

CBC Missionary Newsletter - May 1, 2022

AFRICA

Cephas (Nigeria) April 18, 2022

This year so far has been very busy. After a teaching trip to Liberia (West Africa), I had another brief and really packed trip to the States: Much appreciation to those of you who hosted me. In the last five weeks I have been preoccupied with winding down my work with ECWA. Revising and updating existing policy documents of the ECWA Education Dept (two were thus revised and expanded) or creating new ones (three were so developed) were the hallmarks of my tenure as Director. Within the last five weeks, I have had to round up my work and publish the last two governance documents I was working on, write two position papers on critical matters affecting the for the General Secretary to present to the Synod, compose my own handing over notes, and prepare my final presentation at the Synod. Only the grace of God saw me through all these (writing six major papers running into several hundreds of pages) within such a short time. I can now heave a sigh of relief.

The construction work on the senior high school block (consisting of classrooms, science laboratories, and offices) continues to progress steadily. The roofing work was completed in March. Thank you for giving so generously. At the moment we need \$13,969.90 for the next phase of the work, namely, plastering—internal and external, and installation of a ceiling (PVC ceiling).

Now, I am recuperating from accumulated stress and fatigue and ruminating over the next phase of my life and ministry. I hope to launch fully into it by the beginning of next month. I have already reported at Hesus Academy and began addressing problems there. I also hope to commence my online ministry in May—I am working on laying the groundwork for it in the next two weeks. You will hear more about it soon.

Dwight & Miriam (Sub-Saharan Africa) April 18, 2022

Praise the Lord for the fruitful strategic planning event to confirm the implementation of the vision for ACTEA's expanded ministry in Africa (e.g., especially to the countries of Francophone Africa). The strategic planning event, held in Nairobi during the third week of March, gathered twenty one theological educators from eleven countries (including Dwight) to finalize initiatives for the growth of ACTEA. The renewed ACTEA mission statement explicitly affirms a church orientation in ACTEA's role of strengthening theological education in Africa. We are praying for qualified and called personnel and funding, among other needs to implement the eight initiatives of the 2022-2026 ACTEA Strategic Plan.

Dwight is involved in the ongoing development of training materials for accreditation assessors, one aspect of implementing strategic planning initiatives. He is leading a team of seven for the completion of the ACTEA Visitation Report.

Miriam endures painful immobility and therapy and may have to eventually undergo knee replacement surgery.

ASIA

S & V (India) April 25, 2022

During a recent meeting in Chandigarh, pastors were celebrating that people were returning to church services. However, I was shocked to discover how far many pastors had drifted from the Bible. Such as, they had no hesitation to invite non-Christians to take part in the Lord's table and preach that there is healing power in the bread and the cup for anyone. I shared from Exodus 32 how God was ready to destroy His people due to Aaron's sin. When Moses confronted Aaron, his only defense was, "*you know how prone these people are to evil*" and they made him do it! Many pastors have become like Aaron, instead of leading the people in truth and in ways of the Lord, they will do anything that pleases the crowd so that their jobs are secure!

In contrast, on April 29, 2022, NIITS is celebrating the graduation and hard work of those who have devoted themselves to the study of the Bible, its right interpretation and application, and personal transformation for life. "*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*" (2 Tim 2:15)

According to sociologists, societies have been described as melting pots or salad bowls. The melting-pot concept encourages migrants to fuse into a dominant culture; in the salad-bowl concept, migrants retain their own characteristics while integrating into a new society. India is apparently neither a melting pot nor a salad bowl, according to a new study by Pew Research Center. The majority of those surveyed (84%) say that "respect" for other religions is an important part of their identity and being truly Indian. Yet, a substantial number of them do not want neighbors who belong to another religion or are from another language State of India. This has been a major challenge for our church planters and partnering churches.

The Lord willing, V and I will be back in Texas in May to take care of the administrative responsibilities of Seek Partners. We hope to visit a few of our supporting churches, have face-to-face meetings with friends, and catch up with our girls. I will return to India in July to start the new academic year.

Thank you for blessing us with your partnership in ministry so that we could bless others.

C (Pakistan), April 21, 2022

I have completed the round 5 of the Afghan refugees and relief work. In this relief work my focus was to help the single Afghan mothers and women who have lost their families in war and are struggling to settle in Pakistan. I met with many women and listened to their stories and shared the Gospel with them. These women were very relieved after telling their stories because there is no one who can listen and understand their problems. I cried many times while listening to their stories and thanked God for providing me this opportunity to work among these persecuted women. We pray and share the gospel with them and give them food and hygiene kits.

A new batch of vocational training girls and women will soon start in the sewing class of the RAM vocational training project. This project needs funding of \$2000 for the sewing machines as we have less machines and more students at the class.

Recently, I was diagnosed with the gallbladder stones condition and the doctor has advised me that I need surgery, and the surgery cost will be \$1300.

T & J (US, Bangladesh), April 2022

The bondage by the Enemy is literally in front of our eyes and none of them know that Christ can deliver them. The Bengali, whether in Bangladesh or in NYC is in the same bondage and will perish without yours and our intercession.

God has amazingly provided through His gracious children in Riverhead, Long Island, the building for a house of prayer in Rshl. The first worship service in the finished church building was this past Easter Sunday! The building is significant because it is Christ's temple amid Hindu temples all around where idols are worshipped. This makes a visible, spiritual impact in Rshl.

Three Hindu men have been meeting with Pastor D to study the book of Luke to learn the path of Jesus. At their last meeting, other Hindu men discovered the meeting and barged in shutting it down. All the seekers fled. Our ministry continues to be equipping people to overcome persecution and supporting them.

The church in Nkbkt was stunned when B was won over by his Hindu family members to drive the church out of its building on his land. One month ago, B told Pastor M that the church must move off his land and no longer meet there. B has quickly torn down the church building but he kept the valuable foundation to build his own house on! The Nkbkt believers were deeply affected by not only the loss of their house of prayer, but also by the betrayal of B, their Christian brother.

Even though it is Ramadan, the members of the evangelistic group in Gopaljhar have chosen to keep on meeting to study through the death and resurrection of Christ and all that it means for them. Praise God!

We are heartened to see hunger increasing for the Word among the NYC Bengalis. J has begun studying the Word. A is enjoying recorded gospel messages. Others are asking for help to understand Jesus.

We praise God as our Jehovah-Jireh who continues to see and provide for needs even when we can't see from where the gifts would come. We rejoice in how He moves through His children to provide for us His children and all His works.

D & J (Malaysia) April 13, 2022

Ministering out of our giftings is what we've been created to do. In this season, we have been focusing on cultural and language acquisition - learning language and finding entry points into new communities. As an extrovert, this has been a freeing and thriving time for D. He has been able to use his gifts and talents to meet and engage new people in the neighbourhoods. As one who loves golfing, he's even been able to leverage his hobby to connect with other golfers in our complex and at the driving range.

The season of Ramadan provides a special opportunity to dive quickly into spiritual conversations. While hanging out with a neighbor at the mamak (late night food stall), D was able to discuss why we fast and how to gain forgiveness of sin. D encouraged his friend to study all the holy books - especially the Bible. Pray for spiritual openness.

M & R (USA, Thailand/Myanmar) April 21, 2022

M and team are nearly finished editing the Mon dance/music videos. We are at the stage of doing the subtitles in Mon. The lady who is inserting the subtitles is in Myanmar, working hard during these very difficult times. Please pray for her safety and for the access to technology needed to complete the painstaking process.

Please continue to pray for the crisis in Myanmar, which is basically a civil war with the military having all the best weapons (like Goliath) and the democracy has "slingshots" (like David) and amazing courage. The military is using every form of cruelty, including the burning of villages, rice fields, kidnapping, torture... Our hearts break daily. Internally displaced people are everywhere. Monsoon season is about to begin so these displaced people living without adequate shelter and food will be even more at risk. Little help can get through to the neediest, but the churches are doing their best to help. May the Lord multiply these few loaves and fishes.

On a happier note, I have more and more chances to use English teaching/speaking practice with Mon students in Mon land as well as diaspora Mon students all over the world.

On a personal note, M and I are thinking/praying about relocating from Southern California to either Charlottesville or maybe North Carolina so that we can be nearer to our only daughter and our grandchild. It's a tough decision, but an important one, not only for now, but as we age and eventually would need our family's assistance. There is very little ADA accessible housing available in Charlottesville, and we have concerns about M in the winter. Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill, North Carolina may have more choices, may have milder winters and has a large community of Mon and Burmese people. It is a 3-hour drive from Charlottesville and maybe a better "fit" for us. May the Lord guide us clearly and in His timing.

A & T (Mongolia) April 2022

We did the Capernaum ministry which works with disability kids and their parents. We shared the Gospel with them and invited them to the local church. The day after, one mom who has a child with down syndrome came to the local church. She talked about her life. God has been working with her for a long time and she decided to follow Jesus. Then she participated in new leader training, which is how to share the Gospel. On the next Sunday, she came to church with her two friends. Glory to the Lord!

Also, we teach NO APOLOGIES training to teenagers of churches. Around 50 of teenagers attended and 95% of them decided to choose abstinence from sex until marriage.

We had a great time at Darkhan city. It was the first short term mission trip to Darkhan city for us. We thank God because that city has a lot of youths, and they are open to the Gospel. They have around 30 churches and 20 of them have a license. Also, their church elders are open to learn about how to do discipleship with believers and share the Gospel with unbelievers. We regret that soon we will have to return to the UB city. Here in Darkhan city, we would not only work with adolescents, but we can also work with Capernaum (work with disability kids and their parents), Young lives (work with teen moms), and families and teachers and students from university. We ask God to open our Spiritual eyes and clear direction as we ready our hearts for Darkhan city and its peoples.

I (Tajikistan) April 21, 2022

As we arrived home on March 21, we spent the Navruz (New Day) holiday, with about 180 brothers and sisters. There was repentance, 8 people repented. For many brothers and sisters, this was the first time. All who came to this conference are all former Muslims. There was a lot of time for many to get to know each other. On the last day, we cooked pilaf for 220 people for lunch. It was healthy. The Lord gave us such joy, we see that our people are coming to Christ.

ELAM (Iran) April 25, 2022

Recently, while meeting with Iranian church leaders at a training event, I had the opportunity to meet with N, a church planter in the Iran region. N shared with me that your prayers are making a real difference in the lives of believers suffering persecution in Iran. A few years ago, N spent nearly three weeks in solitary confinement in Iran, facing regular interrogations about her ministry and faith in Jesus. After many days in isolation, and feeling discouraged, N heard something remarkable - *the sound of prayers*. It was as though there was a large gathering of believers outside her cell door interceding on her behalf.

"It was as if I literally heard people praying - I was so encouraged," recalls N through tears. In God's kindness, the prayers of Christians had reached and uplifted N, even in that lonely cell. Following her release, N and her husband continue to courageously serve Jesus in Iran.

I have the privilege of getting to meet brave leaders like N and being part of a team that offers advanced training opportunities for them. Leaders in the region often tell me how much the prayers of the believers around the world mean to them. So, on behalf of N, thank you for your prayers which are helping our brothers and sisters stand strong in the face of suffering.

EUROPE

Diana & Bogdan (Romania) April 15, 2022

As soon as the war started, we are thankful that our local church, Missio Dei Bucharest, immediately partnered with a few other churches in Bucharest and started a transit refugee center, and then a couple of long-term centers. Romania is a main transition or staying country for fleeing Ukrainians.

Every time we go there to serve with what is necessary (from cleaning toilets, to serving food, to loading trucks with food and medicine to go into Ukraine, to playing with kids, and many others), our hearts are deeply moved, and it is a holy time. Many of the refugees do not speak English or Romanian, but we all speak the language of hugs and photos.

While all of this is going on, life and ministry continue. Just yesterday we asked two young men, 19 and 20 years old, about these times and their fear. These are just weird questions to discuss, as well as strange times to live in, and even more, the ministries need to go on.

We are so thankful for what God is doing in EDGE, the national evangelistic and discipleship sports ministry that I (Bogdan) am leading. God is raising new coaches and new teams, and just in the last six weeks we had 4 new teams join EDGE. The coordinating pastor in that area called me last Sunday to tell me how grateful they already are for EDGE, as it is

drawing many boys who they would never have had the opportunity to connect with otherwise. Praise God for this encouraging report!

Sports are a great discipline-building context, but also a great discipleship context, as our sometimes deeply hidden parts come to surface under this pressure. This last weekend I had many opportunities to mediate conflicts between coaches, between referees and coaches, between referees, between referees and kids - think of all possible problems and we probably had them. The stakes were high as the first winning teams got to participate at the Balkan Cup that we will organize in May in Romania, and we felt the intensity. These are opportunities for ongoing discipleship, and we are thankful that we get to connect with the coaches regularly and we can discuss these things. Real life is always messier than in pictures and the good news is that we can grow together in this context of serving God.

Together with the women from Lifesprings International I (Diana) spent the last six weeks doing a course focused on contemplative prayer practices called More Surrender Every Day. This is the fourth part of a five-part course for nurturing the soul and developing deep roots in Christ (Love, Forgiveness, Life, Surrender, Freedom). These six weeks were spent at the cross of Jesus, starting in the upper room and after six weeks of reflecting on different aspects and details of the Sacrifice, the last day finishes with the burial. It was a very heavy time, but so rich and stirring in the places, nurturing a deep gratitude for what Jesus did for us, out of love. One of my favorite things about this course is the Listening Group, a time spent once a week on zoom with other women from all over the world, where we pray and listen to what we've learned each week and then listen to the Spirit together, in prayer. It is so powerful and the fellowship authentic.

Peace Amidst Conflict Training (PACT) is a program where we give some simple tools to apply in order to not just brush over a conflict but be transformed in its process. The team from Lifesprings International did an amazing job teaching us. It was a joy to have this training and to apply the things learned, even in our team soon after.

One powerful part of this time together with the PACT team was when we did part of the training with the women from Ukraine who live in the long-term refugee center that our church in partnership with other churches started. This was another holy time. They told us that this training came at the right time as they are now living in a large refugee community, because we always bring our preferences, opinions, personalities, and selfishness into our community, causing tensions and conflicts.

Albert & Teuta (Albania) April 2, 2022

Our home church (here in Korça) has been going through a spiritual cleansing. God has truly been working on cleansing His church. Undoubtedly, it has been a tough time for us emotionally and spiritually. All the news has come out in a short period of time, but it has occurred over a longer period. There were pastors that sinned against God and their church. We have a very long healing process ahead of us. All the church plants took this news very hard.

We wanted to share some of the challenges that we are facing in Bulgarec. As you may know, a lot of other people have attempted to come and serve in Bulgarec but they have not been successful. We feel that we are truly answering God's calling by serving here. We've had many tough times here with regards to the people living in the village. Some have attempted to throw large firecrackers into the church while we host Bible studies. They also attempted to hurt us and our family members. Others have come and vandalized the church. People have even attempted to remove us from the building. There is also a teacher at the school who is discouraging students from coming to church. He speaks very negatively

about us and the church. He has even gone as far as holding students back a grade if they continue to come to church. After having served the community these five years, things have changed a lot. Many villagers know us much better. Some came to respect us and love us. This is one of the reasons why the services are growing

It has been a big challenge to fundraise as a family, especially with the 50% -70% increase in food, gas, and cost of living. It has been a really trying time for our family but we know that God is faithful, and He will provide. We are working towards a goal of fundraising \$2,200 monthly, for our family of five as well as our church. It costs anywhere from \$500- \$600 each month to run our church. We've gone through many financial hardships in the past few years. We've sacrificed a lot at the expense of our children with English classes, soccer club, and dance classes. We are very thankful for your church and your continuous support. It truly means the world to us.

Timo (Greece) March 29, 2022

I am planning to go to Egypt the last week of April and the first week of May to do some ministry with Hani (CBC missionary in Egypt) and other fellow brethren then fly from there to Lahore, Pakistan to visit Christina and the newly opened clinic.

I hope to receive some support for my planned trip to Egypt and Pakistan. But the trip to Pakistan depends on receiving the visa from the Pakistani embassy in Athens and the political situation in Pakistan which has been volatile these days. (Note: Timo wasn't able to go to Pakistan).

MIDDLE EAST

A & E (Turkey) April 25, 2022

This past month has been so much fun: baptisms, graduating a new class of professional coaches, new worship songs, spring break with our kids, and even a quick family trip to the US! We have literally been all over the map since our last letter—both physically, but also in a ministry sense! Here are just a few ministry highlights from the last month...

Yesterday, our good friend "M" was baptized at our church. M has been deeply transformed over the past three years, ever since he began to investigate the person and claims of Jesus Christ, and since he has very slowly (and timidly) entered into our little church community. M is a self-described "recovering rage-o-holic" whose story includes involvement with various radical groups, and who has spent most of his life angry at God and at the world. Yesterday at his baptism he spoke powerfully about how God has taught him to find pleasure in forgiving others, and how he has come to know and *even love who he is* since encountering God. He and A have enjoyed a growing relationship over the past eight months, and M has been a key support to A in our church's worship ministry.

Also yesterday, E had the privilege of graduating another class of twelve coaches—people she has walked with over the past three months through over a hundred hours of coaching training intensives. Many of these students are HR executives who work for very large, influential local and global corporations, and we thank God for this open door to touch the lives of this very elite and influential segment of society!

Our hearts are full this month as we consider all the opportunities we have to serve those both *within* and *without* the Church in Turkey.

Easter in Istanbul was amazing this year... It was not only the first time in three years (go away, pandemic!) that we got to celebrate Resurrection Day in person with a full church, but we also were able to play some brand new songs with a full worship band—which made us very happy.

Ramadan started on April 2nd, which means that many, many people here are fasting during daylight—no food or drink whatsoever. Ramadan is a bizarre time of the year: life for a whole month is somewhat upended, food is more expensive, the spiritual air is noticeably heavier, and unless you're a heavy sleeper you'll go sleepless because of the *Ramadan drummers* who walk the streets and pound their big drums throughout the night to help people stay up and eat... Please pray with us for Turkey and the entire Muslim world: would their efforts to please God result in their finding freedom and forgiveness in Christ!

A & K (Bethlehem) April 19, 2022

We had a meaningful Easter Sunday at the East Jerusalem International Church. The brothers and sisters worked hard to make it a lovely celebration. For example, Andrew D. from South Africa and Javier from Chile pruned, weeded, and cut the grass in the church's large garden. Anne from England brought in flowers from the yard to place on the altar table. Janet from the US during the service sang the aria from Handel's Messiah, "I Know My Redeemer Lives." A team of nine adults and three children visiting from South Africa brought a sense of resurgence.

After the service, we enjoyed a meal in the garden, and folks fellowshiped for hours. The kids filled their Easter baskets with too much chocolate, which they found secreted away in the crevices of the ancient olive trees around the church. For a church that had been scattered and disheartened one year ago, Easter Sunday was like a resurrection. The living Christ lifted us!

This joy in worship and fellowship comes as violence has wracked Jerusalem over the last few weeks. Jewish Passover, Islamic Ramadan, and Easter overlapped with violent results this year. Innocent Palestinians and Israelis have been killed. God have mercy. We pray that hearts will be turned toward peace, for voices of moderation to be heard. We pray for the Spirit to quench the flames of hatred.

R & R (Jerusalem, Israel) April 5, 2022

After much anticipation and preparation, once again R and I bought the plane tickets with a departure date of April 6, 2022, looking forward to being with our church on the Mount of Olives on Sunday April 10th for Palm Sunday the most festive day in Jerusalem all year round with a parade that includes people from all countries of the world.

So, I got my medical clearance from my physician, cardiologist, pulmonary doctor. Also got the clearance forms from Delta and Air France for Portable Oxygenator that I require for high altitudes of over 30,000ft. Then Delta messaged me that federal law requires that I have eight special batteries to last 150% of the flight time. So, I went online and ordered additional batteries. But no such batteries can be delivered to me until April 9. So, another attempt to fly back to Jerusalem failed.

Providentially, at the same time I received a call from the pastor in Jerusalem telling me that there are 15,000 cases of Alpha 2 Corona every single day in Israel nowadays. He told me that terrorism ran rampant with the month of Ramadan in Jerusalem, the city centre is like a war zone today.

So, I called the Missions office and told Dr. Konnerup my situation and that I believed in the sovereignty of God, and I felt that the Lord allowed this to happen; so, I am considering retiring from the foreign mission field. His advice is for me to buy the batteries and wait till May to make a last attempt to go back to Jerusalem. If I cannot go then in May, I should consider retiring from the foreign mission field. I had discussed with him and with my sending pastor the possibility of working with the Arabic speaking people here in the US, since R and I are very well qualified to work and witness to them, because we know their language, their culture, and their way of thinking.

Now, on a positive note, between the ministries in Jerusalem Israel and Lebanon, we are supporting six pastors and five churches; all of whom are tied to the direct preaching of the Gospel of Christ Jesus our Lord! We are happy to share with you that we have used part of your faithful giving for Lebanon Aid and Iraqi and Syrian refugees of whom nine families have come to the Lord so far and seven of them have been baptized in the churches that I had started in Lebanon. Thank you for your support. Praise the Lord.

I called up my childhood neighbour in Beirut, Lebanon. After eleven calls of witnessing on Skype, I was able to win him to the Lord. Since then, he has been calling me "brother", and he started only saying "Lord JESUS" which is one of the important signs of a converted soul: *"no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12:3).*

NORTH AMERICA

G & E (UN, USA) April 4, 2022

Is there any doubt that we live in a dysfunctional world? It was especially gratifying to receive messages of faith in God's providential care from two key cabinet ministers from a nation struck by tragedy. These two Cabinet Ministers have responsibility for directing the COVID response, and making sure food is available for the population. Thus, amidst their overwhelming responsibility, they are keeping their eyes upon Jesus, which is encouraging.

Nadine (Memphis, TN) April 14, 2022

Chinese Ministry

I have been doing Chinese ministry in Memphis for five years but have never had a child come to talk with me about wanting to believe in Jesus. In the past when I have asked a child, "Do you want to believe?" The answer is "no" or "that is too hard of a decision for me to make right now." I was excited when asked by a 10-year-old girl, "Ms. Nadine, how do I get God in my life?"

Last fall I started working with a third Chinese church, Grace Chinese. I have been helping them lead their children's worship time and teaching their Sunday school with the goal of training the Sunday school teachers and children's leaders to be able to teach without me.

The pastor of Grace Chinese wanted to start a *Good News Club*® at the church Friday afternoons; last month we finally started with ten children attending!

Even though many public-school principals have allowed the Good News Club to resume this school year, several principals have been hesitant. We have been praying we can get back into these schools. I went to visit one principal to ask if we could start the club next school year and without hesitating, she said, "Yes, we look forward to having the club back next year." Please pray when we visit other school principals their responses will be the same.

In January we had a *Christian Youth in Action*® recruitment party for the previous *CYIA* youth and new youth. This party gives a chance for the new youth to learn about *CYIA* and talk to those who have already participated. It is also a great time to have fellowship. I will teach the youth at the training retreat, contact the youth and their parents about the *CYIA* applications and schedule 5-Day Clubs. I will be a Bible teacher one week and camp missionary the other week. Pray for me!