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Esther 5:1-14

For three days the Jews in Susa fasted and prayed for Esther because she had agreed to appear, uninvited, before King Ahasuerus to intercede on behalf of all the Jews in the empire. They were under a sentence of death plotted by wicked Haman. He had persuaded King Ahasuerus of Persia to set a date on which all the Jews in the empire should be killed and their property confiscated. Queen Esther had promised Mordecai that she would appear before the king, despite the fact that approaching him without permission was unlawful and punishable by death. She prepared herself spiritually by fasting and praying with her maids for three days. Mordecai told all the Jews in the capital to do the same.

Our passage begins with the words, "Now it happened on the third day." It was on the third day that Esther, when her fast was over, prepared herself personally by dressing in her royal robes. Even though Mordecai had told her to plead before the king, she did not approach him as a beggar, but as the queen of Persia, dressed with all the finery that her palace maids could bestow on her. Even then, she did not know whether Ahasuerus would receive her or have her killed on the spot.

The golden scepter

As she approached the throne room through a hall of pillars, her heart was no doubt pounding. Then as she stepped into the throne room, the king looked up from his throne. When he saw that it was Esther, she "found favor in his sight." Those same words described what he said when he first saw her as a candidate to become queen (2:17). The king then held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand, a signal that he accepted her. Ancient kings sat on their thrones holding a scepter, an ornamented rod that was an emblem of their authority and power. When he extended the scepter toward her, Esther went up to the throne and touched the top of the scepter (5:2). Keep that scene in your mind while you marvel

that the king approved of her coming to him. Extending the scepter indicated that he would use his authority and resources for her benefit. At the same time his act would add to his reputation of being gracious and kind. She responded by drawing near. When she touched the top of his scepter she was acknowledging his grace toward her and his provision for her every need. She understood that he would provide what she needed, whatever that might be. He said to her, "What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!" (Esther 5:3) He was promising to her the riches of his grace (cf. Ephesians 1:7).

It illustrates to us what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. He has offered us His grace and favor by extending the scepter of His infinite love and ability to bless us when we approach Him. Like Esther, we may have situations that are far bigger than our ability to cope with them. He

He invites us to draw near to Him in full assurance of faith.

invites us to come near again and again. We came the first time when we were loaded down with our own sins. He invited us then to come to Him and He would give us rest (Matthew 11:28). Not only has He set aside the judgment that hung over us, like King Ahasuerus, He bore that judgment Himself when He died on the cross. Now He invites us to draw near to Him in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22). What a provision for those who trust Him: some in their labor on the mission fields and others in the homeland who also face problems of their own. We are invited to draw near to Him in the full assurance of faith. He is on His throne of grace. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16) ■

Ken Fleming in a commended worker serving in Iowa.

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COVER PHOTO: Alyson Trotter—Children in the Chishawasha Valley, Zimbabwe

ZIMBABWE



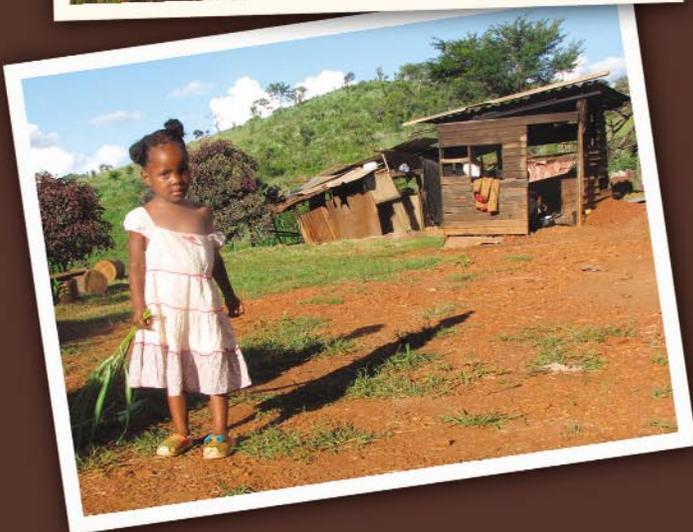
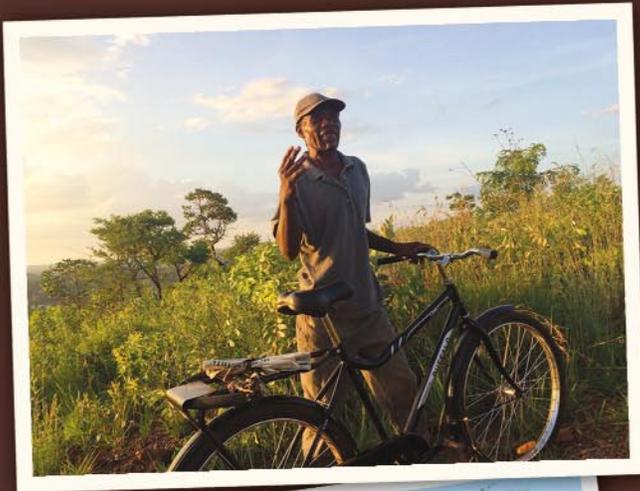
Hope in a Land of Heartbreak

BY MARILYN BARNES AND ALYSON TROTTER

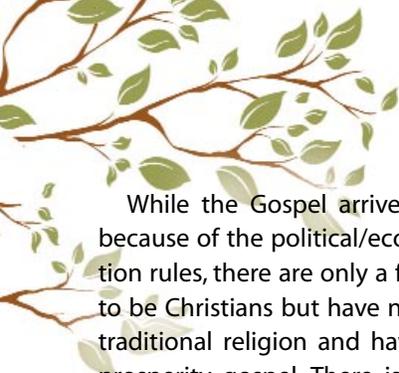
“Please, Madam, please, can you help? Can you do anything to help?” The heat of the African sun lingered in the evening air. Fire ants crawled over our feet as we stood on one of the red dirt paths of the Chishawasha Valley. A man named Mr. H. had stopped us as he pushed his bicycle up the path. His heart was burdened for his 14-year-old daughter, Rachel. Raped on her way to the school a couple months back, Rachel now stayed home, not wanting to run into the boys who stole what was not theirs to take. “She is afraid to walk that path to school now, and she doesn’t want to go to that school anymore. She doesn’t want to see the boys there. I can’t pay for her school fees anyway, and know I can’t pay for her to go to a school farther away. She should be in school.” The memory of Mr. H. on his bicycle and his words linger long after that walk. Like so many others living in Zimbabwe, he is not only unemployed, he is desperate. On our trips to Zimbabwe, we see this type of desperation escalating while hope continues to dwindle.

Zimbabwe today

Zimbabweans are surrounded by a land adorned with beauty but also by a land of heartbreak and injustice. Prior to its independence on April 18, 1980, Zimbabwe was a self-governing British colony, deemed a success story and considered the “breadbasket of Southern Africa.” However, this time of prosperity was followed by a steady decline, blamed on mismanagement and corruption. In the early 2000s the economy collapsed and since then Zimbabwe has struggled to feed its own people. In February 2016 President Robert Mugabe was encouraged by the EU to declare a state of disaster. Because of drought, the crops failed again and IRIN (a humanitarian news group) estimated that 75 percent of the population needed food aid by the end of March.



Top and left bottom: Children in the Chishawasha Valley; Left top: Mr. H. with his bike.



While the Gospel arrived in Zimbabwe many years ago, because of the political/economic crisis and stricter immigration rules, there are only a few missionaries left. Many profess to be Christians but have never fully left behind their African traditional religion and have fallen for the teachings of the prosperity gospel. There is currently an enormous mansion being built in Harare by a man professing to be “God’s own prophet” who promises health and wealth to those who buy bricks to help build his mansion.

Return journey

Marilyn has returned each year to Zimbabwe since she and her husband left in 2008. The last three years, we (Marilyn and Aly) have traveled together to Zimbabwe where we visit and encourage the national workers, share about Jesus with sick and orphaned children and distribute funds received for ZAP (Zimbabwe Assistance Program) by MSC and CMML. Each year, the Lord has faithfully led and protected us. As mentioned above, one of the reasons for entering Zimbabwe is to carry in and safely pass on funds received through ZAP to the national believers and the needy. God has shown us each year how fiercely protective He is of these funds, and this year was no different. As we passed through security and headed down the ramp toward the plane, we realized they were stopping everyone to take all carry-on luggage to be stored in the hold. Tensions were high as people realized what was happening. Then, all of a sudden, the women in charge of this enormous task bypassed a very upset couple, walked straight for us and said, “You can go onboard.” We wasted no time in walking down the ramp and onboard, placing our carry-ons, with all the ZAP funds, into the overhead compartments. We sat down in awe. Oh, how He takes care of His people!

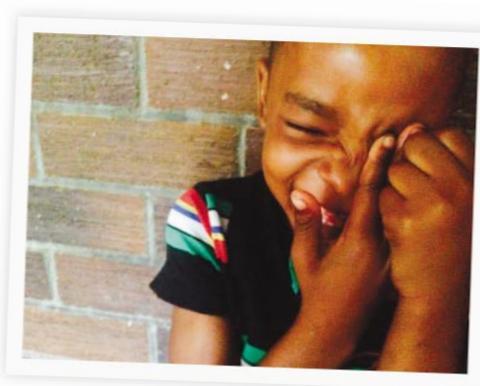
Unseen stories revealed

No matter where we are in the world, stories are taking place that we do not see. Stories that only God sees. But, sometimes, God takes these unseen stories and shares them with us. It always feels like a privilege when we are entrusted with one’s story. And it is a privilege to share with you some of these stories that we saw and heard while visiting the current ministries.

Feeding program

Melody, 11 years old, traveled by combi (minivans used as public transport) and then by foot to the clinic on the property of the Parirenyatwa (Pari) hospital where the feeding program is held. After she received her food and sat on the worn and shaky bench, I (Aly) went over to sit with her while she ate. It was not long before Melody’s giggles could be heard echo-

ing down the dirty unlit halls as she laughed at her reflection in my phone. However, the truth of her story is that, like most of the little ones who came to the feeding program, she is dying of AIDS.



The feeding program is vitally important as the children often travel for 2–3 hours to be seen, arriving sick and hungry, at the hospital. This is why the hospital staff asked Marilyn, along with Zimbabwean nationals, Tracy and Rose, to begin feeding programs at both the Pari and the Harare Central Hospital 11 years ago. As of late, one of the weekly struggles is the continued shortage of nourishing and inexpensive locally grown food. Tracy and Rose need to provide food that won’t irritate mouth sores common to AIDS patients, yet will meet nutritional requirements of newborns to teenagers. It is not uncommon for hungry children to go without because they know they will lose their place in line to see the doctor if their name is called and they are out eating. It is difficult to adequately describe the hospital conditions these beautiful children come to. However, what brings hope is that for the last two years we have been able to freely share the Gospel with each child through a believing Shona-speaking girl named Phyllis. Unmatched vibrant joy and passion flows from Phyllis as she shares with the children the truth about who God is.

Orphans’ Club

Each Friday after school, 96 orphans from the Chishawasha Valley make their way to the Perekedza Orphans’ Club. Perekedza is a Shona word meaning “walk alongside.” One of these children is 15-year-old Medis. She is not alone. She carries her three-month-old son, George, on her back and the tiredness of life shows in her eyes. A year ago, Medis went



to see Natalie (the Zimbabwean national who started Perekedza) because she felt sick. After taking Medis to the doctor, it was discovered that this young orphan girl was pregnant.

Top: Melody at the feeding program; Bottom: Aly and Medis with her son, George, and brother.

Medis will still not talk about what happened. At the time, she lived with her grandma; once the grandmother learned of Medis's pregnancy, she began to beat Medis and tried to get her to end the pregnancy. Medis is strong and, with Natalie and Maggie (a fellow worker) looking out for her, she safely carried her baby to term.

Perekedza is a safety net for many of the valley's orphans and destitute children. Their school fees are met, uniforms purchased, and they are given food and soap. In the last year, to ensure the children are not left in a child-headed household or on their own, each child has been linked with an older woman whom they call "Gogo" (Shona for grandmother). The number of orphans needing care is rising, and there are currently 15 children waiting assessment and a place on the Perekedza register. We see so many children on our journeys in Zimbabwe each year, and the weight of some of their lives shows on their blank faces and in their dull eyes. The Perekedza children have brightness in their eyes, and lightness in their hearts, especially when they sing. They have hope, a hope, we pray, that will be sparked in each child who is exposed to the Perekedza ministry and God's tremendous love for them.

Other ministries

ZAP also partners with other ministries such as Emmaus Correspondence School/prison work, care for elderly destitute and Bethany Kids' Club. Many similar stories could be told from these ministries.

New hope for Rachel

Maggie (of Perekedza) was able to help Rachel, the girl we told you about at the beginning of this article. Rachel has been assessed and today is on the Perekedza register receiving help with school fees and a uniform. She is being exposed to the truth about God and His love for her at the orphan's club. ■

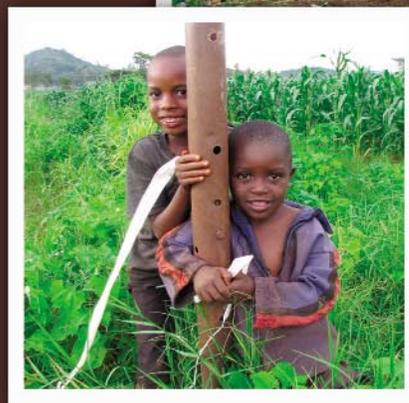


Marilyn and Phil Barnes were commended in 1985 and went to Zimbabwe in 1998 where they served until 2008 when immigration would no longer grant them permission to stay. Phil now works full-time with MSC Canada and Marilyn is involved in worker care. Marilyn travels to Zimbabwe every year.

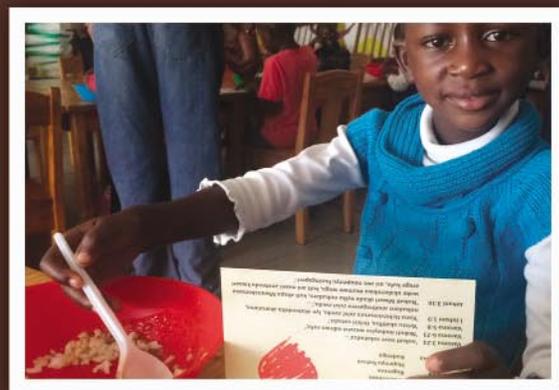
Alyson Trotter attended CMML and MSC's 2013 Missionary Orientation Program and is in fellowship at Thorold South Gospel Chapel (Rolling Meadows Bible Chapel) in Thorold South, Ontario. This was Alyson's third trip to Zimbabwe alongside Marilyn Barnes.



Children in the Chishawasha Valley



Feeding program child



Perekedza orphans



PARAGUAY

Two Teens Share Their Short-Term Missions Experience

BY MATTHEW ABDY AND SUZY TREMPER

On Christmas Day 2015, nine believers of varying ages traveled to Paraguay for a 10-day short-term missions trip to serve with Dale and Rosemary Konkol (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 26). The following reports give the perspective of two 17-year-old team members.

Matthew's perspective

My name is Matthew Abdy and I went on a short-term missions trip to San Juan Bautista, Paraguay. My fellow team members and I are from Mountain Ridge Bible Chapel in Berkeley Heights, New Jersey, one of the Konkols' commending assemblies.

Frisbee evangelism

Throughout the week the team did visitation to get to know church members. We also did door-to-door outreach, visited a children's food shelter, and more. One man on our team has an interest in Frisbee, so we coordinated with Dale and Rose to go to the local plaza to throw Frisbees around to attract a crowd. Many children were eager to participate and their smiles expressed joy when some were given their own Frisbee. With the church logo and Bible verses printed on them, the Frisbees were an evangelism tool we used to talk to people about the Gospel. There were plenty of families and people in the plaza to talk with and to give calendars and gospel tracts to. It was an encouragement to see people we invited at the plaza attend the church service the following



Sunday. Since the people in San Juan Bautista had never seen them before, the Frisbees were a unique tool to break the ice and share the Gospel. We left the remaining Frisbees with the Konkols and pray they will be effective in future outreaches.

Three men

One reason I felt the Lord led me to go to Paraguay was to meet three men: Hugo, Pancho and Roberto. A few years ago my dad asked Dale Konkol for names of people in Paraguay that my brother and I could pray for. Pancho was unsaved while Roberto and Hugo were already believers. It was exciting to meet and shake hands with Roberto and Hugo that first Sunday morning. It was a fulfilling experience to see how God has worked in their lives. I met Pancho at his house later in the week. In the afternoon some of the young men from the San Juan Bautista assembly, Dale, my cousin Chris McLaughlin and I met with Pancho and discussed the plan of salvation. Pancho expressed that he understood the Gospel but was hesitant to accept Christ as his Savior. Please pray! Through meeting these three men I saw God's hand in their lives, not mine. There was no amount of work I could do for them, except ask God to work. It made me realize that I need to fully rely on God in all I do. Praying for Pancho, Hugo, and Roberto allowed me to wonder at the greatness of God.

Encouraging visits

A main goal for the trip was to encourage the work in San Juan Bautista. Much of this was done through visiting many local believers from the church.

The team visited an older woman and her grandson who no longer attend the church. It was an encouragement to us to see her at the next Sunday service.

From top: Discussing how the night went after throwing the Frisbees in the plaza; Playing Frisbee.

Another visit was to Pilar, a town south of San Juan, where Roberto moved for his job and is trying to revive the assembly work. They currently have only three believers in fellowship: two older women and an older man. A message and a song were given at the church.

Katie Cameron, one of our team members, visited a special-needs boy. She provided physical therapy to the boy and gave him a Samaritan's Purse shoebox gift.



While we hoped to bring encouragement to San Juan, we were encouraged just as much. The believers exhibited real faith and infectious joy. We will always treasure the love and hospitality they showed us. Dale Konkol commented that the experience was like two churches coming together. Solid

friendships were formed quickly with simple times such as lunch or around tereré (cold Paraguayan tea).

Prayers answered

I learned that we need God. Prayer was necessary for our trip; we were taught that even in the first stages of travel. A mix-up with our luggage forced us to stay at the Buenos Aires airport for an unintended layover. Someone said that God used the wait so we would be ready to fully submit ourselves to His will for the remainder of the trip. God answered prayer in other ways throughout the trip. After a team member got bitten by a dog, we found out that the owner was a doctor—the Lord answered prayer. The team prayed that there would be a meeting with Pancho to discuss the Gospel with him. We prayed for the door-to-door outreach and for the Frisbees to be tools for evangelism. God's hand is at work in San Juan Bautista, and I continue to ask God to work in the lives of the church members in San Juan Bautista.

Suzy's perspective

My name is Suzy Tremper and I'm 17 years old. Eight others and I went to Paraguay to encourage Dale and Rose Konkol and to help them in evangelism.

Sharing the Gospel with children

One day we visited El Comedor. Similar to a soup kitchen, they provide children with one meal a day. During our visit my mom read them a tract called *One Way*. With very few words it tells the story of man, from Adam and Eve to the cross, in a basic way. Rose interpreted everything my mom said into Spanish for the children. After the story was read, Rose asked the children to tell the story back to us. I was amazed at how well the children listened and that they were able to repeat the story perfectly.



Visiting a generous sister

I have a vivid memory of visiting a woman who goes to the assembly. Prismelia walks to church from her home outside of town. Even though she is financially poor, she understands the love of Christ. She generously gave Rose many foods from her

garden to help feed the team. During our visit, she kept returning to her garden to get more and more items—mangoes, parsley, scallions, basil, limes, and even a fruit Rose didn't know the English translation of, but it made a wonderful juice we all enjoyed.



Learning from the experience

During our trip to Paraguay I learned how important prayer is and that God truly answers prayer. Many times we saw immediate answers to prayer. I also learned that we in America take a lot for granted and aren't content with what we have. "To whom much is given, much is required." (Luke 12:48) ■



Matthew Abdy and Suzy Tremper are in fellowship at Mountain Ridge Bible Chapel, Berkeley Heights, New Jersey.

Left (from top): A boy receiving a Samaritan's Purse shoebox after physical therapy; Erna sharing a gospel tract with children at El Comedor. **Right (from top):** Rosemary Konkol with Prismelia; The team in the Konkols' front yard—(front row left to right) Connie Reznicek, Chris McLaughlin, and Katie Cameron, (back row left to right) Doug and Erna Tremper, Tim McLaughlin, Matthew Abdy, Suzy Tremper, and Fares Shabouk.

After SHORT-TERM WORKERS Go Home

Paraguayans Share Their View of a Missions Trip

BY ROSEMARY KONKOL

Nine believers from Mountain Ridge Bible Chapel in New Jersey recently visited us and the church we are involved with in San Juan Bautista, Paraguay. See pages 6 and 7 to read about their trip. After they left, I interviewed some of the church members and asked what their impression and feelings were of the visit. This gives a glimpse into the results of a missions trip.

Cándido Aquino—Computer programmer, late 20s

What stood out about the group that visited from the United States?

Cándido: I was very happy that they came—to know that there are people who share our same faith in other parts of the world. What stands out to me was their spirituality. For example, we talked about the Word of God with a man in the plaza. The man said, “You will really convince people.”

Matt responded, “No, we will not convince anyone, the Word of God will.” Having that knowledge, that spirituality, to know how to respond to that type of statement stood out for me as something very good.

Do you think it is worth it to spend money on a trip?

Cándido: If people are available to come to share the Word of God with others, it is really good to invest in a trip—to know how it (missions) works, and maybe God will use it to touch their lives so that later on they might want to do what others are doing.

The group was made up of adults and young people. Do you think that is a good mix?

Cándido: For me it was excellent that there were adults and young people because a young person can get to know another young person more quickly. If they were all older adults, there might be somewhat of a barrier, so for me it was really nice that both youth and adults came.

What will you remember?

Cándido: That they are easy people, in spite of being from the U.S. I thought they would not want to eat our food or share with us who are from a lower economic level, but I did not see that. I saw simplicity and a love of Christ—that stands out to me. I’m really glad they came and I will pray that they can return as there is a lot of need here. I liked that they came up with the idea to use the Frisbees to evangelize.



Suzy and Cándido celebrating New Year's

Carlos Romero—Student, bank teller, mid-20s

What did it mean to you that a group of people from the United States came to visit us?

Carlos: It meant a lot in the sense of spiritual help, in the work of the Lord, and in the ministry. With them we saw some other tools and another style (using the Frisbees) to reach others. I appreciated talking with an elder, to get his point of view and to learn to always seek the will of God.

Was it a positive experience?

Carlos: Yes, very positive. Personally, it helped me to share with the brothers and to see their desire that souls that don't know Christ would come to know Him. I really enjoyed talking with the older ones, with Tim, Doug, and Fares.



Carlos taking Chris for a ride

Gabriela Gonzalez—Lawyer, early 30s

What was your impression of the people who visited?

Gabriela: At first I wondered how they were going to adjust since they are from another country, another culture, and another way of life, coming to a country that has less economic resources. I was surprised, however, to find that they were very loving people. We noticed their humility and the love they showed everyone. They adapted to the situation and the circumstances. They showed that they were part of the family. Even though there were differences in language, we felt very comfortable with them.

What impact will their visit have on the church in San Juan Bautista?

Gabriela: That the Love of Christ unites us, that there are no barriers, that it doesn't matter about differences in language or status or economic level, and that we are all children of God—that is something I will remember, along with all the messages that they shared.



Gabriela (center) with Suzy and Erna Tremper (left) and other young ladies from the church

Julio Ortiz—Married, father of four, construction worker, mid-40s

What impressed you about the group from the U.S.?

Julio: Their visit was really nice because it strengthened the church. I realized that they are also God's servants and that God used the time that they were here. Their visit, their presence, strengthened the brothers and sisters.

What will you remember?

Julio: Their desire to serve God, that they left everything back there and they invested their time to come to a place very far away. I shared a lot with Fares and spent a lot of time with him. I learned from his experiences and that they had love for us and remembered the church here in San Juan.

They visited you and your family at your home. Do you have anything to comment about that?

Julio: It really was a blessing to see that they were concerned for us. We really enjoyed their visit to our house. God woke up an interest in us to pray more, to read the Bible more, to share more with our family. It encouraged and strengthened me. I was impressed that other brothers, from another church, think the same as we do. It doesn't matter what country we are from, we serve the same God.



Julio (right) with Doug Tremper

Prismelia Ramos de Romero—Married, housewife, mid-50s

What was your impression of the group that came from the United States?

Prismelia: I get "chicken skin" (goose bumps) when I think about them. I have great affection for them.

What did you learn from them?

Prismelia: I didn't understand their English but I liked that they brought the Word of God. I liked that they made

such a sacrifice to come here to Paraguay. I know it is not easy. It is a great responsibility.

Were you surprised about anything?

Prismelia: They seemed like my sisters. They came to my house and they were like my family. I didn't expect that. ■



Prismelia (blue skirt) celebrating New Year's with the team



Rosemary and Dale Konkol were commended in 1999 by Calvary Bible Chapel, Alamosa, Colorado, and Mountain Ridge Bible Chapel, Berkeley Heights, New Jersey.



GHANA

Living Water for a Dying Village

BY JIM GILLET

Pray for the village of Adudornu in Ghana. A number of years ago, some of our national Emmaus workers went to Adudornu and found that the chief was a pagan priest who forced villagers to bow down and worship idols on an altar at the village entrance. The Emmaus workers introduced the chief to the Emmaus course *What the Bible Teaches*. He was the only one in the village who was literate in the English language. After repeated visits by the Emmaus workers, the chief trusted Christ.

After the chief studied the course *Buried by Baptism*, he requested to be baptized. However, the Ghanaian Christians refused to baptize him until all the idols on the village entrance altar were broken down, hauled away and thrown into the river. I witnessed the chief's baptism and watched as he gave his testimony. His closing words as he stood in his underwear preaching to his 13,000 villagers were: "I once forced you to worship idols... but now I am urging you to put your faith and trust in Christ and follow the one true living God!"

As I revisited the village, I began to realize that everyone appeared to be at some stage of illness, and many died before my next visit. Upon inquiry and medical investigation, I was told that all the villagers were dying due to the river, their only water source, being infested with a microscopic parasite known as bilharziasis.

A desperate situation

Upon my many subsequent annual visits to Adudornu, I began to conduct four-hour medical clinics for the villagers. After two visits, the chief had a small room built for the clinic. He told me that I brought the only medical care the villagers had since the nearest government hospital was four hours away, and many villagers were too weak to make the trip and too poor to afford the tests. Oftentimes, the hospital did not have the medicine needed for bilharziasis, even if the villagers had the money.

In desperation and compassion, I cried out to the Lord and asked people to pray. I contacted government health officials, a medical university and water-drilling charities, but no one would help. Due to the river water being so viscous, water filtration units clogged within 20 minutes. Following our aborted attempt to bring potable water to these villagers, I asked people to pray daily for God to intervene. And God did some very astounding things to accomplish His purposes!

God's provision

Heyford, a brother involved in water drilling, was touched when he heard about the desperate situation of the unknown Adudornu villagers. After my path "just happened" to cross with two politicians of that region who were unaware of the

Adudornu people, the government started to grade a road through the jungle to Adudornu. It is not completed yet, but the newly constructed road foundation was good enough, in the dry season, for Heyford to get a drilling rig through the jungle.

When Ronnie Phillips and I arrived in Adudornu last May, Heyford had just completed drilling a 350-foot well and was installing a submersible pump.

The new system

It was challenging, but God enabled us to work in Adudornu's 100-degree heat and high humidity. To see this project move forward to completion, we had to, in faith, make the costly decision to install a large commercial reverse osmosis system at the central distribution point. The water is now pumped up from the 350-foot well shaft and through 3,000 feet of PVC pipe underground in a trench, which the villagers dug in one morning with crude wooden "diggers," to a 1,000-gallon holding tank in the center of 11 villages. The water is then pumped through the reverse osmosis system before being pumped into a second 700-gallon holding and distribution tank.

Villagers come to this second tank to carry water to where we strategically sited 56 Life Water filtration units throughout the 11 villages. Seven are in the chiefs' centrally located huts, and the 49 others are in the homes of people identified to be reliable, responsible, and honest professing Christians. The water is processed through the system and then the homeowner disburses the filtered water back to the villagers who brought it.

Prayer for continued work

Since Ronnie and I left Adudornu last May, Heyford has completed the security wall around the water distribution facility and the villagers rejoice over the clean water they enjoy.

The reverse osmosis plant filters the water so effectively that 70 percent is being separated out as waste water. This excess polluted water is so extensive that we will have to dig a "soak away" (septic tank) to channel this waste water, which currently runs down the village road and causes erosion. Please pray with us that God will supply the materials for this soak away. The villagers will

supply the labor, but we need to purchase the materials.

Praise God for His magnificent provision, and pray that many more villagers will come to know the Savior as we demonstrate God's love while preaching the Word of God through the provision of clean water.

Pray, too, that God will give wisdom and provision in how to best treat the villagers dying with bilharziasis. In some cases, the disease has already advanced too far and there is no hope for them. In the case of children who are in the early stages of the disease, we may be able to treat and cure them. However, the medication is very expensive and hard on the body, and there are thousands of villagers to treat.

Postscript

A bucket of bilharziasis polluted water was accidentally spilled on me in September 2014. I was tested positive in February 2015, took the almost chemotherapy-like treatments, and then had a negative test result July 2015. However, I still feel unwell. Pray for God's overruling and healing of this problem! ■



Jim and Jean Gillett serve the Lord with Ireland Outreach and are commended from assemblies in Kansas and Ontario.



Page 10. Left, from top: The flooded road to Adudornu; Jim and Heyford with the commercial reverse osmosis filtration system; Completed water plant exterior. **Right:** Sunday preaching to more than 1,000 villagers dying of bilharziasis.

Above (L-R): Water that was used for drinking, cooking, bathing and laundry; Villagers hand digging the trench; Installing the submersible pump into the 350-foot well. **Right:** Clinic.





Ouallam's Road

Pray for a Village in Niger

BY TYLER VECCHIO

One January morning, Jake (a short-term worker from Georgia) and I hopped on our motorbikes and headed north on the road toward Ouallam, not knowing where we would end up. Honestly, it was thrilling. Moving into the unknown, with God as our Leader and preaching the Gospel our objective, we drove until we reached a significant-sized village: Goubé. We first established a relationship with the village chief, and then began our exploration of the area.

Although we did not see any visible fruit that initial day, it has proved to be the beginning of a new effort for Jake and me.

Our involvement

The road from Niamey, where we live, to Ouallam is about 80 kilometers long, dotted with a multitude of villages along the way. As it turns out, Goubé is one of only two “market villages” on the road. Hundreds of people flock to such villages once per week for an area-wide market. This road, as far as we know, lacks a single church. Furthermore, there is no evident work by any church to reach these villages. And so, we have started to work.

Because of the strategic nature of targeting market villages, we have begun making trips to Goubé twice per week. With no believers, our current objective is to make the Gospel known far and wide. Typically, that means looking for listeners to share with for the first time. But as we continue to go, more and more people want to talk for a second or third time.

As we focus all our effort on Goubé, the outlying villages remain untouched. Be praying for more workers. Perhaps someday we will move from Goubé to begin working with the

..... smaller villages, but for

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”

..... and proved to be a problem for our bikes (both broke on the same trip). So we are praying about how to be involved there.

The spread of the Gospel for God’s glory and the everlasting joy of those living on the road to Ouallam is a weighty undertaking. Weighty because the glory of God is involved, and an undertaking because it is the work God has currently laid before us.

My request

So, with this weighty undertaking before us, I have an earnest request to make of you, Reader. It involves your time and it involves your prayer closet. Friend, would you consider Jesus’s glory among these villages worthy of committing your-

now we will continue to target the market villages. My prayer is that one day a church will form in Goubé, and they will be the ones to carry the Gospel to the other villages.

In addition to Goubé, we have also gone to the other market village, Simiri. However, it is significantly farther away



self to pray for them daily? If so, my request is simple: adopt a village and pray.

The villages are as follows:

Goudel Gorou, Louga, Kotchiri, Kone Kaina, Koira Beri, Gabou Kora, Goubou Bougo, Tondi Koukou, Goubé, Bohili, Zola Koira, Tondo Bon, Salakey Tondo, Simiri, and Ouallam.

The living out of this request can look a hundred different ways for a hundred different people. For example, maybe parents choose to adopt a village as a family. Or, maybe your small group or Bible study group joins together for a specific village. Or, maybe you choose to take up Louga or Kone Kaina or Goubé by yourself. Be creative. All I ask is, please pray.

To fuel your prayers and keep you updated, I have started a Twitter account: @vecchio_tyler. Hopefully it will serve you well.

Brothers and sisters, you have been invited. Affect time and eternity by entering the prayer closet. Join in what God is doing for His eternal glory among these villages. Without question, it is worth it.

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.” (Colossians 4:2–4) ■

Tyler Vecchio was commended in 2015 by Branford Bible Chapel, Branford, Connecticut.



MIDWEST 26 Below

CONFRONTING COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIANITY

BY CRAIG FRITCHEY

“When will you bring 26 Below to the Midwest?” Year after year articles about CMML’s 26 Below winter retreat in upstate New York have appeared in *Missions* magazine, and each is usually followed by several requests for additional conferences of this caliber in other regions of the United States. This year, the Lord opened the door to make these requests a reality.

Through much prayer, planning and promotion—along with the help of wonderful saints throughout the Midwest—CMML debuted the first annual Midwest 26 Below high school, college and career winter retreat on February 26–28, 2016.

Hailing from 17 states, 198 young people convened at Hidden Acres Christian Center in Dayton, Iowa, to hear ministry from missionary Nate Bramsen on the subject “Confronting Counterfeit Christianity.” Nate focused his messages on three aspects of false Christianity: Christianity without consecration, Christianity without a commission and Christianity without the cross. Nate’s messages were direct, passionate and soaked in Scripture as he challenged us to fully commit ourselves to the Lord and His service, no matter the cost.

Nate’s messages were supplemented by seminar sessions led by Brady Collier (Discipleship), Joel Hernandez (Recognizing God’s Call), Ben Kerns (Navigating Social Media) and Andrew Price (Short-term Missions Trips). These sessions provided attendees practical ways to implement Nate’s teachings in both their local areas and around the world. We were blessed to have several current and former missionaries attend and participate in a panel discussion, which gave a personal look inside missionary life. (You can watch the full panel discussion at [YouTube.com/cmmlus](https://www.youtube.com/cmmlus).) Free time was highlighted by exciting group games and activities; however, many young people used this time for impromptu seasons of prayer and discussion as they processed the challenging messages.

Our desire is that the Midwest 26 Below attendees would fully commit their hearts and lives to the Lord’s service to go into a lost and dying world with the message that salvation is found only in our Lord Jesus Christ. We look forward to next year’s Midwest 26 Below with Micah Tuttle (missionary to Peru) scheduled, Lord willing, for February 24–26, 2017. For more information please visit CMML.us/midwest2017.

Craig Fritchey, CMML conference coordinator.

