

Worth It? You bet!

It had been almost three decades with a medical ministry in the Middle East. I returned to New Zealand with many very happy memories - the warm hospitality of the local people, friendships with whole families, and the rewards of having input into numerous lives. However, alongside these great memories was disappointment.



Although we had an encouraging ministry to various expatriate groups, the local people were extremely resistant to the Gospel. We didn't know of any who came to faith in Christ through our ministry. This was despite much prayer, the giving out of Scriptures, and many opportunities to share our faith.

Was it worth the stress of living in another culture, the heat and humidity, and the exhausting days and nights in the hospital?

God's answer came to me from John 4:36-37. "One sows and another reaps... so that she who sows and she who reaps may rejoice together." The spiritual harvest is a partnership between the sower and the reaper, and in God's eyes both have equal worth.

Recently I began to see the outworking of this. A very encouraging email arrived from a new worker in the same area but in a different ministry. She had met a woman who had given birth several times in our hospital and who was incredibly grateful for the care received. Her words were similar to those of many who were prayed for, or heard of God's love in Christian hospitals in the area. "They were Christians but they were good people. They helped us so much." My friend went on to say that relationships formed in the past have opened many doors for a new generation of workers and established a sense of trust. She believes that there are increasing signs that the season for harvest is near.

So was it worth it? Absolutely! Even if in my lifetime I don't see the fruit that we longed for, I look forward to the time when I will worship before the Throne of God with people from "every tribe, language, people and nation" – including many from the land I served in.

That same worker says that they desperately need more people to join her team. Would you like the privilege of being part of what God has planned for this region? Are you ready to begin that journey?



"Anne" now works in the NZ Branch Office, and also enjoys reaching out to the migrant community through teaching English.

Anne (pseudonym)



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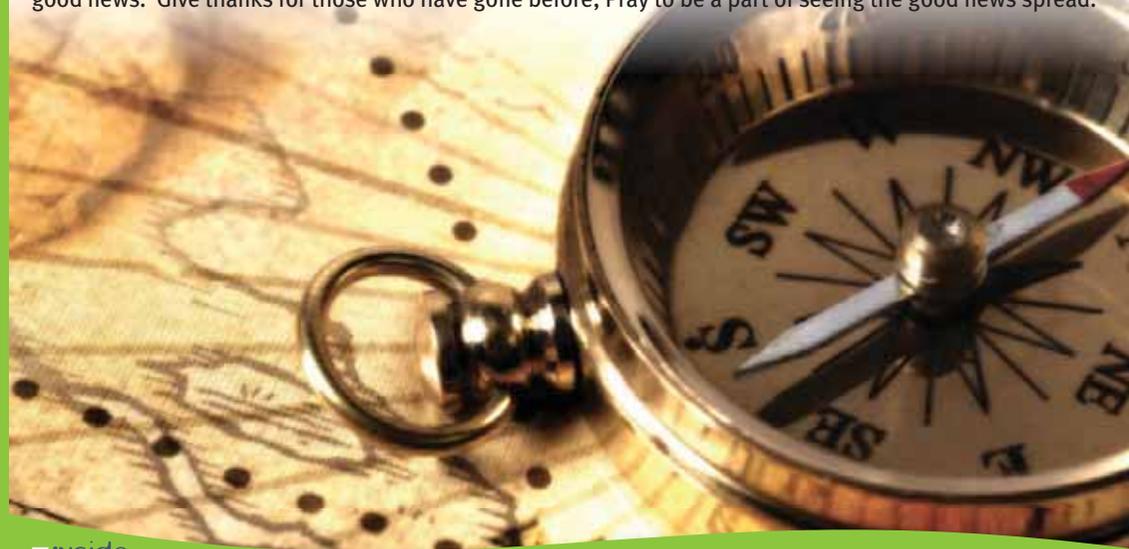
Spreading the Gospel where it's thinnest

North East West South

Good News. Bad News. Fake News. What's news for you? Inside we're telling stories of the good news spreading from land to land, generation to generation.

Christmas is our season of reflection and family. So often in mission, it's easy to see the need ahead, rather than rejoice in the progress that has been made. Some toil for many years and see little apparent fruit. A new generation follows and begin to see the breakthroughs – often through very creative means as our story from Mongolia demonstrates. As Paul reminded us – one plants, another waters, but it is God who brings the growth.

From the first family to the Holy Family, Scripture speaks a lot of the intergenerational nature of our lives. We do not live disconnected from our past. We are the link to the future. It is the same in mission. Generation after generation has sought to bring the eternity changing good news of Jesus Christ to all peoples. Some have been privileged to be part of people groups with long knowledge of and easy access to this gospel. Others are yet to hear of Jesus for the first time. Read on to see the ongoing miracle of the spread of the best good news. Give thanks for those who have gone before; Pray to be a part of seeing the good news spread.



▼ Inside

- Hidden Harvest
- Mongolian Drama
- God's Not Finished Yet
- Worth It? You Bet!

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Hidden Harvest

Fruit is the visible evidence of life and maturity. The process, which is certainly not instant, is described like this:

“This is what the Kingdom of God is like; a man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain - first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it because the harvest has come.” (Mark 4:26-28)

Decades ago (1962-1963), when I was a student at Worldview in Tasmania, we were challenged to pray for two single women working in South Asia. They were sowing the seed and faithfully discipling the ones and twos who responded. At times I am sure they considered the ground very hard and the fruit decidedly sparse. Circumstances changed, visas became more difficult to obtain and ultimately these two women returned to their home countries. I wonder what they thought over the succeeding years?

So much focused prayer over so many years.

Fast forward 50+ years. Through a mobilising ministry within WEC (IMM) contact has been re-established with groups of believers, who remember well the faithfulness of those two women so long ago. Seeds sown long ago are now coming to maturity. The sprouts produced heads,



which are currently producing full kernels of grain. Fruit in the form of new missionaries completing their training and applying to join WEC. Praise God for those who have already completed orientation and begun their service, and for the second group completing their orientation into WEC.

The early pioneering missionaries did not always see the full head of grain in their ministries!

Another example springs to mind. In the 1950's WEC began a ministry in S.E. Asia; evangelism included opening a leprosarium, work among orphans and more. Over the years circumstances changed and all expat workers either left or were evacuated. Contact with the fledgling church gradually ceased.

Again fast forward 50 + years. A visit is made to the area to survey, connect and share a missionary vision with local churches. Some names are written on a piece of paper and shown to the WEC visitor. “Are these names familiar to you?” he is asked. “No” is the reply. Upon returning the visitor shows me the scribbled list of names, “Are you familiar with any of these people?” he asks. “YES” is my reply, “they were the earlier pioneer missionaries in a ministry that we as a mission have lost contact with over the years.”

Contact has been re-established, with a view to continuing our involvement in encouraging and preparing a new generation to “Go and make disciples of all peoples, everywhere”

Be encouraged. Keep faithfully sowing, and praise God for the continuing harvest!

Maurice has been married to Ruth for 42 years. They love spending time with their three children and six grandchildren. He enjoys cycling to Lake Karapiro, walking around Cambridge, solving puzzles, and frequenting second hand shops.

Maurice



Mongolian Drama

Drama is a great tool for discipleship. Here's a story of how the Holy Spirit convinced the audience the value of speaking the truth.

Shame is a feature of Mongolian culture. It's more important to 'keep face' than stick to the truth. Furthermore, Mongolians prefer to live in the here and now. Therefore, sin is not only tempting, but appears beneficial, as negative consequences often only show later. This can make teaching a Christ-like lifestyle difficult.

To address these challenges I used an interactive drama form called “Forum Theatre.” Developed in Brazilian slums, it begins by using an anonymous questionnaire. People write down areas of their lives that they would like to change. We then choose the three most mentioned topics and develop three short plays. In each play, the main characters present these temptations, making common but wrong responses. These decisions lead to consequences that draw the character ever deeper into the web of sin. The plays end realistically - with the police at the door, an unwanted pregnancy, or another day wasted.

Seeing the long-term outcome of “small sins” has a significant educative effect. Nobody wants to live out these stories. They realise that in order to avoid the ending, there has to be a change at the beginning.

This is where it gets interesting. Forum Theatre invites the audience to think of alternative responses. The scene restarts, but if someone has an idea, they stop the play by clapping their hands. The person who clapped then swaps with the main actor and tries the new idea. If it leads to a different outcome, perfect! If it doesn't work, everyone else knows what not to try! Each person in the room leaves with at least one alternative behaviour option.

In our scene the main character received her salary; spent half of it on drinks with friends, before coming home drunk to meet her husband, who is eager to pay some urgent bills. “Where is the rest of the money?” he asked. Initially the main character came up with a lie that led to more stealing, more lies and finally prison. The Holy



Spirit moment came when a lady clapped with an alternative idea. “Where's the rest of the money?” “Gone,” she said, “I spent it.”

Absolute silence. Everyone realised that the problem was gone. Sure, the atmosphere at home remained chilly. Bills still had to be paid. Yet there was no prison and she still had a job. Most importantly, trust remained. What began with telling lies, dodging people and breaking the law closed with truth-telling - opening the stage for a much brighter play.

Then loud applause. Some jumped up. Some smiled. They had witnessed the benefits of telling the truth. God was at work that day.

Birte's love for acting goes back to Kindergarten-age. Birte studied 4 years in the Netherlands to become a Dramatherapist. Working as a missionary in Mongolia for 11 years she realized the potential of drama for discipleship and church planting.

Birte



God's Not Finished with Europe!

Europe, the nursery of world Christianity and most Christianised of continents, has itself become a most challenging and strategic mission field. Jeff Fountain asks, "What hope is there for the continent that has been fundamentally shaped by the Gospel, but also by its rejection?"



To have faith for God's future purposes we need reminding of God's activity, both throughout history and through faithful minorities. If the story and followers of Jesus so profoundly shaped Europe's past, why could that not also be true of the future?

Fountain continues, "Like rabbits caught in the headlamps of secularism, we often feel intimidated, immobilised, and unable to articulate our faith in the public square. Our short memories of what God has done in and from Europe breed short-sightedness and rob us of vision." How then should we view Europe today?

Focus on the Wheat

Europe is experiencing serious crises on multiple fronts. Yet these very challenges are reshaping mission. They present boundless opportunities for which believers are beginning to respond with care and compassion. The soft powers of love, truth and justice, which won the early church credibility and respect, are winning credibility for the church again.

Encouragingly, several Lausanne reports attest that Christian people and leaders are stepping up again – engaging with politics, economics, society, refugee settlement, anti-human trafficking, the environment and every sphere of life. Commentators recognise that there is no-one-size fits all strategy. Post-Christian, post-communist, post-modern, post-secular, post-migrant Europeans each require tailored incarnational approaches.

"Let's take another look at Europe," appeals Fountain. "Let's see what God's doing now. 'Wheat and tares' will always grow up together. We should focus on the 'wheat' and look for signs of faith and vision among the ruins." Renewed spiritual hunger, new stirrings of prayer, migrant churches restoring faith and boldness in European cities, a new ecumenism of the heart between ancient traditions, and a recovery of the gospel as transformative to all spheres of life are the signs of hope. Indeed, God isn't finished with Europe yet!

Sensitivity to Context

Darrel Jackson writes of a sober re-assessment of the evangelical euphoria of the early 1990's in Central and Eastern Europe. Cynics suggested that the call to conversion seemed to be, "Repent, be baptised, and take a truckload of Bibles and children's clothes to an orphanage in Romania!" Despite objections, these early years saw an unprecedented openness to the Gospel, new religious freedoms and evangelistic ministries, and the arrival of large numbers of foreign missionaries which initially led to church growth in parts of Europe. However, the presence of these new missionaries was largely resented, due to their mostly non-indigenous churches and approaches and funded from the West.

Missionary activity in recent years however, has become more sensitive to the local context. Sustained and longer-term approaches are emphasised, including innovative examples of evangelical cooperation with traditional (Catholic and Orthodox) churches, and active engagement with the corridors of political, economic, cultural, social and educational power.



Revival Through Refugees

The current refugee crisis is widely considered to be the greatest humanitarian crisis of our time. The magnitude of human displacement, now exceeding 65 million people, is unprecedented. The arrival of millions of migrants in Europe is shaking the foundations of post-Christian Western civilisation.

Yet God is doing something new and exciting in the midst of this crisis. God is reviving the church in Europe through refugees. "They may be the least likely agents for a major move of God," suggests Sam George, "however, that is surely what the Christmas story is all about: a teenage girl, a carpenter, a manger, shepherds, Persian astrologers, Bethlehem of all places, and the like." Many refugees are God-bearers, blessing their host nations in unexpected ways, and in the process reviving some of the stagnant churches in Europe.

Chronicling the impact of African Christians on Europe and the 'reverse mission' of diaspora groups Afe Adogame describes Europe as a 'prodigal continent.' Now that role is also being taken up by new Christians of Middle Eastern and Asian descent who are bringing a new lease of life to European Christianity.



In this the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, God is revitalising what was the centre from the margins. Many Germans are interpreting Luther's vision as a call to continue to offer a safe haven and hospitality to those in need. For his 95 Theses was driven by ideas such as everyone being equally free to access God's grace through faith. According to Luther, "God does not need your good works, but your neighbour does." As a result churches and ministries involved with refugees are experiencing renewal, while the sceptical or hesitant are missing out on a move of the Spirit.

God is also on the move among people on the move. Diasporas arising out of displacement are fertile ground for new activity of the Spirit. After travelling through 10 cities in six European nations George writes of the many refugees that are turning to Christ. He was struck by multiple fellowships which had baptised hundreds of refugees, and the strengthening and planting of Arabic speaking churches, missionally engaged on account of their linguistic and cultural proximity to many of the refugees.

One German pastor confessed, "Starting an outreach to the refugees was the best thing that happened to this church over the last 50 years! It's the most exciting part of our church life right now." Another pastor in Greece shared that three quarters of his church now comprise of refugees, all of whom have joined in the last six months. Like many migrants in transition, they question the underlying assumptions and worldviews that have defined their lives. There is a great openness to explore new ideas, to genuinely seek God and find answers to the deepest questions of life.

Only God could have turned such a desperate situation into such a mission opportunity. Feeling any divine nudges to get involved? Contact our team to explore the possibilities for you or your church.

This feature was shaped by articles published in Lausanne Global Analysis. See here for more: www.lausanne.org

Eric serves with our mobilising team both here and abroad. Away from helping people and churches he can be seen hanging out with his girlie tribe, or following football in the colours of Tottenham.

Eric



SITsvacant

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Dormitory Helper – Senegal

Bourofaye Christian School provides a safe, inspiring, Christian environment for children of missionaries, enabling their parents to fulfil their...

Homeschooling Tutor – North Africa

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Church Planter among women – Chad

Work as an integral part of a team, planting a mature, expanding church among the Eastern peoples of Chad. Create opportunities to contact and witness...

Handy Skills Trainer – Gambia

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Visit www.wecnz.org to check out the full Opportunities Database, or call us on 0800 46 46 86 to explore the options.

More Info

NZoutlook

"Come over and help us!" came our 'Macedonian call'. Changing ministry at our age is very different to following God's call when we first stepped out to follow Him. Yet the principle remains the same; we come, not depending upon our own abilities or wisdom, but depending upon God's enabling; trusting in His leading, empowering and unlimited resources. We're looking forward to working with our NZ WEC team and local churches to encourage both a deeper love for Jesus and a passion for reaching the least reached peoples of our world.

David exemplifies how our service for God emanates from our love, worship and appreciation of who our God is. His words, recorded in Psalm 16 say, "Lord, I have chosen you alone as my inheritance. You are my prize, my pleasure and my portion. I leave my destiny and its timing in your hands. Your pleasant path leads me to pleasant places. I'm overwhelmed by the privileges that come with following you, for you have given me the best." (The Passion Trans)

We've left our home, garden and eight grandchildren on the Gold Coast. Many (from both sides of the ditch) think we're crazy. Yet we have found that when God speaks and we trust and obey, blessing follows.

Graham and Becky have 3 children and 10 grandchildren who delight them in many ways. They have served WEC in many roles, overseas and in Australia and NZ. Graham is a keen gardener and enjoys most sports. Becky loves reading and having coffees with friends.



Graham & Becky

18th - 22nd January 2018

Registration and start: 2pm
Wrap up and finish: 1pm

THE AMAZING RACE TCK CAMP 2018

Eastwest College of Intercultural Studies is sponsoring a camp for MKs/TCKs who are entering Year 10 and up to age 23. Meet other Kiwi TCKs and experience an awesome few days of fellowship, learning, games and amazing food!

Register at office@eastwest.ac.nz

\$120 per person
\$110 per 2nd or 3rd sibling



Training for Mission

Is God challenging you to step out and serve him in another culture? By investing first in training, you gain the skills to last the distance.

Eastwest College offers accredited 1-year Certificate and 2-year Diploma courses, to equip men and women to live and work as ambassadors of Christ in cross-cultural situations. Contact the team at 0800 896 477 and put yourself in the picture.

