

# Missions

## Austria

Helping the Local Church Thrive

## South Africa

Still Learning after 70 Years

## Kenya

Empowering Women for Christ



# THINKING IT THROUGH

BY PHIL BARNES

## I Plead

*"I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind." (Philippians 4:2, NIV)*

**H**ave you ever been in conflict with anyone? How would you like your conflict with a fellow believer to be on display in the pages of Scripture for all eternity? Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4 and Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15 have that dubious privilege. Many cases of conflict appear in the Bible, but who is "right" and who is "wrong" is usually clear. However, in these two situations, the conflict occurs between committed believers who are fully engaged in the Lord's service, and we are not told who was right and who was wrong. Maybe the situation didn't have one right answer. Often, it doesn't.

Usually, we come into conflict with other believers when we are certain we are right and they are wrong. Sometimes, we line up all our proof texts and hope we have more than they do. The longest list wins. We enlist others to our position, and we do it all in the name of defending the purity of doctrine, of Scripture, or of the church. We behave as if the real fruit of the Spirit is the defense of truth, not love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Social media and identity politics have made conflict a regular pastime. Outrage is a legitimate first reaction and is accepted as part of normal human interaction. Somehow, anger and rage don't require justification. The fact that one is offended is, in itself, just cause for hatred. Current trends only stir these tendencies further. It is the story of human history. When God asked him to account for his first sin, Adam immediately turned on his wife. When God rejected his offering, Cain murdered his brother. Sin's first casualty resulted from humans' inability to interact as God designed us to, which remains the problem today.

Those of us working in missions often deal with several irrational beliefs about conflict. The first belief is the "magic airplane," or the idea that people who provoke discord here can

board an airplane to a distant place and disembark magically enabled to get along with everyone. The second is the "heaven on earth" myth, the thought that serving the Lord full time with mature believers must be like heaven, without conflict. The last belief is the "commitment to Scripture" myth, which suggests that, if we all are deeply committed and submitted to Scripture's clear teaching, we will live and work in perfect harmony.

Paul gives us the general plan for human interaction in Philippians 2:1–8, especially verse 5: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." This passage includes ideas like humility ("no reputation") and servanthood. In Philippians 4, Paul names names. His exhortation in the surrounding chapters is no longer theory; it is personal. He implores the two women, Euodia and Syntyche, to be of the same mind—the mind of Christ. Conflict is not resolved through uniformity of behavior or unanimity on doctrinal positions but is resolved in Christ. Paul knows that the path to resolution for Euodia and Syntyche is developing the mind of Christ in their lives.

God has created many Pauls, Barnabases, Euodias, and Syntyches: exceptional believers fully devoted to the Lord but struggling in conflict with other workers. Conflict is a problem on the field simply because it is a problem in our churches, our families, and our hearts, and we all must do a better job of recognizing it, addressing it, equipping the saints with tools to resolve it, and most of all, striving together for the mind of Christ to be in us. At the Missionary Orientation Program, we have increased the amount of training on interpersonal conflict on the field, and as believers, we need to understand and resolve the interpersonal conflict in our own lives. We can be right on every issue, but disciples of Christ should be known for their love, not for being right. ■

**As believers, we need to understand and resolve the interpersonal conflict in our own lives.**

*Phil Barnes is the executive director of MSC Canada.*

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COVER PHOTO: Austria's mountains—Photo by Leslie Walt BACK COVER PHOTO: Jobson's Cove, Bermuda—Photo by Cheryl Biswurm



# 32 YEARS IN AUSTRIA

## Helping the Local Church Thrive



BY LESLIE WALT

Often called the “graveyard of missionaries,” Austria has seen many missionaries return to their home countries after just a few years. Austria is a beautiful country, wealthy and full of natural resources. Its history and culture are fascinating. The people are reserved and take time to make friends. Usually, they have only a handful of friends, but they love and care for them loyally. Austrians love music, and the country has birthed some of the most famous musicians. As a nation, Austria is very fit; people actively participate in a variety of sports, including walking, swimming, and skiing. The majority of the population is nominally Catholic, but the number is decreasing as the population moves toward the growing world culture of “doing what is best for me.” The upside to people focusing more on their personal desires and needs is that they are less afraid to explore nontraditional religions, which they consider evangelical Christianity to be. Over the past 32 years, we have gone from seeing not a single visitor enter an evangelical church, which they viewed, and many still view, as a sect, to greeting new visitors every Sunday.

**Above:** Scott hikes some of Austria’s mountains with Evangelikale Gemeinde Baden’s leadership team. **Left (from top):** EGB meets in an old suitcase factory, which it is slowly remodeling; EGB has grown in number since the Walts arrived 32 years ago.

## Our arrival

In July 1988, we arrived in Austria with our three young sons. Our goal was to work with Floyd and Christine Schneider, CMML missionaries and our former youth leaders, to plant a new assembly in Vienna. Little did we know that God had other plans for our lives.

Upon our arrival, we ended up staying temporarily with Greg and Becky Johnson, CMML missionaries and friends of the Schneiders, who lived in Pfaffstätten, a small town located south of Vienna and next to the city of Baden bei Wien. Finding a long-term place to live anywhere in Austria was difficult during the summer months, and as the time for school to start drew nearer, we rejoiced when God gave us a great apartment about 15 minutes closer to Vienna. We were not intending to live outside of Vienna, but this change was also part of God's plan.

When the Schneiders were in the States for a yearlong furlough, and Scott and I were focusing on German-language studies, we wanted to attend a local church where we could enjoy fellowship and work on our German skills. The choices were few and far between. Our new apartment was located close to a small, local evangelical church, the only one in our district of 100,000 people. This church was the logical one for us to attend, but the American missionary working with the small congregation made it clear that we were trespassing on his territory and he wanted nothing to do with us. We quickly made the decision to return to the small church in Baden that we had attended with the Johnsons. It was the only evangelical church in another district of about 100,000 people. There, the congregation and the two Austrian elders welcomed us with open arms.

One year later, following their furlough in the US, the Schneiders returned to Austria. Church plants take time, so for the next six months, our family continued to attend the church in Baden and to focus on our German-language skills. For our first 18 months in Austria, Scott refused to preach in English with translation, wanting to wait until he could speak in German. However, one memorable evening, as we started full-time church planting with the Schneiders, God provided an opportunity for Scott to lead the midweek Bible study on Isaiah. The church leaders realized that Scott had a gift for teaching the Word, and after the Bible study, they asked him to consider staying at the church. They told us that, as a church, they had been praying for God to send them a teacher of the Word, and they believed that Scott was the answer to their prayers. After much prayer and discussion with the Schneiders, we determined that God was leading us in this direction, and 32 years later, we are still working at Evangelikale Gemeinde Baden (EGB).

## The work

When we started attending EGB, the congregation was comprised of about 30 people, including children. Greater Europe Mission (GEM) was instrumental in planting the church, and various GEM missionaries were involved in the start. When we arrived, no missionaries were working with the church, and the small congregation was floundering. Despite the congregation's warm welcome, the first 10 years were full of contention, bitterness, and fighting among themselves and aimed at us. Fortunately, Scott not only has the gift of teaching but also the gifts of leadership, training, and encouraging harmony among people.

One other thing made all the difference in our ministry at EGB and in Baden. By the time we arrived, an elderly woman in the church had prayed faithfully for 60 years that God would bring people, especially young people, to salvation and that He would plant His church in Baden, in Lower Austria, and across the country. When people ask us our secret to a successful ministry over 30 years, we tell them that it's easy—they just need someone who will pray faithfully for 60 years for God to work in and through them.

As our German skills increased, Scott took on more and more of the teaching ministry at EGB, especially at the midweek Bible study. He preached on Sunday mornings about once per month, and at our two Austrian elders' request, he trained them further in church leadership.

Around the 10th year of our ministry, in which we had many moments of wanting to give up and return to the States, God opened doors for more ministry among teens and young adults. We held Bible weekends four times per year. The Bible weekends, *Bibelwochenenden*, or BiWos as we called them, were held from Friday late afternoon until Sunday noon. They included eight blocks of teaching on a book of the Bible or a topic. They also included a Saturday evening Breaking of Bread meeting with worship and a time of sharing. These evenings often lasted until midnight as the young people shared what God was showing them and as they prayed that God would help them change and grow. We have funny memories of Scott, who was exhausted from the heavy teaching schedule, falling asleep and starting to snore in the middle of the prayer time. Never-





**Opposite page:** Scott preaches in diverse churches, including an interdenominational English-German church in Vienna. **This page (from top):** Besides being rich in natural resources, Austria is a beautiful country; The Walts host an annual winter camp in central Austria; At a winter camp, Scott plays with his spiritual and biological grandchildren.

theless, we saw our young people grow immensely through the Bible teaching and the practical life applications. As the young people grew serious about their walks with the Lord, we saw their parents, who came from difficult backgrounds, love, accept, and support us more as they experienced the joy of their children's growth and passion for Jesus.

## Our ministries

Through the years, Scott has actively taught and trained people in our church, especially the current and upcoming leaders. As the congregation grows, new and younger elders are added to the leadership team. Scott mentors young men in teaching, and many of them, while still in their late teens, preach their first messages during the summer months. As a result, we have a large number of preachers who minister to our church body and other congregations.

In the past 30 years, my life, as Scott's wife and ministry partner, was full of caring for our home and four children and keeping Scott going. I am not a quiet or reserved person, and at times, I found it challenging to sacrifice some of my gifts to support my husband's gifts. Looking back, I do not regret it for a moment. I am able to rejoice completely in what God accomplishes through Scott while I support the ministry any way I can.





**From top:** For more than 30 years, the Walts have lived and worked in Baden, Austria; Leslie builds relationships with women over coffee; Leslie ministers to young mothers, loving and caring for their children.

ward focus results in Scott and me traveling frequently. In the past five years, Scott and our son Mike started speaking to and training leadership teams together more often. This ministry equips them with a multigenerational focus, and it has been very well received.

### Prayer

Please pray that we would finish this race well and honor the Lord completely with our time and resources. Pray for discernment in where and how we should give our time and energy as we have more requests for help than we can meet. ■



*Leslie and Dr. Scott Walt are commended from Spring Mountain Bible Church in Portland, Oregon.*

God has given me the gift of organizing the BiWos, the winter camp, and other church retreats and events. He also has enabled me to care for children, and today, I support the young mothers in our church, especially those whose husbands are involved in heavy ministries and those who do not have their own mothers nearby. I mentor women of all ages, both single and married. I most enjoy the time I spend with our nine grandchildren. I believe that God has given me the joyful ministry of supporting their parents in teaching these precious children to know and love Jesus with all their hearts. Every day, I ask God to make me aware of the good works He has prepared in advance for me to do.

### Growth

As our 32nd year comes to an end, we rejoice over God's work. He allowed our church to grow and fill the old factory that we bought and started remodeling about 20 years ago. We see the young people marry wisely and start families. We have babies and children galore, and currently, our biggest need is rethinking the Sunday morning children's ministries, which can become a little wild due to the number of children. Further, God raised up committed young elders to work with or take the place of the older ones. He enables us to train and appoint deacons. Many young people begin their ministries in our church and, then, serve in other parts of Austria and in other countries. We watched joyfully as our oldest son became one of the elders and leaders in our church and a ministry partner with us.

Two young couples, whom we trained over the years, are planting a church together in a small city about 30 miles east of Baden. The church plant is thriving, and at Christmas, Scott preached an evangelistic message there to more than 100 people. Currently, we are in the planning and prayer phase for another church plant in a city southwest of Baden.

In the last few years, God led Scott to step down as an elder and to focus on the ministry of "grandparenting." With our children out of the nest for 10 years now, we do this ministry together usually. Our grandparenting ministry involves moving younger, well-trained people into the positions that we formerly occupied. Then, we support them in a relaxed, hands-off way while remaining available to counsel or help them at their request.

Our ministry also includes an outward focus. Over the years, EGB has become well known in Austria, and Scott has too. Almost daily, he receives requests to speak at a church retreat or a leadership seminar or to train and mentor current elders who seek wisdom for their demanding and challenging ministries. Even the church whose long-departed missionary warned us away 32 years ago requests Scott's ministry. Our greater out-

# A Sanctuary in the City

Amani Ya Juu's Ministry in Kenya

BY JULIA NYAGA



I have ministered as a full-time missionary in Nairobi, Kenya, since November 2006. I'm from a small town in Ontario called Sault Ste. Marie, and I studied music and education at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. I planned to become a high school music teacher after graduation, but as is often the case, the Lord had other plans. After reconnecting with International Teams, a missions organization that I went on a short-term missions trip with when I was 19, and after a lot of prayer and conversations with wise, godly people, I was on a plane to join the Refugee Ministry Team (RefMin) in Nairobi, Kenya, for one year. That year turned into 13, and here I am, in 2020, married to a wonderful Kenyan man named Ken, serving with MSC Canada in a ministry called Amani Ya Juu, meaning "peace from above" in Swahili, and feeling very comfortable in my tropical second home.

## The ministry

I joined the team at Amani Ya Juu, or simply Amani, in January 2015. The RefMin team had partnered with Amani for years, and I appreciated Amani's ministry and the quality of its work. When the RefMin team disbanded in 2014, it felt natural for me to join the Amani family.

Amani is a socioeconomic enterprise committed to peace and reconciliation for women from many African nations and

cultures. Amani uses beautiful African materials to create high-quality, fair-trade home goods, clothing, and accessories. As our name suggests, the foundation of, and impetus behind, all our activities and operations is peace: peace with God, peace within oneself, and peace with others. Amani was founded in 1996 with four women sewing place mats, and it has grown to employ more than 200 women across our centers in Uganda, Liberia, and Kenya, as well as a shop and distribution center for fulfilling online orders in Chattanooga, Tennessee. You can learn more about us and view and shop the artisan products on our website, [AmaniAfrica.org](http://AmaniAfrica.org).

Our Kenyan center is self-sustaining via two main income-generating streams: a shop and a garden café. The shop and the café are open to the public Monday through Saturday. We're closed on Sundays so our staff can worship the Lord in their church communities across the city. We endeavor to minister to our employees in a holistic manner, and the production and sewing portion of Amani helps to economically sustain them and their families. However, beyond financial empowerment, many spiritual and social programs go on behind the scenes. As Amani's ministry coordinator, those programs fall under my purview and reside close to my heart. I'll describe a few of them here and how the Lord powerfully uses them to create a sanctuary and an atmosphere of safety at Amani.



The foundation of, and impetus behind, all our activities and operations is peace.

**Above:** Friends from many nations who love Jesus and peace create Amani's core. **Left:** The women design stunning clothing at the production center; Some of the Amani women share a moment of laughter while working.

God's Word lights up where we're walking and makes the road ahead of us bright and clear.



**Above:** The Amani women study the Bible together in the morning and at lunch.

**Left:** During school breaks, Amani hosts Watoto Camp for the women's precious children; On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the women worship the Lord together.

## Morning prayer

At the beginning of each day, we all gather for 20 minutes to sing a worship song, read from Psalms or Proverbs, share our thanksgivings and needs with one another, and corporately lift them up in prayer. Although the women may have their own prayer times at home, many of them say how comforting and strength-giving it is to have the opportunity to share their struggles with other women and to be prayed for. For those who do not have family or close friends on whom they can lean, the warmth that comes from community and belonging is truly a gift.

## Afternoon devotions

During the first portion of our lunch hour, we have a time for devotions, lasting, again, about 20 minutes. Usually, on Mondays and Wednesdays, we have teaching sessions, in which one of the women digs into a Bible passage, a biblical character, or a spiritual theme. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, we praise and worship the Lord in song, and it's always awesome. On Fridays, we break into groups to discuss and reflect on what we heard during the week.

At Amani, worship and the Word create safety and security in a ton of ways, but I'll keep it to a succinct half ton. God's Word lights up where we're walking and makes the road ahead of us

bright and clear. When we truly worship, we're rehearsing and declaring truths about His character or name, which is likened to a strong tower that we can run into and find safety. God promises that He will be in the middle of His people's praises, and His presence there brings joy—overflowing joy, to be precise, which is good medicine for the heart. When we are thankful together, even for a few precious moments, we're assured that His deep peace, which "surpasses all understanding," will guard our hearts and minds like an army fortifying a walled city (Philippians 4:7).

## Medical clinic

I mentioned some of Amani's spiritual programs, but the ministry doesn't stop there. Through our partnership with Samaritan's Purse and their generous and faithful financial support, we are able to run a medical clinic. On the last Saturday of every month, a local doctor volunteers his time to meet with the women who make appointments. Then, we are able to cover the cost of any medications or tests the doctor requisitions. We have even helped the women purchase eyeglasses and receive physiotherapy and chiropractic treatments, which are a particular joy as they are often considered luxuries for these dear women. In a country where health care isn't covered for most people, a medical condition or emergency can

put someone in a deep financial hole—that is, if they are even able to obtain the care they need. This clinic is one practical way through which we provide a safety net within the community, and we're grateful for the privilege.

## Home visits

Every month, a small group of us visits one of the Amani women or her family at home. Perhaps that woman hasn't been feeling well or gave birth to a new baby or lost a loved one; we want to surround her and rejoice, encourage, or mourn with her. We might also visit her child who participates in the Watoto Camp program, which we hold during school breaks. Sometimes, we check in with the child, see where he or she lives, ask how school is going, and learn what truths from the last camp stuck with him or her. We bring gifts, groceries, and little baby clothes, if the reason for the visit is a new baby in the neighborhood. Chai tea, laughter, singing, sometimes tears, and always prayers create special moments for the visitors and visited alike.

## Tours

As I mentioned, our shop, where we sell the gorgeous products the women make, and café, which offers the best salads and mochas in town, are the main income-generating aspects of our ministry. So we love it when our guests ask for a behind-the-scenes tour. It gives them a chance to say hello, meet the women, see our production center, and hopefully, make a deeper connection with whom we are, what we do, and Whom we do it for! For visitors, the women sing a rousing Swahili song of welcome and introduce themselves by name and country of origin. One of the most impactful stops on the tour is at the unity

quilt that hangs on a wall in our chapel. Each square on the colorful quilt depicts a unique way through which a surrounding country practices reconciliation after an individual or group has been hurt or wronged. If you look closely, you will notice a red cross hidden in the design; it represents the most beautiful and eternal act of reconciliation the world will ever know. We hope and pray that, during this simple act of taking a tour, people who dropped by for a latte or a new purse will experience peace, beauty, community, and the supernatural touch of His hand.



## God's work

I could go on and on about the wonderful things that the Lord is doing in and through Amani Ya Juu, but I will stop here. I pray that, like the stones that Joshua and the Israelites removed from the Jordan River, these few stories and details are a reminder of and testament to God's goodness, power, and faithfulness in all of our lives. ■



*Julia Nyaga is commended from Bethel Bible Chapel in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and serves with her husband, Ken.*



**Above:** The unity quilt reminds the women of their cultures' and Christ's reconciliation.

**Left (top row):** Tobias, Amani's security guard, is the first to greet visitors; Through the shop, visitors can access and enjoy the Amani garden café.

**Left (bottom row):** Besides clothing, the Amani shop offers artisanal home goods and accessories; Two staff members, Betty and Bella, are ready to show visitors around the shop; Three café waitresses prepare to serve customers.



# Learning Still

## REFLECTIONS ON A LIFETIME OF SERVICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY JOAN LEVENGOOD



I had the privilege of growing up in a home with parents who were Christian examples and godly encouragers, leading me to the Lord at an early age. After training as a teacher in college and teaching in a school for several years, the Lord gave me the desire to enroll in a one-year course at Emmaus Bible School (now Emmaus Bible College), which was in Toronto at the time. What a joy it was to study His Word and play the piano for outreach meetings and for a weekly radio broadcast. At Emmaus, I met my future husband, Mark.

In 1948, when I was 22 years old and attending Emmaus, I wrote the following poem, declaring my desire for my life:

### My Goal

That I may know Him—this, my goal—  
Cleanse my heart and purge my soul.  
Make me more conformed to Thee;  
Oh, to know Thee—this, my plea.

Make my life like unto Thine  
That, for my Lord, my life will shine,  
And may my life forever speak  
For Christ alone—to help the weak.

Take my hands and may they be  
Instruments, my Lord, for Thee.  
My aim, the wandering souls to win  
To Christ, to free them from their sin.

Help me to ever live for Thee  
That Thy will may be done in me,  
And may my life forever show  
That Christ, my goal, I've come to know.

Later, Mark and I married, and we decided to prepare for the mission field further by completing the Missionary Medical Course at the National Bible Institute in New York City. At that time, we enjoyed fellowshiping with the Christians at Bethany Chapel in Yonkers, New York.

Looking back at those years, I see that God providentially arranged our circumstances and encouraged Mark and me

daily through His promises, which He revealed to us in our quiet times. We experienced His peace as we sought His will. "It is God Who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

### THE CHALLENGE

Have you noticed that, in our lifetimes, we constantly face challenges and must make choices, which often lead to changes? While helping at a summer conference, Mark and I were invited to move to Florida so that we could work with young people. After we relocated, we received a letter from missionaries who served in Africa, and they asked if we would consider helping them in their work.

### THE CHOICE

In 1950, after much prayer and many letters, we were commended by Bethany Chapel to serve in South Africa. In January 1951, we sailed to Durban, South Africa. As the ship docked at port, we met the senior missionaries whom we had corresponded with and would now serve with. Then, they drove us to Elim Mission Station—at last, we had arrived.

### THE CONTRAST

Soon after arriving in South Africa, we noticed several significant contrasts between our former and new ways of life. We had to transition from American culture to British and Zulu cultures, from New York City skyscrapers to Nqabeni's rolling hills and mud huts, from expressways to dirt roads, and from English to Zulu. But, in these challenges and changes, we learned to cope.

### THE CHANGES

Eventually, I enjoyed teaching herdboys (youth who tend or help tend herds) to read and write, since they were unable to attend school. I shared with them the good news that God loved them. Using my basic knowledge of the Zulu language, I also reached children through Sunday school. Meanwhile, Mark familiarized himself with the work at the mission station, preached the Bible, and occasionally, pulled teeth at the clinic.

## THE LESSON

Over the years in South Africa, Mark and I lived in a variety of places. We lived at the mission station, at the mission hospital, and in the city, while promoting the Emmaus Bible correspondence courses in Zulu. Now, I live in the home the Lord provided for me at a residential game estate. (As I write this article, families of warthogs, zebras, and impala are grazing on my lawn.) Wherever we lived, I discovered that Christ is the same (Hebrews 13:8), He is faithful, and His command remains:

“Go into all the world.” (Mark 16:15)

We ministered to people of all ages, reaching whomever the Lord called us to. We shared the Gospel with and encouraged our neighbors and people in women’s groups, Sunday schools, girls’ classes, high school outreaches, hospitals

(through visitation and nurses’ groups), and universities.

Through it all, I’m learning to trust the Lord Jesus; through it all, I’m learning to depend upon His Word. Even now, He patiently teaches me as I face new challenges and make new choices in my life’s changes. I am learning to rely on the Lord to live His life in and through me. I am learning to rest in His arms, to enjoy His peace, and to let Him bear my burdens (1 Peter 5:7). I am learning to remain in His love. I am learning to find refreshment in His Word daily.

« Through it all,  
I’m learning to  
depend upon  
His Word. »

## THE CONSTANT

In all of my life’s changes, whether resulting in joy or sorrow, I felt the Lord’s presence. I enjoyed watching our three children grow up and follow the Lord. I adjusted to several personal operations and dealt with plastic surgery for skin cancer many times.

I accepted Mark’s unexpected cancer and, four months later, his sudden calling home to be with the Lord. At that time, two Bible verses became precious to me: Philippians 4:13, which reads, “I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me,” and Habakkuk 3:19 (AMPC), which reads, “The Lord God is my strength, my personal bravery, and my invincible army; He makes my feet like hinds’ feet and will make me to walk [not to stand still in terror, but to walk] and make [spiritual] progress upon my high places [of trouble, suffering, or responsibility].”

Then, four years later, I coped with the death of my only daughter, Linda, in a car collision. Once again, I clung to the words of Philippians 4:13 and Habakkuk 3:19.

At 82 years old, I packed my

belongings and relocated to a new home in another town. I learned again how to meet neighbors and lead them to Christ through love. Now, at 94 years old, I look at my reflection in the mirror, and I think of the words: “Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou Who changes not, abide with me.”<sup>1</sup>

On March 24, 1993, I penned some words describing God’s faithfulness and care, which have preserved me throughout my life.

### Content with the Unexplained

Sustained, supported by the Lord,  
The One Who faileth never,  
Strengthened daily through His Word.  
He is faithful and true forever.  
Sheltered, succored, safe, and secure,  
Though the storm around me rages.  
Surrounded by His love, so sure—  
I’m hiding in the Rock of Ages!  
Satisfied, I trust in Him,  
Content with the unexplained. ■



Joan Levensgood is commended from Bethany Chapel in Yonkers, New York.

<sup>1</sup> Henry Francis Lyte, “Abide with Me,” 1847.



**Opposite page (L–R):** In 1950, Joan and Mark were commended to serve in South Africa; While serving on the field, Mark and Joan raised their three children.

**Above and left:** Today, at her home in South Africa, Joan sees wildlife, including impala and zebras, from her window.

# Ask a Missionary



Missions work around the world is often very different from what friends and family at home encounter day to day. So, to learn about life on the field while getting to know our missionaries better, we asked them to share their firsthand experience or advice.

## QUESTION: What is your favorite missionary biography, and how has it impacted you?

**FRANCE**  
Maureen Crow



My favorite is *The Small Woman* by Alan Burgess. Gladys Aylward went to China as a small, single woman without much education, but God used her mightily. I went to France as a small, single missionary in the 1990s and faced many challenges. This biography encouraged me greatly.

**COLOMBIA**  
Paul Rogers



One book that impacted my life is *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* by Dr. Howard and Geraldine Taylor. As a young teen, I came face-to-face with the truth that we are to experience the death and resurrection of Christ in our personal lives. This truth is summarized in Galatians 2:20, which became my life verse. At age 19, while walking beside the coffin of my friend, who was killed in Vietnam, the Lord spoke clearly to me, saying I must consider myself dead and the rest of my life is a gift to be lived for Him.

**OTHER OVERSEAS SERVICE**  
Neale Goetsch



I enjoy two books by Rosalind Goforth: *Goforth of China* and *Climbing: Memories of a Missionary's Wife*. Both books tell the Goforths' story and, more importantly, their spiritual journey, their struggles, and the lessons they learned. When I first read the books more than 40 years ago, little did I know that one day Barbara and I would have the joy of ministering to Chinese students and families.

**JAMAICA**  
Melinda Dilione



In our nightly family time, we enjoy reading through the *Christian Heroes: Then and Now* series. We finished the biographies on Ida Scudder and Gladys Aylward and are now reading one on David Livingstone. We are amazed by their testimonies. Reading them has made our minor sacrifice of living apart from family and friends feel like an ease compared to the lengths these brave missionaries went to for the Gospel's advancement. We highly recommend these books and are ordering more to add to our collection. We're thrilled to see our children's interest in these biographies as we read a chapter each night.

**ECUADOR**  
Carolyn Rogers (MK)



My favorite missionary biography is *George Müller: The Guardian of Bristol's Orphans* by Janet and Geoff Bengé. It reminded me that prayer and faith work.

**OTHER OVERSEAS SERVICE**  
Sharon Fleming



My favorite is *Evidence Not Seen: A Woman's Miraculous Faith in the Jungles of World War II* by Darlene Diebler Rose. Her close walk with the Lord through internment in a Japanese prisoner of war camp and many difficulties, deprivations, sorrows, and dangers is an inspiration and example to me to walk with the Lord in any situation.

# ECUADOR

**Nikki Rogers**



In high school, I read Elisabeth Elliot's *Through Gates of Splendor* for a book report. I was impressed by the commitment, determination, and creativity of the missionaries in Ecuador. Their examples of obedience and perseverance were—and continue to be—inspiring and encouraging. I thought it would be neat to visit Palm Beach and see the memorial to the five men who gave their lives to reach the Waorani people. A few years later, I attended Emmaus Bible College and heard that a missionary kid from Ecuador also attended. I figured I should ask him what Ecuador is like. We married three and half years later. Dan and I have served in Ecuador for more than 21 years, and I'm still hoping to visit Palm Beach someday!

# THAILAND

**Abigail Harrell**



My favorite is *These Strange Ashes: Is God Still in Charge?* by Elisabeth Elliot. Chronicling Elisabeth's early years in South America before marrying Jim Elliot, this autobiography focuses on God's presence and providence in the day-to-day struggles and seeming defeat that many missionaries face. It helped me set realistic expectations for myself when I considered overseas service, and it expanded my confidence in God's ability to turn what looks to us like loss into something good for His kingdom.

# MEXICO

**Whitney Landis**



One of my favorite missionary biographies is *God's Smuggler* by Brother Andrew. From a young age, I was mesmerized by the stories of God's miraculous provision and protection in impossible circumstances. I desire a life that is characterized by the same dependence on God as Brother Andrew's. I also enjoyed George Müller's autobiography and *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* by Dr. Howard and Geraldine Taylor.

# AUSTRIA

**Leslie Walt**



My favorite is *Evidence Not Seen: A Woman's Miraculous Faith in the Jungles of World War II* by Darlene Diebler Rose. This book helped me deepen my trust in God during the hard periods of our first years on the field.

# HONDURAS

**Elvia Rodríguez**



I enjoy biographies on Amy Carmichael and David Livingstone. I love their determination to finish what the Lord called them to do.

# CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRIES

**Monica Sernatinger**



I enjoy reading about George Müller.

# CHILE

**Margaret Jones**



I appreciate reading about Isobel Kuhn. It is easy to identify with her as she tells about her real-life struggles.

# SPECIAL AREAS

**George**

*Goforth of China* by Rosalind Goforth opened our hearts to the needs of Asia.

**ASK YOUR QUESTIONS!** Visit [CMML.us/askamissionary](http://CMML.us/askamissionary) to submit your question—it might be selected for a future issue!