

May 2021

MISSIONS



Senegal
Prayers Answered
over the Decades

Uruguay
Serving in the
Center of God's Will

26 Below Retreats
Encouraging Youth
for 15 Years

CMML
Meet the Team



BY KEITH R. KEYSER

A Body Born for Crisis

The world is a dangerous place. Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, economic disruptions, and “wars and rumors of war,” Christians face the added problem of opposition, suffering for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake.¹ The first century was no different. As the early church carried out its mission to “make disciples of all the nations,” God empowered the believers to stand against diverse challenges.² Happily, the New Testament teaches that the body of Christ is still well-suited for crises like sickness, persecution, and geographical disruption.

Hospitality: the antidote to dispersion, loneliness, and disunity

Beginning with Stephen’s martyrdom, saints were scattered as gospel seeds, winning souls and planting assemblies in far-flung places like Antioch.³ Faithful and hospitable fellow believers, such as Lydia, Aquila and Priscilla, and Mnason, greatly helped traveling believers—especially missionaries like Paul.⁴

The first believer listed, Lydia, opened her heart and home to gospel expansion; the second couple, Aquila and Priscilla, built up local churches and encouraged young workers like Apollos. The latter believer, Mnason, is described as “an early disciple,” or alternately, “a disciple of long standing” and “a Christian from the early days,” or even, “one of the original disciples.”⁵

When he visited Mnason, Paul undoubtedly enjoyed hearing this insider’s view of the church’s early days. It demonstrates the wonderful interaction between the different generations of saints. There is no generation gap in the body!

The hymn writer and preacher John Newton opined: “I look upon our old believers here, as misers look upon their gold, with a mixture of pleasure and pain. I am daily apprehensive some of them will be called home; but I long and pray that, before they are removed, others may be raised up to supply their places.”⁶

Clearly, Christianity is meant to be passed on from believer to believer—older to younger—through the centuries.⁷ Even within the same time period, believers must encourage, exhort,

and strengthen each other so their fellow saints do not succumb to discouragement or division.⁸

Prayer: a bulwark against spiritual foes

The early church answered trials by fervently crying out to God in prayer. They met beatings, imprisonments, and threats with intercession and supplication. While Peter participated in an angelic jailbreak, the saints assembled in a prayer meeting on his behalf; his release elicited thanksgiving from them and gave testimony to the lost.⁹ Likewise, Paul and Silas greeted imprisonment with prayer and praise, thereby seeing God rescue them and save the Philippian jailer and his family.¹⁰

Faith: calm amid the storm

The first Christians actively trusted the Lord to work through their difficulties. When Paul encountered a two-week storm, he looked to God and encouraged his shipmates to believe in the Almighty. Listen to the apostle preach in the teeth of the tempest:

And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.” Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island.¹¹

Obviously, faith makes anxiety depart. When we look to God, our thoughts move from fear to faith.¹² With Christ in our ship, perishing is an impossibility, so we may walk through this perilous world confident in God’s keeping power and sustaining grace.¹³

Recognizing this truth, let us follow pioneer missionary William Carey’s advice: “Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.” Christ’s body was made for worshipping and serving amid adversity. ■

Keith Keyser is a commended worker based in Pennsylvania.

¹ Matthew 24:6; John 15:18–16:4. ² Matthew 28:19. ³ Compare Acts 8:1, 4 and 11:19–26. ⁴ Acts 16:14; Acts 18:1–3; Romans 16:3–5; 1 Corinthians 16:19. ⁵ Acts 21:16; Acts 21:16 (NASB); Acts 21:16 (REB); Acts 21:16 (NET margin). ⁶ John Newton, *The Works of John Newton*, Vol. 6 (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1820), 70. ⁷ 2 Timothy 2:2. ⁸ 1 Thessalonians 5:14–15. ⁹ Acts 12:16–19; see also the prayer and praise following persecution in Acts 4:23–31. ¹⁰ Acts 16:25–34. ¹¹ Acts 27:22–26. ¹² Isaiah 41:13–14; Philippians 4:6–7. ¹³ Mark 4:35–41.

Vol. 50, No. 5. Christian Missions in Many Lands (ISSN 0744-4052) is published eleven times a year by Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc., Belmar, New Jersey. Periodical postage paid at Belmar, New Jersey, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send United States address changes to Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc., PO Box 13, Spring Lake, NJ 07762. Send Canadian address changes to MSC Canada, 101 Amber Street, Suite 16, Markham, Ontario L3R 3B2. MSC Canada publication agreement Number 40026478. All correspondence, including address changes, gifts for missionary work, and for expenses should be sent by Canadian readers to MSC Canada, 101 Amber Street, Suite 16, Markham, Ontario L3R 3B2 and by United States readers to Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc., PO Box 13, Spring Lake, NJ 07762. Copyright © CMLL. All rights reserved.

COVER PHOTO: Friends in Senegal—Nathan & Priyanka Bramsen



When God's Word Sounds Forth

A Look at Prayers Answered over the Decades

BY NATHAN BRAMSEN



One Friday evening in Saint Louis, Senegal, after another tough day with much resistance to the Gospel from Muslim contacts, friends, and neighbors, a missionary sensed God directing his heart to 1 Thessalonians 1:7–8. He read, “So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.” The day was November 18, 1983. The missionary was my father, Paul Bramsen.

At this point, more than two years had passed since he and my mother, Carol, (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 28) had moved to Senegal as missionaries, and they had not yet seen any Senegalese turn from Islam to Christ. The passage became his heart’s cry for the work in northern Senegal and formed the basis of his specific prayer: *Lord, may the church in Saint Louis be an example to all in Senegal who believe, and may Your Word sound forth from here in the surrounding regions and in every place.*

Soon, the Enemy began to intensify his attacks of discouragement. On November 21, a young man who had shown interest in the Gospel and his friends showed up at the reading room my parents operated. He mocked the Gospel and my father, saying, “Just go back to America, because Saint Louis is the strongest Islamic town in Senegal, and no one will ever believe your message!” Later, he came back by himself and told my dad, “If I had some gasoline, I’d love to pour it on your books and light a match to it.”

The battle was well underway. Three-and-a-half more years would pass before my parents saw one soul come to true faith in Jesus Christ, yet their prayer remained the same. Though I wasn’t born at the time of that discouraging episode, their faith impacted my life and trajectory.

City of Saint Louis

Fast forward 37 years to January 13, 2021. With great anticipation, Priyanka, my wife, and I stepped off our Delta Airlines flight onto Senegalese soil carrying our one-year-old, Haven Rahab. We looked forward to seeing how the local church was doing and to having our daughter experience my birth country for the first time. After clearing the various airport procedures, we began our five-hour trip to Saint Louis—the major fishing port and former capital of French West Africa and the city of my birth. From my infancy until I was about 16, my family called Saint Louis “home.”

Though fishing the seas is a physical, economic blessing to many there, my soul’s encouragement lay in observing the Senegalese believers who fish for the souls of their people in this deserts West African nation. What a joy to see local Senegalese who had come to faith in Jesus Christ in my youth now mature in the faith, abiding in Christ, and walking in the light with a vision and passion for seeing their own people reached with the Gospel.



Top: Haven high-fives a group of street children, who live on the streets and, often, work for Islamic religious leaders.

Above (R-L): In January, the Bramsen family arrived in Senegal, where Nate was born and raised; On their trip, the Bramsens—including one-year-old Haven—built new relationships and renewed old friendships.



From left: On a Sunday morning, the Bramsens fellowship with believers at the Saint Louis assembly; At a market, Haven explores the world of Senegalese baskets; Priyanka and Haven visit some of the students from the girl's school in Saint Louis.

The local church that started in my family's home now meets at a center in Saint Louis's most populous neighborhood. Priyanka and I attended meetings at L'Assemblée Evangelique de St. Louis, shared the Word, and encouraged the believers—not only on Sunday but also in the church's ministries in the city.

We visited a girl's vocational training school with about 100 Muslim students, who receive quality professional training and Bible teaching; a medical clinic that ministers to the physically hurting; outreaches for street children where they eat well, get showers, and experience the Gospel's love and truth; a boy's vocational school; prison ministries; and more. The Lord is at work in Saint Louis.

But let's move outside the city and see how "the Word is sounding forth"—as my father prayed many years ago and many times since.

Village of Boudiouck

Our first stop was Boudiouck, where Julien and Angele live with their three boys (and a daughter on the way). Julien grew up in Saint Louis alongside my family and was my basketball companion and closest friend. Though his parents were not Christians, he believed the Gospel and gave his life to Christ at an early age. In May 1994, we were baptized in the Senegal River on the same day.

Despite having a good job in Dakar, Senegal's capital, Julien was burdened for the people of the North. About two years ago, after much prayer, he moved his family to Boudiouck, where my parents had lived off and on for a few years after my siblings and I graduated and left home. When God directed my parents to return to the States, the prayer of their hearts, and mine, was to see a Senegalese Christian family planted there.

Living in Boudiouck, Julien and Angele open their home to the community and serve as faithful Gospel witnesses. But God burdened Julien's heart for the village's youth. Over the past year, I have enjoyed encouraging the vision God placed in his heart. At a newly built basketball court,

youth come daily to practice, train, and listen to a lesson from God's Word. Julien went through official training with Fédération Sénégalaise de Basket-Ball and envisions seeing youth leagues started and coaches trained—all with a Gospel-centric approach. Pray for him and others working alongside him to see this vision come to pass, as the Lord wills.

Furthermore, we're constructing a multipurpose building adjacent to the basketball court, with plans to hold classes, house visiting ministry teams, and serve as the office for Julien's small business. We trust that, in God's time, the business will be able to financially support the ministry activities.

God's Word reminds us, "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." (Galatians 6:9) We trust God for a great harvest in Boudiouck, in His time.



From top: The Boudiouck medical clinic has served the village since 2011; Although just cement and sand, the basketball court in Boudiouck is a platform for sharing the Gospel; Julien and Angele welcome the Bramsens into their home for lunch.

Village of Mbarigo

The first Muslim-background believer our family saw come to Christ was a man named Malick. Firsthand, we watched him stand firm in the Gospel as he suffered persecution from his family and community. Later, God used Malick to be the voice of the original radio series in the Wolof language “The Way of Righteousness,” which sounds forth God’s Word across Senegal and in scores of other



languages around the world today. (On a personal note, Malick, along with my dad, baptized me.)

Malick and his wife, Feluine, lived in Saint Louis, but after much prayer, they moved their family to Mbarigo (half an hour outside Saint Louis). Though they remain closely involved in the ministries in the city, and Malick is an elder in the church, they started a small farm and are building a discipleship center. Their plan is to ground new Muslim-background believers in their faith, prepare them for persecution and encourage them amid it, and ultimately, see the Gospel spread among other Islamic communities. Priyanka and I enjoyed not only observing how Malick and Feluine’s vision is moving forward but also seeing three young men from their village attending the church in town, Bible studies with women meeting in multiple villages, and neighbors listening to the gospel message because of these examples now living among them.

Village of Rao

For much of Julien’s life, his father, Henri, had been indifferent to the Gospel and in love with the world. After Julien’s adult twin brothers (both believers) died, Henri gave his life to Christ. Seeing Henri repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ was



the last thing many people would have expected—but the transformation was evident. After his conversion, his new Muslim wife, Astou, also came to Christ, and a Christian family was born in Saint Louis.

Nearly 20 years ago, Henri moved to Rao, where his family became the only Christian witness in the village. Since the day in 1995 that he was saved, Henri has been passionate about one thing: Jesus Christ. He is never found without gospel resources, whether tracts, *King of Glory* DVDs, flash drives with gospel radio broadcasts, or a solar-powered MegaVoice audio device. As we delivered a suitcase filled with gospel resources into his hands, his overwhelming enthusiasm made me ask myself, Do I get this excited about the opportunities I have to share the Gospel in life and word?

What a privilege to work alongside Henri and Astou, helping to keep them stocked with resources to distribute. From prison cells to work with street children to the marketplace, they faithfully proclaim Christ crucified, risen, and coming again. As we shared a dinner of wild boar with the family, Henri reminded me, “Jesus is coming soon. Our time is limited here. We have to keep pressing on!”

God’s timing

Again and again on our trip, we witnessed the heart of the church in Saint Louis, Senegal: to plant themselves in communities, villages, and neighborhoods where Christ is not known and glorify God with their lives. In these few examples, the Gospel’s power is evident. Though God’s timing and ways are not ours, we can say, “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:24) ■

Nathan and Priyanka Bramsen are commended from Overbrook Gospel Chapel in Greenville, South Carolina, and Houston Brethren Assembly in Houston, Texas.



Left (from top): Nate, Haven, and Priyanka visit Malick and Feluine in Mbarigo; Henri and Astou, and several of their children, serve the Lord in Rao. **Right (from top):** Haven shares her favorite activity, coloring, with a group of street boys; Saint Louis is home to a reported 12,000 fishing vessels.





URUGUAY

Serving in the Center of God's Will

BY ANA B. CARACCILO

Uruguay is located on the southeastern coast of South America, next to the Atlantic Ocean. Our two biggest neighbors are Brazil and Argentina. Brazil is north of Uruguay, and Argentina is west.

The official language is Castilian (Spanish), but Portuguese is also spoken in the North, because of the region's proximity to Brazil. Uruguay's citizens enjoy free education from the primary level through university, which has contributed to a high literacy rate (98.7%) and level of educational achievement.

The Republica Oriental del Uruguay is a secular society, although 47 percent of citizens identify as Roman Catholic. About 30 assemblies are scattered across the country, which is slightly smaller than Washington state, with a population close to 3.5 million.

I was born and raised in Mercedes, Uruguay, and in 2015, Buena Park Christian Fellowship in southern California commended me to serve in my home country. But my ministry began long before 2015.

THE START OF MY MINISTRY

You may know of Evelyn Pelley (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 24, refocused), a missionary who served the Lord in Bolivia, Colombia, and Uruguay. Now 91 years old, Evelyn lives



in Western Assemblies Home in Claremont, California. In 1978, Grace Bible Chapel in Fullerton, California, commended her to the Lord's work, and she served as a music teacher at Escuela Cristiana Camireña (Camiri Christian School) in Bolivia, which Eugene and Lorraine Train (CMML missionaries now home with the Lord) started.

You are probably wondering what Evelyn has to do with my present ministry in Uruguay. Let me tell you.

In 1976, after I graduated from Fundación Escuela Bíblica Evangélica (FEBE) in Villa María, Argentina, Eugene Train invited me to serve the Lord at Escuela Cristiana Camireña. My answer was yes—I accepted the challenge. So, at 19 years old, I left home to serve the Lord as a teacher of various subjects. In 1978, I met Evelyn. Besides teaching at the Christian school, we trained Bible Club teachers and participated in children's and women's ministries.

In 1981, my home assembly in Uruguay commended me to the Lord's work in Colombia, where I again served alongside Evelyn. Then, in 1993, we returned to Uruguay to re-establish the Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) ministry. We earned advanced CEF training and instructors of teachers credentials. Then, we began training Sunday school teachers across the country.

In 2003, when Evelyn moved back to the US for health reasons, I went along to pursue higher education at BIOLA University; Fullerton College; and California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). While in California, we provided teacher training and were involved with Family Bible Chapel and Buena Park Christian Fellowship. During that time, I earned two degrees in communicative disorders from CSUF, and I received licensure in speech pathology and certification from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

THE MINISTRY TODAY

After 12 years of living in the US, I realized that the Lord had different plans for me when the government rejected my visa application. So I remained open to the Lord's guidance for my future. In 2015, the Buena Park assembly commended me to the Lord's work in Uruguay, where I continue to serve today.

Assembly work

Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica of La Espada, which I attend, is the largest assembly in Montevideo. It hosts two annual conferences, and a great number of believers from all over Uruguay attend them. God has blessed the La Espada assembly with many young people who actively reach others with the Gospel.

Usually, I join them for door-to-door gospel tract distribution in the surrounding neighborhood. The youth are also actively involved in children's activities, like open-air Bible classes, special programs, and youth and teen Bible camps. In the past, I trained young people using my CEF experience, equipping them with strategies to reach out to kids.

Yet ministry looks different now. The COVID-19 pandemic suspended some activities, as well as some of my travel and teaching. However, recently, I prepared the lesson plan for La Espada's annual children's program, designed for use in open-air Bible clubs this year. Similarly, I am organizing the Ecilda Paullier assembly's annual Sunday school program. Under normal circumstances, I would travel to Ecilda Paullier once per month to help them with their Sunday school and children's ministry.

Also at La Espada, I am involved with a women's Bible study, although, right now, we cannot gather due to the pandemic. Every 15 days, I would meet with a small group of women—about six to eight—in one woman's home to study the Bible. It was a joy to learn together from God's Word.

Hospital outreach

I help the pro-life group CENVIAB (also known as Abundant Life Center) with its evangelistic outreach. Again, under normal circumstances, we would pack and distribute baby bundles in the Pereira Rossell Hospital in Montevideo. Every Saturday, we would meet to pray and pack the baby gifts, which we would deliver three times per year: Mother's Day, Children's Day, and Christmas. Believers donate the baby clothing, especially for newborns, that we would include in the bundles. We thank the Lord that the hospital staff allowed us to visit room to room and talk with young and older mothers (*parturientas*). Along with the gifts, we would present the Gospel. Although we paused our activities due to the pandemic, we still get together for prayer time via Zoom on Monday evenings.

“I remained open to the Lord's guidance for my future.”



Opposite page: Evelyn Pelley was instrumental in Ana's early years of ministry.

Above: Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica (La Espada) is the largest assembly in Uruguay.

Left: Ana helps La Espada organize its Sunday school program, which will meet as an open-air Bible club this year; At the Ecilda Paullier assembly, children enjoy playtime before a special program celebrating Children's Day.



From top: Ana and Teresa wait for other team members to help distribute gifts at the Pereira Rossell Hospital; Women from the Bible study group go out for breakfast together; The CENVIAB team selects and packages presents for newborns for distribution at Pereira Rossell Hospital.



One of our team members, Guillermina, organizes these activities and follows up with the mothers we talk to. Recently, she contacted Diana, a young woman who aborted her baby. Guillermina ministers to Diana via phone calls. Please pray for Diana's salvation. Pray also that CENVIAB will find someone to create a professional video to help us reach young people via different internet platforms.

Personal evangelism

Please pray for my one-to-one evangelism. Before the pandemic, I would visit bus stops to distribute gospel tracts and talk with people waiting for their rides. Since the pandemic limits this ministry, I thought of other ways to connect with people, especially my neighbors. During the holidays (Christmas and Three King's Day), I distributed bags containing snacks and a gospel tract that says "Merry Christmas!" The tract looks like a Christmas card, and it is widely accepted. I thank the Lord that I had the opportunity to talk with a neighbor and two security guards in the building where I live. Please pray that they will be interested in the Gospel and trust Christ.

Since the Lord called me to serve Him back in the 1970s, I have seen Him lead and guide me to where I am today. It is wonderful to be in the center of God's will. Thank you so much for your faithful support and valuable prayers. ■



Ana Caracciolo is commended from Buena Park Christian Fellowship in Buena Park, California.

**Special
OFFER**

2021
MISSIONARY
PRAYER
HANDBOOK



2021 MISSIONARY PRAYER HANDBOOK

The 2021 *Missionary Prayer Handbook* features 28 new missionaries and one new country listing.

To facilitate prayer and communication, this vital tool lists more than 700 missionaries commended from assemblies in the US and Canada and includes a description of their ministries and contact information.

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For the past 100 years, CMML has been privileged to serve the Lord's servants around the world. We appreciate that many *Missions* readers faithfully pray for us (especially on Day 31 of the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*, where we are listed). We humbly ask you to continue upholding us in prayer.

STAFF

Our staff comprises people who are committed to supporting the Lord's work around the world. They are grateful for the roles the Lord called them to.



John Peasland, Executive Director

John is responsible for CMML's day-to-day operations. He also enhances CMML's communication with assemblies and supporters and implements strategic decisions. He is a member of all board subcommittees.



Jennifer Evans, Donor Relations & Special Projects Coordinator

Jennifer processes mail and donations, answers donation questions, coordinates volunteers, and organizes projects, including "behind the scenes" conference tasks.



Heather Zappella, Office Manager

Heather manages a wide range of tasks, from financial to organizational, to ensure the CMML office runs smoothly. She also coordinates production of the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*.



Craig Fritchey, Conference Coordinator

Craig coordinates CMML conferences. He also manages the monthly "Missions Update" videos and schedules speaking engagements for missionaries staying at CMML.



Helen Brown, Housekeeper

Helen keeps the CMML Missionary Guest Home neat and tidy so that each missionary's stay is a comfortable one.



Peg Hart, Communications

Emails, letters, and phone calls fill most of Peg's day. She also handles the magazine subscription list and many other tasks.



Russ Click, Building Maintenance

Russ handles many maintenance and repair projects, ensuring the CMML facility is well cared for.



Phil Parsons, Assembly Relations & Missionary Care

Phil meets with assemblies and communicates with and visits missionaries. He oversees the Missionary Orientation Program and CMML's missionary security program.



Alan Coburn, Facilities Manager

Alan plans, supervises, and implements maintenance projects and improvements to the CMML facility.



Mary Parsons, Guest Home Hostess

Mary schedules missionary stays at the CMML Missionary Guest Home and welcomes guests. She also accompanies Phil on missionary and assembly visits.



Sarah Dunlap, Missions Editor

Sarah plans, coordinates, and edits each issue of *Missions* magazine. She also manages CMML's social media accounts and helps with the website and *Missionary Prayer Handbook*.



Ken Liccardo, Information Technology

Ken maintains the office computers and electronics, and he helps with technology initiatives.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CMML is blessed with leaders who seek to serve the Lord in every decision they make. Please remember our leadership in prayer.



Bob Dadd, Board President

Bob leads the board and oversees CMML's direction. Whenever possible, he meets with visiting missionaries and makes trips overseas.



Tom Turner, Vice President—Publishing

Tom oversees *Missions* magazine and the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*. He is a member of the audit, executive, and publishing committees.



Allan Wilks, Vice President—Technology

Allan's technology efforts include the donations, security, and magazine archive databases. He is a member of the executive, publishing, and technology committees.



Stephen Swaim, Secretary

Serving as a director since 2007, Stephen became the board secretary in 2020. He is a member of the executive committee.



John Collette, Treasurer

A member of the board for 42 years, John serves as board treasurer and is a member of the audit, executive, and investment committees.



Eric Barton

Eric's interest in missions and his knowledge of living and traveling overseas are vital to his service as a director. He helped bring CMML's 26 Below Retreats to the Midwest.



Joel Hernandez

Formerly a missionary in Mexico, Joel is a member of the missionary personnel committee. He helps teach the Missionary Orientation Program.



Joe Raju

Joe is a member of the missionary personnel committee and has visited several missionaries in their country of service.



Tom Schetelich

Tom is CMML's legal adviser and has helped draft new policies. He is a member of the investment and publishing committees.



Rob Sullivan

Rob is CMML's newest director. His expertise in finance and business are an asset to the CMML board. He is a member of the investment committee.



Ken Switzer

Ken is interested in CMML's facilities and has frequently rolled up his sleeves to do tough jobs. He helps missionaries with projects on the field whenever possible.

VOLUNTEERS

CMML has many faithful volunteers who sacrificially serve the Lord, and we appreciate each one. Here are a few who have leadership roles or volunteer regularly:

Marilyn Ridsen, *Clothing Center Manager*
Judy Gallagher, *Magazine and Office Assistant*
Allen Dey, *Magazine Proofreader*

26 Below

Retreats

15 YEARS OF CHALLENGING YOUTH TO LIVE FOR CHRIST

BY SARAH DUNLAP

Since 2006, the Lord has been orchestrating CMML's 26 Below Retreats: year by year, He develops and expands the ministry for His glory. What started as a burden for encouraging young people became an annual weekend retreat in the northeastern US. That retreat led to a second one held in the Midwest, followed by a third one in the Southeast, which launched shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though CMML could not host the 26 Below Retreats this year due to the pandemic, the Lord isn't done working in and through this ministry for young people, ages 14 to 26.



Northeast, Speculator, New York

Clockwise from top: In 2013, the worship team leads the group in singing; Several friends enjoy a game of hockey in 2020; In 2019, attendees play chess during free time.

Establishing the vision

About 17 years ago, CMML directors Sam Robinson (now home with the Lord) and Tom Turner (then CMML president; current vice president, publishing) recognized the need to encourage the next generation. Sam, Tom, and the other CMML directors prayed for an opportunity to challenge young people in four ways: to personally walk with the Lord, to study the Word on their own, to participate in their local assembly, and to consider serving the Lord on the mission field.

Soon, the directors determined that God was leading them to organize a youth conference. While the conference was still an idea being prayed for, the directors also prayed that the Lord might eventually use it around the country.

In 2005, God provided the opportunity for CMML to expand a winter youth conference that Valley Bible Chapel, in Washington Township, New Jersey, had organized since 1999. Valley's youth leaders, Kevin and Cheryl Biswurm (Cheryl is *Missions'* creative director), continued to help plan the expanded event.

In January 2006, CMML hosted the first 26 Below retreat at Camp of the Woods in Speculator, New York. Over three days, the 105 attendees played board games, participated in group activities like volleyball, and stayed up late to hang out with new and old friends. Nate Bramsen (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 28), who was just beginning his missionary service, was the keynote speaker, and his messages called the listeners to personal spiritual examination. "Nate is an ideal speaker for this type of event," noted one participant. "He's 22 years old, so he's 'one of us.' But, at the same time, he's tough on us. He challenges us. He makes us sit up in our seats and think, 'Uh oh, that sounds like me he's describing' or 'That's definitely an area of my life that could use some work.'"¹

Expanding to new regions

In the decade following that first retreat, 26 Below continued growing in the Northeast, and CMML received many requests for a retreat in the Midwest. So, in 2016, CMML hosted one at Hidden Acres Christian Center in Dayton, Iowa. Nate



Midwest, Dayton, Iowa

From left: In 2016, the group shares a funny moment during a session; In 2019, Nate Bramsen spoke to attendees on the theme “Christ or Culture—Which Will You Choose?” (Photo by Eric Robinson); In 2020, some of the Midwest’s leadership team—Joel Hernandez, Jennifer Evans, and Jennifer and Eric Barton—snap a photo with speaker Jerry Mattix (MPH Day 27).

Bramsen spoke to the 198 attendees on the theme “Confronting Counterfeit Christianity.” To distinguish the two retreats, CMML began calling them Northeast 26 Below and Midwest 26 Below.

Then, in 2020, CMML introduced Southeast 26 Below to meet the growing interest among young people in the southern states. That year, 135 attendees from 12 states, one Canadian province, and Colombia gathered at Look Up Lodge Christian Camp in Travelers Rest, South Carolina. Once again, Nate Bramsen launched the new retreat as the keynote speaker, highlighting the theme “Moving Beyond Defeat.”

Upholding the mission

Today, Northeast 26 Below meets in mid-January, Midwest in late February, and Southeast in mid-March. At each of the three retreats, attendees arrive on Friday evening and stay through Sunday afternoon. The weekends are structured around five Bible-teaching sessions with a keynote speaker, often a CMML missionary, and in between, attendees participate in everything from eating meals and socializing to learning, praying, and worshipping together.

For almost a decade, Craig Fritchey (CMML conference coordinator) and Jennifer Evans (CMML donor relations and special projects coordinator) have organized the retreats, and they continue to uphold the CMML directors’ original vision. Each retreat’s theme, speakers, content, and activities support 26 Below’s heart for encouraging youth and young adults. Although CMML canceled the 26 Below Retreats scheduled for this year, we look forward to 2022 and trust the Lord will enable the retreats to meet.



Seeing prayers answered

When we reflect on 26 Below’s story, we see that the Lord answered the CMML directors’ prayer that the retreat would impact young people’s lives and futures and expand across the country. Over 15 years, CMML has hosted 21 retreats, and almost 4,000 young people have participated. Some were saved; others were challenged to mature spiritually. Today, some live for Christ at home; others serve on the mission field (some are even listed in the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*). The Lord knows every heart that attended a 26 Below retreat, and we praise Him for how He is working in those hearts as He orchestrates the retreats for His glory. ■

Sarah Dunlap is the editor of Missions.

¹“26 Below: A New Spin on Camp and a Conference of Our Own,” *Missions*, March 2007, 7.

Southeast, Travelers Rest, South Carolina

Clockwise from top left: Craig Fritchey catches up with MKs Anna and Andrew Dubberly (MPH Day 21); Using Look Up Lodge camp’s facilities, Southeast attendees play soccer; In 2020, at the first Southeast retreat, 135 young people gathered for fun, fellowship, and Bible teaching.

Home with the Lord

Elizabeth Ann Shorten

January 24, 1927 – December 24, 2020 • Missionary to Angola



Elizabeth “Betty” Ann Beatty was born January 24, 1927, in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, to Harold Edwin Beatty and Elsie Louise Beatty while they were on furlough from mission work in Japan. The family returned to Japan soon after her birth. In 1938, they moved to New York City, where Betty completed elementary school and high school. After college, she taught elementary school in Niagara Falls, New York.

In 1959, assemblies in Niagara Falls and Tenafly, New Jersey, commended Betty to the work in Angola. After several months of language training in Portugal, she arrived in Angola. There,

With trust in God, Betty endured many difficult and dangerously uncertain times alone on the mission field.

she served at the mission station in Chilonda and became proficient in some tribal languages, did translation work, and

ministered to women and children. During Angola’s war for independence, Betty remained at Chilonda, under difficult circumstances, to encourage the local churches.

In 1974, after spending time in Canada, Charlie Shorten returned to Angola to help strengthen the many village churches scattered across central Angola in the tense atmosphere of what would become a civil war. While there, he reconnected with Betty in joint missionary work. When the Angolan civil war broke out in 1975, Charlie and Betty had to leave the country. They decided that their future service for the Lord should be together, so they married in 1976 and ministered in London, Ontario.

In 1979, Charlie and Betty returned to Luanda, Angola, where they helped establish and strengthen national churches among the refugees fleeing the war zones. Additionally, they facilitated getting needed supplies to isolated churches in war-torn areas, and Betty worked with national linguists to translate the Bible. These years were difficult and dangerous for the couple.

In 1989, Charlie and Betty returned to London. They stayed active in pastoral ministry at Edward Street Chapel and Faith Bible Chapel and in itinerant teaching, camp work, and visitation well into their 80s.

Three words describe Betty’s life and ministry:

Competent – She was gifted as a teacher, translator, and mission worker and embraced new technology to aid her work.

Courageous – With trust in God, Betty endured many difficult and dangerously uncertain times alone on the mission field.

Generous – She was always bountiful in her support of missionary work around the world.

Betty is preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Charles; and her siblings Katherine May Beatty, John Isaac Beatty, and Philip Harold Beatty. She is survived by her brother James Edwin Beatty of Pittsboro, North Carolina; her stepsons David and Robert; and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Robert Shorten