

Missions

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Thinking It Through

BY THOMAS SCHELICH

“Jesus, What are You Doing Here?”

Mark chapter 5 records Jesus healing a man possessed by a legion of demons. We often focus on the Lord and on the demoniac, but we should not miss the significance of the location.

The accounts in the Gospels occur in Roman Palestine, a small area geographically but with a crazy quilt of political entities. Most of the Gospel story happens in Galilee, on the northern and western side of the Sea of Galilee, or in Judea in the south. However, the events of Mark 5 occur in a region on the southern and eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, in a region called the Decapolis, which means the 10 cities.

This region had a vastly different culture than Galilee or Judea—it was not Jewish. Rome had greatly encouraged its growth and independence, importing Hellenistic values, building cosmopolitan centers linked together with Roman roads. The economy was booming and what passed for religion was the most secular and politically correct faith imaginable—worship of the emperor.

In Mark 4:35 Jesus said to His disciples, “Let us cross over to the other side.” The journey was more than 12 miles of open water—it crossed political lines, racial lines, and cultural lines. “The other side” was Roman to its core. There, Jesus would send the legion of demons into a herd of swine. The herd was more than 2,000 pigs, attended by herdsman, a domesticated part of the economy and diet of the city.

When Jesus arrived on the other side of the sea, He was met by a man from the tombs, tormented by a legion of demons. His first words were, “What have I to do with You, Jesus?”¹ Or, in other words, “Jesus, what are You doing here? You are not supposed to be *here*.”

The world asks that same question today. It’s asked in different places and contexts, but it’s essentially the same question. Many people think the Gospel belongs within the walls of the church. If you take it into the business community, schools, or government, voices like that of Legion will be raised saying, “What does this have to do with us in our secular, politically cor-

rect world? What is Jesus doing here?”

This is not just the words of the legion of demons but the words of people from the city who told Jesus to “depart from their region.”² As Jesus got into the boat to depart, the man He healed begged to come with Him. But Jesus didn’t permit him, saying, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you.”³ Scripture then says, “He departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him.”⁴ When he started to tell this story, he was the only one. There is one mention in Matthew of some from the Decapolis who came to Galilee to hear Jesus, but it appears that this man was the only one, in the entire region, who would witness for Christ.

Over in Galilee and Judea, each town had a synagogue where people were taught and studied Moses and the prophets. The apostles and 70 other disciples were out, two by two, preaching the Kingdom of God, and empowered to do miracles. Jesus Himself was going through the cities and towns to seek the lost. But on the other side of the sea was this secular world, with a politically correct religion, where Jesus had been for one day and left only this one man. This man couldn’t teach from Moses or the prophets. He

was not empowered to do miracles. He had no support

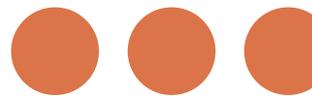
Don’t underestimate the value of your testimony.

team or ministry structure. He was armed only with his testimony. But, when Jesus came a second time to the Decapolis, great multitudes wanted to see Him, bringing the lame, blind, mute, and many others to Him.⁵

Don’t underestimate the value of your testimony. Don’t underestimate the value of what you do and say for Jesus Christ, because you and I will go to, work and live in, the places where they think Jesus is not supposed to be. ■

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¹ Mark 5:7; ² Mark 5:17; ³ Mark 5:19; ⁴ Mark 5:20; ⁵ Mark 7:31; Matthew 15:30–31



Mexico

A Door through the Spiritual Wall

BY JOEL HERNANDEZ

I sat at the 2016 CMML Annual Fall Conference in New Jersey on a crisp November day. Some 400 people were gathered to hear about the Lord's work in Mexico, their anticipation mixed with unease. The US elections had just taken place. The whole world seemed abuzz with talk of the border wall. We were on the edge of our seats as Cabe Pillette methodically unpacked the desperate plight of Mexican communities swallowed up by drug violence, the spiritual darkness that repels the Gospel, and the dangers to those who dare to preach it.

The real wall

"For centuries, Mexico has resisted the Gospel," Cabe explained. Certainly the light has come to larger cities, but thousands of small towns and villages, with populations of 50,000 or less, lie in near-impenetrable darkness.

The barrier—the real wall—is not one made of concrete and steel. The barrier is spiritual and deeply rooted in history. During the pre-Hispanic era, before Columbus's arrival, indigenous empires reigned supreme. First the Olmec, then the Mixtec, Maya, Zapotec, and Aztec empires. Their animistic rituals included idolatry, witchcraft, and ritual sacrifice. The Spanish colonizers brought Christianity but not a pure Gospel. Instead, a hybrid developed, one that was neither pure ancestral religion nor orthodox Roman Catholicism. People pledge fierce allegiance to this self-styled religion. It's a wall zealously safeguarded by

whole communities who have become impervious to the Gospel and its implications. Generations of missionaries have come up against this formidable wall.

The men who broke through

Mexico became independent from Spain in 1810. For the next 100 years turmoil reigned. The country underwent civil wars, a war with the US, and a revolution. By the turn of the 19th century, the Roman Catholic Church dominated all of life—religion, politics, and culture. The government's attempts to change this, to separate church and state, were met with resentment that eventually erupted in war.

In the midst of this 100-year upheaval, however, God was at work. Though Mexico was sealed off to evangelicals, He sent waves of missionaries to break down the spiritual wall. The Scottish agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, James Thomson, arrived in 1827 with a mission to persuade the government to authorize and facilitate Bible sales, promote Bible translation projects into indigenous languages, and set up schools to raise literacy standards using the Bible as a textbook. God then sent waves of godly brethren beginning with James Pascoe in 1865, then Charles H. Bright, J. Eglon Harris, Admiral Reginald Carey Brenton, Leonard Ingram, and an unbroken succession of others. Through their efforts God broke through the wall.

So what were the traits of these remarkable men? They were



men of resourceful ingenuity. They were self-taught printers who wrote thousands of essays, created periodicals, and swayed public opinion. They were gifted evangelists, teachers, orators, poets, hymnists, and journalists. They started Bible studies, founded print shops, businesses, and churches. They displayed remarkable courage. Their faith emboldened them to face untold dangers. Mexico then was as hostile to the Gospel as closed countries are today. These men promoted Bible reading at a time when papal edict forbade it. They printed and distributed Gospel literature to masses who were incited to destroy it. They preached when angry mobs hurled threats and insults. They planted churches that were subsequently opposed and harassed by the local priests. They were ready to sacrifice. They abandoned promising careers for the sake of the Gospel. They were willing to be regarded as fools for Christ's sake. Their wives gave up family and the comforts of home. Many buried their young, succumbing to unknown diseases.

One final characteristic they shared was that they decided to serve the Lord at a young age. Thomson's missionary travels began when he was 30. Eglon Harris decided to be a missionary in his teens and arrived in Mexico by 24. Leonard Ingram was only 21. God used committed young men to break down the spiritual wall. He still does.

State of assemblies

The results of missionary waves have been exponential. Evangelicals today form an impressive eight percent of the population.¹ There are more than 240 assemblies scattered in somewhat disconnected clusters. Some of these clusters reflect mere geographic isolation, or different biblical-interpretive peculiarities, or natural networks cultivated by a beloved founder or leader. More formal groups developed in 1992, with the enactment of the Religious Association law, which invited

churches to become legal entities by meeting a set of requirements. At first the Brethren considered uniting under one national umbrella. Complexities led to fragmentation, however, which resulted in the formation of several religious associations, which has unnecessarily limited cooperation.

Mexico is still experiencing a time of spiritual harvest. Since unbelievers still respond to the Gospel, those assemblies that work hard at evangelism and discipleship generally experience growth, while those who don't are experiencing decline. As observed in every part of the world, assemblies that have qualified and devoted leaders and shepherds tend to be the healthiest.

Mexico today

Mexico has a beautiful tapestry of cultures. It is home to more than 128 million people, 331 people groups, 287 living languages, and an astonishing array of rich cultures with unique traditions, foods, folklore, music, and dance.^{2,3} Its people are incredibly resourceful and are held together by deep-seated values that prioritize people and family above all else. Family is everything. Acceptance by an individual means acceptance by his or her family.

"Not all that glitters is gold," say the Mexicans. The country is a paradox of rich resources and near-unsolvable challenges. The top problems in the country include deep social and economic inequalities, abusive political leadership structures, callous and senseless violence, and the powerful drug cartels that operate almost openly and with near-impunity. These



Left: *El Heraldo*, the first evangelical magazine in Mexico, was produced by missionary James Pascoe.

Simply reading the Bible and explaining its message has become a powerful evangelistic strategy!

have devastated harmony and good will. Mexicans are resilient, but there's a fifth problem that is far worse than those already listed. It's the one that casts a dark shadow on the face of the future. It is systemic corruption. This is the worst social, economic, and political problem, and it has infected every level of society from top to bottom. The result is a deep antiauthority distrust that is culturally endemic and breeds a fatalistic hopelessness.

The irony is that the heavier the darkness, the brighter the light shines. It is against such dark a backdrop that the Gospel shines through the simple allegiance of Christ's followers. Greed and sexual abuse scandals that have rocked the Catholic Church have led to widespread disillusionment among the younger generations. As people turn away from the church, its power upon the national conscience is slowly eroding. Yet people are not ready to abandon the idea of a personal God. The Catholic Church's reversed stance against reading the Bible is driving a curiosity, a hunger even, to know what it really says. Today, simply reading the Bible and explaining its message has become a powerful evangelistic strategy!

How you can reach Mexico

Certainly the Gospel has penetrated larger cities, but small towns and villages have traditionally remained resistant. Rejection and persecution are most likely in small communities.

Years ago, I began an evangelistic Bible study in a small Mexican village. A young couple eagerly received me every week. But their own family—parents, siblings, and extended family—began pressuring them to stop. The pressure was formidable. The wife's father shockingly told her husband, "I would rather you cheated on our daughter, or beat her up, than you continuing to read the Bible!"

In spite of the husband's own desire and my frequent encouragements to persevere, the day came when the young man caved. "I can't go further," he said. "Every time I need a small loan"—and his job situation made such need a frequent one—"I go to my in-laws for help. I just cannot resist my family any longer."

Such is the repelling power of family, and a family's influence is greatest in smaller communities. What is one to do? In the face of this impossible wall, God is opening a new door of opportunity: immigration.

These immigrants come to the US for the love of family. They are driven by the deep-seated cultural value to care for their families' welfare. This explains why, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, Mexican immigrants sent "remittances" of 27 billion dollars home in 2016, and the number is expected to exceed 30 billion in 2018.⁴ Immigrants experience hardship and loneliness

abroad for the love of the family they left behind.

It is these very immigrants who provide a unique opportunity for their communities back home to open the door to the Gospel. It works like this: an American believer shows the immigrant acts of kindness and friendship. The immigrant, true to Mexican culture, gratefully elevates his new friend to the status of near-family. The American contacts a missionary or evangelist in Mexico and comes with him to visit the extended family bearing letters and gifts from their relative living in the US. The extended family receives the American as a family member, and out of gratitude and sense of obligation listens to the message of the Gospel. If this sounds strange, consider this: hundreds of churches are being planted following this approach. If it sounds disingenuous, let me say, it does not need to be. With your love of the Lord Jesus Christ, love the immigrants in your community! Your act of kindness may change the history of a whole village in Mexico.



Clockwise from top left: Children are often the first to respond enthusiastically to the Gospel; Believers in Guanajuato recognizing new elders this year; Easter is a time for religious pilgrimages, the motivation for which ranges from religious duty to mere exercise.



Years ago, a fellow missionary and I were distributing gospel tracts in a small village in Mexico when we came upon a group of men drinking. We were not eager to satisfy their chemically-induced amused interest, so we began planning our exit. Just then another man riding a bicycle joined the crowd and asked us what we were up to. When we told him that we were distributing gospel tracts his eyes lit up. He proceeded to quote John 3:16 verbatim. I was impressed and asked, "Where did you learn that?"

He smiled and said, "Let me show you something."

He pulled out his wallet and unfolded a tract. He told me that years ago he had crossed illegally into the US, and a stranger, an American, gave him the tract while uttering, with a heavy American accent, "*Mi amigo!*"⁵

He then said, "I have never forgot him. I carry this tract everywhere I go."

I nearly wept. If only Americans knew the power of those two little words, *mi amigo!* If only we prayed and looked for opportunities to show acts of kindness to the immigrants in our cities and neighborhoods. God has given us an opportunity. We can change the history of missions without leaving our jobs or country.

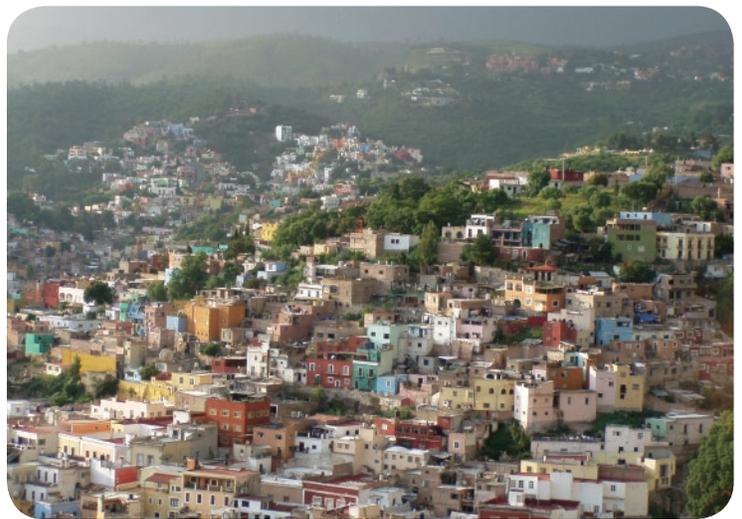
Mexico has a formidable spiritual wall—but God has opened a door. Shall we not lay aside our political preferences and instead seek first the kingdom of God? Shall we face a door that countless missionaries prayed for, and just stand there, refusing to open it? Rather, let us seize this opportunity to share Christ with lost souls. ■

We can change the history of missions without leaving our jobs or country.



Joel Hernandez is a CMMML director, a Missionary Orientation Program instructor, Emmaus Bible College's Intercultural Studies department chairman, and an elder at Asbury Community Chapel. He and his wife, Amy, served as missionaries in Mexico and now live in Dubuque, Iowa.

From top and L-R: The church once played a critical role in Mexican culture, but its influence today is in decline; Mexican women enjoy studying the Bible together; VBS programs in outdoor settings are an effective method of connecting with new families; Sister churches gather occasionally for a special day of joint baptisms and fellowship; The city of Guanajuato, in central Mexico, is home to 170,000 people.



¹ "Mexico," Operation World, www.OperationWorld.org/node/240. ² "Mexico," Joshua Project, JoshuaProject.net/countries/MX. ³ "Mexico" Ethnologue, www.Ethnologue.com/country/MX. ⁴ Anthony Harrup, "Remittances to Mexico Hit Record \$27 Billion in 2016," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 01, 2017, www.WSJ.com/articles/remittances-to-mexico-hit-record-27-billion-in-2016-1485978810. ⁵ Translated, "My friend!"

Home with the Lord

Myung Sub Kim

May 25, 1950 – August 27, 2017 • Missionary to Cambodia

We first met Myung Sub more than 50 years ago when she was a teenager in Korea. Born in a farm village, she had two brothers and three younger sisters. From birth, she was physically weak and not expected to live—but the Lord had other plans for her. The Gospel came to her village through an American missionary. Myung Sub believed in the Lord and continued in fellowship at a new nearby assembly.

South Korea was very poor at that time. Myung Sub heard of Germany's need for nurse's aides, so she applied and was accepted to work there in 1971. Though physically weak, her mind was very good. She learned German and became a nurse in Berlin. There, she met Johanna, a German missionary. Together they reached out to Korean nurses and coal miners. In 10 years 134 Koreans were saved and baptized.

In 1981 the Lord opened the way for Myung Sub to go to the US, where she became a citizen. For several years she worked in an office, but at times she had to take a reduced workload because of her weak body. During her time in the US, she enjoyed fellowship at Grace Chapel in Tenafly, New Jersey. She loved children and she helped with children's work. The years went by and, as she neared 60, she had a fervent desire to serve the Lord as a foreign missionary.

With her assembly's commendation, she attended the nine-month Christian Training Institute course in Korea. She stayed after the training and befriended Cambodian girls who worked in a nearby factory. They taught her some of the Cambodian language, and she ministered to them. Myung Sub traveled to Cambodia to possibly work with Korean missionaries. Although her intended ministry didn't work out, as she left, children gave her slips of paper with "come again" written on them. And she did!

Returning to Cambodia, she attended a university to better learn Cambodian. She did well and reached students and professors with the Gospel. Because she did well in the language, she was asked to interpret for a medical team going to poor villages. While she was there, the Lord gave her a love for the children she saw. That started her ministry there. From where she lived in Phnom-Penh, she had to cross the Mekong River

by ferry and get transport to the poor villages. It was difficult but rewarding work, with hundreds of children hearing the Gospel. Village leaders asked her to help the poor there. She had a water system installed for a school. Twice, new shoes for the children were donated from Korea. Finally, a car was provided for the trips there.

Myung Sub's work was hard and lonely. However, some nationals became believers and helped. Ho Sook was her little "mother," whom she called almost daily. Being physically weak, some days Myung Sub couldn't go to the villages even when short-term Korean workers came to help. Some teams from our assembly went to teach the children and bathe them.

Soon after a team returned here to South Korea, word of her passing came. We had just finished breaking of bread when the announcement was made. There was shock, grief, and tears. That Sunday morning, Myung Sub drove to board the ferry. On the way down, the car went into the Mekong River. It seems she died before entering the river. There was no evidence of struggle or drowning after her car was recovered. At her funeral, Ken Switzer, her elder and a CMML director, said, "She was on her way to worship the Lord, but the Lord said, 'You come up *here* and worship Me.'" Ken Switzer and two others from her commending assembly were mid-flight to visit her when she passed. Youmi Park met them at the airport with the sad news. They came to visit Myung Sub, but instead the Lord brought them there for her funeral.

Her work continues. Myung Sub purchased land in a poor village and almost finished building a multilevel meeting place. We're thankful that her Korean commending assembly has completed this building. A short-term team recently went to minister to the children. Insun and Youmi Park are continuing the work there. Four young Cambodian men lead the assembly. Pray for all those whom the Lord has led to continue the work.



Doug and Ho Sook Neiswender

RENEWED HEARTS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Ministering to Refugees in Belgium

BY HANK & BERYL GELLING

Our goal in coming to Belgium was to help Richard and Marina Haverkamp (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 10) with evangelism. We had been very active with evangelism in Clinton, Ontario, soon after we were both saved in 1970 and until we came to Belgium in 1975. During our first three years in Belgium, we reached mainly Flemish people, but when we moved to Houthalen, we met people of many nationalities because of the coal mines in the area. In the coffeehouse that we hosted in our home, we met young people from Italy, Spain, Turkey, Morocco, Eastern Europe, and Belgium, of course. Many of these individuals, all of whom spoke Flemish, were saved, and some are presently leaders in the assemblies in our area. Now, we are working with four generations in some places.



A WORK BEGINS

Refugees started to come to Houthalen in 2012, and they live in empty military barracks. One day, we got a disturbing phone call. Someone on the other end was very anxious, but the call was interrupted. I felt very bad because I knew this person seemed to be in danger, but I didn't know where he was. Then someone from the refugee center phoned, and with their help, I was able to go to the center and bring Marco back to our house. He was from Iraq but had been in Europe for a long time. He ended up staying at our home for three months and was able to get permission

I KNEW THIS PERSON SEEMED TO BE IN DANGER, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE HE WAS.

to stay in Belgium. His mom died after he came to Belgium, and he has family in Great Britain, but he is not allowed to live there. He is living on his own now and finding his way, but he is hurt from the whole experience. Iraq is so different from Belgium! Pray for Marco as he seeks employment.

Marco brought us into contact with many other refugees. Arabic-speaking brothers from Antwerp and Brussels would come to the center with us to invite people to the local assembly for a meal and an Arabic evangelistic meeting in our building. The biggest attendance we had at one time was 140 people, but at that meeting the Sunni and Shiite Muslims got into an argument among themselves that scared most of the people. After that only a handful of refugees would come. One family from Iraq, A and I and their four sons, lived with a couple from the assembly for one year. We spent a lot of time with them, but when they didn't get permission to stay in Belgium, they went into hiding somewhere in Europe. Most of the Arabic-speaking refugees are now no longer in Houthalen due to similar circumstances. We are heartbroken when we see these things happen, but in eternity we will see how the Lord used the refugees' time here with us.

CONTACTS ARE REACHED

A and R are from Iran. R became a believer in Iran, and when the police threatened R, her husband and young daughter fled with her to Belgium. All she will say about the situation with the police is “they hurt me.” R’s knees were damaged going over the mountains as she escaped from Iran; she has had operations on her knees, and her recuperation is taking a long time. It is wonderful to see how A became a believer too! A and R have a son now, and they are going on for the Lord. Their neighbor also fled from Iran. She was a gynecologist in Iran, but because getting permission to practice gynecology in Belgium would be next to impossible, she became a hairdresser. R is trying to share the Gospel with this neighbor.

E and M, from Iran, came to live with us for five months because, after men from Afghanistan threatened them in the center, we felt we should ask them to stay with us for their own safety. They now have permission to stay in Belgium. Recently, we started having Bible studies in our home with other Iranians, and M interprets Flemish into Farsi. They have many questions; it is a privilege to open Scripture with them. They bring along others who are also searching.

HEARTS ARE CHANGED

One mother, G, with her 21-year-old daughter, A, and her 18-year-old son, A, have been to the meeting five times now. G was very open from the beginning, and the son was sympathetic. The daughter, however, defended her faith in Islam. One evening just the three of them came, which meant we could speak English. We had a very intense conversation together—they came at 7:30 p.m. and left at 12:30 a.m. We opened the Quran and read that Jesus was not put to death but that Allah had substituted someone else in his place. G’s son, A, understood enough to realize that, if true, Jesus’s coming was then in vain. When G and her two children left, we told them to continue reading the Bible, and God would speak to them.

G told us she had asked God to show her the way to go that week. She told us she had the same dream two nights in a row. In the morning, she read about her dream in Matthew. We wondered what she had been reading, and she told us about someone building a house on sand and on a rock. We were thrilled at God’s grace working in her and to see her coming to faith in Jesus Christ. We gave her the

movie *A Case for Christ* to watch.

The last time they were here, G and her son, A, were happy and smiling, but her daughter, A, looked a little sheepish. They told us they had all accepted Christ as their Savior and Lord. A apologized for her attitude the time before. We told her we were happy that she trusted us enough to open up and defend what she believed. They now go to an Iranian-speaking church in Brussels, but they plan to visit the assembly here in Houthalen, which is much closer for them and offers interpretation into English. Pray that they will know where to go in the future. The change in all of them is beautiful. ■



Hank and Beryl Gelling were commended in 1975 from Fellowship Bible Chapel in Clinton, Ontario, Canada.



Opposite page (from top):

Upon arriving in Belgium, the Gellings (right) begin their vision for evangelism with their fellow workers the Leusinks (left) and the Haverkamps (middle).

Houthalen’s coal mines and their employment opportunities encouraged people from various nations to move to this region.

This page (from top):

Refugee centers in Houthalen and Heusden offer unique opportunities to share the Gospel with those living there.

Arabic refugees gather at the Houthalen assembly for a meal and some time in God’s Word.

“Look for a Lydia”



RELIEF AND GOSPEL WORK IN PILAR, PARAGUAY

BY ROSEMARY KONKOL

After many years of growth in the Lord and praying about full-time missions work, Dale and I met in 1997 at the Missionary Orientation Program hosted by CMML and MSC. We married and began to pray about where the Lord would have us serve together. After a survey trip, we felt the Lord leading us to Paraguay and to move to an area without much Christian testimony and where there were no assemblies. We were commended and moved to Paraguay in 1999. We began language study and visited missionaries and several areas of the country, continuing to pray for the Lord's leading. In June 2000 we moved to the southern town of San Juan Bautista, led by God to begin an assembly there. By His grace, He has raised up a small group of believers to bring honor and glory to His name.

THE TOWN

Dale met a young man, Roberto, while playing tennis a few years after we settled in San Juan. A friendship grew that led to a Bible study and eventually to Roberto's salvation. He quickly grew in his faith and began to show his leadership skills with the youth and in the meeting. About two years ago, Roberto's job transferred him to Pilar, a town farther southeast, on the Paraguay River.

Pilar is an old town, founded in the late 1700s, that was isolated from the rest of the country for many years. It is at the end of a road that only was paved in 2000. Whenever it rained, the town was cut off. For many years most contact was with Argentina as people used small boats to cross the river. Since the road was paved with asphalt, the city grew to a little more than 40,000 inhabitants. Because of its location on the river, many areas of the city still flood when there is heavy rain.

An assembly was started in 1939 when John and Annie McAl-

lister arrived from Scotland, via Argentina. They served the Lord there until the late 1960s. Unfortunately, since then, the assembly has suffered splits and members have gone to be with the Lord. Currently, there are only two elderly sisters left. The young but growing church in San Juan is the closest assembly to Pilar. Roberto does what he can to build the Lord's church while maintaining his work responsibilities and university studies.

THE VISIT

The assembly in San Juan, along with a group of nine believers from the city of Luque (near the capital, Asuncion), wanted to provide clothing and food supplies to people affected by flooding, assist in outreach work, and encourage Roberto. Dale began the trip by reading Acts 16:9–15, which says:

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel to them. Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged

me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.”
So she persuaded us.

Dale encouraged us to “look for a Lydia” as we visited Pilar. We organized the donated clothing and headed out to a poor, flood-prone neighborhood. There, about 20 partially built houses surrounded an open plaza area. It was a government housing plan that failed when the funds were stolen, leaving small abandoned houses without roofs. Various families rigged up tarps and temporary tin roofs and began to live there. To identify who took possession of each house, they painted names or initials on the walls. As we drove up to the neighborhood, the first thing we saw was a house with “Lidia” painted on the side! We felt that the Lord used this to confirm our visit there.

We visited each family, handing out literature and inviting them to gather in the central plaza area to receive donated supplies and to attend a children’s program. A few hours later we had a crowd of about 40 children and 20 adults. We taught the kids some choruses, explained the Gospel using the “Wordless Book,” and showed an evangelistic movie in the native language, Guarani. Then, each person was invited to select some clothing and receive rice, tea, and sugar. Some of the brothers went and spoke with Lidia. We also met a woman named Marcela, who had some Bible knowledge. We left her with study materials and encouraged her to learn and to share what she knows with her neighbors.

THE FUTURE

The visit was very encouraging for all involved. Please pray for the people of Pilar; the Gospel has been present there for many years, but there is not a strong commitment. Pray for Roberto as he desires to help in the work but is very busy with his job and university studies. Pray that other assemblies in Paraguay, including our assembly in San Juan, would know how God is leading them to be involved. ■



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

From top and L-R: The team brought supplies to give to those impacted by the flooding; Some Pilar residents live in partially built government homes; Roberto faithfully serves the Lord as he also focuses on work and school; Rosemary, with the help of a friend, taught the Gospel using the “Wordless Book”; Many children enjoyed learning, singing, and watching a movie.



MIDWEST 26 Below GOD'S PATH FOR YOU

BY CRAIG FRITCHEY



Now in its third year, the Midwest 26 Below: High School, College, and Career Winter Retreat, held at Hidden Acres Christian Center in Dayton, Iowa, has become a staple event. From 12 states, 186 young people attended this year, coming from as far south as San Antonio, Texas, and as far north as the upper regions of Minnesota.

This year's speaker, Brady Collier, focused on the theme "God's path for you." He shared his life experiences as a testimony of following God's path in active service for the Lord whether on the foreign field or in the US. Brady talked about his time as a missionary in Honduras, as well as starting a discipleship program for young people (GalileeProgram.com), relaunching the Discipleship Intern Training Program (TheDITP.com), serving in his local assembly, working a secular job, discipling other men, and maintaining a healthy family life. In his sessions, Brady discussed God's path for every believer in the following areas: salvation, marriage or singleness, work, the local church, discipleship, and personal intimacy with Christ.

Brady's messages were complemented by breakout sessions on subjects including "God's Heart for the Unreached" (led by Dan Ball from Haywood, California), "Stress, Fear, and Anxiety" (led by Seth Scott from Emmaus Bible College), "Starting the Cycle of Discipleship" (led by Micah Tuttle, *Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 30), and "Serving the Lord in College" (led by Craig Fritchey from CMML and Christina Fleming from Emmaus Bible College). These breakout sessions reinforced the theme of active participation in the Lord's work.

A unique missions panel was held Saturday evening featuring Laura Messerly (MPH Day 25), Micah Tuttle, Brady Collier, Dan Ball, and Zack and Paola Armfield. Each panel member has a desire to serve the Lord overseas, but, for various reasons, are currently in the US. They discussed how the Lord has provided cross-cultural ministry opportunities here in the US and shared ideas on how people in the US can connect and encourage missionaries overseas.

As in past years, we were encouraged by the young people's eagerness to receive the ministry. One attendee commented: "I learned a lot of practical things that I'm planning on taking back and practicing in my local assembly." A youth leader shared that she appreciated "how wonderfully practical the [teaching] was in breaking down abstract, or what can seem overwhelming, aspirations into attainable steps that our young people took to heart and are currently acting upon."

Please pray with us as we plan next year's event scheduled for February 22-24, 2018, with Nate Bramsen (MPH Day 29). ■

Craig Fritchey is CMML's security and conference coordinator.

