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# THINKING IT THROUGH

BY JOHN PEASLAND

## Where Do We Go from Here?

This question was the theme of CMML's 50th Annual Fall Conference on November 14, 2020.<sup>1</sup> And I am sure that many asked the same question as they faced the challenges of 2020. Here at CMML, as we reflect not only on 2020 but also on 100 years of God's work in and through CMML, we want to use our anniversary as an opportunity to celebrate. Not to celebrate an organization but to celebrate God's faithfulness to CMML through committed senders, servants, and supporters. As we go through 2021, we have a threefold purpose for celebrating:

### Recall to rekindle

The apostle Peter used his second epistle to stir up or rekindle his readers' spirits by means of reminding them, and we seek to do the same. When we look back at 100 years of faithful service, we are reminded of the engaged senders in US assemblies who prayerfully and financially supported wave after wave of missionaries whom they commended to the mission field. Over the years, the impact of the Gospel through the US assembly missions movement has been nothing short of amazing. Our small, decentralized, autonomous, mission-focused, quick-to-send churches are uniquely equipped for facing the challenges of this ever-changing world. As we recall, we seek to rekindle a passion and love for missions among the US assemblies.

### Educate to equip

Much changed in 2020 and over the past 100 years in which CMML has served assemblies and their missionaries. But the mission remains the same. We are still called to preach the Gospel, make disciples, and establish local churches until our Lord Jesus returns. However, from preaching in synagogues to preaching virtually via Zoom, and from papyrus to the internet, the methods and medium change often and drastically as we seek to reach those who need the Gospel. Therefore, it is critical that servants are enabled to reach the lost. Today, the tools

in our tool bags look different from those 100 years ago, but being well-equipped is key to reaching the current generation for Christ.

### Illustrate to inspire

Finally, we love to tell stories of faithful servants who have served and are serving on the mission field. The Lord Jesus is building His church, and we seek to keep the believers at home informed so they can be enthusiastic supporters of His marvelous work. We shared some stories at the conference in November and will share more throughout the 2021 year. These stories illustrate how the Lord is working around the world.

We desire to inspire the next generation of faithful servants to prayerfully consider that God may call them to follow in the footsteps of those who went before them. In 2 Timothy 1, Paul reminds Timothy of his mother's and grandmother's faith and tells him that the purpose in recalling is to stir up or rekindle the gift of God in the current generation. May our faith be stirred as we remember the faith of those who went ahead of us.

### Press forward

In response to our question—"Where do we go from here?"—let us press on, press forward, and be found faithful, just as committed servants have for CMML's past 100 years and the more than 2,000 years since Christ came to earth. Will you join the ranks of those who have gone forth preaching the Gospel? Will you send others and be faithful at your battle stations on the home front? Will you enthusiastically support Christ's work around the world?

We are a chosen people, so let us throw off entanglements and pursue with endurance the path that God has set before us (1 Peter 2:9; Hebrews 12:1). May we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). May we be rekindled, equipped, and inspired as we consider our ever-faithful God this year. ■

*John Peasland is CMML's executive director.*

<sup>1</sup> If you have not seen the messages and missionary updates from the 50th Annual Fall Conference, you can access the content at [CMMLConferences.us](http://CMMLConferences.us).

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# EL SALVADOR

## A CHILDREN'S HOME AND A

# Hope



BY HELEN GRIFFIN



As a civil war raged in El Salvador in the 1980s, the Lord laid upon my heart the need for a home for Salvadoran children, who were suffering terribly there. In 1989, I visited El Salvador, and Jack Saword (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 15) and his late wife, Ellen, welcomed me into their home for three months. During my stay, as bombs fell outside, the Lord gave me a verse as my promise from Him: "Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee." (1 Chronicles 17:2, KJV) It has been my rock ever since.

In 1991, Highway Gospel Hall, in Westbank, British Columbia, Canada, commended me to the work among El Salvador's children. In August 1991, I returned to El Salvador and, again, lived with the Sawords for three months. I didn't know much Spanish, so learning the language was my first objective when I arrived.

### THE START OF SOMETHING

Several missionaries helped me learn Spanish: Vernon and Ilda Markle (now home with the Lord) and Hazel Brownlie (New Zealand). Hazel ran a Christian academy, and she invited me to teach in English while I learned the language. A local medical doctor named Sylvia also helped me; she had a vision for missionaries to learn Spanish so they could bring the good news to her people. I am grateful to all of them. Almost every night, I attended gospel meetings conducted in Spanish, which accustomed my ear to the language.

Then, I began working to establish a children's home. Since no children's home in El Salvador was connected to the assemblies, I needed to do all the legal paperwork—and lots of it—to start one. In 1993, I sent the paperwork to the government, and they assured me that I could take in children from the assemblies or from the country's child welfare program, the Protection of Minors, while I waited to receive official authorization on paper. As it turned out, official authorization wouldn't materialize until 1996.

I had rented a home for the children and prepared it, and I was ready to welcome them, even though my Spanish was still shaky. Whom did the Lord send? Teenagers. Whom did I think I wanted? Small children. But God is so wise: through the older children, I learned more Spanish, which wouldn't have happened if I had received younger ones first.

**From top:** After a few months at the children's home, Ana, Tania, and Jhony were healthy and happy; the home's first group of teens, including Ana Marina (far right), have fun with visitors; Over the years, Helen and several helpers, like Minerva Rincon (right), cared for and loved the children.



## PAIN AND POSSIBILITIES

Yet these teens brought much “baggage” with them. My first teen, Ana Marina, was from a rural area. Her father was threatening to kill her, so her grandmother, who attended my assembly, appealed to Jack Saword for help. Ana Marina had never seen a bathroom as we know it; she had rarely worn shoes; she had never lived by a clock; and she had not finished first grade. You can imagine the frustrations we both faced.

I would tell her she had five minutes to be ready for school, and five minutes later, she would be in the same position, having done nothing. Alongside her, I learned how to make her understand her new world. A small, nearby school accepted her into second grade, and finally, she learned to read and write. In 2020, Ana Marina celebrated her 40th birthday; we keep in contact and see each other a few times per year.

Then, I received three more teens: two brothers and a sister from the assemblies. Their mother died a few years prior, and Jack was responsible for the family. He kept these three youngest siblings together, but they rotated through the homes of different Christians. The situation wasn’t working, so they joined my children’s home.

Another girl, Iris Yessenia, came, and she had several health issues. She had one kidney, and it was functioning at 30 percent. Her small feet were crooked, as was her spine. She had so many doctor appointments that we came to know Hospital Rosales

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### It was an honor and a privilege to care for them.

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In 1997, she was hospitalized, and from there, she left her body of suffering and went home to be with her Lord—joy amid much sorrow.

That year, one boy, David, returned to his biological mother, and two weeks later, a girl, Yvonne, was “legally kidnapped.” All this happened while I had hepatitis. It was a hard year for me. Then, the Protection of Minors sent me more children and teens, who came for different periods of time and left for different reasons. After a few years, God sent young children who came in groups of three or one by one until I had 15 little ones.

## GOD’S LOVE

The 60 children the home received over the past 30 years came from diverse backgrounds. Some were abandoned or orphaned; others mistreated and abused. Some came from families who were involved in alcoholism and witchcraft; others suffered from fetal alcohol syndrome and schizophrenia. Some

were malnourished with swollen stomachs; others had severe allergies. But one thing is sure: they all had lacked love in their lives, especially the love of God.

They all have their own stories, and one day I would love to tell each one—how God brought them to me, helped me heal their bodies and troubled souls, and gave them peace amid their stormy lives. It was an honor and a privilege to care for them and to tell them about Jesus and His great love for them.

## AN UNEXPECTED FAMILY

In 1997, the 10 children whom I would adopt by 2019 started coming to me. Two of them, Angela and Samuel, are deaf, so I learned American Sign Language to communicate with them. The majority of the children stayed with me through elementary and high school. During their teen years, they accepted the Lord as their Savior and were baptized, and almost all of them came into assembly fellowship. Then, when they reached age 18, we wondered where they would go. They could not return to their former gang-run communities.

Once I had teenagers over the age of 18 living at the home, I was legally unable to take in younger children. I could either send the teens away and take in younger children or continue caring for the teens. At this point, my health was poor, and I knew I could no longer manage night duty with children. I considered my options carefully, as caring for young adults was not my original vision for the children’s home. Still, many years ago, Vernon Markle, the missionary who helped me learn Spanish, had given me two important pieces of advice for serving on the mission field: keep your own soul sweet, and be flexible. I wondered, *Could it be that my work is changing?*

So the home’s workers and I continued helping the 10 young adults through university—if that was their goal—or to find employment. After much prayer and time and talking to different people, I sensed the Lord was leading me to adopt the 10 young adults and moved forward, submitting applications to the courts in the last months of 2017. The first adoption wasn’t finalized until November 2018. Each adoption case had its own judge, and the judges had different criteria. Most of the teenagers were treated like minors and had to have a social worker and psychologist interview us, test us, and inspect the home.

With God’s help, on December 9, 2019, I finally adopted the 10 young people. Karla, Angela, Iris, Arely, Ana, Tania, Jhony, David, Rudy, Samuel, and I were officially a family. Unfortunately, the paperwork from the courts for the last adoption, Iris’s, did not come through until late February 2020. This delay held up her new identity papers, which were in process at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, we had submitted papers



for Canadian citizenship for eight of my children and will do so for Iris and David soon.

## THE GIFT OF HOPE

Nine of my children are in the home with me now, along with two of my grandchildren. Iris lives in her home with her husband and two children. One day, unless the Lord comes first, we would love to move to Canada and live away from the gangs, corruption, and violence that dominate this society.

Often, I'm reminded of Romans 5:3-5. If the Holy Ghost had not poured out the love of God in my heart, I would never have wanted or been able to love these children as they needed to be loved (v. 5). Having a children's home is hard work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. But we "glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint." (vv. 3-4) These 30 years have not been easy, but I have hope. And, with the love of God, I gave hope to all the children who passed through the home. God is steadfast and faithful.

Please pray for my children. Pray for their spiritual lives and the choices they make so that they may be able to share with others God's goodness, which they have experienced. Pray that their Canadian citizenship will be approved and that God will guide us as to what He would have us to do and where He would have us to go. We have been so blessed. ■



*Helen Griffin is commended from Highway Gospel Hall in Westbank, British Columbia.*

**From top:** Helen transported the children around town in a eight-passenger van; (L-R) Ana, Tania, Jhony, Iris, Rudy, Nelson, Angela, Alicia, and Maria play in a boat; (L-R, back to front) Karla, Angela, Iris, Helen, Arely, Ana, Tania, Jhony, David, Rudy, Samuel.



# My Eyes Have Seen

## A PERSONAL HISTORY OF GOD'S WORK IN AFRICA

BY ELEANOR SIMS

I was born at Kalene Hospital in Zambia on February 17, 1928, and grew up in Chavuma, Zambia. Although missionary responsibilities kept my parents, Wallace and Ruth Logan, busy, we gathered for a time of Bible reading every morning and evening. Each of us seven children trusted the Lord as Savior at a young age.

One night, when I was six years old, I witnessed a fierce forest fire in the bush. When I saw how ravaging and uncontrolled it was, the thought of hell and the punishment for my sins convicted me. In the middle of the night, I woke my parents, and we prayed at their bedside. I asked God to forgive my sins and trusted and received the Lord as my Savior (John 1:12; 1 John 1:9). Words cannot express the peace and joy that filled my heart. As we grew older, my siblings and I were introduced to Emmaus correspondence courses, which strengthened our walk with the Lord.

### THE LORD PROVIDES

In 1951, my family returned to the USA for a two-year furlough, during which we traveled to different assemblies telling of the Lord's work in Africa. At the meetings, my family stood up and sang: "Away far beyond Jordan, we'll meet in that land; oh, won't that be grand."

At that time, a few of us older girls were in our 20s.

Before returning to Zambia, someone called my father aside and questioned him as to the wisdom of taking his daughters back to Africa—would they ever find husbands there? He replied that they each want the joy of helping those in Africa find the Savior.

In 1953, we returned to the mission station at Chavuma, Zambia. Meanwhile, the Lord had led a young man named John Sims to join his widowed missionary father, Edwin Sims, in the work in northwest Zambia. The elders of John's home assembly had commended him to this work, and he was serving the Lord at Lukolwe mission station, which was located near Chavuma.

Over time, John and I developed a deep friendship, and we married at Chavuma. During the next few years, our loving heavenly Father provided spouses for the five girls and two boys in the Logan family, as they continued in mission work in Zambia. With the Lord as our guide, John and I had the joy of serving the Lord for the next 52 years—in Zambia and Zimbabwe.



**Far left:** Wallace and Ruth Logan raised Eleanor (far right) and her siblings at Chavuma Mission Station in Zambia.

**Left:** Eleanor carries two of her children, Andrew (left) and Stephen (right).

**Above:** While the Sims children were young, the family served at Lukolwe and Chavuma mission stations.

## THE LORD GUIDES

Chavuma was our family home and base, and during my childhood, I learned to speak Luvale, the local language. John and I enjoyed the missionary work at Chavuma and at Lukolwe, the sister missionary station. Yet, after our older children finished their elementary education at Sakeji Mission School, we sought the Lord's guidance for their high school education. At the time, the postal system in Zambia was not well-developed, so education by correspondence was not the answer. John made a visit to Zimbabwe (then known as Southern Rhodesia) and found good government schools. The missionaries warmly invited us to join them in their work.



While John was away, I stayed home with the children and also sought God's guidance. Three times, from different sources, Acts 8:26–40 was given to me. Each time, the words in verse 26 struck me: "Arise and go toward the south." When John returned, he said he believed God was calling us to go south to Zimbabwe.

So, in 1971, we said goodbye to our parents and other family members and, with our six children, followed the Lord's call to a new field of service.

## THE LORD OPENS DOORS

When we arrived in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital, the Lord provided a house for us and places for our children in the local government schools as day scholars. Becoming proficient in Shona, the local language, was important for us, and our colleagues encouraged us in this endeavor. Within three months, John could preach in Shona, and I, too, could teach the women



from the Scriptures in their language. Speaking Shona enabled us to build friendships, and we were delighted to see the people responding to God's Word as they heard

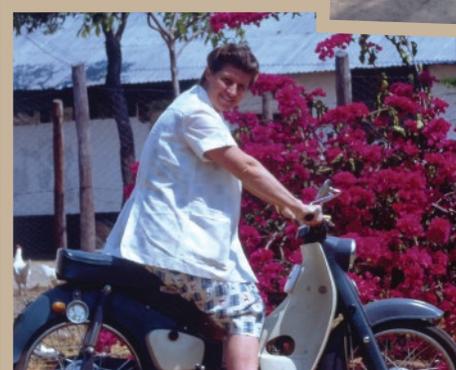
it in their language. Our missionary work was twofold: spreading God's Word and raising our six children to know and grow in the Lord. We are thankful that our children surrendered their hearts to the Lord at young ages. Daily Bible readings were an important part of our family life, and we were grateful to see our children grow in faith and in their involvement in the local assembly. Today, the Lord lovingly uses our children in His service around the world.

### Community ministries

The Lord blessed our ministry among the Shona people. We witnessed many people turn from ancestral worship and place their faith in Christ, anchoring themselves in God's Word and letting it filter into their home life, assembly life, and work life. Through His grace, the Lord enabled us to meet not only people's spiritual needs but also some of their many practical needs. Zimbabwe would become a war-torn country, yet the Lord gave us opportunities to reach unreached ones with His Word and protected us while traveling on lonely, dangerous roads.

John spent many hours building up local believers in their faith, often as they faced trials and suffering. The Lord enabled me to share openly with the women about how His divine power gives us all things pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him. One believing Shona woman suffered opposition from her husband. Yet the Lord used the testimony of her strong faith, her deep love for the Lord, and her faithful endurance to convict and save her husband and three children. They are still living for the Lord (1 Peter 1:7–8).

What a joy it was to see God saving individuals who became servants of the Lord—evangelists in rural areas and faithful workers in the assemblies.



**Left column (from top):** John Sims and Lorne Ferguson, a fellow missionary at Lukolwe, travel to nearby villages to preach the Gospel; Eleanor teaches her children a Bible lesson using flannelgraph.

**Above:** John studies the Bible with a group of men while a few children listen in. **Left:** Eleanor rides a motorbike, which helps with movement around the mission station or to nearby villages.



### School ministry

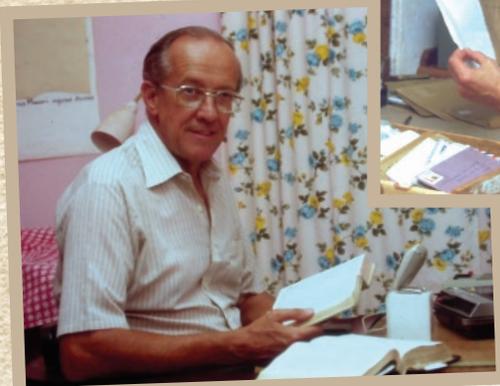
We had the privilege of teaching religious education in government schools in the townships of Harare. As more and more schools requested our help, we built a team of about 10 teachers from the Shona assemblies and went on to teach hundreds of children the good news.

### Emmaus correspondence course ministry

The Lord opened the door for us to preach the Gospel in one of Zimbabwe's largest prisons and to introduce Emmaus correspondence courses into all of the country's prisons. Since many prisoners did not speak English, they needed courses in Shona. We translated many of the English Bible courses into Shona, providing Bible study resources to hundreds of Shona believers within and outside the prison system.

Over the years, the local believers' hard work has blessed this ministry. One young man who worked in our garden joined the Emmaus work and, eventually, began overseeing all the correspondence course work in the prisons. Hundreds of prisoners trusted the Lord as Savior. After the man's tragic home call due to a stroke, the Lord raised up another godly young man who continues to lead this ministry.

Even to this day, the Lord is using these courses: We receive many testimonies from prisoners who trusted Christ and experienced transformed lives. Some are missionaries to their fellow inmates. Please pray that the Lord will help the people who grade the completed tests and answer the students' questions.



### Assembly ministries

I thank the Lord for the testimony of the assemblies scattered across Zimbabwe. They faithfully gather to remember the Lord Jesus Christ and His death for sinners, they share from God's precious Word, and they spread the good news of God's loving salvation. Through these assemblies, small or large, the Lord is shepherding, encouraging, and strengthening Christians—especially in their present trials and hardships. I greatly appreciate your prayers for them.



**Top left:** In a government school in Harare, Eleanor teaches the Bible to eager students.

**Above:** Eleanor and a group of believers pose for a picture after a Gospel meeting.

**Left:** Eleanor plays the accordion while believers in a local church sing hymns.

### ALL FOR HIS GLORY

The Lord gave John and me a deep love for the people of Africa, but in 2003, failing health brought us back to the USA. We served the Lord together as He gave us strength, and on December 26, 2005, the Lord called John home to see Him face to face in all His glory and to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. . . . Enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:21)

I anticipate that day when, in the presence of our Lord, I will join with my loved ones gone on before to praise Him for all eternity. May the Lord use us, His servants, for His glory as we serve Him faithfully, inspired by the godly example of those who served Him tirelessly and selflessly over many years.

**Left (clockwise from top):** Eleanor opens mail containing Emmaus correspondence courses from prisoners; In Zimbabwe, a team member prepares Emmaus correspondence courses for prisoners; John records Bible teaching in Shona.

# A Memory from the Field

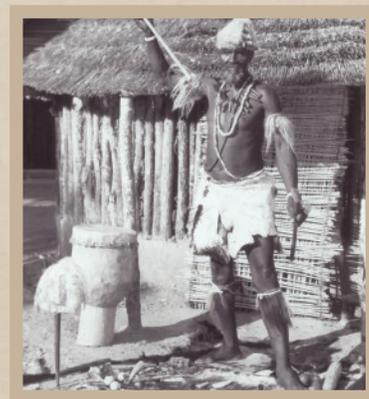
While serving the Lord in Zambia, my father, Wallace Logan, came across a crowd of people seated on the ground in a village where a death had recently occurred. He sat down among the people to observe the proceedings. In those days, when a person died, the death was attributed to bewitchment, not natural illness or age. So the villagers called a witch doctor, or diviner, to identify the person responsible for the death.

## Courage in the Gospel

The diviner used a large, waxed seedpod, which he threaded and tied to an overhead tree branch. He told the crowd that, when the pod slid down the string, the answer was no; when it remained high up, the answer was yes. As the diviner named different individuals in the crowd, he asked if they killed the deceased. Each time, the pod slid down, indicating no. Eventually, at the mention of an elderly man's name, the pod remained in place. The villagers turned on the old man, intending to kill him immediately.

With courage from the Lord, my father jumped up and shouted for the people to stop. He saw the diviner's trickery in controlling the seedpod. He took the string from the reluctant diviner, who sat

with the crowd, waiting to see what would happen. The string was coiled around a stick that was attached inside the pod, which allowed the diviner to control the seedpod's rise and fall.



My father then operated the pod's movement in answer to his own questions: "Is this diviner a good man?" The pod slid down—no. "Is he deceiving the people?" The pod stuck—yes. "Did this old man kill the person?" The pod slid down—no. At this answer, the diviner fled. Everyone was astonished, for this method killed many people in the past. Once my

**Left:** Traditionally, witch doctors, also known as diviners, were important figures in village life. **Right:** Wallace and Ruth Logan and their seven children, including Eleanor, served the Lord in Zambia.



father revealed the trick, the villagers spared the old man's life. This situation presented an opportunity for my father to share the Gospel. He told the people that Satan is the father of lies, deceiving humankind, while Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). That day, many people in the village received the Lord as their Savior.

## Triumph through the Gospel

The story does not end there. One night, soon after this incident, the diviner surreptitiously poisoned our drinking water (boiled river water that we hung outside in canvas bags to cool). During the night, my mother and one of my siblings drank the water and suffered vomiting and diarrhea. But the Lord graciously spared their lives. A few days later, word spread around the local villages that it was no use trying to poison the missionaries, for their God was too strong for poison.

Years later, my parents and sister were in a distant village, meeting with Christians on a Sunday. After the meeting, a man sitting next to my father asked him if he remembered him. When my father answered that he did not know him, the man confessed that he was the diviner whose trick my father exposed. Now, he was a Christian, thanking the Lord for His salvation with other believers. In time, five other diviners trusted the Lord and blessed others. What a wonderful, powerful, loving Savior we have. ■

What a wonderful, powerful, loving Savior we have.



*Eleanor Sims is commended from Grace Gospel Chapel in Jersey City, New Jersey, and Brighton Avenue Gospel Chapel in East Orange, New Jersey.*

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE *MISSIONARY PRAYER HANDBOOK*

BY RUTH LANDIS STIEFLER

I began life on a farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, with Christian parents. We attended the Curley Hill assembly, Grace Gospel Chapel, where missionaries occasionally visited. Each spring, my mother took my sisters and me to the Philadelphia Ladies' Missionary Conference, which was influential in my life. As a result, I wanted to be a missionary nurse.

After nursing college, I planned a four-month trip through Asia and Oceania, visiting many missionaries in Japan through New Guinea before ending at my sister's home in Australia. Soon after, I relocated to Hong Kong to help at Peace Clinic for four months. Then, I moved to Taiwan for six months to help former CMML missionaries Conrad and Myrtle Baehr proofread a hymnbook.

### A NEW TASK

After returning home, I was overwhelmed by the need to add information to the existing booklet that listed assembly missionaries—that way, people would better know how to pray for the work overseas. It needed maps, pictures of the missionaries, and information on where they came from, their type of ministry, their children, and who worked together. The Fields, a missionary service organization in New York City, published it, so I contacted Fred MacKenzie, the president. He accepted my proposal to update the booklet and helped me start the project.

The Fields sent questionnaires to all missionaries on their list; these questionnaires were extremely helpful to me in compiling the handbook information. I had opportunities to meet many workers on furlough, which helped me get a feel for the situation on the mission fields I had not been to.

I worked on the first edition of the *Missionary Prayer Handbook* (MPH) in fall of 1966, even going to Lithocolor Press in Chicago to help with the layout. It was printed and ready to be distributed by 1967.

I continued to update the MPH each year, and then, The Fields asked me to help full time in their office. In 1971, The Fields united with Voices from the Vineyard, the Julia Hasse Memorial Missionary Home, and Christian Missions in Many Lands, Ltd., to form Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc. We moved from Manhattan to the beautiful property in

Wall, New Jersey, a gift the Lord orchestrated and CMML missionaries have appreciated for many years.

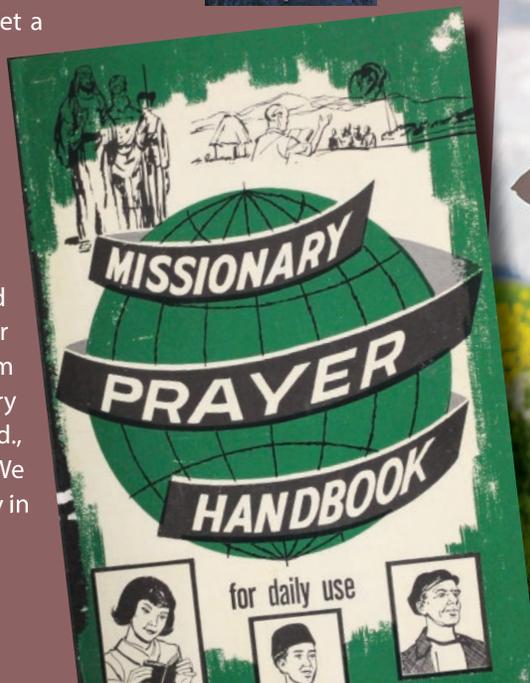
### A DOUBLE BLESSING

When I married David Stiefler late in 1975, I stopped editing the MPH and joined him in his work for the Lord. Our summers were filled with camp work, where using the MPH daily influenced many campers. We were invited to a number of assemblies in the US, and over 35 years, we visited missionaries on the field until David was unable to travel. I never lost my interest in the mission field. I praise the Lord for the wonderful life He has allowed us to have in serving Him.

Today, the MPH looks different from when I worked on it. It is larger in size, has color photos of each missionary, an eye-catching cover image, and additional information. But, just as when I worked on the MPH, many people continue to use it and appreciate it. The 2021 *Missionary Prayer Handbook* is now available; if you haven't already done so, order a copy today so you can stay up to date with and pray for 725 missionaries in more than 80 countries. Your prayers and support are a blessing and encouragement to each one. ■



Ruth Landis Stiefler attends Blasdell Gospel Chapel in Blasdell, New York.



# Interview with Micah & Cristina Williams



## New Missionaries Share about Daily Life

In 2008, Lawrence Bible Chapel in Lawrence, Kansas, and Fenton Crossing Bible Chapel in Fenton, Missouri, commended the Williams family. In September 2019, the Williams moved to California to serve the Lord in a cross-cultural context with Freedom Teams. They are excited about what the Lord is doing in and through them there. Please pray for Micah and Cristina as they learn Spanish and build friendships in their community and for their children as they adjust to their new home.

### What is your area of the US like?

We live in Watsonville, California, just north of Monterey and southeast of Santa Cruz, in the heart of Monterey Bay. Watsonville is a farm community with fields of strawberries, lettuce, and artichokes. Most days, regardless of conditions, farmworkers are in the fields working hard. The farmworkers, like the rest of our community (85 percent Hispanic), are mostly from Mexico. We love the Hispanic influence of our town's culture!

### In your cross-cultural setting, what tradition do you find interesting?

The Day of the Dead is fascinating and, as we consider the beliefs represented and celebrated, sad to see. In 2019, thousands attended the Day of the Dead celebration at the town plaza. Scattered across the plaza were ancestral offerings, people in elaborate traditional dress, and dancing to celebrate those that "cross over." It is sobering to consider that the mistaken beliefs about life after death are leading many to an eternity apart from God.

### What is the majority religion in your area?

Catholicism. Just three blocks from us is a large cathedral where, before COVID-19, around 30,000 people attended Mass in shifts each weekend. Catholic influences are evident throughout the town.

### Do you feel settled?

Yes, very much so. This past summer, we traveled back to the Midwest to visit family, friends, and commending churches. After a few weeks, we missed our home in Watsonville and couldn't wait to return.

### What do you miss the most?

Before moving to Watsonville, we lived at Turkey Hill Ranch Bible Camp, which sprawls over 800 acres of beautiful hills. We enjoyed the camp's activities and the fellowship with many who came through camp, but we loved being near family. Some of our family live on the campgrounds, and the rest live within a four-hour drive. We miss the closeness of family, the land where the kids were free to roam, and the visits from friends. But we are so happy to be where the Lord has placed us.

### What is exciting?

We saw a neighbor trust Jesus Christ several months ago, and she started meeting with us on Sundays!

We love our community. We love the people around us. We have neighbors who need Christ and are eager to build relationships with us, a park across the street with opportunities to meet people, and a town whose streets precious souls cross all day. Many people are friendly and open to conversation. The opportunities for the Gospel are exciting!

We are thrilled to work with a team of two other couples: Dan and Cyndi Williams (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 30) and Scott and Lynn DeGroff (MPH Day 30). Daily, we pray, work, eat, rejoice and weep, and share together. We treasure the gift of working with a team.

### What is challenging?

Language. Cristina has a decent grasp of Spanish since she grew up as a missionary kid in Ecuador. Micah has a good foundation but has much to learn to communicate the Gospel well in Spanish. Language is a more complicated matter than we assumed. The first language for many

migrant workers is an indigenous Mexican dialect. Some do not understand Spanish well, much less English.

Finances. The cost of living in California is not cheap, so the Lord is increasing our faith and teaching us greater wisdom with finances. Praise God! He is faithful and multiplies much out of little.

### How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your ministry and daily life?

The pandemic opened many unexpected opportunities for friendships and the Gospel. At the beginning, many of our neighbors were home all the time, and some of them were lonely. We have built relationships with many—loving them and simply being friends—taking opportunities to point them to the truth of Christ’s love.

Our church meetings happened via Zoom for a time, but now, we meet outside on our back patio. One couple who attends another local church joined us from time to time until their church reopened.

### What have you learned?

Faith. The Lord stretched our faith regarding our children, finances, the Gospel, friends, and family. Some days hold pleasant surprises, and some hold struggles and tough lessons, but each day has opportunities for growth in faith.

Parenting. Life in a busy town in California is different than it was in the woods at a Bible camp in the Midwest. The kids’ ongoing adjustment has been tough for them, and God reminds us that His heart toward them is unwaveringly good. He is faithful to give the wisdom we so desperately need in the challenges of parenting!

Relationship with God. Our Father has drawn us to Him, and we are so thankful. He is teaching us to abide in His presence, to daily yield to Him, and to be selflessly devoted to Him. Some days, we see moments of growth, and other days, He allows tough lessons and struggles to teach us.

### How can we pray for you?

Pray for faithfulness and wisdom in the work. Pray for God’s perfect provision and guidance. Pray for our relationships with friends and neighbors to grow so they might be pointed to Christ. Pray for our children’s walks with God. Above all, please pray that we will abide with Christ daily, walking in unhindered fellowship with Him. ■

**From top:** The local park provides outreach opportunities; The Williams host church meetings on their patio; The team meets for daily prayer; The Williams enjoy working with the other families on their team.

