

Message

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**The 2023-2024
New Missionary
Class**

**The Church in a
Floating Village**

**An Unexpected
Journey to the
Unreached**

**Being the Hands
and Feet of
Christ in Brazil's
Flood-Stricken
Communities**

To the

Ends of the **Earth**



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WHO IS ABWE?

ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. Supported by a network of 450 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, around 1,000 ABWE missionaries are reaching the lost in 89 countries through evangelism, discipleship, church planting, leadership development, and national partnerships.

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Editorial

FROM THE PRESIDENT



That Your Way May Be Known on Earth

BY: DR. JOHN TAYLOR
ABWE CANADA PRESIDENT

Jacky and I recently attended an evangelistic concert in an Arabic church led by Z., our newest ABWE Canada missionary. While we could not understand the words, it was a joy to be surrounded by hundreds of Arabic people exalting the name of Jesus.

What is happening today is an answer to the psalmist's prayer in Psalm 67: "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations" (vv. 1-2). We often pray for God's blessing, for his provision, and for his peace, especially in uncertain times. But why do we pray for these things? The ultimate goal of all we ask from God is not merely our own comfort or safety—it's that his glory would be made known among the nations.

I know many of us feel a burden for our country and the world right now. We look at the headlines, the cultural unrest, the tensions between nations, and the grief we experience can be overwhelming. But as believers, our hope is grounded in something far greater than circumstances: our confidence that God's way will be made known, his name will be glorified, and the knowledge of Christ will reach the farthest corners of the earth. When we remember that, our prayers take on new purpose and power.

Our ABWE teammates around the globe are zealous for this divine cause. We believe we exist specifically to serve the local church in order to grow the global church. Our work is not merely about sending missionaries or funding projects; it's about partnering with you, the body of Christ, to see the gospel reach every tribe, tongue, and nation. It's a humbling and awe-inspiring calling, but we know that Christ himself is building his church. That is why we serve. He will bless us, he will make his face to shine upon us, and he will use us so that his ways may be known—across every land and people.

This is why I'm especially excited to introduce this new missionary issue of Message. We are celebrating 76 new workers, including Z. & V. from Canada, who have answered the call to serve Christ in some of the 89 countries where ABWE has an active ministry presence. These new missionaries, alongside the churches who send them, are part of the great work our God is doing to make his name known among the nations.

As you read this issue of Message, be encouraged by the stories of how God is at working relentlessly for his glory, even in a chaotic world, through his servants who answer the call to go. And by his grace, we are privileged to participate in our God's mission. ■

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A *mamo*, or animist priest, from the Kogi people group of Colombia looks on as a gospel worker ventures into new territory.

Cover Design: David Brandt
Photos: Getty Images

Did You Know?

Message Magazine received the 2024 Award of Excellence from the Evangelical Press Association in the missions print category.



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ERIN WAWRO

ABWE Sports Event
Evangelism Team, France

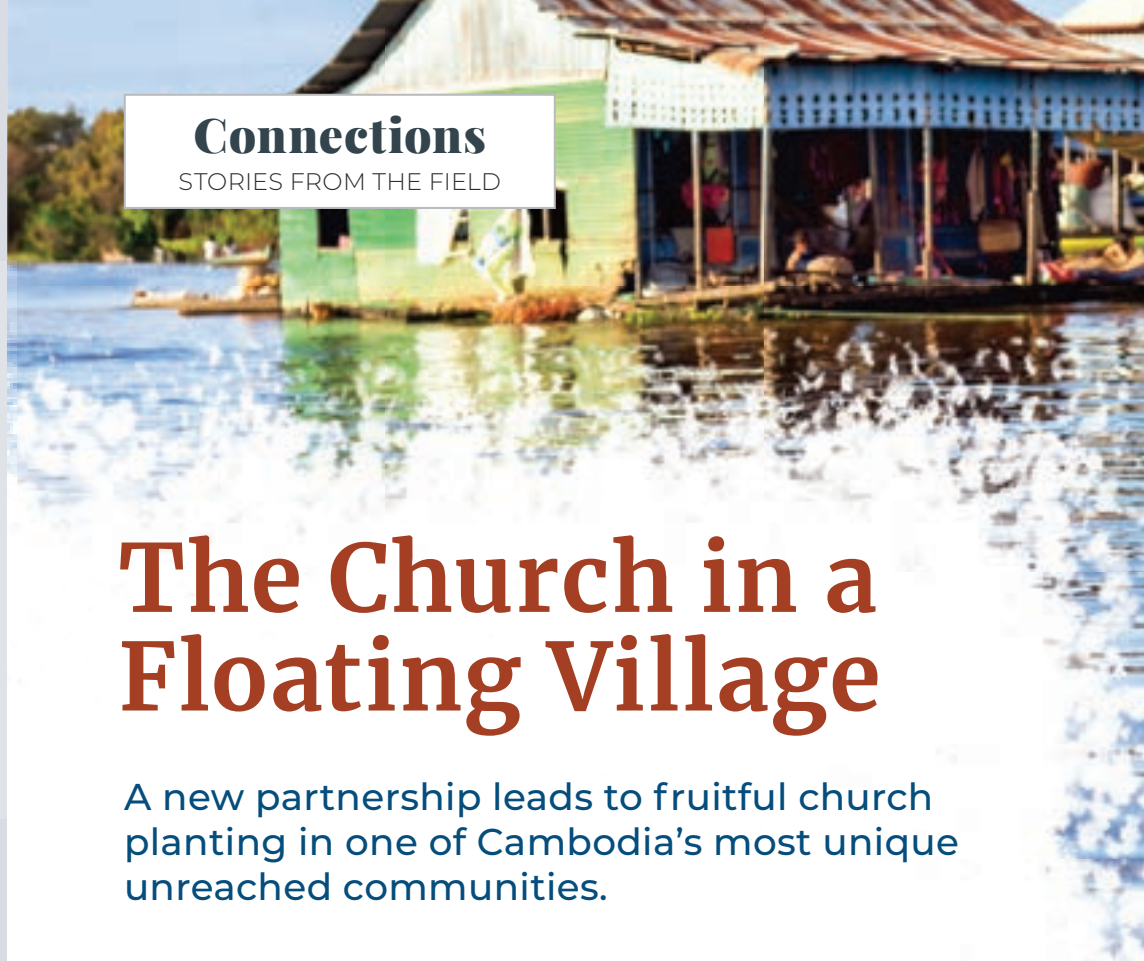
“Our team of 64 people, led by ABWE missionaries Matt and Barb Douglas, converged in Paris to share the gospel at the Olympic Games. We were blessed to work with a local French church to hand out around 63,000 gospel booklets in six different languages to people from 134 different countries. So far, Matt has received six emails from people who read the booklets and put their faith in Christ. He is currently connecting them with local churches in their nations for discipleship.”



PEDRO & STEPHANIE GARCIA

Chile

“After months of attending our church and years of observing the testimonies of friends and family members, a young woman approached Stephanie and said, ‘I’ve done very bad things. Wouldn’t it spite God to say I want to follow him, knowing that I will fail again?’ As Stephanie shared about God’s forgiveness and the work of the Holy Spirit, the woman confessed her sins to God and trusted Christ for salvation. What an encouragement and reminder to remain faithful in prayer and witness for loved ones who need Christ!”



Connections
STORIES FROM THE FIELD

The Church in a Floating Village

A new partnership leads to fruitful church planting in one of Cambodia’s most unique unreached communities.

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS
LOCATION: CAMBODIA

A thunderous explosion cut through the night, followed instantly by glittering starbursts of color crackling down to the lake surface below. Trevor Amack touched the lighter to the fuse of another firework, questioning the decisions that had led him to conclude a village outreach celebration from a narrow wooden canoe assailed by a cascade of sparks.

Trevor, his wife Hayley, and their family had traveled to the Tonlé Sap, Southeast Asia’s largest lake, to disciple church leaders and conduct an evangelistic event with a local pastor, Rottha, in his community of floating homes.

They had met Rottha one year prior, when he attended their Train the Trainer program in a nearby city. Discouraged and on the precipice of leaving the ministry, Rottha had searched in vain for biblically grounded training and partnership before his wife learned

of the event and implored him to attend. Begrudgingly, he agreed—and was so impressed with the training on personal Bible study, sermon preparation, and interactive teaching that he jumped in the car with Trevor’s ministry partner, Sitha, and barraged him with questions throughout the six-hour trip back to the Amacks’ home in Phnom Penh. Trevor and Sitha began discipling Rottha, traveling frequently between their cities, and a close friendship formed.

One month later, Rottha invited Trevor and Sitha to lead his congregation through “The Story of Hope,” ABWE’s chronological Bible teaching resource. Located in a floating village, Rottha’s church of 100 members serves one of the most unreached people groups in Cambodia.

In the 1970s, the brutal Khmer Rouge regime devastated the ethnic groups of this region, executing and



A resident of a floating village rows past houseboats in Cambodia.



G. & M. C. Caribbean

“Recently, a few members of the ABWE Open Initiative team traveled to the Caribbean to present the Heart, Mind, and Soul seminar—an interactive course on building grace and truth relationships with Muslims. The training team prayed for 30 participants and were amazed when 101 local church leaders attended the two seminars, including many Muslim background believers. Additionally, 28 church leaders responded by committing to cooperatively develop church plants among unreached people groups living in the Caribbean.”



Photo: Getty Images

ELIJAH & ELIZABETH NORRIS Ecuador

“As part of our ministry to first responders, we hosted a pancake supper in our home for local firefighters. They expressed appreciation that we would demonstrate love to them in this way. The next Sunday, six of the firefighters showed up at our Bible study, saying that they were willing to discuss Scripture with us in the relaxed environment of our house. Pray with us that they would see their need for Christ and find fellowship with local believers.”

deporting villagers and stripping those who remained of their citizenship and the ability to attend school or purchase property—a condition that remains to the present. Adapting to this reality, the survivors constructed new villages on the lake, where generations have lived in wooden homes floating on bamboo rafts or plastic barrels. Rottha, burdened for this often-neglected population, began his church on a houseboat.

Trevor and Hayley visited the floating village three times over the next year, undergoing the arduous journey in a narrow longboat tossed in monsoon-driven waves. Their teaching quickly bore fruit not only in the young congregation but also in its pastor.

“Rottha shared how God had used ‘The Story of Hope’ and the Train the Trainer events to rekindle his love for ministry,” conveyed Trevor.

With renewed zeal, Rottha and the Amacks planned a holiday evangelistic event culminating with fireworks. Over 25 individuals professed faith in Christ during the gospel message. Later that day, Trevor taught on baptism, after which he and Rottha baptized 30 believing church members.

“The church has grown so much that they have made plans to plant two churches in neighboring floating villages,” said Hayley. “Many families are traveling over an hour by boat to reach the church.”

To lay the foundation for these church plants, the Amacks and Rottha are training future leaders and providing audio Bibles and resources to disciple new believers, many of whom are illiterate.

“God is at work,” shared Trevor. “His Word is spreading, and he is using nationals to reach other nationals. Praise the Lord!” ■



Symbols of Salvation

A chance discovery prepares a desperate young man to find hope in Christ.

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS
LOCATION: NICARAGUA

A glimmer of pale green light emanating from the dirt road caught Moises' eye as he walked home under darkening skies. Stooping down, he dusted off a silicone bracelet covered with a series of strange, glow-in-the-dark symbols.

"I thought it looked cool, so I put it on," he later told his friends.

Impressed by the image of a cross on the bracelet—a common symbol in Catholic-majority Nicaragua—Moises began wearing it daily. Its unique design drew the admiration of other young men, known for being the rougher sort, in his neighbourhood.

Moises, in his late 20s, had already lost both parents. With few personal resources, he had turned to alcoholism to battle a rising impression that life was empty and meaningless.

A glint of hope appeared eight months later, in spring 2024, when Moises heard about a one-day medical clinic happening in his town. ABWE missionary Traci Warner, working alongside national partners and a short-term medical team from US partnering church Chapel Pointe, had traveled to the remote, mountainous region to assist local church planters with evangelism through mobile medical care.

Moises left immediately for the clinic and requested a consultation for his ongoing health concerns. As he waited for the pharmacists to prepare his medications, a team of counselors initiated a conversation with him. One of the pastors noticed his bracelet and, recognizing the symbols, inquired if Moises knew what they meant.

"I have no idea," he replied. The pastor then pointed sequentially to each symbol, using it to illustrate the gospel message.

The hope of the gospel resonated with the longings in Moises' life.

"After sharing that his own life demonstrated the deadness he felt, Moises realized that he also wanted to rise from that grave and experience new life in Christ," recalled Traci.

Nurse technician Gina Boomsma, from Chapel Pointe, and translator Cristoffer Gonzolez pray with Moises during patient intake at the clinic.

Moises placed his faith in Christ that day. After praying with the counselors, he told them, "You know, I have friends who thought this bracelet was cool and kept asking if they could have it. I kept saying 'no, no.' They kept pestering until I finally just told them it was a gift so they would stop asking me for it."

"Now he knows that it was a gift," summarized Andrew C., an ABWE executive director. "It was a gift from the One who was calling him."

In addition to the clinic offered in Moises' town, the medical team visited two other communities and treated over 550 patients, of whom 10 made professions of faith. These new believers, like Moises, are currently being disciplined in church plants in their towns.

"The whole story makes me think of the Ethiopian eunuch's response to Philip's question in Acts 8:31: 'How can I [understand], unless someone guides me?'" said Traci. "Will you pray for our Nicaraguan pastors and these new believers as they continue learning to understand this new life they're walking?" ■

Being the Hands and Feet of Christ in Brazil's Flood-Stricken Communities

God opens hearts as ABWE missionaries tirelessly offer aid amid insurmountable devastation.

BY: MICHAEL FOUST
LOCATION: BRAZIL



Photo: Randy Richner

Brazilians living in a region devastated by a once-a-century flood are more open to the gospel than in recent memory, say ABWE missionaries on the ground.

In May 2024, rainfall eight times the monthly average fell on cities and towns in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, leading to widespread flooding that submerged rooftops, destroyed houses, and displaced an estimated 600,000 residents. It also sparked a humanitarian crisis that continues to unfold.

“It just wiped out entire cities,” said Randy Richner, ABWE regional director for Brazil, who lives about 10 minutes up a mountain from the flood zone.

Brazilian authorities estimate that it could take up to 10 years to rebuild the region. Even in the crisis, however, the ABWE South Brazil team has witnessed God moving through Rio Grande do Sul—one of the least evangelized states in Brazil.

“The flood has really helped to soften people’s hearts,” he said.

Many gospel conversations have unfolded in shelters and local church plants, where the entire South Brazil team has engaged Brazilians in discussion while handing out food, water, and personal hygiene items. After one inter-

action, a woman expressed a desire to get back in church. Others confessed to being caught in the stranglehold of sin, whether alcoholism or other vices, and wanted to turn their lives around. Randy told each one: “You need faith in Christ.”

“People were very open to talking to me, especially because I was taking food and making sure that they were doing okay,” said Randy.

Likewise, ABWE missionaries work with local pastors to assist and encourage members of their congregations affected by the floods. One believer shared how she grabbed her Bible in a split-second decision as the floodwaters closed in. Another told Randy that she has lost all her possessions but still has Jesus.

“She started singing this song about, ‘If you have Jesus, you have everything,’” he said.

Such conversations have been possible thanks to donations to the ABWE South America flood relief fund, which supplied essential resources to distribute necessities, clean out houses and churches, build furniture, and set up

ABWE missionary Randy Richner assists Jesús, Emily, and their sons in a shelter after they lost their belongings in the flood. As a result of the relief ministry, the family began actively participating in a local church.

washer and dryer stations for those affected by the disaster.

The team also reconstructed a kitchen at a ravaged school to build additional relational bridges in a community. “It was very humbling,” Randy said, “to see all these kids that . . . just were so happy that they could have a meal at their school.”

The team’s goal now is to launch a centralized distribution center offering food, supplies, chiropractic care, dentistry, and spiritual counseling during the long rebuilding process.

ABWE’s support in the region, Randy said, is making an eternal difference.

“I think our reputation in the community grew,” Randy said. “And I think a lot of people are able to see that we want to be salt and light. We want to be a channel of God’s love in this area.” ■

An Unexpected Journey to the Unreached

Like Paul in Acts 16, an ABWE missionary in Colombia encountered a closed door—redirecting him to a ministry alongside local believers with even greater gospel opportunities than he ever envisioned.

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS

LOCATION: COLOMBIA

As the trail crested the steep ridge, a small group of trekkers paused in the shadow of the snow-capped mountaintops and gazed down into the warm, rocky forest. A cluster of conical mud thatched-roof huts rose from a clearing on the mountainside below—the unreached village they had set as their destination.

With renewed vigour, the seminary students scrambled down the incline, led by Colombian ministry partners Mateo and Andrés and accompanied by ABWE missionary Elliot. Upon reaching the village outskirts, they paused, their anticipation mingling with trepidation.

Access to indigenous villages in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains of northern Colombia remains

tightly restricted, granted by invitation only. Thanks to their connection with a community member, the group had received authorization to visit—provided it was granted upon arrival.

The approach of outsiders caught the attention of curious villagers, each attired in white, woven-cotton tunics traditional to the Kogi people group. Recognizing Andrés, who had guided the group up the mountain, the villagers welcomed them, ushering them into the village.

“We were in awe after seeing all the almost miraculous things that God had done to open a door for us to get into this people group,” conveyed Elliot.

Later that night, as the group settled down to sleep in the mud hut they had been allocated, Mateo glanced

Photo: ABWE missionary



From left: Colombian national Mateo and ABWE missionary Elliot visit a remote Kogi village to share the gospel.

through the darkness toward Elliot and asked the question he had been pondering: “What was your plan when you first decided that you wanted to go to the unreached?”

The Death of a Vision

Thirteen years prior, Elliot and Sarah landed in Bogotá, Colombia, with their children, their earthly belongings, and a burden for Colombia’s remaining unreached people groups. Although much of Colombia has access to the biblical gospel, with evangelical believers comprising nearly 11 percent of the population, ongoing violence between paramilitary organizations has isolated many remaining pockets of unreached indigenous populations from contact with gospel influences outside their remote mountainous and jungle territories.

“We wanted to take the gospel to these places that have never heard,” explained Elliot.

In preparation for planting a church among one of these unreached indigenous groups, Elliot and Sarah traveled to southern Colombia to survey potential ministry locations. Upon their return to Bogotá, however, a colleague informed them that he had been recalled to a pastorate in the US. To fill the vacancy left by his departure, he suggested that Elliot assume his position as director of the Baptist Seminary of Colombia.

“He told me, ‘You know, you could reach a lot more people and be more effective by training our local partners in the seminary,’” Elliot recalled.

Recognizing the strategic value of training future church leaders, Elliot prayerfully accepted the appointment. At the same time, he faced lingering questions about God’s purpose in this change of plans.

“It was like the death of a vision,” he shared. “At one time, I wondered, ‘Why did God call me to stay in Colombia in

an area that’s predominantly reached?’”

Taking his colleague’s words to heart, Elliot began contemplating ways to instill an urgency for fulfilling the Great Commission into the seminary culture. He, with other instructors, assigned research projects on unreached people groups for each student to present in class and initiated a focused time of prayer for the unreached during Monday evening chapel services. They later constructed a thatched-roof hut on the seminary campus, christened the War Room, in which students could gather to pray for unreached indigenous groups.

Their concentrated efforts soon took root in the students’ hearts and minds.

Confirming a New Calling

One young man, Mateo, was leading a devotional in his dormitory one night when, as he challenged his roommates to pursue opportunities for evangelism, he sensed the Lord impressing upon his own heart a burden to serve among the unreached.

This was not the first time that Mateo had experienced God’s direction in his life. Although he had rejected his mother’s attempts to take him to church as a young teenager, repelled by the incongruous behaviour of Christians he witnessed, he had been drawn to begin reading the Bible years later. As he studied Isaiah 6, he understood that he was a sinner and needed Christ.

“Everything changed,” he said. “My desire to know Jesus, the way I acted and lived. And God began to work in my heart about serving him.”

Mateo continued his personal Bible study, this time reading the book of Acts and a Spanish translation of *Radical* by David Platt. As he considered the example of the early church, he developed a burning desire to pursue a seminary degree.

“I decided to leave everything, my



Photo: ABWE missionary

Mateo baptizes a new believer.



work, where I was living, everything—just to dedicate my time to studying God’s Word.”

His pastor agreed to grant him an endorsement to attend seminary, with the condition that he enrol in a Baptist seminary. Through an online search, he discovered the Baptist Seminary of Colombia, founded by ABWE missionaries in 1980 to equip future church planters and leaders through residential and online programs.

As Mateo completed coursework on missions and unreached people groups, he realized that, as a member of one of Colombia’s indigenous populations, he had family connections among several of these communities. With his training from the seminary, continued discipleship from Elliot and other professors, and a growing conviction of God’s sovereign direction, he graduated and acquired a teaching job in a school for indigenous young adults.

Aided by his attentive, caring personality, Mateo quickly formed friendships with several of the men he taught—not from the indigenous groups in south-

ern Colombia that had been Elliot and Sarah’s initial focus but from the four unreached people groups inhabiting the mountains of Colombia’s north.

These indigenous groups—the Kogi, Wiwa, Kankuamo, and Arhuaco, of whom the former three are classified as unreached by the Joshua Project—remain largely isolated in the Sierra Madre de Santa Marta mountains. In addition to challenges like the remote location and the threat of terrorism, which often restrict travel in the region, each community exercises the authority of self-governance, with its land, culture, and religion protected under Colombian law. To travel between villages, even those inhabited by the same people group, would-be visitors must obtain an invitation to enter the community.

Mateo’s first contact with the Kogi came through a student named Juan José. Through Mateo’s faithful witness, and that of other Christian professors, Juan José placed his faith in Christ for salvation. As Mateo wrestled with how to help Juan José effectively communi-



Photo: ABWE missionary

Unreached Kogi villages lie scattered among the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains of northern Colombia.



Photo: ABWE missionary

Summoned before his community for preaching the gospel, Esteban has endured whippings, imprisonment in a three-by-three-foot wooden structure, and other persecution. Each time he is commanded to recant, he prays, “God, give me the words to resist and be faithful to Jesus.”

cate the gospel to his own people, the two men invested hours in learning to better understand the Kogi culture and worldview, a complex system of beliefs based on animism and harmony with nature.

“God began to confirm my calling to work with the unreached there in the northern parts of Colombia,” related Mateo.

At first, he primarily saw obstacles—after all, missionaries had sought to see the gospel take root in these communities for decades, yet they remained unreached.

“But then God just started opening up doors like we wouldn’t have believed through relationships,” said Elliot.

Juan José invited Mateo to visit his village, as did students from the three other indigenous groups of the mountains. In 2021, Mateo began traveling three to four times each year into these unreached regions, teaching and discipling his Christian contacts in their vil-

lages, encouraging them to withstand opposition, and sharing the gospel with others in the community. His growing network provided a springboard to travel from peripheral villages in which a few Christians live to villages deeper in the mountains currently untouched by the gospel.

Controlling a Raging Storm

As his ministry developed, Mateo maintained close contact with Elliot, the seminary, and his church. Jointly strategizing ways to involve other future church leaders in reaching indigenous communities, they arranged for Elliot, his daughter, and a small group of students to accompany Mateo on a trip to visit four believers in a Kogi village. One of them, Esteban, had been saved and disciplined through Mateo and his fellow professors at the school.

Welcoming them into the village, Esteban invited the group to pray for a sick acquaintance in a village farther

up the mountain. As they paused in the community to prepare lunch, they glanced up in surprise to see a *mamo*, a shaman-like priest, approaching them on the path. Discovering he was conversant in Spanish, they offered him a plate of food and struck up a conversation.

“If people want to get healed, they come to me,” he said, learning of their mission. Nevertheless, he decided to accompany them farther up the mountain, describing along the way his ascribed role as mediator between his people and the world of angry spirits. His appeasement, he said, protected his community from natural disasters.

Sensing a divinely orchestrated opportunity, Elliot asked, “Can I tell you a story about somebody who can control a raging storm?”

Intrigued, the *mamo* agreed, listening intently as Elliot related the account of Jesus calming the storm.

“When Jesus says, ‘Peace, be still,’ the



Esteban has endured punishment in his village for preaching the gospel.

creation recognizes the voice of the Creator,” Elliot concluded.

The *mamo* considered his words—likely the first time that this community leader had heard this story of Jesus’ divine power—and left the group in peace.

“These are the little advances we’re praying for,” explained Elliot. “The fact that he didn’t kick us out of the community or get angry that we shared stories of Jesus—these are the first steps that often have to happen in unreached places. People start hearing biblical stories, and then God awakens something in their hearts.”

The Hut of Opposition

Back in Esteban’s village, God continued to open doors. The community leaders, deciding to honour their visitors, invited them to enter the communal meeting hut, a thatched-roof structure large enough to accommodate 200 men.

A current of cool air hit Elliot’s face

as he stepped out of the hot, beating sunlight of the clearing into the dimly lit hut. Glancing around the smoke-darkened interior, he sensed the oppression of the religious rituals conducted in the hut and silently prayed that, rather than a place of opposition to the gospel, this would one day become a place where Christ is proclaimed.

In the meantime, however, the village rejects Esteban’s faithful witness.

“I’ve been punished here, multiple times,” Esteban said, pointing to two huge, rough-hewn log seats at the center of the hut. “They’ve asked me to renounce my faith.”

Summoned before his community for preaching the gospel, Esteban has endured whippings, imprisonment in a three-by-three-foot wooden structure, and other persecution. Each time he is commanded to recant, he prays, “God, give me the words to resist and be faithful to Jesus.”

“People ask, ‘Why don’t you just

flee?’” shared Elliot. “But his desire is that they would know the gospel. And he and the other indigenous believers Mateo disciples are willing to be punished time and again for the hope of a little progress; those moments of being able to share stories of Scripture.”

Continuing to the Next Mountain

Mateo continued traveling regularly among his network of contacts, both alone and with additional groups of seminary students. While visiting a different village deep in the mountains, he saw four people come to Christ.

Desiring to develop his missionary team, Mateo encouraged another of his students, Camilo, to seek preparation at the Baptist Seminary of Colombia. Even before his salvation, Camilo’s family had believed he was different, telling him, “You should go study and come back and teach us what you learned.” Despite living in a village that usually persecutes believers, they granted per-

mission for him to enrol in the seminary in 2023. Camilo plans to return after graduation to serve among his people.

“These small groups of Kogi believers are the key to taking the gospel, we believe, to the larger unreached Kogi communities just over the next mountain,” explained Scott Russell, ABWE executive director for South America.

To better disciple these new believers and reach further into indigenous communities, Mateo sensed God directing his steps once again, this time to move into the mountains as a full-time gospel worker in fall 2024. He, Elliot, and the seminary staff and students pray for increased opportunities among the unreached.

“It’s come full circle for me,” said Elliot. “Realizing that there’s not a chance I could go up there when the violence flares up or relate as well to the

culture. But it’s been amazing for me to invest in Mateo’s life, and then see him invest in others and God open up doors in some of the toughest areas.”

Elliot and Sarah recognize that reaching the world’s remaining unreached people groups will require believers from every part of God’s global church to join in his mission.

“The American church has invested in Latin America for a long time, taking steps to see people come to Christ and churches planted. This is the next step—helping them send their own missionaries to the unreached in their borders and beyond. And it’s a game changer.”

“God had a plan,” added Scott, “and he’s reaching the unreached through the ministry of this seminary. May God be glorified among every tribe, tongue, and nation.” ■

Editor’s Note: Names have been changed for security.

“The American church has invested in Latin America for a long time, taking steps to see people come to Christ and churches planted. This is the next step—helping them send their own missionaries to the unreached in their borders and beyond. And it’s a game changer.”

Elliot, ABWE missionary

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More than two billion people on earth are unreached with the gospel. Help us support labourers with a gift to the Global Support Fund.

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Photo: ABWE missionary





From left: Elliot and Mateo share stories of Jesus' divine power with a *mamo*, a shaman-like priest.

The 2023-2024 New Missi

BY: CALEB GORTON AND KATELYN HAWKINS

God’s plan was always to reveal his salvation to the ends of the earth.

From the first promises to the patriarch Abraham that through his line “all the nations of the earth” would be blessed (Genesis 22:18), to the psalmist’s proclamation that “all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord” (Psalm 22:27), to myriad prophecies of the coming “light for the nations” (Isaiah 22:6), God always intended to reconcile all peoples to himself.

When the long-awaited Messiah began his earthly ministry, news of his wonders quickly spread. Those healed and restored joyfully spread the good news throughout surrounding towns and villages. Yet the message of salvation remained bound to one region within one historical epoch.

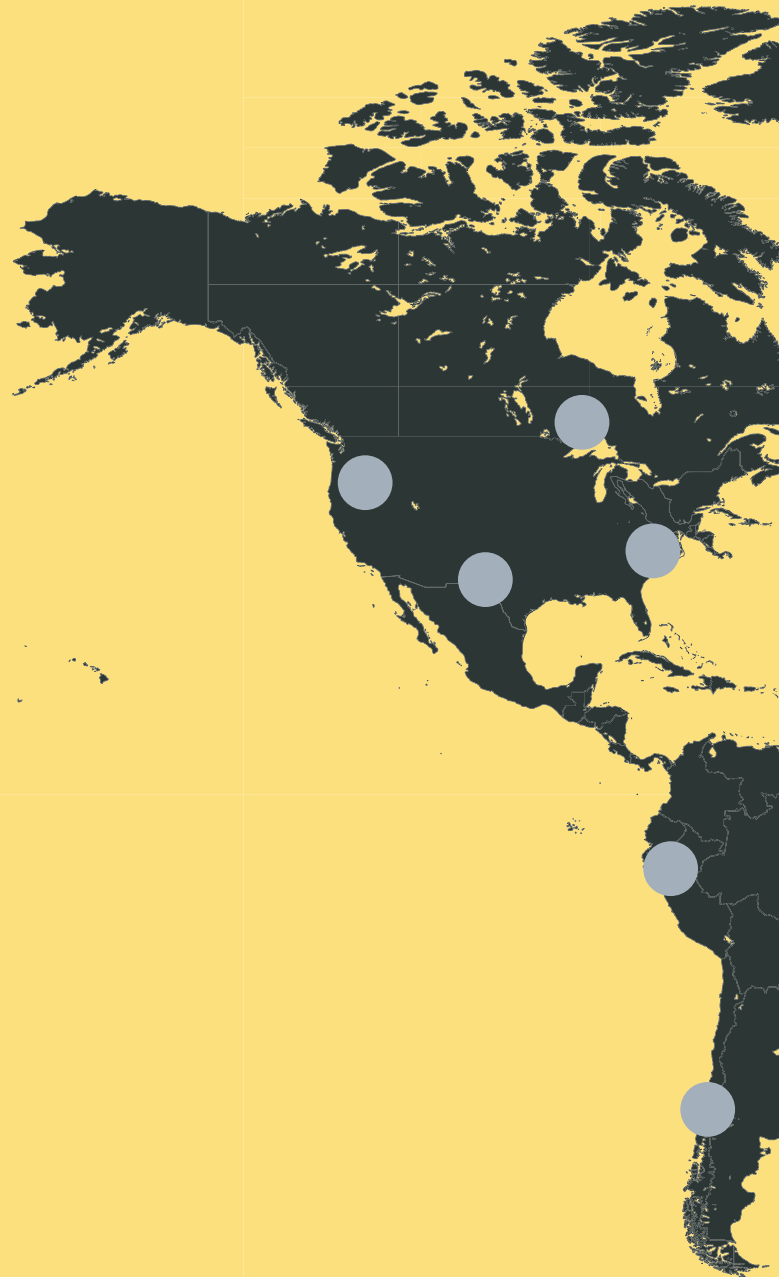
Christ’s answer lay with his disciples. Redeeming their past failures and inadequacies, he stood before them—resurrected and glorified—and commissioned them to an audacious assignment: to preach the gospel “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Empowered by the Spirit and emboldened in the face of opposition, the disciples carried Christ’s message throughout the known world—committed even at the cost of their lives. Generations of Christ-followers have continued their mission, pressing farther into unreached corners of the globe and boldly confronting the remote landscapes, hostile regimes, pagan fervour, and religious apathy that enshroud billions in spiritual darkness.

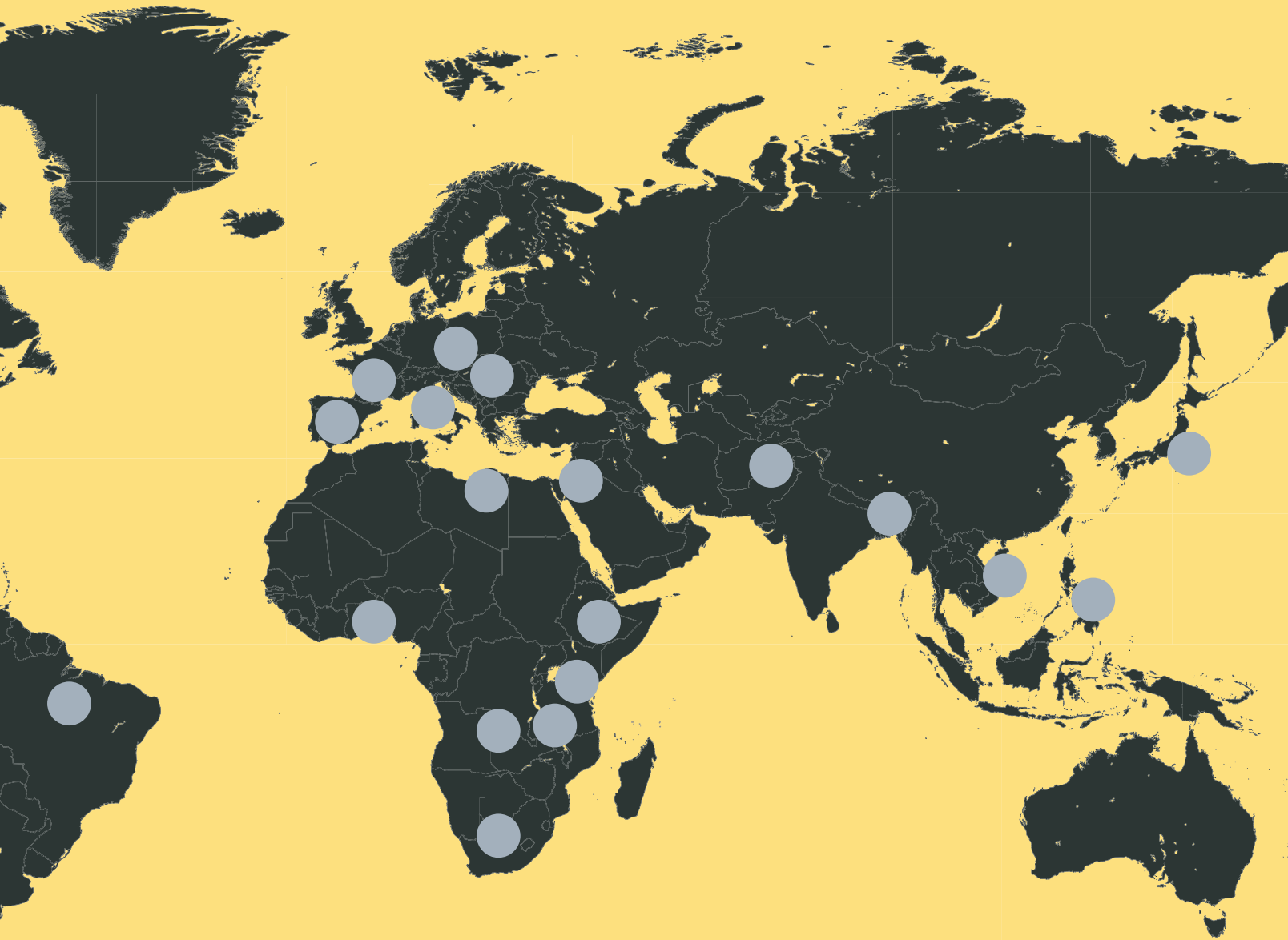
Since autumn 2023, 76 new mid- and long-term missionaries have joined Christ’s mission through ABWE and two have joined ABWE Canada. Their testimonies of calling and qualification for ministry follow.

Many are preparing to serve in contexts that pose a security risk. Their identities have been withheld to preserve their safety and effective witness.

As they go, may we remember that Christ’s commission is for all his church, calling us to go, send, pray, and partner—that his name would be made great to the ends of the earth (Malachi 1:11).



onary Class



Africa



Benjamin and Quaneisha Browning

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Calvary Baptist Church

As Benjamin was nearing the end of his Ph.D. program, he faced the common question, “What next?” As he wrestled with his decision, the Lord laid on his heart a desire to reach the nations through theological education.

While his call came later in life, Quaneisha was burdened for the lost from a young age, serving as a faithful witness to her family and neighbours. They are excited to see the Lord work in Zambia through leadership training at Ambassador International University and through addiction counselling.

abwe.org/m/0172451



T. and A. C.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Mountain View Baptist Church

“If someone asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, my answer was always, ‘a pastor’s wife,’” said A. of her early years. Similarly, T.’s desire to serve the Lord in full-time ministry was sparked by a missions trip during his teenage years. The Lord has blessed these desires as they join ABWE to continue serving in South Africa—where they have already ministered for a decade—reaching refugees from a highly unreached people group and serving children from farming communities.

abwe.org/m/0172191



Micah and Debbie Colbert

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Community of Grace Church

As a 12-year-old boy, Micah vividly remembers “reading through the book of Romans and seeing Paul’s desire to reach the unreached.” Pressing into that calling, he and his wife, Debbie, served four years in Ghana planting a church in a Muslim village before returning to the US and starting a church in their house that grew to 60 people. God used their experiences and training to confirm their desire to serve in missions and led them on a new journey to partner with Ambassador International University in Zambia to equip African leaders to plant and pastor healthy churches.

abwe.org/m/0193691

Africa



Liza Kessling

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Halfmoon
Christian Fellowship Church

Liza's perseverance through medical school was driven by one passion: "to use medicine for opening up areas for church planting." From the rural fields of a Pennsylvania dairy farm, Liza has traveled throughout the world, using her training as a family medicine physician to serve the church. Her particular affection is for the French-speaking world, leading her to settle in Togo, West Africa. After already serving at Hôpital Baptiste Biblique for more than two years, she is joining the ABWE family to continue those labours.

abwe.org/m/0172441



Mallorie Keel

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Mid Term

Sending Church: Biltmore Church

Mallorie's calling was more a question of "When?" and "Where?" than whether she would serve overseas. Having grown up taking yearly missions trips to Guatemala, cross-cultural missions was in her blood. Knowing that the Lord was also directing her to become a nurse, she earned a nursing degree and waited on the Lord's timing and direction. After practicing as a pediatric oncology nurse in Clarkston, Ga., she is transitioning to Togo, where she will use her training at Hospital of Hope to make disciples.

abwe.org/m/0172521



Chris and Lydia Cooper

Ministry: ABWE GO

Rack: Mid Term

Sending Church: Chapel Pointe

On a missions trip with their church to Hospital of Hope in Togo, Chris and Lydia witnessed how God was working to reach the lost through physical and spiritual care at the hospital. Stepping onto the hospital grounds, they both felt a sense of peace that God was leading them to use their passion and abilities to reach the lost in Togo, Lydia as a nurse and Chris through sharing the gospel and helping to disciple new believers.

abwe.org/m/0172631

Africa



Brad and Kayla Pogue

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Associate

Sending Church: Gateway Baptist Church

When Brad and Kayla began supporting a pastoral training school in Malawi, they had no idea that God would later use Brad's military career to send him on repeated trips to Malawi, during which he developed close relationships with local pastors. After his third trip, the Malawian leaders requested that he consider using his experience in administration to serve the pastoral training school as a full-time administrator. Now retired from the military, Brad and Kayla are relocating to Malawi to serve in theological education, church development, and discipleship.

abwe.org/m/0172701



R. and A. G.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Living Water Community Church

A., a pastor's daughter, studied secondary education with a goal to serve overseas. She obtained positions teaching science, first in South Asia and then in Kenya, where she met R.

R. was born in Kenya to a father who worked in the capital and mother who remained in their village. From age nine he lived with his father, playing soccer and raising himself. Disillusioned by the prosperity teachings popular in East Africa, he trusted Christ after seeking out the biblical gospel. R. now serves at-risk youth through sports and Bible studies, while A. teaches at an international school.

abwe.org/m/0172621



Armand and Rebecca Nyakpo

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Faith Free Will Baptist Church

Armand, a Togolese national, was raised by his grandmother who taught him about God, but he did not make his own decision to follow Christ until high school, when he attended a Bible study led by ABWE missionaries. After submitting his life to Christ, he joined an ABWE church plant and began serving in the church through music, teaching at a Christian school, and volunteering in community kids' clubs. In 2020, he served alongside short-term missionary Rebecca, and, discovering identical passions, they married in 2024. They will continue serving in West Africa through education and children's ministry.

abwe.org/m/0192601

Middle East and North Africa / Europe



K. O.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Associate

Sending Church: North Hills Baptist Church

K. was born and raised in the Middle East. He grew up saying he was a Muslim, but it wasn't until he was in college and friends questioned him about his beliefs that he read the Qur'an for himself and quickly realized that he did not believe it. Through the divinely appointed timing of a friend's invitation to church, K. began reading the New Testament and saw how much more holy Jesus was than he could ever imagine. He, along with his wife, now seeks to plant and serve in local churches to teach others about Jesus.

abwe.org/m/0192481



K. W.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Christ Life Church

K.'s path to missions has taught her that the Lord's timing is always best. After her salvation as a child, she became passionate about caring for other people and later studied nursing to gain opportunities to enter unreached, creative-access countries. When doors for ministry closed, God impressed on her to wait faithfully by serving in her local church. Nearly two decades later, she connected with an ABWE missionary team and now eagerly moves forward through the doors God opened to serve in North Africa through healthcare.

abwe.org/m/0172581



Mike and Emily Rudolph

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: First Baptist Church

As Mike drove down the road, leaving his dream house in the rear-view mirror, he found assurance in seeing the Lord answer his prayer from years before: "God, strip away anything that would keep me from you." Through financial struggle, injury, and the loss of his daughter and first wife, Mike learned to trust the Lord. He followed God's leading to seminary and met Emily, whose own health struggles led her to disciple young women. They committed to ministry overseas and now plan to serve through theological education in Central and Eastern Europe.

abwe.org/m/0172551

Europe



H. J.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Shepherd Reformed Baptist Church

At her grandmother's funeral, H. was comforted by knowing that her grandmother was in the glorious presence of Christ but dismayed to consider others that didn't have that same hope. Knowing she couldn't keep the gospel to herself, she committed to missions and attended Bible school in preparation. In his timing, God brought her together with L., a Live Global missionary appointed in 2023. Burdened to reach a secular Roman Catholic population, L. and H. will serve in Spain and "leave behind what is familiar in favour of what is eternal—people's souls."

abwe.org/m/0172221



L. W.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Associate

Sending Church: Southgate Baptist Church

L. observed missionaries in her Balkan nation from a young age, noting, "Without missionaries, it would be hard to bring the gospel to unreached places like my village." After her salvation, she committed herself to evangelism, and, in 2023, married an ABWE missionary she met through mutual believing friends. She and her husband currently seek to support local churches, develop women's ministries, and educate future leaders through a local school.

abwe.org/m/0191051



M. and J. M.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Providence City Church

"Mama, this country feels like home," is a statement M. and J. will never forget. During their son's birthday trip to Italy, they realized that the Lord was increasing their evangelistic zeal for Europe and preparing their children for the next step in his plan. Although they were living comfortably in the US, J. had previously served in Europe as a young adult. Meanwhile, M. retained unfulfilled dreams of reaching Europe through professional soccer, and more than 15 years in the corporate world had left him spiritually drained and hungering for more. With their burden reignited, they joined Live Global to provide resources for those facing spiritual drought in Western Europe.

abwe.org/m/0172501

Europe



Jonathan and Callie Van Wyk

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Mid Term

Sending Church: Samaritan Church Springdale

Callie's burden for the lost developed in middle school, and witnessing the spiritual needs of Spain in high school confirmed her calling. After college, she served short-term with ABWE missionaries in Spain until COVID-19 lockdowns prompted her return to camp ministry in the US—where she met Jonathan.

Jonathan, after trusting Christ in college, served several years in camp ministry with international employees. God used his adaptable and compassionate spirit to draw others to Christ, and he committed to using his skills in missions. Jonathan and Callie will teach and disciple youth at Evangelical Christian Academy and pursue the Spanish people through relational evangelism.

abwe.org/m/0193911



Bekka Olandt

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Faith Baptist Church of Winter Haven

“In the path to missions, not a thing in life was a mistake; God used everything to prepare me,” shared Bekka.

God's sovereign plan combined her love for math and science, her personal journey to develop her faith in high school, and her experience visiting an international school in Brazil to lead her to teach at the International Christian School of Budapest from 2014 to 2022. She now plans to return as the school's academic counsellor to equip the next generation of missionary kids and international students.

abwe.org/m/0172671



J. and H. C.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Thomas Road Baptist Church

J.'s desire for missions came through unexpected means. During a two-year period of difficulties renovating a home and undergoing multiple surgeries, J. noted, “This whole thing, while I didn't see it or understand it, was God helping bring me to a place where I really recognized the priority of my life.” J. and his wife, H., now long to see those in France entrenched in secular philosophy and enlightenment thinking find freedom in Christ, who alone can satisfy their desires.

abwe.org/m/0171291

Europe / Asia



Zach and Kara Zegan

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Grace Chapel

Zach and Kara did not anticipate becoming missionaries. Kara, a former aspiring chemical engineer who became a single missionary and English teacher after her salvation, met Zach, the lead singer in an evangelistic rock band, at a school in Prague. They quickly found that the Lord was not only leading them to each other but also to pursue long-term missions together. Having already served in the Czech Republic for over a decade, Zach and Kara have now joined ABWE to continue their work of church planting and student ministry.

abwe.org/m/0172471



Aaron Doolittle

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Trinity Baptist Church

Growing up as an avid fan of video games inspired Aaron to pursue a degree in computer science. Many of his college classmates were from Japan, which piqued his interest in their language, country, and culture and launched him on a path towards missions. Following the Lord's leading, with confirmation from his pastor and family members, he explored opportunities to go to the field and visited Japan. He recounts, "The moment I stepped off the airplane in Japan, I got a sense of relief, as if I had come home for the first time."

abwe.org/m/0172561



C. and M. C.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: (Withheld for Security)

When a Rastafarian man from Jamaica invited C. into his home and said, "Tell me about sin," C. knew the Lord was calling him to go to the nations. Meanwhile, M. developed a burden for missions while serving in Mexico every summer with her grandfather. After their marriage, however, they made excuses for staying in the US until their church adopted an unreached people group from Central Asia, and they understood God was propelling them forward. A period of prayer confirmed their calling, and they moved to Central Asia to plant churches and train leaders in evangelism—ministries they will now continue through ABWE.

abwe.org/m/0172571

Asia



C. and S. D.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: (Withheld for Security)

C. was first exposed to missions in high school through short-term trips to impoverished communities in the US, but, desiring to do more than paint houses or mow lawns for the lost, pursued an education in theology and engineering to open doors in marketplace ministry. In college, he met S., an international student from Southeast Asia whose initial goal was to live the American dream as a successful CPA. Convicted to surrender her plans to the Lord, she and C. entered ministry and are now following God's leading to share the gospel with the unreached population of her home nation.

abwe.org/m/0172421



C. and M. R.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: The Town Church

From the moment of their respective conversions, C. and M. have had a singular passion to share the gospel. Experiencing the vast spiritual needs around the world through multiple missions trips in their youth drew them each to pursue every ministry opportunity that presented itself. After meeting in college, they considered the power of the Word of God in their own lives and determined to serve together through theological education, which they are preparing to do in South Asia.

abwe.org/m/0172461



Kent and Tanya D.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Rocky Bayou Baptist Church

Kent and Tanya have served in Southeast Asia for six years. First experiencing the world's desperate need for the gospel through a missions trip to South Asia, they committed to serving full-time but questioned their ability to learn another language. After God demonstrated his equipping power in their first ministry location, they followed his leading to their current assignment among unreached people groups in the Philippines, where Kent trains national pastors in evangelism and Tanya employs her medical background to direct their birthing center and medical clinic, which they are expanding into a hospital to equip and evangelize local communities.

abwe.org/m/0172641

Asia



Tony and Keira Hawkins

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Associate

Sending Church: Community Bible Church

Tony's path to missions began as a child with a fascination for the maps of Paul's missionary journeys.

When his initial plans for missions fell through, he joined the military and later completed medical school. Keira, meanwhile, felt an affinity for Japan from an early age and grew in her love for other cultures while their family was stationed in Korea. God used a car accident to remind Tony of his commitment to missions, and the family determined to serve in Japan: Tony through his medical background and discipling young adults and Keira through counselling and relationships.

abwe.org/m/0172661



B. C.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Redeemer Baptist Church

B. was born and raised as a missionary kid in East Asia. He quickly developed his own burden for ministry by witnessing the lost around him.

"It was overwhelming to stand in a crowd of thousands of people going about their life and know they've never heard the gospel," he explained.

He sought preparation through MBA and seminary degrees, along with training from his local church, and plans to join a family from his church in planting churches in Southeast Asia.

abwe.org/m/0172681



S. S.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Faith Bible Baptist Church

Wondering what happens after death, S. discussed his questions with his Hindu uncles in his South Asian city.

When they told him that only the righteous go to heaven, he began worshipping idols at the temple. He was introduced to the gospel through the Jesus film, and later trusted Christ when a friend invited him to Sunday school. Burdened for his people, he became a Sunday School superintendent and shared the gospel with relatives and neighbours, later marrying a Live Global missionary. Together, they serve among Hindus and unreached Muslim refugees by planting churches, training pastors, and translating Scripture.

abwe.org/m/0135401

Asia / Global Partnerships



E. S.

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Mid Term

Sending Church: One City Church

E. saw God's leading toward missions woven throughout her life, first as a child listening to missionaries speak in Vacation Bible School and then through missions trips to Latin America, Africa, and Asia, during which she discovered the needs of unreached people groups. She completed a degree in counselling, which she plans to employ in Southeast Asia to reach Muslims and disciple believers in local churches.

abwe.org/m/0172651



Z. and L. N.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Sacred Mission Church

Z. attended a T4G conference with the goal of getting books and left with the goal of serving in missions. Curious about the booth with a "Live Global" banner, he struck up a conversation that led to finding opportunities he had never considered. He and his wife now plan to use their skills in design, business, and administration with Live Global to connect international believers to US churches and coordinate the distribution of training and resources to national partners around the world.

abwe.org/m/0172481



L. and T. H.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Vietnamese Baptist Church

L. and T., both born in Vietnam, retained a burden for their home country after moving to the US as children. T. was adopted by a Dutch family in Michigan and trusted Christ at camp. L. learned spiritual disciplines from his uncle. Though he had biblical knowledge, he lacked a true heart for God and for the lost. Through godly friends, ministry opportunities, and a providential meeting with T. as she prepared for ministry in Vietnam, he developed a desire to serve God by equipping his countrymen with proper doctrine. Now they both, with their family, desire to serve the greater Vietnamese community.

abwe.org/m/0193601

Global Partnerships



M. and C. L.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Starkey Road Baptist Church

God used a Sunday School conference in Zambia to change M. and C.'s lives. While visiting missionary friends in Zambia in 2002, C., a teacher with her Ed.D., witnessed educational needs and opportunities that inspired her to begin training Zambian teachers in rural areas to become more effective. Traveling to Zambia each year, she developed a non-profit to expand her program to community schools throughout the country. M., a military engineer who retired as a Lt. Colonel, uses his training to design and build classrooms. They were introduced to Live Global through Dr. Jack Sorg and desire to increase their gospel impact through equipping and training national partners.

abwe.org/m/0172491



M. and R. S.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Grove Hill Church

M. and R.'s road to long-term missions has been a winding one.

Although R. served in Nicaragua as a young adult and desired to return, her plans changed when she met and married M. A series of new homes, new jobs, and a growing family redirected their path more than once, yet they faithfully maintained and cultivated a desire for overseas ministry. Having developed a heart for Spain and the surrounding region, M. and R. are excited to join Live Global to strengthen the church in Spain as they engage with and serve national partners.

abwe.org/m/0172411



S. and S. H.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Grace International Church

Born and raised in Ethiopia, S. and S. had a vision for serving the church from the early days of their marriage but did not know what that would look like. After serving in worship, youth, and orphanage ministries in Ethiopia, they moved to the US in 2011 and worked with a church plant in Charlotte, N.C. The Lord then showed them an opportunity to serve their home country from the US by ministering in an Ethiopian congregation in Indianapolis, which they will now do through Live Global.

abwe.org/m/0172511

Global Partnerships



Z. S. and V. Y. 🇨🇦

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Rivers of Life Church

Both from Christian families in the Middle East, Z. and V. have developed a powerful evangelistic ministry throughout the Arabic-speaking world. Z., a well-known Arabic singer and preacher, has been featured not only at church-centered events around the world but has also ministered to Muslims, refugees, and youth for more than 25 years. Part of his ministry is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. V. has a passion for worship and the presence of God. She writes Arabic worship music and serves in local ministry in Canada to reach the poor, broken-hearted, lost, and unreached with the gospel of Christ.

abwe.ca/missionary/z-v/



R. P.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: South Church

While visiting Thailand in 2010, R. was struck both by the darkness of a nation living without Christ and by the faithfulness of national ministers enduring opposition. Deciding to retire early and serve in ministry, he connected with Live Global missionaries through his church who shared a vision of leading sports teams for evangelistic ministry. He is joining Live Global's Sports Impact ministry to coordinate these short-term teams.

abwe.org/m/0172691



E. and K. E.

Ministry: Live Global

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Restoration Church

As a teenager, E. envisioned his role in the church taking the traditional route of youth and pastoral ministry.

However, a missions trip to East Asia increased his desire to see the gospel go to all nations. While working in the corporate world and attending seminary, he became passionate about missions mobilization. He shifted into a full-time mobilization role to connect people, primarily college students, to gospel work around the world. As E. and his wife, K., an occupational therapist, join Live Global, they will continue serving through mobilization, networking for church partnerships, and pursuing overseas ministry.

abwe.org/m/0172541

North America



Rollin and Carrie Mohler

Ministry: EveryEthne

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Immanuel Baptist Church

Rollin grew up in a family and church devoted to missions—a passion he carried into his own ministry as he assumed pastorates in Pennsylvania and Virginia. Throughout 20 years of ministry, he participated in short-term trips and led his church to send out three families to the mission field. When God redirected Rollin and Carrie, they recalled the help that EveryEthne had given their congregation. They now serve with EveryEthne to coordinate church assessments and help pastors determine strategies for fulfilling the Great Commission in their community and beyond.

abwe.org/m/0172721



Drake and Ashley Budde

Ministry: EveryEthne

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Liberty Baptist Church

As a young adult, Drake wrestled with competing desires to either start a business or pursue missions. He felt a growing burden for Japan, accentuated when the 2011 earthquake and tsunami struck Japan and people perished without Christ. Ashley, meanwhile, felt a draw toward missions in high school and college but resisted until a chapel speaker mentioned that her degree in art education could be used in ministry. After Drake and Ashley married, their pastors affirmed their calling and directed them toward reaching the Japanese population in Hawaii.

abwe.org/m/0172711



Salvador Silva and Monse Lopez

Ministry: EveryEthne

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Bethany Baptist Church

As the son of divorced parents in a dysfunctional, Roman Catholic family, Salvador's early years were marked by turmoil. After the Lord powerfully saved him out of that situation, he attended seminary, where he met Monse, who had experienced her own difficult road to Christ through a broken family, anger, and attempted suicide. Their experiences revealed to them the incalculable worth of Christ. With the needs of the Hispanic community weighing heavily on their hearts, they began planting and revitalizing churches in Washington state, work they will continue through EveryEthne.

abwe.org/m/0172601

North America / Latin America



Jeff and Criss Hastings

Ministry: EveryEthne

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Walnut Memorial Baptist Church

After two decades of pastoral ministry, a late-night phone call changed Jeff and Criss' trajectory. A soldier in their son's unit had committed suicide, and their son and his fellow soldiers turned to Jeff for help dealing with this trauma. Burdened for others in the military, Jeff joined the army as a chaplain at age 46, deploying to Iraq and Kuwait.

After serving eight years, Jeff saw the mental and emotional burdens carried by military veterans, and, with Criss, founded Warrior 180 Foundation to equip churches and communities to minister to our nation's warriors. As master trainers in suicide prevention, they serve military and first responder communities through training and outreach.

abwe.org/m/0172401



Fabian Aguilar and Francesca Cortes

Ministry: EveryEthne

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: CrossPoint Church

"I feel sometimes like a Jonah," Fabian says of his journey to missions. Although he and Francesca faithfully served their church and community in South America, they initially rejected God's leading to move to the US, preferring the stability and comfort of their lives. As they continued to pray, however, the Lord convinced them of the opportunity they had among Hispanic communities. As they begin church planting in faith, Fabian says, "Now it's my turn to share the gospel with more people."

abwe.org/m/0172591



Kyle and Brandy Bills

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Meridian First Baptist Church

A dream about Chile first awakened Brandy's passion for missions. While seeking counsel from their pastors, Kyle and Brandy heard ABWE President Paul Davis speak at their church and were convicted to begin preparing for overseas ministry. Still burdened for Chile, they learned that the ABWE team had been praying for new team members gifted in evangelism and discipleship and discovered a good fit. Kyle will teach evangelism classes to equip Chilean Christians for outreach, while Brandy will reach disadvantaged women with the gospel through the Florece Pregnancy Center.

abwe.org/m/0193501

Latin America



Mike and Cristina Leonzo

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Living Water Community Church

Growing up in a multi-ethnic church pastored by his father, Mike's interest in other cultures and languages was always present. During his tenure on the ABWE mobilization staff, he felt a hunger to not just send and support missionaries but to go to the field himself. With an affinity for Spanish-speaking populations, his travels took him to Ecuador, where he served in church revitalization and met Cristina. Cristina, born and raised in Quito, is burdened for discipling women. Alongside the local church in Ecuador, they seek to confront the theological famine that is present in many parts of South America.

abwe.org/m/0192441



Daniel and Emily Pineida

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Long Term

Sending Church: Calvary Baptist Church

Daniel, a Chilean national, grew up in Santiago, where he was saved and began serving the Lord at age nine. Emily grew up in small-town Pennsylvania, where she trusted Christ at age five and developed a burden for ministry through missions trips. Their worlds collided in 2013 when Emily taught at Santiago Christian Academy in the same building in which Daniel studied at the ABWE seminary. After completing preparation in their US church, they plan to move to southern Chile to proclaim the gospel and train leaders.

abwe.org/m/0190891



Rob and Linda Wachter

Ministry: ABWE GO

Track: Mid Term

Sending Church: Parkside Bible Church

Rob and Linda's journeys started in radically different ways. Rob grew up in an unbelieving home and did not hear the gospel until college—and did not overcome his skepticism until studying apologetics 10 years later. Linda, meanwhile, grew up going to church and trusted Christ at a youth retreat in South America, where her father worked in business. After meeting in graduate school and marrying shortly after, they grew in their faith and in their passion for missions. After their retirement, the Lord led them to southern Brazil, where they serve primarily through English language classes and church planting.

abwe.org/m/0192421



Lufa Waits Over the Next Mountain

A mission to bring medicine to a dying woman reveals the vastness of the missionary task.

BY: PATRICK MELSON

LOCATION: PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Photo: Jordan and Cassie Timpy

“Morning, Brata Pat,” called Onili, our garden and grounds supervisor at Goroka Baptist Bible College (GBBC), arriving at my door shortly before 7 a.m. on a Saturday morning. He hesitantly explained that he needed a ride to take medicine to his sick mother-in-law, somewhere near the Lufa region. Just outside the doorway, his wife, Fono, stood with a group of people prepared to go if I said, “Yes.”

Onili said the village was “a little close.” Forty-five minutes later, I was beginning to wonder what that meant as we turned off the highway onto an almost-paved road leading farther into the mountains. We slowed as the deteriorating road and bridges became nearly impossible to navigate. After manoeuvring through a rougher stretch, Onili casually remarked, “During the rainy season, sometimes no cars come; they cannot.”

I considered his words as we parked and began hiking to the village. Without vehicles, there would be no way to transport goods or medicine—and no way to carry in the gospel.

The narrow clay path climbed a ridge with steep, slippery switchbacks. Onili smiled as he repeated that the village was “a little close.” Eventually, the trail levelled to reveal luscious vegetable gar-

dens in orderly rows and woven-bamboo huts with grass roofs blackened by smoke. We had arrived!

There was a joyous flurry of handshakes and hugs as our group was welcomed like family. I heard yelling in the distance, and Onili explained that chains of messengers were announcing our arrival over the mountains to Fono’s village, which was farther still.

“It is a long way from here,” he continued, “and beyond it are other mountains and more villages and more people.”

Fono’s younger sister arrived, her normal smile replaced with a grimace and tears. Speaking tenderly in their tribal language, she explained that their mom was near death.

Onili leaned close and quietly told me, “Fono’s sister is young; she can run the medicine to their village. We will wait for her.” She headed towards the mountain pass several miles away and over 1,000 feet above us. The trail appeared again on ridges and switchbacks. In the distance, people looked like ants crossing over the mountain, disappearing into valleys filled with unreached villages.

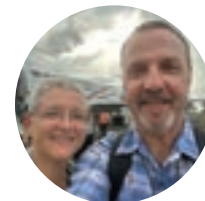
As we waited, I was staggered by the desperate hugeness of the missionary task. How do we carry the gospel

to these remote places? Much later, I was told that Fono’s mother recovered with the medicine we brought, but what about countless others facing eternity without Christ?

These questions stirred my mind and heart our whole trip back to GBBC. As we arrived just before dark, I realized that GBBC provides an answer. We train nationals who *already* know the languages, cultures, and remote trails of Papua New Guinea. Our graduates serve as pastors, teachers, and missionaries to their own people. I am committed to investing my life in students at GBBC because I still see those mountains. Yet beyond them are other mountains and more villages and more people. Who will go there? ■

Help the Goroka Project transform Papua New Guinea for Christ:

abwe.ca/projects/goroka/.



Patrick Melson and his wife, Kellis, teach and train leaders at Goroka Baptist Bible College (GBBC). Recognizing that multiplying leaders results in more national churches, they partner with over 475 graduates of GBBC for increased gospel outreach in Papua New Guinea.

'God Is Able'

A Mother of a Disabled Son Discovers Grace

A Tanzanian woman finds physical care with eternal results through a health advocacy ministry.

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS

PHOTOGRAPHER: ALICIA SPARKMAN

LOCATION: TANZANIA

“Either you abandon the child, or I will abandon you.”

The ultimatum fell on Pendo’s ears like the blows she had endured from her husband ever since their son Daniel had first shown signs of disability. The boy’s seizures had begun when he was four months old. Then, at six months of age, he became unable to lift his head. Soon after, he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy.

“When [my husband] discovered the child had a problem, he showed no love for me or the child,” Pendo recalled. “He would beat me while I was holding the child. Every day, all I could do was cry.”

Driven out of her home, Pendo tried to support herself through a roadside stand, but the same cultural stigma that had led her husband to blame her for her son’s condition also repelled customers. She daily cursed her husband, wishing he would suffer as Daniel did.

Feeling completely alone, she decided to attend God’s Tribe Church, where she met ABWE missionaries Joe and Brittany James. Brittany, along with Tanzanian ministry partner

Joseph Boon, leads Dar Health Initiative, an advocacy and health education ministry that helps patients obtain medical care. Evaluating Daniel’s needs, they provided a custom wheelchair and assisted with the cost of physical therapy, while also supplying mosquito nets and water filters to help alleviate Pendo’s suffering. More importantly, they taught her to know Christ through studying the Bible.

“I have become someone who puts God first,” Pendo shared with a smile.

Changed by the grace of God, “her life now is marked by extending forgiveness to others that have wronged her,” observed Brittany, “because she knows the forgiveness she’s received through Jesus.”

Even in hardship, Pendo encourages others to turn to Christ. “I tell [them] that God is there, and God is able, and that they should not lose hope.” ■

Watch Pendo’s story of transformation at abwe.org/god-is-able.

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.



Alicia Sparkman is the owner of Sparkman Photography. She lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband and two daughters. She photographs families and architecture and receives great joy from volunteering these services for her church and documenting the short-term missions trips she takes each year.

Photo: Alicia Sparkman



B. & E. - OPEN TORONTO TEAM

2024
FEATURED
PROJECT



B. & E. currently live in Southeast Asia, and ABWE Canada has applied to bring them and their young daughter to Canada as religious refugees.

B. & E. both speak several languages. Coming out of a Muslim background, this young couple is well suited to reach Unreached People Groups in the Greater Toronto Area. They have already been used by God to lead several to Christ, and have been instrumental in seeing two churches planted and several church leaders developed among immigrants in Southeast Asia.

As part of the immigration process, we need to raise \$45,000 to cover their living expenses for their first year in Canada. The plan is for them to live in London, Ontario, for the first year, working alongside other EveryEthne missionaries in the Persian community, learning Canadian culture, and raising a support network.

In the unlikely event the application is rejected, the funds will be designated for other Open Toronto Initiative church planters that we would like to recruit from outside of North America.

PROJECT GOAL:
\$45,000 + Travel Expenses



abwe.ca/projects/b-e/