

Message

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Transformed Accounts of Lives Changed Across the Globe

Faith Triumphs
Over Idols in Africa

Threads of Redemption

An Operation That
Launched a Church

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ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. Supported by a network of 400 like-minded churches, we are a global family of ministries, dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission by multiplying leaders, churches, and missions movements among every people. Currently, more than 1,000 ABWE missionaries are reaching the lost in 84 countries through evangelism, discipleship, church planting, leadership development, and national partnerships.

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Editorial

FROM THE PRESIDENT



There Is No Mission Without the Church

BY DR. JOHN TAYLOR | ABWE CANADA PRESIDENT

We at ABWE firmly believe that the church, the cherished body of Christ, stands at the blazing center of God's mission. She is the beloved bride for whom Christ died, the prize of redemption, and the ambassador commissioned to proclaim the love and mercy of the cross to all the nations. If we claim to be about our Lord's mission, we must be about his church.

Because of this, we're passionate about helping local churches fulfill their role in the Great Commission. First, we're forging connections with new, missions-minded congregations seeking to send workers from Canada to the nations (Matthew 9:38); and second, we're deepening our bonds of ministry partnership with churches that already send and support gospel laborers.

Our love for the church is unwavering. We believe that God has entrusted ABWE with a unique calling to come alongside local churches in the work of the Great Commission, stewarding our gifts and resources to nurture the next generation of missionaries. We firmly believe that with these gifts comes the weighty responsibility to serve the bride of Christ with excellence.

As you explore the many stories of eternal impact on the mission field in this digital exclusive edition of Message Magazine, we pray that you see the common thread that unites each narrative and update: that through them all, Christ is transforming lives and fulfilling his promise to build his church (Matthew 16:18), and that we have the high and holy privilege of partnering with him in this glorious work.

Pray for us—that we would serve the church well and be a vital blessing to God's people as we raise up a vibrant generation of faithful missionaries.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE MINISTRIES AND MISSIONARIES OF ABWE CANADA



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A life-threatening illness leads to a transformed community in northern Togo.



We've Rebranded!

Notice our new look? Our team felt it was time to move away from the rigid, blocky lettering in our previous masthead and pursue a design that was cleaner, easier to read, more open, and better evoked ABWE's visual identity. We hope you enjoy the update!

ON THE COVER

A local church gathers for services in Mango, Togo.

Photo: Hannah Strayer

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Connections

Meet Ilyas, the Interstate Evangelist

BY: ALEX KOCMAN

LOCATION: UNITED STATES

Ilyas had the heart of an evangelist—despite the challenges posed by living in a refugee camp in the Middle East.

Having fled from the Taliban in 2021 following their resurgence to power in Afghanistan, Ilyas was well aware of the dangers associated with publicly following and proclaiming Christ. But, undaunted in his faith, he continued sharing the gospel among fellow displaced Afghans.

One of those Afghans, a Muslim, heard the gospel from Ilyas and received Christ. Within a year, other members of his family responded to Christ as well, even receiving baptism.

When ABWE launched the Afghan Initiative to resettle Afghan believers in the US and mobilize them to reach fellow refugees in North America, Ilyas joined—and was paired with Derek, an ABWE Live Global worker, to help him adapt to his new environment in the Pacific Northwest.

But while Ilyas was growing in Christ, the same could not be said for a community of Afghan refugees in a different state more than 600 miles away.

“Some of [the other refugees] were already Christians . . . a lot more were interested in Christ, but they didn’t actually know Christ yet,” Derek explained.

In that state, the language barrier posed a significant challenge for the refugees, who could not understand English. A local ministry leader knew he needed help reaching these Afghan expatriates—so he called Ilyas.

“He reached out [to Ilyas] and he was like, ‘Hey, would it be possible for you to come down sometime and just maybe help . . . share the gospel with them?’” Derek recounted.

Since then, Ilyas has made at least three interstate trips to engage in evangelism and disciple making and to baptize new believers.



Photo: Unsplash

“Refugees who continue to share the gospel in America find themselves in a country many times larger than their own, with hundreds of thousands of their native speakers with whom they can share the gospel,” Derek explained. “To cover the same amount of ground in Asia would require traveling through many countries and requiring passports and multiple visas. But these brothers and sisters in Christ can travel hundreds of miles to meet with those hungering for truth without needing a passport or visa.”

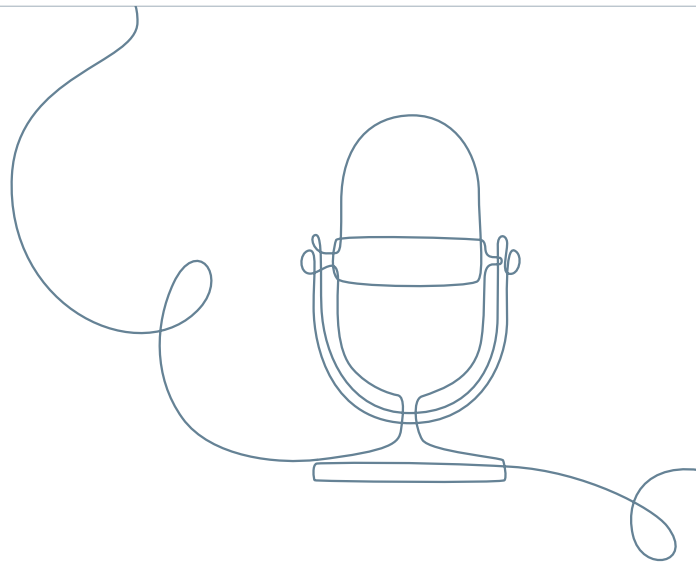
“We’re going to share the gospel with Muslims from all over Central Asia,” Derek declared. □

Names have been changed to preserve the security of those involved in the Afghan Initiative.

Faith Triumphs Over Idols in Africa

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS

LOCATION: TOGO



In the West African nation of Togo, a 23-year-old man named Ganiou faced a sudden test of faith one evening when his mother became unable to breathe. Witnessing her suffering, his entire village urged him to perform voodoo rituals for her healing.

Ganiou, a Christian, knew he could not turn to pagan magic. His faith had been strengthened by listening to Hope Radio, ABWE’s ministry broadcasting gospel truth to unreached people groups and remote villages in northern Togo, where low rates of literacy among oral cultures create obstacles to spreading biblical truth.

Remembering the teaching he had received, he boldly replied that he would not turn to voodoo because the Bible forbids idol worship.

Facing repercussions from the village, Ganiou stayed awake all night, praying and fasting. When the villagers returned in the morning, they found his mother awake and doing well. The Lord had restored her health.

“He said that he wouldn’t have had the courage without Hope Radio speaking truth into his life over this last year,” reported ABWE missionary Adam



Drake. “Praise the Lord he stayed strong and testified. Keep praying as walls to the gospel are crumbling down.”

Now, Adam is discipling Ganiou, whose village is an hour away, weekly by phone and in person when Ganiou visits the city every three months. They regularly discuss Scripture and share personal reflections, communicating through the tribal language.

Ganiou’s faith continues to grow in leaps and bounds. He encourages other believers to take up the challenge to stand against the idols in their own lives and families, so that, through their witness, many will turn from lifeless objects to living hope in Christ.

Photos this page: ABWE missionary

Threads of Redemption

LOCATION: TANZANIA
BY: KATELYN HAWKINS

Malaika arrived as the most troubled student at Sifa Collective.

With relationships battered by years of trauma and broken trust, her family members had registered her for the program. “We hate her,” they declared to the staff. “See what you can do with her.”

The feeling was mutual. Once enrolled in the microenterprise program, Malaika continued in the same pattern of conflict, anger, and shame that had characterized her behavior in her family and community.

The national staff and missionaries worked patiently with Malaika throughout the year-long course. Founded to disciple and empower vulnerable young Tanzanian women, the program teaches sewing and entrepreneurial skills, along with women’s health, life skills, and biblical training. Each lady who graduates from the program leaves with her own treadle sewing machine, allowing her to start a local business and provide for her family, even in villages without access to electricity.

“They hear the gospel every single day,” shared Sifa Collective founder and ABWE missionary Stephanie Boon.

As Malaika heard the good news and witnessed the love of Christ through the Tanzanian staff each day, God began softening her heart. In the last month of the 2023 program, she approached the Tanzanian manager, announcing, “I’m ready to repent. I want to confess to you and to God everything that I’ve done.”

Burdened by the weight of her wrongdoing, however, she continued: “But I don’t expect God or anyone else to grant me forgiveness.”

The manager assured her that God delights in granting forgiveness, and Malaika placed her faith in Christ. Immediately, she resolved to seek her family’s forgiveness. She set up a meeting with them to pursue reconciliation.

“Her coming to know Jesus before she leaves and goes off on her own is really exciting, especially for someone who had their life filled with so much conflict and hatred and shame,” said Stephanie. “The gift of repentance and brokenness is such a beautiful picture of Christ’s work through the gospel.”



Photos this page: Stephanie Boon

Top: Students learn to hand-make clothing.

Bottom: Stephanie Boon joins students for a photo.

Editor’s Note: Malaika’s name has been changed for privacy.



Photo: Stephanie Boon

Rehema (right), a Sifa Collective teacher, helps a student with a project.

Legacies

OF FAITHFULNESS

Jim and Jan Ruff

For half a century, this missionary couple has demonstrated exemplary devotion to the work of the Lord in Japan and abroad.



From the beginning of their missionary career, Jim and Jan Ruff committed to following the Lord's leading.

Over the last 49 years, they have faithfully followed that sovereign guidance through each stage of a surprising journey. Starting as ABWE missionaries in Japan, they established a Bible school and planted two churches with colleagues, in addition to other ministries. Between their third and fourth terms in Japan, the Ruffs served in the Chicago suburbs for four years, planting a church with the Wood family.

When health issues prompted their unexpected return from Japan to the US after 20 years of ministry, God provided a unique opportunity for Jim to help launch the training department of ABWE. Even after their official retirement in 2013, Jim continues to teach the next generation of missionaries, preparing them to follow their Lord into the harvest.

Q: How did your journey to missions begin?

Jan: I became burdened for missions while studying religious education at Baptist Bible Seminary in New York, pursuing my lifelong dream of becoming a teacher. At first, I resisted the idea of serving as a missionary, feeling unqualified and concerned about serving as a single. I eventually surren-

dered to God's will and was appointed as an ABWE missionary to Japan in 1966.

Jim: Meanwhile, I was serving in the Army Security Agency, and, in 1967, deployed to a small base in southern Japan. Although I enjoyed Japan, my mind was set on a career in the sciences and on my engagement to a woman back home. However, while in Japan, I received a "dear Jim" letter ending the relationship. In my disappointment, I accepted an invitation to attend a Bible study in the base chapel, where I heard the gospel for the first time—despite years in the Lutheran church and even serving as the choir director for an army church. Over the next several weeks, the Lord overcame my staunch belief in evolution and flooded my heart with the realization that I needed Christ as Savior. I trusted Christ at the home of an evangelistic friend in November 1967.

As I was discipled, I came to three realizations: first, I needed to follow the Lord in baptism; second, I was surrounded by millions of people in Japan who did not know Christ; and third, I knew that God intended for me to return to Japan as a missionary.



Jim Ruff (left) conducts the first baptism service at the church plant in Kokubuhayato, Japan.

Photos this page: Jim and Jan Ruff

When I received my next assignment, the ABWE missionary who had baptized me in Japan gave me the phone numbers for two churches near my new base in Baltimore. The church that I called was Jan's home church.

We met, fell in love, and were secretly engaged before Jan left for Japan and Jim finished his term of service in San Francisco. We married in 1969 and moved to Japan as ABWE missionaries with our three children in 1977.

Q: What is a highlight from your ministry in Japan?

One highlight was the way the Lord burdened us and our teammates, the Holritz family, separately and simultaneously to begin a church plant in Kokubu, Japan. Finding that we shared an interest in reaching the people in Kokubu, we prayerfully agreed that the Holritz family would move near Kokubu, and we would commute from our Bible school ministry to work with them. We prayed together at a park overlooking the community, asking the Lord to raise up a church in that area. With our teammates, we started what became Hayato Baptist Church, which just celebrated its 40th anniversary.

Of course, the greatest highlights appeared through watching God bring the light of salvation to so many who had known only darkness, and then seeing these new believers walk in truth. This is joy!

Q: How did God use your transition back to ministry in the US in your lives and in the lives of others?

Two major lessons came out of that transition. First, we learned that God can and will redirect his servants both locationally and chronologically according to his will. Second, we must always be willing to step out and do what God wants done, and then he will provide the information for the next step. Our invitation to help start the training division of ABWE did not come until we had,



with broken hearts, informed our team and the believers in Japan that we had to leave.

Q: From your 25 years of experience in training new missionaries, what advice would you give someone considering cross-cultural ministry?

You must surrender completely to the will of the Lord. Even a short-term, exploratory ministry should not be attempted if not motivated by love for the Lord and a desire to serve others wherever the Lord directs.

If married, both husband and wife must completely agree in their decision to serve the Lord together as missionaries.

Make sure to study and prepare in every way possible to fit in as a guest in your host culture.

Devote yourself to learning the language.

Recognize that transition stress (culture shock) is a real experience that must be endured prayerfully and with help. Prepare your sending church and supporters to prayerfully assist with this during your first months on the field.

Commit that, by God's grace, you will be a blessing to all you work with.

Ask the Lord to help you to meet and fall in love with the people you serve as quickly as possible—even if that means limiting your communication with the folks back home. □

Believers from the ABWE churches in the South Kyushu area gather for the first time at the Praise 2004 event.



Hear more of Jim and Jan's story of faithful service in Japan and in the US. Tune in to the Cloud of Witnesses podcast to be inspired, challenged, and encouraged through the lives of remarkable individuals who have played significant roles in advancing Christ's kingdom throughout the century-long history of ABWE.

Listen now at cloudofwitnessespodcast.com.





Nakime, a Togolese pastor, stands in front of his congregation's newly dedicated church building.

An Operation That Launched a Church

The early morning rain cut through dusty air, splashing against the parched, red earth. As channels of water flowed off National Route N1, the shallow streambed below filled waist-deep—one of countless answered prayers witnessed by the 14 new believers scheduled to be baptized that day.

The skies had cleared by the time the church members set out in joyful procession from their village near Mango, in northern Togo, to the baptism site. With few water sources available in their arid climate, they praised God for providing the downpour they needed to observe this church ordinance—the very day they needed it. Nakime, the Togolese pastor of the growing congregation, and ABWE missionary Ethan Molsee scrambled down the embankment to the muddy stream and immersed each man and woman who had recently professed faith in Christ.

“As I joined my Togolese brothers in the murky water . . . I could not help but think back over the years that this group has been meeting,” recalled Ethan, “and I marveled at how God has protected and grown this group.”

From Death to Life

Ten years earlier, Aboudou lay in the village dying. A Togolese farmer still in his 30s, he was accustomed to spending his days laboring in his fields during the rainy season to provide sufficient crops for his family to survive the dry season. When illness struck in 2013, his tall frame grew increasingly gaunt, and pain prevented him from leaving his mud-brick hut.

“As I joined my Togolese brothers in the murky water . . . I could not help but think back over the years that this group has been meeting, and I marveled at how God has protected and grown this group.”

Ethan Molsee

Photo: Ethan Molsee



Church members celebrate while walking from their village to the baptism site.

His family transported him to a hospital two hours south in Kara, but surgery proved unsuccessful. In 2014, he underwent a second surgery at the small government hospital in Mango, but it too was unable to heal him or relieve his pain.

Aboudu's last hope arrived in 2015 with the opening of ABWE's Hospital of Hope in Mango. ABWE's then-medical director and surgeon, Todd DeKryger, discovered what the other hospitals had missed: Aboudu suffered from Typhoid Fever, which had perforated his intestines.

"By the time he came to our hospital, he was in bad shape," recounted Ethan.

Todd provided a series of life-saving surgeries, and Aboudu began to recover. Over the next six months, Aboudu remained at Hospital of Hope, first in the men's ward and then in the *cuisine*, long-term hospital housing for patients who need regular checkups but no longer require full-time care. Through daily interactions with the medical staff, he regularly heard the gospel. Noticing his interest, one of the chaplains, Dieudonné, showed him the Jesus Film and began meeting with him for Bible study. As God restored Aboudu's body to health, he breathed new life into his soul, and Aboudu trusted in Christ as Lord and Savior.

Aboudu immediately became burdened to share the gospel with others in his village, members of the minimally

reached Gangam people group. Knowing that the village had no Gangam-speaking church, he arranged for Dieudonné and several ABWE missionaries to begin a Bible study at his family's compound of huts. Upon his release from hospitalization, a few of Aboudu's family members and neighbors gathered to hear Dieudonné teach from "The Story of Hope," ABWE's evangelistic Bible study resource.

"That began a weekly Wednesday Bible study that continued for several years and grew in numbers," said Ethan.

The Gospel Takes Root

The leaders of the small Bible study immediately confronted challenges. Despite the village's accessible location alongside National Route N1, the one paved road extending through Togo from south to north, the Gangam people have remained isolated from the gospel due to language. Only the New Testament has been translated into Gangam, and high rates of illiteracy keep it beyond reach.

In addition, many Gangam devoutly practice animism and ancestor worship, with increasing numbers converting to Islam.

"Those early days as we met at Aboudu's place, it was common to drive our motos on the path past the neighbor's outdoor mud pedestals that worked as an altar or shrine and see a freshly

Aboudu immediately became burdened to share the gospel with others in his village, members of the minimally reached Gangam people group.

As interest in the gospel increased, the Bible study grew into a church plant.



Photo: Ethan Moisee

Church founders Dieudonné (left),
Ethan Molsee (third from left), and
Nakime (right) baptize new believers.



Photo: Ethan Molsee



As the Bible study grew, they moved from Aboudu's house to a thatch-roofed shelter constructed for their meetings.

killed chicken on the pedestal as a sacrifice to the gods," Ethan explained.

Dieudonné, with assistance from ABWE missionaries Ethan Molisee and Alain Niles and previous teammates Patrick Vincent and Josh Farver, strategized a unique approach for the Bible study. Dieudonné would teach in French, the national language, and they would recruit a local village leader to translate the lessons into Gangam. This arrangement allowed Dieudonné to use resources available in French and ensured that the missionaries would understand the meetings. More importantly, it provided an opportunity to train a local leader in preparation for establishing a self-supporting, Gangam-led church in the village.

One young man, Nakime, was perfectly positioned to serve as translator.

Nakime held a respected role in the village, tasked with registering cotton harvests. When the cotton trucks arrived to collect the season's harvest, he weighed each person's crops and calculated how much of the profit each should receive based on the weight produced.

Unlike many of his fellow villagers, Nakime had attended school, where he had learned French and listened to a pastor teach biblical truth—tilling the soil in which the gospel could take root in his heart. When the Bible study began at Aboudu's compound, he decided to attend based on his friendship with Aboudu's relative who had stayed with him in the hospital.

In late 2015, after translating the Bible lessons into Gangam for a couple of months, Nakime received Christ as Savior. With



Aboudu (kneeling in front) and Nakime (fifth from left) hold radios with SD cards containing an audio recording of the New Testament.

a growing hunger for the word, he dedicated himself to assisting Dieudonné through translation.

"This was a wonderful system since Dieudonné also spoke Gangam and would frequently stop Nakime to correct an idea or make something clearer," said Ethan. "It helped Nakime grow in his ability to lead and allowed him to be a part of the teaching."

To provide formal training, the missionaries enrolled Nakime in a Bible institute in Kara, where he traveled regularly for course modules.

Crisis struck the small group, however, when Aboudu, the group's founder and first believer, entered his eternal home. His death came shortly after Todd DeKryger, who had once saved his life, completed his faithful service on earth and passed away in February 2016 of Lassa Fever.

“Even through his death, Todd left a lasting spiritual impact on those he had ministered to. Seeing the ABWE team mourn their loss biblically, the new Togolese Christians realized that God had not abandoned them in their time of human need,” Andy Kirby, executive director for ABWE GO in Africa, shared. “I think of 2 Corinthians 1:4, which gives us purpose in our trials to build up and comfort others in their trials to help them continue in the way. What Todd started years ago did not end with either his passing or the passing of Aboudu. Death is just the final step in being with our Lord.”

The remaining Bible study members decided to continue meeting—and when the missionaries gave them a radio and SD card containing an audio recording of the New Testament in Gangam, they began gathering on their own several evenings a week to listen to the Bible.

“In fact, they wore out the first radio and had to be given another one,” Ethan recalled. “While most in the group could not read or write in any language, they knew the Bible and the stories of the Bible from all their listening.”

For additional outreach, the missionaries and Togolese believers showed the Jesus Film in the village, projecting it onto the wall of the elementary school. National ministry partners have also begun teaching Gangam people to read and write in their own language, enabling them to read the Bible.

‘In Awe of What God Is Doing’

With the partnership between Togolese leaders and American missionaries, the Bible study has flourished, developing into a church under Nakime’s leadership as pastor. Nakime also now serves part-time as a chaplain at Hospital of Hope.

“Our role was really to support and mentor when needed,” Ethan explained. “It is our desire to help enable nationals to reach nationals, so unless absolutely necessary, we want to coach and cheer on rather than lead.”

When the nascent congregation assembled at the roadside stream in July 2023, the baptism marked the beginning of a weekend-long celebration to dedicate their first church building. On Saturday evening, following the baptisms, more than 200 people from the village assembled to watch a gospel film projected onto the side of the new church building. The building was dedicated on Sunday, and during the service, numerous Gangam believers stood to testify to God’s work in their lives for salvation, which for many had occurred through the ministry of Hospital of Hope.

“Our hospital, or any institution, is just the starting point for ministry. We can minister through our work and skills as well as through evangelism and discipleship within the hospital walls, and that platform gives us a jumping-off point to also be heard and respected in the broader community. Whether it be in the prisons or the offices

“We don’t want Jesus to be mistaken as merely a North American god but as the way, the truth, and the life for all peoples.”

Andy Kirby

Nakime teaches the Bible study at the group’s third location, a mud-brick structure they soon outgrew.

of the chief, mayor, or prefect, our missionaries are listened to because the people know that they are there to bring help,” Andy Kirby explained.

“Our goal in northern Togo is to raise up strong nationals, discipling them to be the face of the gospel to their brothers and sisters in their villages,” he continued. “We don’t want Jesus to be mistaken as merely a North American god but as the way, the truth, and the life for all peoples.”

Ethan echoed Andy’s joy. “A group that started when a young man wanted to share his new faith with his family has grown so that, on this Sunday, it included men, women, and children that numbered more than 100,” he conveyed.

“Knowing this history, having participated in weekly Bible studies in this town, and watching Nakime become a humble leader of this group left me in awe of what God is doing.” □

Photo: Hannah Strayer



Photo to the right:

Hospital of Hope Chaplain Dieudonné shares the gospel with recovering patients and their families.

Photo below:

The congregation gathers in their newly constructed church building.

Photo: Ethan Malisee





A Church Built on Prayer

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS

PHOTOGRAPHER: ROLAND PUGH

LOCATION: NICARAGUA

One church plant in Nicaragua is so dedicated to prayer that even its name reflects a desire to enter God's presence. The verse referenced in its name, *Iglesia Bautista Jeremias 33:3*—Jeremiah 33:3 Baptist Church—reminds the growing congregation of God's command to “Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.”

The church leadership demonstrates the integral nature of prayer. Every Sunday, national Pastor José Guadamuz and his wife Mercedes Lezama Ruiz pause to ask God's guidance and blessing on their worship services, committing their ministry to his glory.

They have established the church in the town of Tisma to reach their community. Although Tisma is located in a historically Catholic region of Nicaragua, the local population practices

much religious syncretism and occasionally even witchcraft, including what they call “white magic.” Although Nicaraguans frequently use Christian phrases in greetings or advertisements, the Nicaraguan church has historically struggled to establish deep roots in its culture or make lasting impact on individual families.

“From my experience of life and ministry here in Nicaragua over the past 10 years, two things stand out when I think of spiritual need and the church,” shared ABWE Nicaragua Team Leader Jason Lang. “First, extremely broken family units, and second, confusion about spiritual things and true, biblical doctrine.”

Recognizing these needs, ABWE missionaries founded Centro ABEM (the acronym for ABWE in Spanish), a 100-acre multi-purpose ministry center including a seminary building, dining hall, athletic facilities, and cabins to host events for local churches. They also established the Institute for Church Planting, which has trained over 100 Nicaraguan church planters—including Pastor José. Centro ABEM celebrated its 20th anniversary in October 2023.

Let's join them in prayer that, over the next 20 years, many additional healthy churches will be established throughout Nicaragua. □

Katelyn Hawkins is a communications specialist with ABWE. She serves as managing editor for Message Magazine and the ABWE blog. She holds an M.A. in Social Sciences and B.A. in Communications, and has lived in locations across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.



Roland Pugh became a freelance photographer after a 10-year career in finance. He graduated from NYU's School of Professional Studies in 2014 with a MA in Graphic Communications Management and, as a visual storyteller, has traveled on assignment throughout the world. Roland is currently working as a Multimedia Producer for the largest municipal health care system in the US.

Do These 5 Things to Show Missionaries You Care

BY: ALEX KOCCMAN

The New Testament makes clear that we should have an attitude of loving support towards missionaries: “send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God . . . support people like these” (3 John 6, 8). We know that we are to show sincere care for sent-out gospel workers. But how? Consider these five ways in which we can demonstrate our love for gospel laborers.

1



Pray regularly and intentionally.

Samuel Zwemer wisely remarked, “The history of missions is the history of answered prayer.” We know that prayer is foundational to the missionary task. Some would even go so far as to say it is the missionary task.

The missionaries you and your church support do not only need financial support; they need to know that the rope is being held for them via the faithful intercession of the body of Christ back home on its knees. Never underestimate the impact you can make by lifting up your missionary friends before the throne of grace.

2



Send tangible expressions of love.

Of course, we must love in deed, not merely in word (1 John 3:18). This begins with financial generosity towards gospel workers, but it need not be limited to monetary support.

Missionaries are people too. Tangibly expressing love towards them is no different than it would be for any of our other friends or neighbors. What gifts or goodies do you enjoy? Consider sending them along in a care package. Does the missionary family have children? Send care packages specific to those kids, or, if customs fees are a barrier, send funds earmarked for the children to pick out something they would enjoy—children and parents alike will be absolutely delighted that you’re thinking about each member of the family. If you’re wondering what to pack, or unsure if sending a package could result in high customs fees on delivery, simply reach out to the missionary and ask—they won’t be offended.



3



Show hospitality.

Whether the missionary you know is visiting for a long weekend or is in the midst of an extended furlough, the same rules of Christian love apply. Missionaries want to feel as though they are a part of your church's community, since in a real sense, they still are.

Inviting visiting missionaries into your pulpit or to your potluck are great steps towards giving these dear ones a warm reception. Yet let us not neglect the oft-overlooked virtue of hospitality. Bring them into your home. Give them a setting in which to relax, to let down their hair, and to get out of public presentation mode. They'll be glad you did.

4

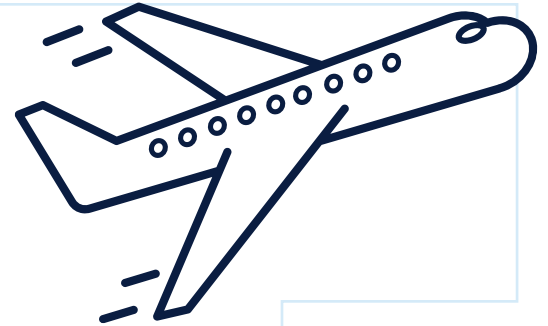


Don't treat them as superhuman.

If avoidance is at one extreme of faulty ways of treating visiting missionaries, infatuation is at the other. Missionaries do not want to be kept at arms' length, and they don't want you to think that they see you as just another potential donor or recruit. Yet neither do they want to be put on a pedestal or treated as though they belong to an elite class of super-Christians.

To illustrate this point, in conversation with missionaries, phrases like, "I could never do what you do" are not always warmly received. What is intended as a compliment to the missionary's dedication is often perceived as a way of absolving the person making the comment from their own next steps of Great Commission obedience—given the fact that the missionary, being an ordinary person, took a step of faith, and therefore others can too. Missionaries are not so holy that they levitate. They're normal people too (whatever that means), and loving them means not treating them as alien.

5



Visit them.

Only so much love can be shown from afar. Sometimes, in order to show love, nothing but the simple ministry of physical presence can suffice (see 3 John 13-14). If your family and church have the means and opportunity, a short-term trip to encourage and relieve your supported missionaries may be the perfect way to visibly demonstrate love.

Though many of us want to be "useful" on a missions trip—and for that reason, many short-term trips are built around performing manual tasks of debatable necessity (like repainting the same wall each time a short-term team visits)—perhaps the most useful thing we can do is provide a ministry of edification to the missionaries already on the ground.

Brothers and sisters: we have been called to love those who have gone out among the nations for the sake of Christ. Let us do so in a manner that is godly, loving, and tangible. □



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**2024
FEATURED
PROJECT**

OPEN TORONTO INITIATIVE

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There are an estimated 7,391 unreached people groups in the world, representing over 3 billion people. Many of these live in hard-to-reach places where it is difficult for missionaries to enter.

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