which so vividly honored God. The writer of Proverbs 3:9 challenges us, saying, “Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase.”

How do we honor God? By obeying the instructions in His Word that tell us we are to honor our parents (Exodus 20:12), our partners (1 Peter 3:7), the powers that be (Romans 13:1), spiritual leaders (Hebrews 13:7), and even the elderly (Leviticus 19:32). It’s a full list!

### Give glory

Isaiah 42:8 warns “I am the Lord: that is My name: and My glory I will not give to another.” How easy it is to give ourselves the glory, even when we know any success is the result of His intervention. We know we owe the Lord a huge debt of gratitude and ought to give Him praise for all He has done. We need to say, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory.” (Psalm 115:1) Giving God glory pushes us to the background and allows God to increase so He can take His rightful place in our lives. Surely, God wants this kind of present!

### Give ear

In Isaiah 51:4, God exhorts His people to “give ear to Me, O My nation.” Similarly, Jeremiah wrote, “Hear and give ear . . . for the Lord has spoken.” (Jeremiah 13:15) No wonder the Lord’s final words to the churches were, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 2:7)

What can we give to a God Who has everything? He does not desire the things we value here on earth. Instead, He is pleased with hearts that overflow with thanksgiving, with ears that listen to His voice, and voices that give Him the honor and glory of which He is worthy. ■

*Dr. Terry Gilpin serves in South Africa.*

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COVER PHOTO: Brasov, Romania—©iStockPhoto.com/Janoka82



# A TRIP TO *Encourage*

## CMML Visits Missionaries in Romania

BY PHILIP C. PARSONS



On their trip, the Parsons visited missionaries in several Romanian cities, including Brasov.

In August, my wife, Mary, and I visited the five CMML missionary families who serve in Romania. Considered to be one of the most spiritually open countries in Europe, Romania is a bright spot in the continent's evangelical movement.

In 1899, assembly missionaries came to Romania and planted the country's first assembly. Following the 1989 revolution, which ended decades of government oppression, a new constitution restored religious freedom, thus protecting people's right to freely organize and meet.<sup>1</sup> This change had a profound impact on the lives of the missionaries we visited. Today, more than 700 assemblies exist throughout the country along with many opportunities for growth in the work. However, of the 21 million people in Romania, 82 percent are Eastern Orthodox.<sup>2</sup>

Our trip to Romania was a time of encouragement and learning. Mary and I had the privilege of fellowshipping with each family and engaging with their various ministries to gain a firsthand look at their day-to-day lives and gospel-sharing activities. Please pray for these families as they spread Christ's love throughout Romania.



The Dobrovats minister to the believers in the Sanduleni assembly.

### BACAU

#### John & Mariana Dobrovat



John and Mariana were born and raised in Romania. Mariana speaks lovingly of her Christian heritage and God's preservation of her life through a famine and the demands of communism. John grew up in an Eastern Orthodox family who was well connected to the communist party. He and Mariana were classmates in ninth grade, and Mariana and her friends helped John become a believer. John and Mariana married in April 1980, but unrelenting and unending persecution for their faith led them to leave Romania for the United States. Their sudden departure meant leaving family and friends behind, and they longed to return someday to share the Gospel. As changes occurred in Romania, the Dobrovats prayed, and the Lord enabled them to periodically visit their homeland. In 2016, John and Mariana returned to Romania as full-time commended workers.

Part of their ministry involves helping a small assembly in Sanduleni. In August, many children participated in VBS at the Sanduleni assembly, and the church is starting a kids' club. On a Thursday evening, we visited the assembly with the Dobrovats to encourage and pray with the believers. The Dobrovats also visit, encourage, pray with, and support the elders of two small assemblies in nearby villages.



## BRASOV Daniel & Georgiana Eakins

Georgiana, or Georgi, is the middle child of John and Mariana Dobrovat. While her father received asylum in the US a few years before, Georgi, her mother, and her siblings arrived in the States in 1990. After graduating high

school, Georgi attended Emmaus Bible College and met Daniel, a fellow student. Their relationship grew largely through a music ministry. Georgi and Daniel formed The Ineloquent, a band, to share the message of hope, peace, and good news through songs. The group traveled extensively throughout the US and overseas, including Romania.

In 2013, now married, the Eakins were commended to full-time service in Romania. Today, Daniel and Georgi use their musical gifts to encourage the local churches in Romania and inspire believers to write original Romanian worship music. The Ineloquent continues to give concerts and seeks opportunities to sing and share about the Lord in restaurants. Daniel and Georgi also use their music ministry as a tool to present the Gospel to and build relationships with people outside the church. They are passionate about connecting people to God's Word and the Gospel through preaching, teaching, discipling, ministering at marriage conferences, and leading men's and women's small groups at church and evangelistic Bible studies in their home.



**From top:** Daniel talks with a man at a local market; Daniel and Georgi use their passion for music to minister to local believers.



## BRASOV Pablo & Bethany Calderon

While still in the US, Pablo became the third member of The Ineloquent and, as Daniel Eakins confessed, "formed the backbone of the group." Pablo's musical abilities expanded the ministry's effectiveness, and when the group

performed in Romania, Pablo saw an abundance of ministry opportunities. Pablo and Bethany graduated from Emmaus Bible College and married, and for a time, Pablo served as a church worship leader. In 2016, the Calderons were commended to serve in Romania. Soon, they reconnected with the Eakins, and The Ineloquent was once again impacting people, this time in Romania. A small Christian school needed help, so Pablo agreed to teach some high school courses, and Bethany helped with administrative responsibilities in the office.

A unique evangelism opportunity arose when Pablo introduced Ultimate Frisbee to kids at a public park and stadium. He showed them how to play the sport, and interest grew rapidly among the children and their parents. Today, Pablo and Daniel share coaching duties with the goal of creating an Ultimate Frisbee team in Brasov that can compete with other teams throughout Romania. This ministry helps them cultivate relationships in the community and paves the way to sharing the Gospel more openly.



**From top:** Like the Eakins, Pablo shares the Gospel through music; The Calderons reach families through an Ultimate Frisbee outreach in public parks.



The Rusus encourage Christians at the Bucharest assembly.

## BUCHAREST

### Elisei & Adriana Rusu



Like the Dobrovats, the Rusus are Romanian by birth and faced the hardships of life under communism. In 1985, Elisei was arrested and sentenced to one year in prison for organizing an underground chain of Bible and Christian literature distribution. A year later, due to increased pressure, the government pardoned Elisei. When the US granted him political asylum, the Rusu family settled in the Chicago area where they were involved in a small Romanian-American assembly. In November 1992, after the fall of communism, Elisei, along with three Romanian brothers, founded the Timotheous Bible Institute (TBI), which is the only Brethren school at the university level in a former communist country. In 1996, Elisei and Adriana returned to Romania as commended workers. At TBI, Adriana teaches English as a ministry tool; Elisei teaches ecclesiology, pastoral theology, and biblical counseling. They are also involved in premarital and marital counseling, writing, conferences, and Christian radio and TV. In the last 27 years, more than 650 Christians graduated from TBI and now serve in local churches in more than 15 countries, lead a variety of ministries, teach Christianity in Romanian schools, or serve as missionaries in India, Peru, South Africa, and Turkey. TBI is working to start a master's program on spiritual and academic formation for Christians in middle- and upper-management positions.



From top: The Murrays focus primarily on camp work; Mihaela chats with Mary Parsons during their visit.

## CALARASI

### George & Mihaela Murray



In 1990, the Lord impressed Albania on George's heart. The next year, George attended a missions conference in Amsterdam with the hope of meeting Albanians; however, he met a group of Romanians instead. During this time, Mihaela Albu, a believer and a leader in the underground student movement, desired to be a missionary to Albania too. Following the conference, George moved to Romania, and he and the students from the underground movement, including Mihaela, began to pray about Albania. Soon, the Lord brought 350 Albanians to Romania, and George shared the Gospel with them. When the Romanian government granted the Albanians refugee status, George, Mihaela, and others ministered to them in the refugee camps. George and Mihaela married in 1993. The doors to ministry in the camps closed, but God presented them with many opportunities in Romania.

For a time, the Murrays worked in Dobrogea, a large region accessible only by ferry. They ministered to people by meeting practical and spiritual needs. Currently, the Murrays focus on camp ministry. The Lord provides the resources, and the believers in the Calarasi assembly provide the manpower. George says, "We are still waiting for open doors in the villages to start evangelistic Bible studies, but we believe those days are not too far away." ■

*Philip Parsons oversees CMML's assembly relations and missionary care.*

<sup>1</sup> Tatford, Frederick A. *Red Glow Over Eastern Europe*. Vol. 9 of *That the World May Know*. Bath, UK: Echoes of Service. <sup>2</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). *The World Factbook*. 2019. [www.CIA.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ro.html](http://www.CIA.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ro.html)

# FIGHTING FOR RELATIONSHIP

## Using an Obstacle Course for Christ

BY BRAD STURM

**M**ore than 500 hours of planning, design, construction, and assembly; 2,300 pounds of Lexan, steel, aluminum, and webbing; and \$15,000—what do these things have in common? We used all of them to build a ninja warrior course deep inside the rugged Alaskan interior.

### THE LOGISTICS

Our family home is a quaint log cabin located in McGrath, Alaska, 300 miles from the road system. Winter temperatures fall to minus 60°F, and we're surrounded by more landmass than all of the US east of the Mississippi River. Our vehicles are an all-terrain vehicle and a snowmobile that pull a trailer or sled. Moose and fish are staple foods, milk costs \$16 a gallon, and a large-caliber firearm is as essential as muck boots.

This 300-person village became our home after our commending assembly, Forge Road Bible Chapel in Maryland, felt unanimously burdened by this region's needs. Curiosity put Alaska on our radar as we desired to involve ourselves in cross-cultural ministry while awaiting our next mission destination. But that curiosity quickly became the destination we prayed for.

As with any community, our village has its struggles. One pertinent challenge is the locals' misgivings toward the church. They charge the church with being unloving, even cruel, and inconsistent, and they believe that Christians don't stick around because this region isn't their home. Soon after we arrived here, this thinking led a neighbor to approach me to say, "Hey, preacher, when you leave next year, I'll take your container."

We do what most CMML missionaries do: introduce people to a loving God, beg that loving God to breathe life into our friends, and join our eternal siblings as we walk with our loving God. For us in the Alaskan interior, this purpose involves lots of flying, snowmobiling, and hunting. Being so remote with such extreme weather has its challenges; if one Sunday I can't fly or snowmobile to a neighboring village to preach, the service doesn't happen. Nevertheless, we work with the church to build each other up and engage our community and region with the Gospel.

### THE COURSE

With an understanding of the region's terrain, challenges, and culture, we dreamed up the ninja warrior course. Measuring more than 40 feet long by 10 feet wide and 10 feet tall, the course contains 12 of the most iconic obstacles, including a warped wall, spider alley, and circuit board. We designed the entire course so that we could disassemble and transport it anywhere in the Alaskan interior via a single plane flight. It was a big undertaking, but the Lord allowed us to accomplish it.

This summer, we held two, one-week camps for youth with the ninja course as an attraction. The camps were divided into two age groups. First- through fifth-grade kids attended a day camp during the middle of July, and sixth- through twelfth-graders gathered for a week of overnight camp at the end of July. The theme for both weeks was "Fights Worth Fighting," and we touched on one topic each day over two teaching times. One message introduced a challenge common to followers of Christ, and the next message looked at how that challenge points us to Christ. One day, we spoke first on fighting for unity, and then we showed the kids that it was what Christ fought for on the cross.

But, while listening to the messages, the campers kept the ninja warrior course in the corner of their eyes. We designed the obstacles to offer degrees of difficulty that range from simple to extraordinarily difficult. We knew that few, if any, of the kids would be able to complete the whole course, so we made it a team effort. Kids chose obstacles, and the team attempted the course much like a relay race. So, regardless of athletic ability, each child contributed to his or her team. All in all, the event was a success, and even adults stayed to attempt the course and eat a meal, which we offered to the whole community every evening.

### THE GOAL

When dreaming up the obstacle course, we asked ourselves what the goal of this structure ought to be and then built the camps around it. What would justify such an expenditure of resources? Our stated goal was to establish lasting, intimate relationships with the campers and their families. Of course, our

ultimate desire is their salvation, since we know that a relationship with us saves no one. But we chose this goal to focus our attention on our responsibility to build Christlike relationships, which extends beyond simple gospel proclamation.

Establishing Christlike relationships tills the ground. It dramatizes the Gospel. The time and energy believers invest in building lasting relationships is totally worthwhile. The late-night calls, interruptions, and schedule disruptions we face can be eternity-shaping events. We should strive to be a friend, not just pointing people to Christ but accompanying them on their journeys.

## THE RESULTS

God blessed our endeavors through the camps and allowed us to accomplish our goal. Every child in town who fit the age range attended our first camp and heard the Gospel daily, and youth from three villages camped with us for the second ninja-filled week. The community expressed appreciation for our investment in their kids. We forged new friendships and deepened others. I believe misgivings were dealt a serious blow, and now, we are reaping the benefits, namely relationships of trust and care that illuminate the Gospel and open doors.

## THE PRAYER

Please pray for the breakdown of the enemy's strongholds in the Alaskan interior. Pray for the church as we seek to introduce our friends to the King of the Universe. Pray that the Lord would continue to use this ninja course to pave roads into the lives of families and to Jesus. ■

*Brad and Lindsay Sturm are commended from Forge Road Bible Chapel in Perry Hall, Maryland.*



**Top row (L-R):** Each week, youth from the church and community gather for a meal, singing, and Bible study; Due to the region's remoteness, practices like dogsledding are still common. **Middle row (L-R):** The disassembled course awaits transport into the bush; Brad and a coworker, Tim, build the obstacle course in an airplane hangar, providing them access to tools and supplies; Brad talks to campers about "Fights Worth Fighting." **Bottom row (L-R):** Spider alley, which one participant tackles, completes the obstacle course; The ninja course attracts local adults' attention, not just the youth's; The 10-foot warped wall was a "ninja" favorite; Tim spots a camper who masters the monkey bars.

# THE BAHAMAS

## Bringing Relief to the Devastated Islands

BY LARRY PRICE



On September 1, 2019, Hurricane Dorian made landfall in the Bahamas. Slow moving, the hurricane, which was the strongest in the nation's recorded history, hovered over the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama for more than 48 hours. As a Category 5 hurricane with sustained winds of 185 mph, gusts of more than 225 mph, and storm surges of up to 23 feet, Dorian devastated Abaco and Grand Bahama. An estimated 90 percent of Abaco's housing and infrastructure is damaged or destroyed, and an estimated 76 to 100 percent of Grand Bahama's buildings are destroyed in some areas.

Currently, the death toll in the Bahamas stands at more than 65 people. This estimate is expected to rise as more than 1,000 people remain missing, but the total is difficult to determine as the number of undocumented immigrants is unknown.

### THE ISLANDS

The Abaco Islands are a 120-mile island chain in the northern Bahamas. Abaco, part of the chain and the second largest island in the Bahamas, and its cays are scattered over 130 square miles. Abaco has a population of approximately 17,224 people. Marsh Harbour, which is Abaco's commercial center, is about 103 miles from Nassau, the Bahama's capital, and the town has a population of approximately 5,730 people.

### LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

Following the hurricane, the runway at Marsh Harbour's international airport was under several feet of water for days. Because the storm damaged many planes and destroyed hangars, helicopters, many of which came from the US Coast Guard, provided initial relief and rescue efforts.

Across the island, electricity remains down, and while cell phone service is back, it is unreliable. Storm surges and flooding destroyed most vehicles, so many people have difficulty accessing supplies, and the trucks needed to distribute goods to communities are in short supply.

### RELIEF EFFORTS

Initial relief efforts prioritized survival: those in need of medical attention were evacuated to other areas. The first supplies consisted of food, water, and sheltering items. Nearby, Floridians and others quickly organized funds and relief drives for materials. Barges loaded with containers traveled to the affected islands. Large organizations, including Samaritan's Purse, provided an incredible amount of help in a variety of areas. Many

people who own second homes on the Family Islands have contributed to the cleanup and rebuilding efforts too.

Fishermen in Spanish Wells launched immediate efforts to help their fellow countrymen in the Abacos. Using their large fishing boats and smaller, faster boats at their own expense, they traveled about 75 miles to bring supplies and fuel to the affected areas and returned home with evacuees, many of whom still remain with them.

Many of the smaller islands lacked heavy equipment. The people's boats were their only mode of transportation, and now, most are in disrepair or unusable. However, some of the islands received donations of trucks, generators, and fuel tanks.

### REBUILDING EFFORTS

The cry for survival has become a cry for workers. Most residents of the Family Islands started to clean up and rebuild despite a lack of resources. Marsh Harbour's situation is particularly problematic. The town is without lumber or hardware stores, hospitals, banks, or electricity; the water is contaminated; the clinics are not functioning; it lacks income; and the police maintain little presence there. Many residents lost everything, and because they lack insurance, they have no plans to rebuild or even return. Due to the great possibility of financial loss, people are hesitant to invest in rebuilding the stores, restaurants, resorts, and marinas. Even if homes were rebuilt today, residents still question, "Then what?" To further complicate matters, many of the surrounding small cays were economically dependent on Marsh Harbour prior to the storm.

### LOCAL SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES

The damage that many school buildings sustained makes them unsafe for students and faculty. As a result, some of the islands set up makeshift schools so that their children can continue learning despite the devastation.

The Gospel has a powerful presence in the Bahamas. Prior to Hurricane Dorian, Man-O-War Cay, Marsh Harbour, Guana Cay, and Green Turtle Cay each had an assembly that met every Sunday for the Breaking of Bread and to preach the Gospel, teach God's Word, and reach its community for Christ.

All four chapel buildings suffered damage as did their mission houses or apartments. Overall, Marsh Harbour Gospel Chapel and the connected Agape Cristian School, which enrolled 310 students and employed 25 teachers, received the worst damage. The school buildings are in great need of repair, yet



without employment or income, residents may be unable to afford private school. The two chapels in Green Turtle Cay and Guana Cay have been repaired enough to be used as centers for storage and food distribution.

## TESTED FAITH

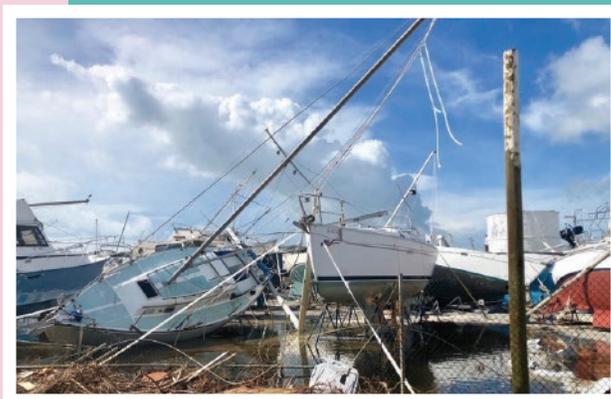
Many believers are among those who have lost everything. Their homes were destroyed; their businesses are gone; their personal items and memorabilia are no more. Yet those who know Christ exhibit faith that comes only from the One Who declared, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9) Many of these believers testify that they don't understand the "why" of this disaster, but they know the Lord has a purpose in all things, and they express their trust in Him. As with any catastrophe, hearts are often tender, which can lead to opportunities for sharing the Gospel.

## GENEROUS GIVING

In the face of such devastation, the long-term prognosis is hard to predict. For now, recovery is a day-by-day work. Meanwhile, the physical and financial contributions from people worldwide help the process. For many believers around the world, God's love prompted them to reach out, and it continues to do so. The Lord's people have been generous, and those who received the financial help are grateful and often visibly moved.

CMML has a disaster relief fund designated for the Bahamas. If you would like to contribute, you may do so at [CMML.us/donate](http://CMML.us/donate) or by mailing a check with the note "Suggested for Disaster Relief, Bahamas." Funds donated to CMML are transferred to a designated account that a group of assembly workers, who are familiar with the area and are at or have been to the disaster sites, oversee. They have worked through the logistical challenges and distribute the funds to responsible parties in the affected islands. MSC Canada also has a fund for hurricane recovery in the Bahamas. If you wish to contribute through MSC, you may do so at [MSCCanada.org/donate/hurricane-recovery-fund](http://MSCCanada.org/donate/hurricane-recovery-fund). Please pray that God would work in the Bahamas, helping the nation to rebuild, recover, and look to Him. ■

*Larry Price is commended from Southside Bible Chapel and Hiawassa Bible Chapel in Florida. He is active in assembly work in central Florida and other areas, including the Bahamas.*



**From left, and down:** In the 2004 storm Hurricane Jeanne, this home, which Larry stayed in, survived; However, Hurricane Dorian destroyed the home in 2019; The Man-O-War assembly's sign shows the height of the flooding caused by the storm; At the assembly in Man-O-War, the windows shattered due to immense pressure; In Green Turtle Cay, the boats are in disrepair; An aerial view of Elbow Cay shows the storm's havoc; Covered with debris, Man-O-War Cay struggles to recover.

# Home with the Lord

## Priscilla Joyce Simpson

May 12, 1944 – July 20, 2019 • Missionary to Colombia

Born in Chicago on May 12, 1944, to missionary parents, Priscilla Joyce Anderson was raised in Colombia. From an early age, Priscilla was active in two forms of ministry: playing the trumpet in her father's Salvation Army band and teaching Sunday school classes to children in the rural, mountain churches of Norte de Santander. Of her 75 years of life, she spent almost 60 in Colombia.

Priscilla's father instilled in her and her brother, Tim, the value and love of good music. Often, in the mornings as they studied, he would put on a stack of LP records by one of classical music's great composers. He dedicated mornings to prayer and Bible study, and Priscilla's mother home-schooled the two children. Living in a Christian environment, Priscilla received Jesus as her Savior at five years old.

It is not easy for a farm boy from southern Ontario to meet a pretty, Chicago-born girl who grew up in Colombia. A mutual friend, Dwight, who attended Priscilla's home church, visited his aunt and uncle, who were good friends of my parents, in Ontario each summer, so we became friends during those visits. Dwight's father happened to be the pastor of the church that supported Priscilla's parents for more than 45 years in their service with TEAM. Dwight involved Priscilla, Tim, and myself in a postcard game. I received 17 postcards. Years later, in March 1960, after a couple of moves, I dug out the one remaining postcard and decided to write, knowing nothing about Priscilla Anderson. The letter went to Ocaña, was forwarded to Cúcuta, where her parents were working, and forwarded to Chicago, where Priscilla lived with her maternal grandparents while finishing her last year of high school. Around three weeks later, I received a friendly letter back with a picture and a whiff of Prince Matchabelli, her favorite perfume.

A few months later, we met in person while I was on my way to Prairie Bible Institute (PBI). We corresponded for four years, getting together infrequently. After graduating from PBI, I

worked in Chicago for the summer. On August 31, 1964, Priscilla's father married us.

Teaching the Word and music were Priscilla's main ministries, even when she was a girl. She learned many Bible truths and doctrines from her father in the home and from *cursillos*, mini-seminars or Bible conferences, as she traveled with him on weekends.

While we served as a missionary couple, she often spoke at women's conferences with different church groups and missions. At her passing, many wrote about how much they learned and how her counsel helped them. They remember her happy disposition and smile. Some mentioned the blessing they received from the choral, with four-part harmony, of sacred songs.

At the last church God enabled us to help start, Priscilla gave seminars for the women to help them learn to teach, preach, and evangelize. Prior to our leaving Colombia, she trained Mitzi Machado, a faithful choir member, musician, lawyer, and strong Christian, who shared the same vision and appreciation for sacred music. She and Mitzi were very close in their friendship and devotion to the Lord.

God gave us three children. Michele and Wendy were born in Colombia; Konrad was born in Hamilton, Ontario. Priscilla was a wonderful mother. Despite many ministry activities, she made sure our children were well fed and well dressed. Whenever possible, she took them to cultural events and special places in Colombia and while on furlough.

On July 2, 2014, Priscilla was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. She had four chemotherapy protocols, read widely about cancer, and diligently did what she could. She declined quickly this year, and on July 20, Colombia's Independence Day, she passed into the presence of the Lord whom she loved and served so faithfully.

Bruce Simpson



# Christmas Around the World

BY SARAH DUNLAP

We all have our own way of celebrating Christmas: some enjoy quiet times with family and readings of Luke 2, while others gather to sing carols with church family. But holiday traditions can vary even more around the world, from one country to the next or even city to city. Many of our missionaries celebrate the Lord's birth in a foreign setting, far from their extended families. To better understand what Christmas looks like in these places, we asked a few workers to tell us about the holiday traditions that are unique to their areas, what seasonal ministries they have planned, and how they celebrate. Please pray for all our missionaries as they seek to share the Gospel this Christmas.

## Philippines | JERRY UY



### What is a local Christmas tradition unique to your area of the world?

Filipinos celebrate Christmas beginning on September 1. They call this time the "Ber" months with September being the first month ending in -ber.

### What specific Christmas ministry are you planning for this year?

I am working with the White House executive chef, Cris Comerford, who came to Christ in high school through my Bible preaching on campus. We are again distributing a Noche Buena family dinner on Christmas Eve. This is our third year reaching out to 500 families. I will preach on December 24. This year will be different; a Christian assembly in San Ildefonso, Bulacan, will collaborate with us. The assembly will invite more than 300 families.

### How do you make Christmas special for you and your family?

We help one another to distribute food on Christmas Eve.

## Mexico | RON & ROSE CAVENAGH



### What is a local Christmas tradition unique to your area of the world?

The stores are open and life continues. Christmas Eve is family time with a big dinner around midnight. Children receive presents on January 6 (Day of the Kings). The religious part is December 12, with a time of commemorating the apparition of a small, dark-complected woman to a rural man on the hill sacred to the Aztec mother goddess. She is much more popular in the national religion than Jesus. The pilgrimages, traffic-stopping processions of slow-walking pedestrians who sing "Ave Maria" and shoot off rockets, are incessant for a couple of weeks, but fortunately, they terminate at midnight on the 12th. The rockets continue until New Year's Day, accompanied by firecrackers that sound like grenades.

### What specific Christmas ministry are you planning for this year?

This year, for the first time in 17 years, we intend to be in Canada with our grandchildren. Usually, we have people, foreign and Mexican, who don't have families here, over to celebrate with a traditional Canadian dinner of turkey and more. Sometimes, we host it at Bet Shalom for the seniors, but we also celebrate there on New Year's Day with prime rib roast, mashed potatoes, and veggies.

### How do you make Christmas special for you and your family?

By celebrating with others who do not have family here, we make a bigger, mostly Christian, family occasion.

## Colombia | BILL & ANGELA LOUDON



### What is a local Christmas tradition unique to your area of the world?

December 7 marks the official beginning of the Christmas season. Everyone lights candles on their sidewalks.

### What specific Christmas ministry are you planning for this year?

We don't have any this year as we will be on furlough with family. Typically, the church has a special Christmas gathering a week or so before the 24th. They make natilla (a stiff vanilla or cinnamon pudding served with a blackberry sauce) and buñuelos (deep-fried, cheesy buns).

### How do you make Christmas special for you and your family?

Colombians celebrate Christmas on December 24, opening gifts at midnight. We stick to our family traditions of one gift on Christmas Eve and then a yummy brunch and gifts on December 25.

## Mexico | JASON & SHELLEY WAHLS



### What is a local Christmas tradition unique to your area of the world?

Sadly, in the small community where we preach the Gospel, the beginning of each Christmas season, typically December 24, commences with the making of a manger scene where the image of the baby Jesus is actually worshipped. The image is offered a food sacrifice, and members of the families take turns kissing the image.

### What specific Christmas ministry are you planning for this year?

Because of the tradition, we typically plan a meal on December 24 for the believers. It is a time of fellowship and reflection on Christ's coming into the world to save sinners.

## Philippines | TODD & MIRIAM EICHENAUER



### What is a local Christmas tradition unique to your area of the world?

The Philippines is unique in their timing for celebrating Christmas. They love Christmas so much that they celebrate throughout the "Ber" months—September through December! In fact, we saw Christmas decorations in one store this year on August 29.

### What specific Christmas ministry are you planning for this year?

Our Filipino assembly celebrates with a Christmas party following a Sunday meeting in December. We have a traditional potluck meal, play crazy games, and have a gift-giving time when every person gives and receives one gift. They have a system of receiving and giving that involves taking the microphone, saying thank you to the gift-giver, and then naming the recipient of the gift they purchased, who comes to the microphone and repeats the process until all have received and given a gift. It takes a while, but time is not as important as relationships in Filipino culture.

### How do you make Christmas special for you and your family?

We try to repeat most of our traditions from back home in Ohio, including decorating the house after American Thanksgiving, getting up early on Christmas for a delicious breakfast, reading Luke 2, and opening gifts. The only problem was when the local customs trumped our plans. Every Christmas morning, the neighborhood children go door-to-door asking for coins (similar to trick or treat). After many interruptions of "Maligayang Pasko!" (meaning "Merry Christmas" in Tagalog) coming from the street in front of our house, we almost changed our tradition. But after a couple of years, we just adjusted and prepared for our expected guests with cheerful greetings, a handful of coins, and a gospel tract. They are always quite appreciative!