

Missions

POLAND
Reaching Women
Through English Camps

**Christmas Around
the World**

**Teaching Bible
in Brazil**

**OPAL Ministries
in America**



Thinking It Through

BY DR. TOM MARINELLO

Why Did He Come?

At this time of the year, the thoughts of many turn to the celebration of the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. While a certain spectacle accompanies the sights and sounds and smells of the season, the far greater wonder is the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. His conception was miraculous, and the subsequent birth revealed the incarnate Christ to the world. So, why was the Lord Jesus incarnate? What was the purpose of the second person of the Trinity putting on the flesh? Certainly, one purpose would be that the Lord Jesus came to die (Luke 9:22). Certainly, another would be that the Lord Jesus came to build His church (Matthew 16:18). And yet another purpose is found in John 1:18, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” Jesus came to make the Father known. Without the coming of the Son, no man would ever know the Father.

Why was it necessary for the One who is one with the Father to make the Father known? First, because the passage says, “No one has ever seen God.” Man can never see God because He dwells in unapproachable majesty (1 Timothy 6:16). Straightaway, some may note that God appeared to a number of Old Testament believers, such as Moses or Isaiah. However, considering this verse, Chrysostom, perhaps the greatest preacher of the ancient church, rightly noted that all these were instances of God’s condescension, not a vision of the essence of God Himself. In fact, he asserts that neither prophet nor angel has ever seen God, saying, “How can any created nature ever see the Uncreated?”¹ Modern scholar and Bible teacher David MacLeod agrees, writing, “All those theophanies or Christophanies were partial, visionary, and evanescent. They did not see God in His actual being.”² Second, if His unapproachable majesty was not sufficient as an insurmountable barrier, all men since the sin of Adam dwell separated from God in an unreconciled state of sin (Romans 3:10-18, 23). God’s majesty in perfect holiness and man’s unfathomed sinfulness—born as a sinner and as one who sins—creates a great chasm which only God Himself can cross.

How was this chasm crossed? How was it possible that the Son could make the Father known to man? First, the Son made known the Father because the Son is the Begotten of the Father. Only the Son is the Begotten of the Father; only He has “identity of essence.”³ Only one who *is* God, not merely *like* God, can make the Father known because no one but God can know God truly and fully in His essence.

We celebrate
the first coming of
the Lord Jesus
while we await His
second coming.

Second, the Son alone is unique in His relationship with the Father. From all eternity, the Father is, and thus also, the Son is. Hence, this closest of relationships of the Son in the bosom of the Father is from all eternity. Both in kind and contact, the Son has a relationship to and with the Father. Rightly thus, the Son says, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9) Because of the incarnation, no longer is the unseen God completely

beyond; no longer is the unapproachable God insurmountably distant; no longer does man lack someone to cross the chasm and make the Father known. In the incarnation, the Son has made the Father known.

How then can one possibly comprehend the incarnation, which is celebrated especially during this season? The Christian believes it, but no man can comprehend it wholly: the true nature of the incarnation is mystery. John 1:18 focuses not on the explication of the mystery of the only Begotten who put on flesh, but on the wonder of the incarnate Son making the Father known. So, as we celebrate the first coming of the Lord Jesus while we await His second coming, we humbly bow and adoringly worship Him who, by means we can hardly grasp, made known Him whom we could not know. ■

Dr. Tom Marinello serves in the Netherlands.

¹ John Chrysostom, “Homily 15—John 1:18,” *Homilies on the Gospel of John*. Translated by Philip Schaff. Vol. 1, no. 14, of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, n.d.; ² David MacLeod, “The Benefits of the Incarnation of the Word: John 1:15–18,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Edited by Roy B. Zuck. Vol. 161 (April-June 2004). Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004, 188.; ³ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973, 15.



The Ladies' English Language Retreat, affiliated with the present-day Wrocław Language School where my husband, Patrick, teaches, has deep roots here in Poland. The original English language camps were created to meet the growing desire of Polish students to learn English. They began in 1984 through the vision of a dear sister in Christ affectionately referred to as Aunt Ruth. Staffed by volunteers who were native English-speakers and believers, the camps also served as an outreach.

The success of the camps led to the concept of a Christian language school. With the Lord's hand on it, the Polish government uncharacteristically granted approval to open the Wrocław Language School on September 1, 1989—the same year communism fell! The school, from opening to present, has always been staffed by born-again believers. Over the years, the camps tied to the school have included family camps, kids' camps, and ladies' camps.

It has been more than 20 years since the first ladies' camp. This outreach clearly met a need and grew in number until it was difficult to accommodate everyone who wanted to attend. As a result, about 10 years ago, we began a second-generation ladies' camp, which we now nickname the "career ladies' camp." The original, which was lovingly referred to as the "classic ladies' camp," no longer exists; however, a Bible study, which began through that camp, continues.

Impacting today

In 2008, I had the privilege to begin codirecting the career camp, alongside Ala, one of the Polish teachers at the language school. The camp takes place over one week each July in the

beautiful Polish countryside. As conditions in Poland have greatly improved over recent years, we now have more comfortable accommodations and reflect this by calling our time away a retreat. It is our desire for the ladies to enjoy a break from the routines of life by relaxing, having fun with friends, and sharing time together as women.

An important goal is to help the women improve their English by participating in daily lessons, rooming with native English-speakers, and being surrounded by activities in English. Additionally, the native English-speakers who come to serve at the retreat present daily Bible talks. A discussion time follows these talks to allow the Polish women to process what they heard in English, ask questions, and talk about the topics.

Although the name "Ladies' English Language Retreat" reflects an emphasis on English, the Polish women who attend know the week will provide not only the opportunity to improve their English but also to study God's Word. We are intentional in confirming that they understand this aspect before



Participants in the 2017 Ladies' English Language Retreat (Polanica Zdrój) pose for a group photo.



they decide to take part in the retreat because Poles often consider non-Catholics as part of a sect. The last thing we want is to have the Polish women feel they have been misled. Building trust is essential.

The staff, consisting mostly of native English-speakers from England and the United States, come from various churches, but all are born-again Christians. A few of the Polish women at camp attend our assembly here in Poland or other Protestant churches in Wrocław, but most are from the Catholic Church. Our daily Bible talks respectfully emphasize our common belief in Scripture, not our differences.

This year, we had 16 women at camp, 11 of whom were repeat attendees. Our five new attendees came through word of mouth. It is a great encouragement that these women return year after year and bring their friends.

Expanding the vision

After several years of prayer, I shared with my friend Carol a dream to have the retreat held in an English-speaking country. With the help of Carol's home church, the retreat took place in Southport, England, in 2014. What a testimony for the Polish women to spend a week in the homes of Christian host families. Now I have a new dream: further west over the pond!

Encouraging hearts

Marta's first camp was in 2013. God had prepared her heart, and she truly enjoyed the time spent in His Word each day. Not long after, Marta received a diagnosis of cancer with a 75 percent mortality rate. Thankfully, she is doing well, has joined us for a Bible study, and never had to miss a retreat. This year, she bravely shared her ordeal with us as a group, instructing us on the importance and types of routine testing, which we should pursue.

Małgosia came to her first camp in 2015. She described her feeling of emptiness while in the Catholic Church and how con-

tact with born-again Christians, as well as attending the retreat, completely changed her life. Małgosia is considering baptism next year.

Viola was with us for the first time—what a blessing to get acquainted and share with her. She traveled 10 hours, round-trip, by train to be with us. She commented that she was not there by accident.

Building bonds

Lifelong friendships have been formed as we laugh together, cry together, and laugh until we cry together. We realize that it does not matter where you are from; as women, we share many of the same challenges in life: jobs, health issues, aging parents, family issues, and the list goes on. It is pure joy to share not only our lives but also the hope and promise of eternal life offered through God's love.

Please pray for the ladies of Poland that the seeds sown during the retreats will take hold and grow. If you are interested in joining us or would like to take part in some way, please contact me. ■



"THE LORD OPENED HER HEART TO RESPOND TO THE THINGS SPOKEN BY PAUL."

Acts 16:14, NASB



Cindy and Patrick Hughes were commended in 2004 by Bethany Chapel in Wheaton, Illinois. Their ministry, in part, includes sharing the Gospel through the use of English.



From Left: The retreat leaders, like Ala, use Bible talks as a tool for teaching vocabulary; The volunteers make English lessons fun with different games and exercises; A few women enjoy a snack of Polish gofry; Castles are just one of the many sights the women take in during their tour of the Czech Republic.



In their own words

Many of the women who attend the Ladies' English Language Retreat have been deeply impacted by it spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. Below, several of the Polish women, who are still expanding their knowledge of English, share what they gained from the retreat.

"This Lady's Camp is very important to me. This is time when I improve my relationship with God and other people. During the camp, we read the Bible and discuss about many parts of it. It happened that my reflections about God and His relationship with us are deeply than in this time when I read it alone. Due to it, my relationship with my family is more touchful."

–Jola

"For me important is meeting with people from this camp and singing because for me it is the best way to the God."

–Dorota

"I come to Ladies' Camp four years ago for the first time. Now I can say it has changed my life. From that moment, my life has become more valuable, the life with presence of God and His words. I cannot imagine summer without our meeting with [the] ladies!"

–Marta

"This camp is honey for my heart. It gives me everything that I need. It has got an amazing atmosphere. This camp is a refreshment of my faith. It deepens my faith, and I can share with my faith with others."

–Anonymous

The retreat brings its helpers, who are native English-speakers, the same joy that it brings the Polish women. Carol and Hayley, two women from England, comment on their experience with the retreat.

"It's just sheer joy and a great privilege to serve God at the Polish Ladies' Camp. I keep coming back! It's a love God has put in my heart."

–Carol

"The Polish ladies are a delight—their warmth, openness, and grace make the camps a very special and unique experience. It is a privilege to spend time and share fellowship with them."

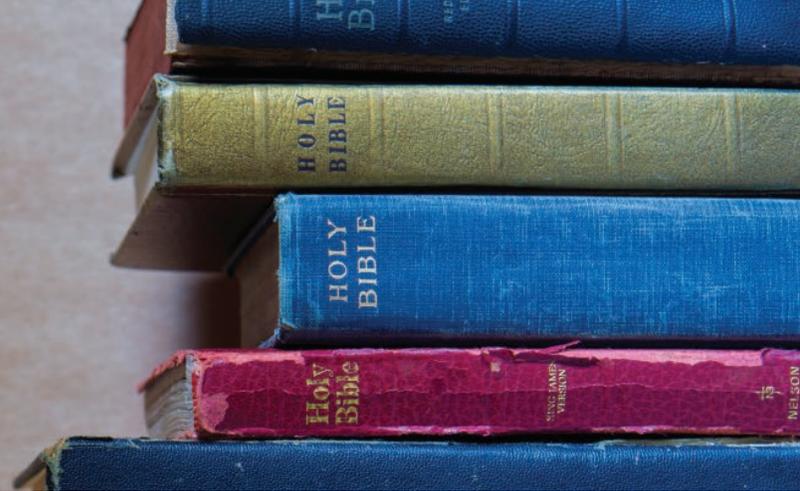
–Hayley

The women participate in singing praise hymns together as a group; Relationships, like Marta and Cindy's, are strengthened during hikes in the countryside, one of the many retreat activities; Throughout the retreat, the women participate in small-group Bible discussion times to ask questions, talk about Scripture, and get to know each other.



Values Class

Teaching the Bible in Brazil



BY JEANNE LIPSI

“I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.”
(Revelation 3:8)

I am blessed, humbled, and grateful that the Lord continues to open the wonderful door to teach Bible in schools in Campinas, Brazil, and that more than 800 children are reached in five different public schools and in one nongovernmental organization (NGO), Grupo Primavera.

Starting a work

About 50 years ago, my mother, Margery Lipsi, became friends with Antonia, a former nun and director of the only public school in the town of Sousas at that time. Antonia invited my mother to teach Bible at that school, but, later on, other schools also opened their doors. My mother took out of class those children who were interested in learning about the Bible and whose parents would permit them to do so, and she taught those students in a separate classroom. I remember going with my mother to help in these classes as a child and then as an adolescent.

Facing transitions

About 30 years ago, Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) of Brazil offered to train and send volunteers into the classrooms to teach the children during school hours, as religion class was to be part of the school curriculum. Sadly, in recent years, things have changed. Although Brazil is considered a Catholic country, in reality, it is a melting pot of many religions and beliefs. CEF is no longer permitted to send teachers into the public schools for religion classes, at least not in the state of São Paulo, because the public schools are now considered secular. However, at the suggestion of some of the directors and coordinators, we now call these classes *valores*, which translates as “values,” “citizenship,” or “social responsibility.”

Expanding the work

Although I did not start teaching Bible through CEF, I did volunteer to teach the Bible on a voluntary basis during the school hours, like they had offered, and all of the directors know, even now in the secular climate, that I use the Bible as my textbook. *Valores* classes are offered every 15 days for a duration of 50 minutes, which is the normal time allotted for other subjects. I use this time to teach a Bible story, a verse, and, sometimes, a song. In every class, I make the plan of salvation clear as I tell the Bible stories, but I do not mention a specific religion, nor do I give invitations to visit the assembly. Over the years, some children and families have come to the chapel because of these classes, but as I am teaching children of different religious backgrounds, I must be sensitive and ask for the Lord’s wisdom.

I like to reward the children with small prizes or gifts. Recently, we received prize rolls from Workers Together Online to give to the children who faithfully say their verses, and I am grateful for the many years that we have received calendars, made by those who participate in the calendar project, to distribute to all the children and staff.

I am able to enter the different schools in Campinas largely through the recommendation of a teacher who was transferred to another school. I praise the Lord that most of the teachers with whom I work are supportive and appreciative of the lessons. In a few cases, parents have asked that their child leave when *valores* class is given. Yet watching the living Word of God influence the lives of the children, teachers, and staff at the schools is a great blessing.

Watching the living Word of God influence the lives of the children is a great blessing.



Seeing results

Because I have lived in the same town all my life, many people recognize me; I rejoice in hearing young adults—sometimes waiters, cashiers, or store clerks—say they still remember the stories and biblical principles that I taught them in school.

About 15 years ago, one of my students won a week at Camp Bethel because she faithfully recited her verses. Then, a couple of years ago, while attending a concert at the Nazarene Church in Sousas, I met her again. She came to know the Lord during the week of camp that she won as a child. Soon after, she started attending an evangelical church; later on, she studied elementary education and is now involved in evangelizing children through various projects.

A few years ago, at the end of the school year, Cecilia, a teacher at Escola Estadual Couto de Barros, asked me to visit a girl in a special-needs class. She told me that this child suffered a terrible accident at the beginning of the school year. A bus driver, after looking in the rearview mirror, thought that all of the passengers were seated; however, this girl was still on the steps of the bus. As the driver took off, she fell and slipped under the bus, which ran over her thorax. Her father rushed her to the hospital and was devastated when the doctors did everything they could to save her but did not expect her to survive the night.

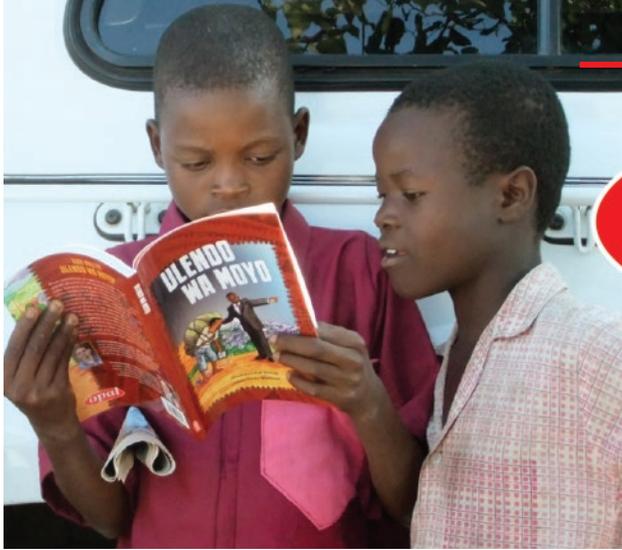
When the news reached the school, Cecilia told the girl's classmates about the accident. At the time, I was teaching the life of Abraham, the Father of Faith, and, specifically, that we become God's children through faith in Jesus Christ. Cecilia was blessed when most of the children sent notes to the parents and the hospital saying that they were praying for the girl and asking the God of the Impossible to heal her. The doctors said that this child's survival is indeed a miracle. What a privilege and blessing to be serving our Lord in this capacity.

Top (left and middle): New booklets from Bible Educational Services (BES). Each year, more than 800 students receive these free booklets. **Top (right):** Seeing former students who have grown up and are raising children, like this young mother, is always a joy. **Middle (L-R):** Students who successfully recite memory verses win prize rolls, which are filled with candy and small toys, supplied by Workers Together Online; Students present their valores teacher with a book of handmade Christmas cards. **Lower (from top):** Jeanne and several of her fellow teachers pause for a quick photo at a Christmas celebration; Many students live in the slums of Sousas and enjoy visits from their teacher.

Please pray that the Lord will continue to give me wisdom and grace as I do His work. I praise the Lord that, despite all of Brazil's difficulties, we still have the liberty to share the precious seed and see it multiply in the hearts of these beloved Brazilian children. ■



Jeanne Lipsi was commended in 2009 by Avenue 54 Bible Chapel in Los Angeles, California.



opal

Ministries

A New Office in South Carolina Encourages American Involvement

BY GEOFF RUSTON

In 2001 Geoff Ruston and John Lewis began to pray about using their years of varied experience in the Christian literature industry to create a ministry that could help meet the desperate need for affordable Bibles and literature in the poorer countries of the world, particularly focusing on our Brethren constituency and assembly missionaries. With the encouragement of service groups and others, OPAL (Overseas Publishing and Literature) was formed in 2003, and operations commenced in earnest in 2004 in a warehouse near Lockerbie, Scotland.

UK GROWTH

From small beginnings and focusing initially on sub-Saharan Africa, activities have steadily grown to the point where a larger warehouse was needed in 2010, allowing us to distribute literature to more than 80 countries. A subsidiary distribution center in Chingola, Zambia, has also been operating since 2005, and in 2015, to meet a growing demand for attractive evangelistic leaflets from overseas, OPAL took over the activities of a sister ministry TELit (Thematic Evangelistic Literature) to benefit from their library of more than 200 topical tracts.

2. To facilitate with others much-needed reprints of vernacular Bible translations for Africa including Lozi, Lunda, Chokwe, Congolese Swahili, and several printings of the Bemba Bible.

3. To publish books particularly relevant to developing nations, including our key title *Knowing and Doing*. This book explains basic biblical truths—how to become a believer and what it means to live for Christ—and is available in 36 languages with more than half a million in print.

4. To provide leaders and other target groups with book packs containing a study Bible, commentary, dictionary, and concordance, along with helpful books on topics such as leadership, prayer, apologetics, and so on.

5. To distribute donated used Bibles and books to Bible schools, libraries, reading rooms, etc.

US DEVELOPMENTS

Most of our distributed new Bibles and books come from the United States. Therefore, to strengthen our links with suppliers and potential donors, OPAL Ministries Inc. began from an office in Newnan, Georgia, at the home of OPAL associates Paul and Angela Lewis with full 501(c)(3) status being granted in 2014.

We have now established an OPAL warehouse and leased a unit near Greenville, South Carolina, where we can handle deliveries from US publishers of Bibles and books made available to us at high discounts, receive and sort donations of used Bibles and books, and make our own OPAL publications available. We are delighted that Neville and Dee Goodhew—commended workers from Kuraby, Australia, but previously working in the US for many years with Operation Mobilization—are now committed to developing this ministry.

YOU CAN HELP

Pray for OPAL. Please pray for the Goodhews and for the ministry's development. Also pray that all needed resources will



From the start, our aim has been the following.

1. To distribute low-cost Bibles and helpful Christian books, which are obtained as inexpensively as possible through our publishing contacts.



Opposite page (from top): Boys in Malawi reading the Chichewa language edition of *Pilgrims Progress*; The OPAL Ministries board—(L-R) Neville Goodhew, Harley Rollins, Dee Goodhew, Geoff Ruston, John Lewis, Paul Lewis, and Angela Lewis. **Above (L-R):** Neville Goodhew outside the South Carolina warehouse entrance; Dee Goodhew sorting books in the warehouse in Greer, South Carolina.

be provided; we acknowledge our dependency on the Lord for His provision.

Donate books. We are happy to receive your surplus used Bibles and books, and guidelines can be provided.

Make needs known. We count it a privilege to help resource CMML missionaries and other national workers in the world's poorer countries with literature as their needs are made known to us.

Stay in contact. We will be happy to place you on our mailing list and provide regular updates. And, distance permitting, we would be happy to visit your local fellowship. Visit OPALMinistries.org for more information and to contact OPAL Ministries.

Geoff Ruston is a founding board member, along with John Lewis, of OPAL Ministries in the UK.

26 Below

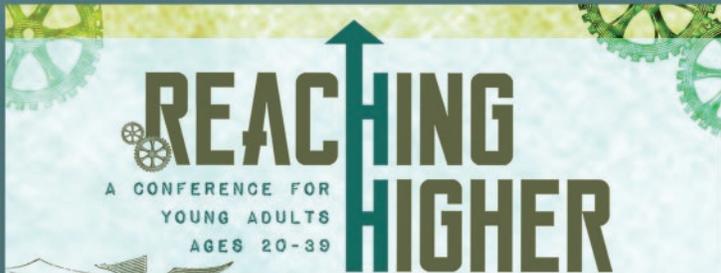
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Home with the Lord

Tim Wagar

December 29, 1953 – June 2, 2017 • Missionary to Paraguay

Timothy Alan was added to the family of Elmer and Hazel Wagar in Valley City, North Dakota, 63 years ago. The youngest of five, Tim was raised in the love and fear of the Lord. At the age of 10, he made the decision to accept God's gift of salvation and began his personal walk with the Lord. During his university years, Tim reaffirmed this decision and began to consider foreign mission work. Meanwhile, he moved to Linton, North Dakota, where he taught high school science and coached track and field, cross country, and gymnastics teams. He held home Bible studies for his students and took small groups camping in Canada. Tim spent many summers counseling and lifeguarding at Storybook Lodge Christian Camp in northern Minnesota. He saw several of his students come to know the Lord during his years in Linton.

We first met in 1974 when my family (Ray and Marian Green and kids) spent some time at Storybook just before moving to Paraguay. In 1980, Tim and I met again at Storybook and found we had similar outlooks on life and God's will. A year and a half later, on December 26, 1981, we were married in my parents' house in General Aquino, Paraguay, and I became part of his life and ministry in Linton. There were adjustments to be made. Tim had to learn to deal with my Paraguayan view of "being on time," and I had to deal with his crazy urge to run! After four years, the Lord moved us to Paraguay. We arrived in 1985 with two adorable little daughters, and over the next several years the Lord gave us three wonderful sons.

Throughout his 32 years in Paraguay, Tim was involved with numerous ministries. He served his Lord in several local assemblies in different capacities. He worked with both Christian and unsaved young people through education and sports. Most recently, he served as "elder to the elders" in the assembly we've attended since 2013. He always managed to be a dedicated husband and father as well.

Everyone who met Tim soon found out two things: he loved the Lord and he loved to run. The combination of those two

loves gave him opportunities to witness to many people in various situations. When he preached or taught the Word, he most often used sports illustrations, either from running or the "national sport" of soccer.

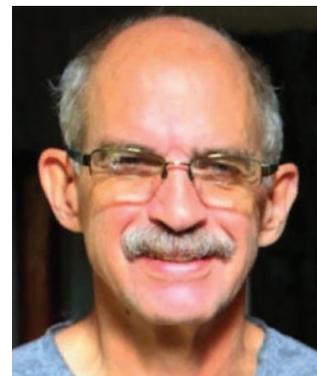
He had a group of friends—some Christians, some not—with whom he exercised and against whom he competed.

Tim was known around the neighborhoods we lived in because of his running and his willingness to talk to anyone. He would go to the park for his daily run and come home to tell me about the people he talked to as he ran, stretched, or cooled down. If we lost track of him at the park or the mall or on the bus, the kids and I assumed he was off talking to a stranger. Many times someone would come up to greet Tim, calling him "profe," (shortened version of professor), which is a respectful and affectionate title in Paraguayan culture. I often had no idea who the people were, but Tim always had time to chat.

The year 2016 was a difficult one for Tim. He battled health problems without being able to pinpoint an exact cause. In December, he underwent a series of tests and analyses, and the doctors were finally able to give us a diagnosis. Tim had a rare autoimmune disease that was affecting his organs. Through a fairly aggressive treatment that had to lower his immunity before boosting it again, the disease was coming under control. However, he was hospitalized at the end of May due to a serious lung infection.

After five weeks of struggle, seeming improvement, and final weakening, on June 2, 2017, the Lord welcomed Tim to his final victory celebration. He left behind a legacy of love in his five children, their wonderful spouses, and five grandchildren and all the lives he touched. We will miss him, but Tim is where he always looked forward to being. God is good.

Robin Wagar



Christmas Around the World

BY ANNIE ELLIOTT

We all have an idea of what Christmas is like—maybe it's quiet family times reading Luke 2 or big church gatherings to sing carols—but holiday celebrations can look very different around the world. For most of our missionaries, they celebrate the Lord's birth in a foreign setting and often without their extended families. We asked a few workers to share about local traditions, what ministries they have planned, and how they celebrate. Please pray for missionaries as they seek to use this holiday season as a bridge to share the Gospel.

Japan | TIM & CHRISTIANE MARCY

What is a local Christmas tradition unique to your area?

People eat Christmas cake, a white cake with whipped cream and strawberries. Also, "Illumination," which is decorating malls, houses, and streets with lights, is becoming popular too. Most people do not know the real meaning of Christmas.

What Christmas ministry are you planning?

Nothing official, but we plan to have friends and neighbors into our home for meals and to sing carols.

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

We sing carols and open presents with family in North America via Skype.



Peru | JANETTE & JOHN HOCKING

What is a local Christmas tradition unique to your area?

In Peru's jungle region, people eat panetón (fruit-filled bread) and drink hot chocolate at midnight. Sometimes we have an evening church service and serve these as well. People have a big meal at midnight, usually with immediate family and maybe some friends. If a family has some money they roast a turkey, but the meal can be anything.

What Christmas ministry are you planning?

Our ministry is now as retired missionaries and serving those who work with us on our farm. We hope to have a meal with couples in our home. In the church, my husband often gives a talk since we have been around since the beginning of this church plant, and it is also the time of their anniversary—December 30. We will help with this celebration.

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

Our daughter and her family work close to us, and this year another daughter plans to visit with her five college-age children. There will be lots of celebrations in the Kids Alive ministry that our daughter and some of our grandchildren are involved in. There will be gifts to be purchased in town and wrapped and a big Christmas party for children. The church usually puts on a program and a play. We decorate our house with simple lights and decorations to remember Christ's birthday.



Peru | NICOLE & WILSER CACHO-HANSEN



What is a local Christmas tradition unique to your area?

People stay up until midnight on Christmas Eve to eat. In Cajamarca, where we live, people pay about five dollars to roast their suckling pigs or turkeys in the bread store clay ovens. In Peru, people might give a gift or two, but it isn't the focus of the holiday. People have Christmas trees now, but traditionally they make manger scenes in homes, schools, churches, office buildings, stores, and the main square.

What Christmas ministry are you planning?

Our church always helps with a garage sale to raise funds for a big Christmas party that they host a few days before Christmas for children in the country. Kids come from about 18 churches to celebrate; some walk two or three hours to get to the party. We always have a Christmas play at our church in the city as well. People invite their friends, neighbors, and family to come hear the Gospel.

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

We go to the market and let our son pick out a present. It is so interesting to see all the shops transform into toy or Christmas shops a few weeks before Christmas. We get together with my husband's family for Christmas, and we often go to the main square to see the decorations. We decorate a fake Christmas tree as a family and make a tiny Nativity scene, which is my favorite Peruvian tradition as it is a great way to learn about the Christmas story. Although it isn't traditional here, I always make pies, which everyone enjoys.

Paraguay | DALE & ROSEMARY KONKOL



What is a local Christmas tradition unique to your area?

Christmas Eve is the main focus. People get together with family to share a meal right at midnight. They set off firecrackers and go out in the streets to greet neighbors and friends. Typical foods include grilled beef or pork, cornbread, and clericó (fruit salad with white wine). On Christmas Day, people sleep in and then go to the beach. No gifts are exchanged. Children receive presents on Three Kings' Day, which is January 6.

What Christmas ministry are you planning?

Since the holiday is during schools' summer vacation, we take advantage of this time and have many open-air movie showings of the Jesus movie and talk about why Jesus was born.

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

In spite of the 90–100 F heat, we make and decorate Christmas cookies. Rosemary usually bakes the cookies on the last cool days in November and freezes them, and then we decorate closer to Christmas. If we can find them, we make pecan pie and drink eggnog as a treat.

Ireland | PENNY DEFOUW



What is a local Christmas tradition unique to your area?

Christmas in Ireland isn't much different than in the US and Canada. It is a time when families get together. Gifts are a big thing; it is a very worldly time and Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection is remembered less and less.

What Christmas ministry are you planning?

The assembly, Shankill Bible Church, is planning our annual ladies' dinner. It is a highlight for us as we invite women, including unbelievers, for a special meal, fellowship, and a gospel message. I have two ladies in mind to invite. The men in the assembly do all the cooking, and my input will be to decorate the room.