

Practical Considerations

in Preparing for

Overseas Missions



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This booklet was written by Paul and Janice Meiburger, Great Commission Europe missionaries in Italy. It was written with help from others within Great Commission Europe and the Great Commission church movement. The motivation for this booklet is to simply share our experiences (both good and difficult) and also to encourage and provide practical help for others considering overseas ministry. Our common passion is to glorify Jesus Christ and in a united way to fulfill His Great Commission.



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"For someone whose heart God has stirred to consider moving overseas for the sake of the gospel, this booklet is invaluable. Whether you are relatively young in your faith, or a seasoned reproducer, you will be challenged to be properly motivated, prepared and equipped. And whatever you do, don't just read over the content and skip over the practical assignments. Come join us in this great adventure of faith!"

Daniel Goering, Pastor and church-planter with over 25 years experience in church planting in Europe. Co-director of Great Commission Europe.

This booklet captures a lot of really good issues for someone considering overseas ministry and it will give you a lot to think and pray about.

Mark Darling, Pastor and church planter with significant involvement in Europe and Great Commission Latin America.

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David and Svea Flood had no idea what was in store for them as they moved from Sweden to the heart of Africa with their 2-year-old child in 1921. Armed with faith, a sense of adventure and another couple to labor with, they ventured deep into the jungle, a part of the Congo where no missionaries had ever been. Arriving in N'dolera, they were immediately barred from entering the village by a tribal leader. Undaunted, they set up house a half mile up the slope from the village.

Prayers for a spiritual breakthrough seemingly went unanswered as nothing happened. The only contact they had with the villagers was one small boy who sold them chickens and eggs. Svea seized the opportunity to talk to this young boy about Jesus, and he did eventually become a believer.

After discouragement caused the other couple to leave the village, tragedy also soon struck the Flood family. In the process of giving birth to their second child, Svea fell ill and died. Something snapped in David. He dug a crude grave for his wife and returned to the African coast, giving his newborn baby to an American missionary family, who renamed her Aggie. Aggie and her new family eventually returned to the States, settling in South Dakota.

Years later, Aggie, much to her surprise, received a Swedish religious magazine, which contained a picture of a white cross with the words, "Svea Flood", her birth mother. Having the article translated, she read the story of her birth parents and a young African convert. As this young man grew, he eventually led many of the villagers to Christ, including the chief. Because of the sacrifice of her birth parents, there were now 600 people following Jesus in this small village.

A few years later, Aggie and her husband traveled to Sweden to find her birth father, now 73 years old, still a bitter alcoholic angry at God. Aggie told him the incredible story of that transformed village, explaining that their work had not been in vain. Before the afternoon ended, her father had reconciled with both her and his Savior.

In yet another twist of remarkable providence, Aggie attended an international conference in England where one of the primary speakers was an African man from Congo. In interacting with him, she discovered that he was, in fact, that young African convert who had brought eggs and chickens to her parents. He was now the superintendent of the National Church of Congo with over 110,000 believers.

Aggie went to visit her mother's grave and was welcomed by cheering throngs of villagers. The message that Sunday at the village was John 12:24, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit"*, ending with Psalms 126:5, *"Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!"*¹

A story like this can, no doubt, inspire some Christians to leave their countries and become overseas missionaries. However, proper motivation for carrying the gospel to foreign lands becomes critical when one encounters trials, temptations, disappointment and apparent failure. This booklet will attempt to explore not only our motivations for service overseas, but also be a simple introduction and guide for those who are considering overseas missions. Other valuable sources have been included at the end of the booklet for help in the preparation process.

1. Our Motivations – Good and Bad

The Bible instructs us to be as neither a horse nor a mule. The horse runs ahead, out of control while the mule obstinately stands its ground and refuses to move. Janice, my wife, and I often laugh as we, respectively, see ourselves as the mule and the horse. I can easily say, “Let’s go!” while she exclaims, “Hold on a moment!” I remember Janice asking me many “why” questions even before we were married. I often struggled with knowing how to answer.

So when it came to moving to Italy, the same question came up. “Why do you feel God is leading us to Europe?” Janice asked these questions not with an unsubmitive spirit, but a genuine desire to understand how God was leading us. The Lord used these questions to help purge my motivations and think through what the primary motivation should be.

So why do people pack their bags and leave their homes and families for the sake of the gospel? For some, it might be the thrill of adventure; for others, love and compassion for the lost; and for others, a simple desire to obey Christ's command to go and make disciples, even to the ends of the earth.

When all is said and done, the greatest reason to do any kind of ministry is our love for Jesus Christ. The first and greatest commandment demands the kind of love for God which involves our total being. A popular song suggests that when Jesus hung dying on the cross, His only thought was of us. It's a nice sentiment, but not, at least in my opinion, accurate. From eternity past, this love relationship existed among the Triune Godhead. Love sent Jesus to die on the cross, but I believe it was primarily love for the Father which really kept Him there.

Unless we are motivated primarily by the love of Christ, a life of sacrifice and service can easily become hollow and meaningless. Nelson Guerra, who has a powerful and effective ministry in Latin America, once gave a riveting talk to pastors from all over the world. He confessed that for years, it seemed like his love for ministry had become the driving motivation in his life. He repented and began to change and allow his love for Jesus to supplant his love for ministry.

It is also easy to think of ourselves. We all to varying degrees entertain thoughts of self. The more we do this, however, the easier it becomes for this self-thought to slowly slip into a desire for recognition by others. When we opt for self-glory, we are on very shaky ground, for the Lord declares He will not share His glory with another.

Without love for Christ as the fundamental motivating principle in our lives, we run the risk of causing more damage than good for the kingdom of God. When life's challenges and temptations come our way—and they will—it can be all too easy to allow serious sin, discouragement, disillusionment and tension in relationships to derail us from our initial desire to serve God.

I encountered such an experience when I had been in Italy three years. Clearly not a linguist, I had been struggling in my language acquisition but felt like I was making progress. However, my language teacher thought otherwise and said as much to me. Her words attacked my heart in a way I could not even explain and I remember after that day not wanting to even leave our home.

Several Sundays later, I excused myself from our Christmas festivities, saying I felt sick. But it was really sickness of heart. Once at home, I found a list of God's promises that our daughter Erin had prepared for a good friend. Jeremiah 31:3 struck me: "I have loved you with an everlasting love". Desperately needing something fresh from the Lord, I began to read this verse in context, starting a few chapters earlier. God then gave me a new life verse: "I will bring him near and he will come close to Me, for who is he who will devote himself to be close to Me?"(Jer. 30:21). I began to cry, because I knew that I was not that man.

I read it again in as many different translations as I could find. This became my expanded version of the verse:

"I will bring him near, and he will come close to Me, for who is he who will devote himself or risk his life, and even dare to pledge his heart, to be close to Me? declares the Lord."

At that point, the Lord began to restore my heart. The following week, I spent three days alone with Him, where He burned on my heart afresh His tremendous love for me and that He must be my

foremost love and only sufficiency. The words of this song, “Draw Me Close to You”, became my heartbeat in this recovery period.

DRAW ME CLOSE TO YOU²

Draw me close to You
Never let me go
I lay it all down again
To hear You say that I'm Your friend

You are my desire
No one else will do
'Cause nothing else could take Your place
To feel the warmth of Your embrace
Help me find the way
Bring me back to You

You're all I want
You're all I've ever needed
You're all I want
Help me know You are near

Application and Action Step:

One of the best principles that I have been able to apply since the early 1990s is what Doug Brown calls a DAWG day (Day Alone with God). Since 1993, I have been trying to spend at least one day per month alone with the Lord. I realized that during the months right before I experienced a type of mid-life crisis, I had stopped having DAWG days.

1. DAWG days are critical to keep us focused on what God calls important. Start having a DAWG Day at least once per month. Even if you feel your DAWG day did not go well, KEEP IT UP. If necessary, get help from a friend on how to spend a day alone with God.
2. During your first DAWG Day, get before God and answer the question, “Why do you think God is leading you to move to another culture for the sake of the gospel?” Write your answer.
3. Honestly examine your motivations before God. Pray and ask

Him to help you be as honest as possible, knowing that rarely do any of us have perfectly pure motivations. Confess any selfish motivations and ask God to purge them and further refine and purify your more pure motives.

4. Share the discoveries of the day with your spouse or a close friend. Ask them to pray for God's continued leading in your life.

2. Our Authority – Christ, the Word of God, and the Church

Equally important as pure motivations is our submission to God-given authorities. Being under His authority and our earthly authorities is a type of protection for our lives, ensuring that we not move too fast or go in directions that are contrary to the Lord's will.

Our supreme authority is the triune God, our Heavenly Father, Jesus our Savior and the Holy Spirit who guides us through His Word. I love how Jesus' Great Commission begins, "All authority in heaven and on earth..." Using this authority, Jesus gives His command, "Go, therefore, and make disciples." Five times Jesus gives this type of Great Commission command to His followers. Today God uses the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to lead and guide His disciples. Indispensable to every believer serious in his walk with the Lord is a reverent and dedicated commitment to the Word of God and the heart to obey it.

However, God also uses biblically-based undershepherds, or local church leadership, to guide and direct us in His excellent and perfect will for our lives. The church, God's chosen instrument in accomplishing His Great Commission, is also the physical manifestation of the glory of God. Through her, God's people are equipped for the work of service and demonstrate that God is living in our midst today.

Three primary purposes and ministries for the church are described in the Word of God: (1) ministry to God through praise and worship; (2) ministry to believers through equipping and nurturing the members of the community; and (3) ministry to the world through evangelism and deeds of mercy. Healthy churches keep these three purposes in balance without overemphasizing one or two at the expense of the others.

The heartbeat of almost every leader in the beginning years of the Great Commission church movement was to go to the ends of the earth with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This Acts 1:8 vision was foundational for our movement, seeing ourselves fulfilling the core value of reaching all nations with the gospel, even in our generation.

Acts 1:8 is often used to encourage a geographic expansion of the gospel: first to our city, then our region or state, and then to the remotest parts of the world. However, the New Testament church model seemed to exhibit a broader application of this verse.

Acts 1:8 says we are to take the gospel to Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the remotest parts of the world. To fulfill Jesus' command, churches are to be simultaneously involved in both local ministry and sending workers to more distant mission fields, and even to the ends of the earth. In the first century, the gospel expanded to the whole known world, while believers were also still working in their Jerusalems, Judeas and Samarias. These first-century churches were filled with fully devoted disciples, who reached their world for Christ in their generation.

Leadership development is often viewed as one of the limiting factors in the spread of the gospel or the starting of new churches. When leaders within a church always continue in their existing roles as senior pastors (either by name or perception), it can passively limit their faith, the faith of developing leaders, and even the faith of the congregation. This, in turn, stifles the development of new leaders. However, when seasoned pastors take a step of faith and launch a new church or step into international missions, it not only serves as examples for our churches, but also makes room for other leaders to fill their roles, expanding the number of leaders within the movement. Fortunately, we have many examples of pastors who have done just that.

A long-time pastor and church-planter in the United States for over 35 years just recently moved to India. He felt the burden to obey the Great Commission even to the ends of the earth, realizing that if we are to reach the world for Christ, it was necessary to start moving overseas. However, before making a final decision, he consulted and received the blessing of his co-pastor and other leaders in the Great Commission church movement. He and his wife currently work with different Christian groups among the Muslims and Hindu and Sikh, as he remains united with and accountable to a number of people in India and the States.

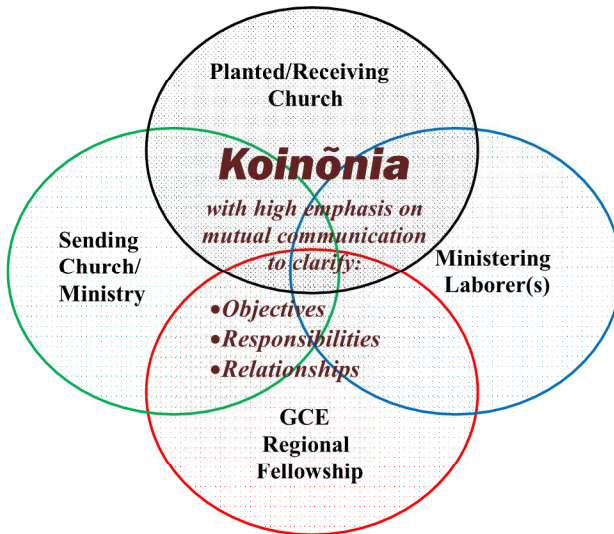
The experience of Andy Sanchez, a seasoned elder, exemplifies another solid principle of unanimous agreement among leaders within

the church. Andy had felt called to start a new church in a nearby community, their Judea perhaps. However, there was not unanimous agreement and so he waited and prayed. He continued to voice his desires, but also to wait upon God's confirmation through total agreement within the leadership. When it came, and only then, Andy launched a new church plant. Such humility and submission must be a "fragrant aroma" to the Lord Himself.

If God does not give unanimous consent within the leadership of a church, it is likely that He is calling us to either stay or wait for His perfect timing. Any number of reasons may be behind the wait: changes may need to occur in our lives or within our family; the church may not be strong enough to weather the loss of one of its pastors; or for reasons only the Lord knows. But this principle of unanimous agreement must also be balanced with the biblical principle of stepping out in faith and "getting out of the boat." The remaining leadership also must exercise faith, since sometimes the loss of a key leader will significantly stretch their lives as well.

When there is a new church plant or a new missionary joining the work in Europe, Great Commission Europe is committed to applying a principle called "The Round Table". The key element in this approach is communication. The Greek word *Koinōnia* means communion by intimate participation. The word is used frequently in the New Testament to describe the relationship within the first-century church.

In the Round Table figure, there are four entities that need to communicate often in the process of starting a new church or sending a new missionary: 1) The Planted or Receiving Church, 2) the Sending Church or Ministry, 3) the Great Commission Europe regional fellowship, and 4) the Ministering laborer(s). There needs to be a high emphasis on mutual communication to clarify the objectives, the responsibilities and the relationships. It is important to communicate who will have the primary authority in which phase of the process. Who will be responsible for the training of the people or coaching them once they are on the field?



Our own experience was a lesson in waiting as well. From the time I first felt led to pursue international missions to its actual fulfillment was about eight years. I recall vividly when Herschel Martindale, our European missions director, called to tell me that “it is not the right time” to go overseas. I hung up the phone and started to cry. Little did I know that more disappointment and waiting lay ahead for us. However, after a “failed” psychology test and serious health problems for Janice's mother derailed “our” plans, the time eventually came for us “to set sail for Italy.”

During this process, it was necessary to be persistent. We likely would have stopped had I not been convinced that this really was God’s will for us. In retrospect, I have come to truly appreciate all the care and effort those in authority in my life took to make sure that this move would be right and best for our lives. God is the same way. He only wants our very best, and He will use the authorities in our lives to help lead and guide us in His excellent and perfect will for our lives.

Application and Actions Steps:

1. If you feel that God is leading you to be part of an overseas mission process, as an individual, as part of a team, or even a

number of people from the same family, the first thing you need to do is share this with your pastor and leadership team. They can give you an objective perspective and advice on how to proceed.

2. A question which might be posed to you will be: “How are you currently involved in sharing your faith?” The truth is that if you are not involved in the gospel right where you are now, you probably will not be that involved when you go overseas. The good news is a simple solution exists: start sharing your faith!
3. Ask counsel and questions from as many people as you can find who have been or are missionaries. Prayerfully consider how you can use their counsel and learn from them. If you have a specific country in mind, plan on taking a trip there or begin to network with people who have already ministered in that part of the world.
4. If you are a pastor or church leader, consider how you can better prepare your church to reach not only your Jerusalem and Judea, but also Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world. Usually every healthy church has a number of people who have the gift of evangelism or whom God has given a deeper heart for world evangelism. These people can be a real catalyst within your church when they are properly directed and focused in ministry. Many churches have an annual missions conference which has the benefit of motivating Christians to not only give to missions, but also envision some to go.
5. If your church does not have an annual missions conference, consider taking initiative to plan one. Talk to your pastor and get his approval and help. Resources online abound. A simple search “planning a missions conference” yields a goldmine of resources and ideas.

3. Our Family – Strength Within

“The family should be a closely knit group. The home should be a self-contained shelter of security; a kind of school where life's basic lessons are taught; and a kind of church where God is honored; a place where wholesome recreation and simple pleasures are enjoyed” – Billy Graham, “My Answer”, syndicated newspaper column.

The strength and unity of the family cannot be overemphasized. Our association of churches places immense value on the necessity of raising godly families:

“We believe that strong families are fundamental for the physical, social, emotional and spiritual development of each individual; for healthy relational patterns within the church; and for stability in society. Strong families produce strong churches and strong communities...

Common Practices

- When we evaluate a married man for leadership, we look at the strength of his marriage and his family before evaluating his ministry skills and other credentials...
- Our practice is to encourage families to be 'on-mission,' actively involved in evangelism, discipleship, and church-planting.”³

Character can often define and sometimes determine the effects of a ministry, whether at home or abroad. While no family can claim perfection, fundamental necessities include a Christ-centered focus, the ability to quickly resolve conflicts, mutual respect and honor, and, of course, love and unity.

For strong families, a way to further strengthen and envision the family is to be involved in overseas missions. Short-term mission trips are a great place to begin preparing the family; however, it is crucial to realize the importance of long-term involvement in cross-cultural outreach. The Great Commission will not be realized through short-term service alone. Imagine the impact of children realizing that “Every Nation in Our Generation” is not just a song we sing, but

a lifestyle we live.

A myriad of resources is available for those seeking to develop a strong family, but one of the most important principles we can practice is that of accountability, regularly meeting with couples in open and honest relationships. These types of life transformation groups, where difficult questions are asked, will help sharpen and refine our lives and families.

Another indispensable principle is that of the father assuming spiritual leadership of the home. After many “false starts,” I was finally able to establish a regular time of family devotions, reading the Word together and helping us to discover God's will and heart. I used these times and meal times to introduce the possibility of our family eventually going overseas. Years later, one of our daughters commented, “It seemed not so much a question of ‘if’, but rather ‘when and where’.” Preparation of the family is essential before considering a move overseas and this ideally starts when they are still young.

The Great Commission Churches have developed a 2020 strategic vision and plan, part of which includes a strategy to encourage families to be teamed together in the same geographical area, to reach people together in that city, state or country. This has the advantage of promoting the advancement of the gospel combined with families maintaining a responsibility to each other in the spirit of Deut. 6:2 and 1 Timothy 5:8. There are many advantages to this strategy, and family unity in the Gospel is definitely a high priority. Families that are truly Great Commission families may stay together and be teamed together in the gospel, while other Great Commission families might be led by God to travel to different parts of the world, accepting the sacrifice of not being physically close to the people they love for their calling in Christ.

With the technology of today, it is possible to stay closely connected and have deep conversations even over thousands of miles, and international travel is relatively easy. When I moved to Europe, for example, I had found that my relationship with my mother had significantly deepened. I used to Skype her for a short call 5-6 times per week while I was in Europe, but when I was in the States, I would call her only about once per week and see her maybe once per month even though we were in the same city. We used to Skype our daughter often day to “see” our grandson. Now people use Facetime.

Today, a type of family unity is possible even from different parts of the world, but regardless of this technological advancement, for those who feel called to overseas ministry, the priority of being united and close to our family needs to be held in balance with our calling and our primary love for Jesus. His clear command is to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Jesus made it clear that loving Him and obeying Him needs to be foremost in our hearts, as Jesus said in Matthew 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Jesus also said that following Him will require sacrifices. There are definite sacrifices associated with being distant from parents, children and grandchildren. But our awesome God promises to give us even more in return (along with persecutions). In Mark 10:29-30, "Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life."

Clearly different stages of life require different preparation and some knowledge of the potential obstacles which come with them. We will take a quick look at these stages, from singlehood to the empty nest.

1) Unmarried missionaries

Although at first glance it would seem unmarried individuals have an easier time making a radical lifestyle change to overseas ministry, unique challenges await them as well. Parental concerns are generally higher when their single son or daughter pursues a call to international missions. Once on the field, one of the common struggles will be that of loneliness, and if the new ministry is filled with young married couples, a sense of isolation.

Although temptations are universal, the single person is especially vulnerable. In many countries, public nudity (posters, beaches, etc.) is acceptable and the norm. Single men might struggle with pornography even more so overseas. Italian TV, by Christian standards, is pornographic. Single women, discontent in their

singleness, might easily be flattered by the male attention they receive from international men who might be much more forward and aggressive. It goes without saying that if singles struggle with these or other potentially weakening issues, the time to address them is before they actually move overseas. Accountability groups and older, wiser mentors are highly encouraged.

2) Newly Married Couples

Our general counsel for newlyweds is to wait at least a year and perhaps even longer, before embarking on an overseas mission process. Often the stress of cross-cultural adaptation (even in English-speaking countries) can put too much strain on a couple already dealing with adjustments to marital life. It is imperative that parents and/or pastors and spiritual mentors become involved in the decision-making process of the time frame for newlyweds to begin pursuing overseas missions.

3) Missionary Couples

When a married couple considers moving overseas for the gospel, two of the major concerns are strength of relationship and unity. It is important that the couple be experienced in resolving conflicts, handling stressful situations together and knowing how to encourage one another.

It is also not uncommon for a young, driven husband to feel called to the mission field while the wife remains ambivalent, especially realizing all the sacrifices such an undertaking will exact. She may have a strong faith and trust in the Lord allowing her to follow her husband wholeheartedly in this decision, feeling that her calling is primarily to honor, support and submit to her husband. If, however, one of the spouses is strongly opposed to the move, it is imperative to seek the Lord together and allow Him to bring unity in the decision-making process. This principle would be true for every married couple, whether they have children or not.

A couple without children will have a greater amount of freedom and availability than certainly those with young children. They can focus on language acquisition and navigate their way through cultural challenges without the added stress of children's needs. Their schedules will only have to be coordinated between them, adding

much flexibility to a completely different kind of life.

However, one problem which could arise more quickly is getting adjusted to spending almost every waking hour with your spouse. This phenomenon, usually reserved for retirement, may come as quite a rude awakening for some. With children, the pressure is usually diffused, but when it is only the two of you, things can get tense. Another potential adjustment might be if the couple decides to have a baby in the new country, which is a challenge for any first-time parents. The fear of the unknown, a new culture and language, and little understanding of the medical institutions make it a more stressful situation. Some missionaries have opted to birth their babies in their home countries.

4) Missionary Couples With Young Children

Two of the greatest challenges for families with young children will be the added stress and pressure of cross-cultural adaptation in an already demanding season of life and the decision-making process regarding the education of their children.

Raising young children brings with it a myriad of responsibilities: discipline, character training, family standards, and educational choices. And these can all fly in the face of a new culture which may undermine the very values parents are trying to instill in their children. For those who homeschooled in the United States, it is important to realize that this may not be an option in the newly adopted country. Some opt for international schools, others for Christian schools, and still others choose a public school in order to immerse their children into the new culture and language.

The most important ingredient here is parental involvement. Whether one chooses homeschooling or private or public options, parents must maintain vigilance in what is being taught to their children. A biblical worldview taught by the parents is one of the greatest weapons against secular humanism and postmodernism.

5) Missionary Couples With Teenagers

Among some mission organizations, there is a consensus that an overseas move with high-school-aged children presents unacceptably high risks and, therefore, is not encouraged, or even permitted. It is

true that in this season of life teenagers begin developing their own values and convictions which may present unique challenges. Teenagers sometimes move from being family-dependent to peer-dependent, and face opposition to the biblical worldview and Christian faith of their childhood. A number of missionaries from the Great Commission church movement have moved overseas with teen-aged children and a survey of their experiences was taken to obtain their insights on their move.

When asked to rate (from 1-10) how the move affected them in various aspects of their life, the average response was as follows:

Socially	– 8
Emotionally	– 6
Spiritually	– 8

All of them said it was a good experience. When asked if they would do it over again, all said yes, some commenting, “In a heartbeat”, “100% yes”, “Definitely”, “For sure, it shaped who I am in a good way.”

Leaving family and friends was understandably the greatest challenge, along with learning a new language and developing friendships in the new culture. Thoughts were also shared on how to better prepare the family: (1) “Start at birth, letting them know that they might move overseas for the gospel”; (2) acknowledge the difficulties and listen to their fears and potential reservations; (3) give as much advanced notice as possible and stress the long-term benefits; (4) language training; and (5) provide opportunities to talk with other missionaries on what to expect.

It is also important to make preliminary trips to where you will be moving. Ideally teens participate with their parents in short-term mission trips to their new location. This will not only remove some of the unknowns from the move, but also God will likely have begun working in their hearts, and they also will feel called to missions. Often short-term mission trips have the effect of leaving some of our heart where we ministered, and there is often a desire to return.

Some missionary teens said the move strengthened their family, and family relationships improved as a result of their experience. Though difficult times were endured, many thought the end result was

positive, in that they were forced to step out in faith and were also much more understanding of other peoples and cultures.

Wise parents need to walk a fine line between allowing their children input on a potential move overseas and making the ultimate decision, based on God's leading. Teens need to be listened to and must feel as though they are being listened to and understood. Since teens become part of the mission team, their opinions and feelings must be considered and teen children must be a united part of your team.

If we are to live our core values of strong families and the Great Commission, we should not automatically disqualify a family or discourage a family from considering overseas missions solely on the basis of having teen-aged children. Within the Great Commission church movement, there is a high priority on raising up our children as Great Commission disciples. Pastors are encouraged to make that goal a priority in decision-making. Fathers are urged to make this their focus. A father should ask himself, his wife and his children if a move will further that goal or be a stumbling block to that goal. If there are teens, it would be ideal if the teens have the same conviction of being called as do the parents. Younger teens may have sufficient faith in God and their parents to follow the leading of their parents under their authority, perhaps without having their own personal call. There is a big difference between a 13-year-old and a 17-year-old teenager. If the family is united in their vision and calling to move overseas in a desire to fulfill the Great Commission, then it is likely that this move overseas for the sake of the Gospel will only serve to strengthen this vision and further unite their family around God's calling and purpose in their lives.

6) Empty Nesters

Many baby boomers are now empty nesters. Tremendous potential resides in this stage of life as well as unique challenges and considerations. Seasoned believers, having already weathered many of life's storms, are often more stable and more mature than younger missionaries. With more years, one often has more wisdom, biblical knowledge and experience

However, it is also a time of life when the proper care of aging parents must be considered and ensured. Oftentimes a sibling left

behind takes on the primary responsibility of parental care, but it is still difficult dealing with parents' increased medical problems and not be nearby to help. A good principle to follow is to make decisions such that after our parents have passed on, we do not have to live with serious regrets.

Entering the mission field late in life also brings with it certain insecurities and revelations. It took me several years of being in Torino to realize that I was no longer considered a peer of the university student! The notion, however, that we are too old for the mission field is one that should be dispelled immediately. Though it is true that the university students will never see us as peers, it is also just as true that they are in need of mentors, and more often than not, parental figures. Frank and Pam Apisa, our co-workers here in Italy, are wonderful examples of those who bridge the age gap and minister powerfully to the students.

7) Adult Children Who are Left Behind

Adult children who were left behind when their parents chose overseas missions were asked to share their thoughts and feelings about the process. Their responses are included here.

- “Their move was, of course, very emotional for me. I was thrilled on one hand to have parents who were so committed, so faithful.”
- “As time went on and I faced trials in marriage or parenting, my parents were largely limited to counseling and comforting me over the phone. In many ways this was no different than I had ever expected.”
- “In many ways, their physical absence has only accelerated the process of adulthood for each of us. They are not available to solve all our problems. We have had to seek the Lord on our own and make grown-up choices while many of our peers seem to fall back on their parents all too quickly. We are all learning as we go but overall the process, while difficult, has been very healthy.”
- “I'm pretty sure it would feel the same way if they lived

across the U.S, or even several hours away, but it is still hard and I miss them and wish they were more a part of my daily life.”

- “I think the hardest part is that I love my parents and respect them so much, it is just hard to share them with the rest of the world. But, with all that said, I'm so proud of them.”
- “They are a strong example to me of how one must give up his life to save it—every aspect of this life, including your children, might have to be given up at some point in order to follow Christ.”
- “For me, I was living at home my first year of college, so when they moved overseas I moved in with my oldest brother who was still single at the time. The transition probably hit me the hardest as my older brothers and sisters had already pretty much settled in to their independent lives.”
- “Not having the option to go 'home' on the weekends while in college was not easy.”
- “My parents' decision to make this move was my decision too, but God does not call us to make comfortable choices where we see the outcome. He calls us to make disciples of all nations and leave even the people and things we love to show others the purpose of life and how to live it. I still talk to my parents frequently as they will always be a huge part of my life and the role models of Christ's love I aspire to be like; knowing they are being role models for the people around them could not be more encouraging. Their story gives my story the doors to share the gospel where I am on the other side of the world.”

Key ingredients to relational/emotional stability on the mission field when leaving behind adult children are the importance of frequent communication and availability for those in crisis or need. With Skype (an online free computer to computer video conferencing program) and the ease of overseas communication, this is no longer a difficulty or financial burden.

8) Our Church Family

For some, a church family becomes more of a support than their actual physical family. In any case, it is important that the sending church gives support to its missionaries in ways other than just finances. This may happen initially but then diminish as the years go by. The missionaries themselves can help in this process by keeping in good contact with and making known their prayer needs to their church family.

Ways in which the sending church can bless its missionaries include mailing care packages (especially with items not available in the country they reside); delegating a small group to obtain specific prayer requests and pray for them regularly; sending short-term mission groups which encourages the missionaries while envisioning the sending church; and allowing the missionaries to share ministry updates when they are available during home service.

Application and Action Steps:

1. A strong family is necessary for successful ministry. Pray and ask the Lord to reveal weaknesses in your family or things which could become weaknesses while ministering on a foreign field. Ask Him to identify at least three areas where you can grow and strengthen your family.
2. For each area identified as a weakness, pray and ask the Lord to give you a plan on how to strengthen them and the grace to be vigilant.
3. Identify each person in your family who will be affected by your potential move overseas. Pray for God's wisdom and understanding on how to help them accept and adjust to this change in their lives.
4. Pray and ask the Lord how He might want to use you as an instrument in His hands to develop more of a Great Commission mindset in your church.

4. Our Preparation – Where to Begin

Once the call to overseas missions has been confirmed, our biblical authorities are in agreement and our family is strong and united, it is necessary to begin actively preparing. Herschel Martindale, a pastor for over 50 years and former European Missions director, poses the following questions for those considering overseas missions:

1. Have you been baptized?
2. Have you established a daily habit of reading and obeying the Scriptures?
3. Have you learned how to be filled with the Holy Spirit regularly?
4. Have you learned how to quickly repent from sin and claim God's forgiveness?
5. Do you meet with a church and small group faithfully?
6. Do you share the gospel with others whenever God gives you an opportunity?
7. Have you “made a disciple” in the past six months?
8. Have you developed the habit of sacrificial prayer as a priority?
9. Have you learned how to humble yourself to God and others regularly?
10. Have you developed a habit of loving and putting others ahead of yourself?

Honestly answering these questions and developing these godly habits should and will be an ongoing process in our lives.

Three options for entering overseas missionary service will be considered here: (1) through a mission agency; (2) through tent-making; and (3) through a local church. The best option for you may depend upon many different factors.

Mission Agencies

The most common way to serve overseas as a missionary is to go through a mission agency, such as Reliant Mission. Requirements generally include an application, an interview and usually some type of psychological testing. Based on the results of the test, it might be

necessary to undergo some counseling. The investment of time and money in the training and sending process makes it imperative to ensure that potential missionaries are fit for service. My wife and I were required to see a counselor and though it was initially difficult, it proved to be a rewarding experience for both of us.

Although the process of going through a mission agency generally takes longer and is more difficult, the benefits are many. Training in the support-raising process and handling of financial issues, including reimbursements, insurance and retirement benefits, are two of the main services the mission agency provides. It also provides a good authority structure; it simplifies the gift-giving for the donors; and mission agencies usually understand the missionary's needs and can, therefore, better help meet those needs.

Tent-Making

A tent-maker, like the Apostle Paul, is one who moves overseas for the purpose of sharing the gospel, but works in the local economy to provide for his own needs. Tent-makers may constitute the entire missionary force in a country which is closed to full-time missionaries, such as the Muslim nations. The benefits to tent-making are obvious: (1) no need for a financial support base; (2) natural immersion into the culture; (3) language acquisition may be easier, working with nationals.

However, one misconception may exist in the mind of the tent-maker: that it will be easy to find a job or start a business overseas. Experience has proven that this often is not the case. If this option is being seriously considered, it is important to make contact with Christians inside the country for help and support in the process. Without this, it might be impossible to proceed legally and effectively as a tent-maker. However, working part-time for a company in the United States through internet connections is very feasible these days.

Local Church

Being funded and supported fully or partially through a local church is becoming more common these days. The advantage to this is that there are no or only minimum administrative fees charged by the church. Since the supporters are donating to the church, there is also a tax deduction. One warning to this way of supporting a

missionary is that there may be some scrutiny by the IRS, and churches must make sure that there is no “channeling” of funds. It is critical that funds be clearly under the direction of the church's financial or legal board. It is prudent to include a professional tax consultant or accountant in the planning process.

Regardless of which method a missionary chooses to support himself, visa acquisition and legal permissions to stay in the country will be issues which need to be addressed. Laws and requirements differ for each country, so it will be necessary to research the process and find the consulate office for the country being considered. It can be a long and daunting process so it is important that the application process be started as soon as possible. In our case, we enjoyed the benefit of joining an already existing ministry, with our co-laborers walking through many of the transition steps with us. However, even with that, the visa process delayed our arrival in Torino six months after we were ready to go.

Prayer is and always will be one of the most powerful resources for your ministry, and it is highly recommended that you have a team of prayer warriors in place before you leave the country. Begin writing regular ministry prayer letters for your prayer support team, both for prayer requests and for highlighting answers to prayer. A simple truth to remember is “Prayer is not the beginning of the battle or a part of the battle; it is the battle” (author unknown). Oswald Chambers has also written, “Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.”

Another final step in the preparation process should be focused training on what to expect with your move and the language acquisition process. One of the best training programs available is Mission Training International (MTI at www.mti.org). Two programs exist which should be required for every foreign missionary, whether funded by a mission agency, a local church or a tent-maker. The first is called SPLICE, which is a two-week course on preparation for entering a new culture. The second MTI course is called PILAT, which is a two-week program in language acquisition techniques. Both of these programs (or something similar) are vital for you and your family, and are required for those sent by mission agencies. They come highly recommended by missionaries who have participated in them, and it is well worth the financial and time investment for your move overseas.

Application and Action Steps

1. During one of your DAWG days, review the ten areas of personal faithfulness in the beginning of this section. Pray and ask God to identify which areas need to be strengthened and prioritize them. Pray and take steps to strengthen these areas.
2. Seek an accountability partner (a trusted friend or spouse) who will help you stay on course with these action steps.
3. Pray and seek counsel for the best way to move overseas, whether through a mission agency, as a tent-maker, or through your local church. Begin making the necessary arrangements or contacts to begin this process.
4. Begin researching the visa requirements, seeking help from companies such as “Travisa” which, for a fee, will work with the appropriate foreign consulate offices in the visa application and approval process. Better yet would be a contact within the country who is willing to help you in this process.
5. Develop a prayer support team, staying in contact with them even before you leave.
6. It is not always plausible, but if it is at all possible, begin language acquisition Stateside. Personal teachers, community college courses and language partners are all ways one can familiarize oneself with the language even before departure.
7. Plan and schedule your departure training with MTI or some other similar program. Raising special support may also be necessary for the costs involved in the move overseas.

5. Our Move – Just the Beginning

A special word of confirmation from God, though not necessary, is so helpful in the process of moving overseas. Fear of the unknown and leaving family and relationships behind presented much more of a challenge for Janice and our daughters than for me. However, late in the process of moving after having raised almost all of our necessary support, the Lord gave this verse to Janice which sealed the move in her heart.

“And when it was decided that we should set sail for Italy...” Acts 27:1

Many practical considerations also must be addressed in making this monumental move overseas. Housing, shipping and language acquisition are some of the issues which can present unique challenges when the move is international.

Housing

It is not easy finding a home in a new country. Laws and controls often make the task so much more daunting than in the States where there is more freedom. Knowing someone in the country you are moving to is a great asset because they are familiar with the location and language. However, when no one is available, being a native English speaker works to your advantage as generally speaking, you can always find people familiar with the English language.

Things you will want to find out in the house-hunting process are safe neighborhoods, types of and longevity of rental contracts and expenses incurred in the rental process. For example, in Italy, a rental agreement is usually 4-8 years in length, a very expensive realtor fee is charged even for a rental contract and the security deposit can be up to 3 months' rent. Thus, moving costs are probably much higher than you might imagine and should be considered when raising support. In Italy, we found very few freestanding homes for rent and that became quite an adjustment in itself as well. Learning to respect neighbors with noise level and late hours presented quite a challenge for us, who were used to living alone in our own home.

If at all possible, it might be wise for the husband to go early and find housing before the rest of the family arrives. Otherwise, it will

be necessary to have a place to stay for an extended amount of time. We were able to move into our new apartment within the first week of our arrival, but our furniture was held captive by the Italian government for two months. Expect surprises!

A number of options are available when it comes to your home and possessions, and of course, this will be dependent upon the intended amount of time you will spend in the new country: (1) Selling everything; (2) Storing everything; (3) Bringing all or part of belongings. We opted for the third as it considerably decreased our expenses since we knew someone in the international shipping business who cut the price in half. In any case, one piece of advice which made sense was to bring along some items which remind you of home and evoke good memories. For those on a limited budget, there is also the option of renting a furnished house or apartment.

Language Acquisition

As was mentioned earlier, language acquisition can and should start in the States before one's departure. Many of the comments from the young people who were surveyed included regrets that they had not learned the language a little before the move. However, once you are on foreign soil, the importance of language acquisition cannot be overstated. There will be serious challenges adapting to your new culture if you or any family members do not learn the language. Below are some tips to help you with the language acquisition process.

1. Shortly after arriving, find a tutor or language school.
2. Develop a personal language acquisition plan with measurable goals for hours of effort in three areas: (1) Classes or language conversation partners (recommended 20-25 hrs/wk); (2) Active learning and personal language study (recommended 5-10 hrs/wk); and (3) Passive learning and listening (recommended 5-10 hrs/wk).
3. Log in your hours in each category everyday, and find a personal language coach or someone you can be accountable to with the implementation of your language plan. Share that plan with them and plan to meet with them at least two times per month.

4. It is recommended and, in my opinion, imperative that the first year be entirely devoted to language acquisition. Ministry should be limited to only those things which will aid in the acquisition of the target language. After the first year, your language progress should be evaluated to determine if continued language training is necessary.
5. Even for international church pastors teaching in English, language acquisition would be encouraged as many international church participants are not fluent in English and nationals become members.
6. One exception to focused language acquisition training might be for an older missionary who will likely only be in-country for a relatively short time, and it is intended that translators will always be used while doing ministry.

Promises from the Word of God

Probably the most important foundation for your move will be your promises from the Word of God as well as your life verses. These, more than anything else, will help sustain you in your transition process so it is good to always keep them before you and your family. Someone counseled Frank Apisa, the founding pastor of the church in Torino who has since moved to start a new church in Milano, to read and study the book of Deuteronomy during the final weeks before embarking on his church-planting efforts in Italy. Moses wrote this book as a final exhortation for the people of Israel as they were preparing to enter the Promised Land, so this is a very good preparation step.

Application and Action Steps

1. Make efforts to obtain some local help in the city where you will be moving. It is always good to find support and friendship among the existing Christian community, so that they see you as co-laborers and not competition.
2. Decide if you will find a place before moving, or if you will be hosted by someone immediately upon your arrival. Make the necessary arrangements depending upon your decision.

3. Begin thinking about and planning for your move, especially your current household possessions.
4. Develop a preliminary language acquisition plan and upon arrival, find a personal language coach. Work together on your language progress.
5. Begin asking the Lord for special promises and words of encouragement from His Word, and during one or even a couple of your DAWG days, study the book of Deuteronomy. Share your promises and insights with your prayer team.

6. Our Adjustment – What to Expect

Shortly after arrival in our new country, the excitement kicks in as everything seems to be so strange and new. We'd been preparing for this for well over a year, and now the day has come. We have finally arrived. However, it does not take long for the excitement to wear off and we begin to experience a myriad of other emotions which can be difficult to explain.

Not too long after we had first arrived, we went with some visitors to a nearby lake. Janice and I got separated, and as she was searching for me, an older Italian man looked over at her. She decided to take the plunge and engage the man in conversation. “Cercho un marito” she said timidly, at which the man smiled broadly and asked, “Quanti mariti cerchi?” She then realized what she had said. Instead of saying, “I'm looking for my husband”, she had actually said, “I'm looking for a husband”. The man had replied, “How many husbands are you looking for?”

This was just one of many embarrassing moments we encountered and the beginning of what is commonly called “culture shock”. If you attend the Missionary Training International courses, you will become very familiar with what this is and how to minimize its effects on your life and relationships. This section will give you just a brief overview of what you have to look forward to.

Culture shock is what happens when a person from one culture is immersed into a different culture, and the clash of cultures begins. It can even occur within a country, for example, when someone from New York moves to Texas; it can happen between two English-speaking countries, like England and Australia; and, of course, as in our case, crossing an ocean can really get the process moving.

Culture shock often consists of distinct phases: (1) the honeymoon phase; (2) the crisis phase; (3) the recovery phase; and (4) the adjustment phase. There are no fixed symptoms ascribed to culture shock as each person is affected differently and some are not in their new culture long enough to traverse all of these phases. Each phase will be briefly explained along with some tips for overcoming the negative effects of culture shock.

The Honeymoon Phase is the romantic feelings we have when we first enter a new culture. Life is full of adventure with many new discoveries. The nationals are generally excited to meet a person from America. We get excited trying the new foods. We enjoy the different pace of life. However, as with newlyweds, the honeymoon doesn't last forever. After a relatively short period of time, real life sets in, with all its demands and challenges, only now in a new culture. It is important to know that not everyone experiences a honeymoon phase; some move right into crisis mode.

The Crisis Phase is the period when people need to negotiate through the new territory of their new culture. It usually occurs about three months after arrival (although this can vary, of course). During the crisis phase, the differences between the old and new cultures become marked, creating a wide range of emotions, mostly negative, such as anxiety, frustration and even anger. It is not uncommon to feel confused or embarrassed or even stupid, because the simplest things become a real challenge or obstacle in our lives. The differences which once seemed quaint now become irritating, strange, or just unacceptable. These feelings usually seem to revolve around the formidable language barrier, but other irritants might include the food, personal hygiene (or lack thereof), customs and even how people drive.

We begin to really miss the security and familiar places of our old culture ("normal" restrooms, grocery stores with actual choices). We miss the routines that used to make up our lives back home. If we are not careful, we can adopt a "we" versus "they" mentality, with "their" culture always ending up on the short end of the stick. In extreme cases, serious mood swings can occur, resulting in isolation and depression. As more and more cultural differences gnaw at the person, severe disappointment and disillusionment can take its toll.

Our initial attitudes when culture shock hits us are, therefore, critical. If we can maintain an attitude of openness, acceptance and trust, our responses to the cultural differences will more likely be positive. As we navigate through culture shock, it is important to employ some positive coping strategies. Observing the nationals is a great way to learn their social taboos and nuances. Asking simple questions and listening intently to the responses can go a long way in

understanding them. If we can remember phrases like “different, not wrong or strange”, we can dispel the tendency to judge the new culture.

People who successfully adapt to their new culture will eventually find a rapport or understanding of the culture that they did not have before, but those who remain critical will find themselves withdrawing from the culture, resulting in alienation and isolation. The latter will likely not survive long-term on the mission field.

The crisis phase can last anywhere from six to eighteen months upon arrival in your new culture. After this, people generally experience what some call the recovery and adjustment phases. These two will be discussed in the next section on Perseverance.

During the culture shock phase of our transition, a number of good disciplines can strengthen us in our trials. Staying recharged in the Lord is the responsibility of every Christian, but it is especially crucial when the new culture seems to be taking everything else out of us. Extra time with the Lord, worshiping and singing, can often neutralize the effects of a bad encounter in the culture, not to mention fight off attacks from the evil one.

When someone initially enters a new culture, they usually try to have an attitude of openness, acceptance and trust, but some unfortunately come with suspicion, fear and prejudice. Some of the inevitable reactions to cross-cultural encounters are frustration, confusion, tension and embarrassment. When the cultural differences begin to gnaw at your sanity, you have a choice. People have different reactions, some positive and some negative. What type of coping strategy you will embrace:

- The positive coping strategies, which include things like observing, listening, and asking questions. This generally results in understanding and embracing the new culture where you are living.
- The negative reactions to the cultural differences, which would be to criticize, rationalize, or withdraw. This generally results in alienation and isolation from the new culture.

Forbearance with others is another good habit to cultivate, since

frustration with the culture can often result in taking it out on the ones closest to us, our spouse and children. Realize that you are not the only person experiencing the challenges of culture shock. Along the same lines, keep short accounts with others. Be quick to go and ask forgiveness. Be quick to forgive.

It is essential to pray often and with others. Personal prayer is important and necessary, but united prayer as a family or with co-laborers will likely do more to strengthen you and others around you.

Application and Action Steps

1. Talk through with your spouse and/or family members some of the adjustments you will be facing with your move overseas. If necessary, do more research on the topic of culture shock and/or encourage family members to research it as well. Share information.
2. Together with your spouse, decide on a few commitments you will make with one another to help you through the process. Perhaps even write a short covenant, incorporating some key biblical principles that you especially want to hold to during the crisis stage of culture shock. Include your children in this process. Print it, sign it and maybe even display it on the wall of your home. This will be a constant reminder to one another and also a witness to your guests on how you want to live by biblical principles.

7. Our Perseverance – The Team around Us

Frank Apisa, our founding pastor of the church in Torino, told me before we moved to Italy that we would pray together everyday once we joined them. My first thought was one of unbelief; it just wasn't realistic. However, thanks to Frank's passion for prayer and diligence in making it a priority, it really did happen. We are convinced that it was this discipline of prayer which held us together as a team, because we were all so different. At one point, we realized that we two couples represented all four of the temperaments (choleric, melancholy, phlegmatic and sanguine)! There is absolutely nothing more critical for team unity and success than regularly praying together.

Conflict among missionaries remains one of the major reasons for returning home. Therefore, staying humble and working to resolve all conflicts should be one of the highest priorities among staff. A new missionary especially is commonly very optimistic rather than realistic, which can be a good thing, but it also can breed critical thoughts toward the more seasoned missionaries. It is important that new missionaries stay humble and be primarily learners.

The recovery and adjustment stages occur when a person continues to be immersed in a culture not his own, but is beginning to embrace and adapt in it. One is learning to accept the new environment, adopt new ways of thinking and even beginning to feel like they belong in this new culture. This process takes years and some missionaries never complete it, never feeling quite comfortable in their new country.

Even more seasoned missionaries may feel tired, anxious, discouraged and a host of other emotions, without being able to explain why. Having passed through the crisis stage of cultural adaptation, and entering the recovery and adjustment stages, missionaries might still struggle with cultural issues. Learning how to manage this ubiquitous challenge called “cultural stress” will be an important rite of passage in perseverance.

A missionary care website, "www.missionarycare.com" has a wealth of information for both new and inexperienced missionaries and much of the following information is taken from it:

Some major causes of culture stress:

- Involvement. The more you become personally involved in the culture, the more culture stress you may feel. The tourist, the business person or someone from the diplomatic corps, not committed to being the incarnation of Christ in that culture, may feel little culture stress.
- Values. The greater the differences in values between your home culture and your host culture, the greater the stress. Values of cleanliness, responsibility, and use of time may cause stress for years. Cultures may appear similar on the surface but have broad differences in deeper values.
- Communication. Learning the meanings of words and rules of grammar are only a small part of being able to communicate effectively. The whole way of thinking, the common knowledge base, and the use of non-verbals are necessary and come only with great familiarity with the culture.
- Temperament. The greater the difference in your personality and the average personality in the culture, the greater the stress. A reserved person may find it difficult to feel at home where most people are outgoing extroverts. An extrovert may never feel at ease in a reserved culture.
- Entry-re-entry. Most missionaries, unlike immigrants, live in two cultures and may never feel fully at home in either. Every few years they change their place of residence, never fully adapting to the culture they are in at the time.
- Children. The more your children internalize the values of your host culture and the more you realize that they will be quite different from you, the more stress you may feel.
- Multinational teams. Although effectiveness of the ministry may increase, working together in your mission with people from cultures other than your host culture often adds to the culture stress.

Common results of cultural stress, which can be very similar to other types of stress:

- Feelings of anxiety, confusion, disorientation, uncertainty, insecurity, and helplessness
- Fatigue, tiredness, lack of motivation, lethargy, lack of joy
- Illness (stress suppresses the immune system), concern about germs, fear of what might be in the food
- Disappointment, lack of fulfillment, discouragement, feeling hurt, feeling inadequate, feeling "out of it"
- Anger, irritability, contempt for the host culture, resentment (perhaps toward God), feelings of superiority or inferiority
- Rejection of the host culture, the mission board, even of God.
- Homesickness.

Suggestions on how to decrease culture stress and make it manageable:

- Recognition. Realize that culture stress is inevitable for those attempting to become at home in a host culture, and look at what factors cause you the most stress.
- Acceptance. Admit that the host culture is a valid way of life, a means of bringing Christ to the people who live in it.
- Communication. Beware of isolating yourself from everyone in your home culture, those with whom you can relax and be yourself, those with whom you can talk.
- Escape. You need daily, weekly, and annual respites. God made the Sabbath for people, so be sure you keep it. Reading, music, hikes, worship (not leading it), and vacations are necessary.

- Identity. Know who you are and what you will allow to be changed about you. Acculturation inherently involves changes in your personality, so determine the unchangeables.
- Activity. Since stress prepares you for fight or flight, and as a missionary you can probably do neither, you must have some physical activity to use that energy. Sports, an exercise plan, and active games with family or friends can reduce stress.
- Befriend a national family. Get close to a national family just for fun, not to learn or evangelize. Learn how to have fun in that culture.

Like any other type of stress, staying connected to God is one of the most critical factors. Realizing and accepting our personal limitations and God's sufficiency is so important. Regularly getting some special time away with your family and with the Lord is fundamental. Do not feel guilty taking the necessary time away to stay refreshed and strong in the Lord and in your significant relationships.

Application and Action Steps

1. Make prayer one of your highest priorities with your fellow missionaries. Every day is not too much, and might be necessary, especially in the beginning.
2. Stay humble and teachable, especially as a new missionary on the field. Study the blessings of humility, and also the consequences of pride in someone's life in the Bible.
3. Make sure you keep very short accounts with your family members and fellow missionaries. Realize that you may be just as difficult to live and work with as you may think others are.
4. As you embrace your new culture, practice some of the items listed above for overcoming culture stress.

Conclusion:

David and Svea Flood moved from the comforts of their home in Sweden to the heart of Africa with their 2-year old son. Svea died and David was crippled with alcoholism for the rest of his life. Was it worth their sacrifice? Now they are together in heaven with hundreds of African worshipers before our Lord Jesus Christ, many of whom were saved through their sacrifice of love. Paul wrote in his second letter to the Corinthians “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”

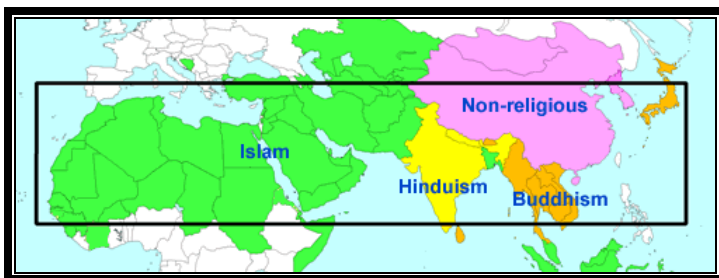
Let the love of Christ control us as we together strive to fulfill Jesus’ Great Commission.

Snapshots of Issues in Foreign Missions

A number of "snapshots" on various issues related to foreign missions is presented in this addendum. Many books have been written on each of the items introduced below, so readers are encouraged to further explore issues according to their personal interests or needs. These snapshots include both published information and personal stories, and at times just express the ideas or opinions of the authors.

1) Unengaged Unreached People Groups

When I was initially investigating the possibility of moving my family into the mission field about 25 years ago, the 10 / 40 Window was a phrase commonly used. The 10 / 40 Window is roughly defined as the area between 10° and 40° north of the equator through Africa and Asia. It is considered the part of the world with the highest level of socioeconomic challenges and least access to the Christian message.



Within the 10 / 40 window is the bulk of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Atheistic China. This became the popular descriptor for the region with the greatest need for missions. Being zealous and a bit naïve, I first thought to join Arab World Ministries and move my family to North Africa. Others advised me of the wisdom of reaching out to Muslims in Europe, where my wife and I, with our two teen-aged daughters, felt led to move in 2000.

Even before the term 10 / 40 Window became popularized, there was much talk about the "Unreached People Groups". Ralph Winter

first presented this concept at the 1974 Lausanne Congress, and it significantly changed the way many missions-minded people thought and strategized their missions' efforts. A "people group" was originally defined as "the largest group within which the Gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance."⁴ In efforts to further promote the need to bring the gospel to unreached people groups, movements such as the "Joshua Project" (joshuaproject.net) further developed this thinking and researched where and who are the "Unreached People Groups".

The Center for the Study of Global Christianity reported, "Despite almost 40 years of emphasis on unreached people groups, however, many still have no church planting work of any kind among them. Others might have had such work in the past but do not currently. Such groups are sometimes identified as unengaged unreached people groups (UUPGs), and many mission strategists are seeking to move churches and mission agencies beyond 'adopting' a people to actively "engaging" them in actual church planting work."⁵

Finishing the Task (FTT), an association of mission organizations, denominations, and congregations, publishes a list of groups that are prioritized for ministry. Originally including 639 people groups with populations over 100,000 each that had no known church planting work among them (representing more than 500 million people in total), the list today encompasses 1,312 with populations of at least 25,000 each. Of these, 256 are considered unengaged, 273 are "adopted but not yet engaged," and 763 are "engaged by international churches, missionaries, or near-neighbor Christians."⁶

We have been working with a church in Texas that has demonstrated a tremendous heart for missions over the years. This commitment extends far beyond just sending short-term mission teams. They help train and mobilize missionaries in the process of sending them to some of the neediest parts of the world. They are in the process of preparing a team of missionaries to reach one of the Unengaged Unreached People Groups in the Western Balkan countries.

There are two ways to "adopt" a child. We have "adopted" a Child name Lindah in rural Kenya through Compassion, a wonderful ministry that connects needy children with western families who help

support their material and spiritual needs. We know some families who have legally adopted one or more children from needy places, paying heavy adoption fees, and then welcoming them to become a living part of their loving family. There is a significant difference in these two types of "adoption". I have tremendous admiration for those who physically adopt a needy child into their home; it is a commitment of love, time, and finances for a lifetime that far exceeds my "adoption" commitment for Lindah.

I also appreciate churches who fully adopt and engage a needy mission fields. This kind of adoption process requires serious prayer to determine which mission field God is leading their church. The prayer really begins once this is determined, as a team from the church learns all they can about this place, so that they can pray more effectively and specifically. Relationships are developed with local believers, if any, who can help facilitate their adoption process. Short-term teams are sent to pray walk and begin sowing the seed. All the while, the church is praying that God would lead some from their church to step out in faith to fully engage this mission field. As much as I love and appreciate churches who send short-term mission teams, I believe that God is leading some Great Commission minded churches to also move beyond this, to more fully adopt and engage in new mission fields.

2) Immigration and the Diaspora of the World

Diaspora, a new word for me a couple of years ago, literally means anyone who is not living in their home country. In that sense, I am also part of the "diaspora" of the world. However, now it is more commonly being used in terms of the massive immigration of refugees into Europe and western parts of the world. People are calling this a "Kairos moment", meaning that it is an opportune time, and it is critical for the church to respond well - according to God's will. We have all seen pictures or heard of the thousands of immigrants from Syria flooding into the train station in Budapest, hoping to catch trains to western Europe. The truth is this just brought the immigration problems in Europe to the forefront. Immigrants have been flooding into Europe from all directions and from all over the world, just as they are flooding into America across our southern borders. In Europe, some are fleeing war torn countries in search of security, but many more are coming in search of a better

lifestyle for them and their present or future family. The great majority are men, because the trip is too difficult for women and children, but in rare cases, whole families are making the journey.

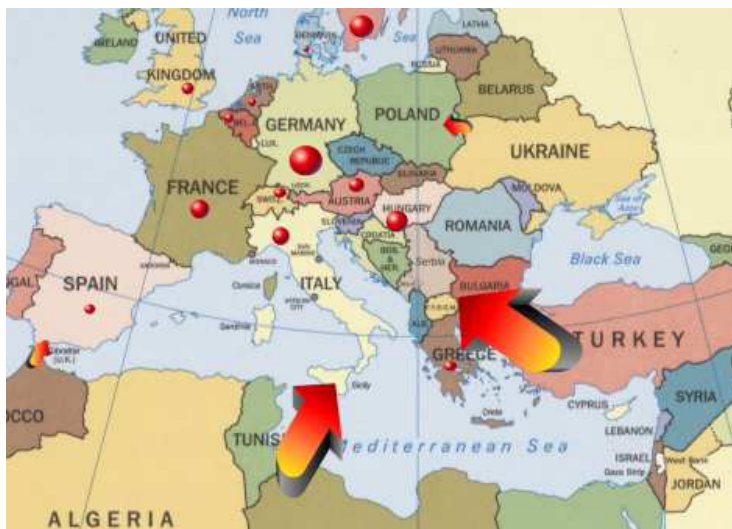
One of the deacons in our small Italian church is from Albania (just across the Adriatic Sea). When he was a young teenager, he would cross the border between Albania and Greece every summer. Once there, he would work illegally in the olive orchards or fields of Northern Greece for whatever he could earn as an illegal migrant worker. Eventually the police would find him and transport him back to Albania, and he would get off the truck and immediately begin his trek over the mountains between Albania and Greece. His efforts were not motivated by whim, adventure, or personal gain, but helping to support his family back in Albania.

This same brother (he was not a believer at the time) eventually paid for a boat ride across the Adriatic Sea to come to Italy. In his first attempt in a small rubber inflated dinghy boat, he was nearly bounced off the front of the boat. Fortunately, the motor failed not far from shore, so they had to go back. He says they would have never stopped if he had fallen out of the boat - just another immigrant casualty. During his second attempt, he sat right next to the driver in the back of the dinghy. A number of years after arriving in Italy, he did get his legal residency. He, from an Albanian Muslim background, received Christ as his Savior, and is now serving in the church, using his evangelistic gift and encouraging others in the same.

We also met a Kurdish Muslim from Iran who came to Italy in a tank truck. He told us his story of when he returned home one day and found that his parents, his sister and her husband were gone - apparently apprehended by the anti-Kurd Iranian government. That was 12 years earlier, and he has not seen them since. He does not know if they are dead or still in prison. He came to Europe seeking political asylum.

All the immigrants coming to Europe have their own unique story and reason. The Syrian refugees are only a fraction of the overall number of immigrants coming to Europe. Some are living in gymnasiums in Berlin where Daniel Goering is teaching them German in an effort to make friends and introduce them to Jesus. There was a large group of immigrants from Pakistan camping in the center of Torino, hoping the City of Torino would provide them with

housing - abandoned homes or buildings, run-down apartment buildings, wherever. Some receive financial help from the city, others are begging in the streets or in front of stores.



Details for this map are from BBC.com, Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>

Some from our church want to reach out to the recent "diaspora" of the city, hoping to be able to show them God's love and salvation through Jesus. We will soon be meeting with a friend who is doing immigrant work with the city and region. We hope to listen and learn how God might want to use us and our small church in this Kairos moment. We pray for us, and others, that God would help us make the most of this opportune time.

3) Global Trends in Christianity - Moving to the South

The line between global North and South has generally been considered along socio-economic lines, global North representing the United States, Canada and Europe along with the developed parts of Asia and Australia/New Zealand. The Global South is generally the other parts of the world. I overheard an interesting conversation once

while waiting in line at the Italian police station to make our application for our permission to stay in Italy (an every other year event for us). People were complaining about the long wait - all of us part of the "diaspora" of the world. A young Moroccan man said to his waiting companion "At least we are now in the "first world". Essentially, most of the "third world" countries make up the Global South.

All this to say that the global Christian movement is shifting "south". Christianity is exploding in South America, and South Korea has been one of the largest "Christian missionary sending" countries in the past. China is also experiencing a staggering revolution of faith in Jesus unparalleled in history - from 2.7 million evangelicals in 1975 to over 75 million in 2010. This revival is occurring across all strata of Chinese society, through home church movements and vibrant urban professional churches⁷.

In 2014 Janice and I participated in a "Perspectives in the World Christian Movement" (www.perspectives.org). One of the speakers was talking about this southward shift in Christianity and the significant growth in evangelical Christianity in South and Central America. One of his major points was that, in his opinion, missionaries from these places will be much more effective in reaching the Muslim world than American missionaries. Muslims unfortunately often see Christianity as a political extension of Western political systems and culture, and becoming a follower of Jesus is perceived to be a betrayal of their culture and country. Probably these negative preconceptions would diminish if the messenger for Christ were from Central or South America (not the Great Satan in their minds).

Much more can be said about this shift, but suffice it to say that the United States and Western Europe are no longer the greatest focal point for evangelical Christianity.

4) Simple Church Movements

When I was a young believer, the Great Commission Church that I was involved with met every Sunday in a home. This home church had about 30 - 35 people in it, and it was very Great Commission-oriented. As years passed, some thought that to really grow, it was

necessary to become more traditional, more like other churches. Unfortunately, with the transition to become more traditional, it seems as though we also lost some of our passion for the Great Commission. The Cell Church movement gained a lot of momentum in the 90s, and more recently, the most progressive missiologists seem to have returned to what is commonly called the "simple church" or "home church" or "organic church" ideology. There are definite strengths to the move to the more simple church model, but there are also challenges. Some of these will be briefly summarized below.

Strengths of Simple Churches:

1. Usually members are very obedience-oriented; emphasis on applying and doing what the Word says, not just listening to a Sunday message.
2. Usually people are highly encouraged and held accountable to share their faith, their personal testimony, and what they are actively learning in the group with others they know;
3. Structure encourages developing leaders to quickly take responsibility and initiative with an easily reproducible way of leading a group meeting;
4. Groups are encouraged to invite others and quickly multiply into new groups, and if successful, results in a rapid expansion of the gospel;
5. In countries where Christianity is illegal and/or persecuted, simple home churches become the only way for Christians to meet. Simple churches have had significant impact in the growth of the church in both China and Iran. Thousands of Iranians are being baptized in home churches and large baptismal services just across the Iranian border in Turkey. "Experts predict that by 2020, the Christian population in Iran will top 7 million -- or 10 percent of the total population."⁸
6. Another big advantage to simple churches is that it is economically feasible in any culture or economic level, since there is no need to support a facility, and in some cases, a pastor.
7. Most simple church movements also try to hold a monthly "all-

group gathering" at a rented facility or in another church's building. This allows some teaching from elders for the simple church members, as well as the opportunity to worship and praise / share together.

Challenges to Simple Churches

1. Successful discipleship is essential in simple church movements. Daniel Goering, a fellow missionary pastor in Germany with over 26 years in Europe, espouses "Elder-led simple churches", recognizing the need for effective oversight, discipleship and training in the Word and doctrine. Overseeing elders with the biblical character qualifications and doctrinal foundation protects groups them from wolves, heresy and unbiblical practices. This is God's design for the church.
2. Another challenge to simple churches in some cultures is the small size of the homes. In Italy, we once met in the kitchen of a Muslim host to discuss the Bible with some friends. The kitchen was very small, only a long narrow room with very little space. There were only six or seven of us present, and we could not all see each other because we could not all fit in the room.
3. While home churches, fellowships, and Bible studies are becoming more common and acceptable, in some cultures, it can be viewed with suspicion - is this a cult? This, in fact, may have driven the churches that we were associated with 35 years ago to move toward a more conventional type of church.

To summarize the simple church principles, ideally groups are led or given good oversight by biblically recognized elders / pastors; if done well, it can result in a rapid expansion of believers and effective discipling of emerging leaders.

5) Entering with an Exit Strategy

With the focus of Christianity shifting from the more financially affluent western cultures to the Global South, it is important that missionary movements consider serving more in a catalytic capacity, rather than a settling attitude with long-term involvement in a single church. About a hundred years ago, an English missionary to China

named Roland Allen wrote a book entitled Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours⁹. This early 20th century work is much more in vogue now than during the lifetime of the author, who advocated the Pauline model of missionaries being catalytic rather than long-term workers in a single location. Roland Allen had a difficult time implementing the principles he promoted, as are we also having difficulty here in Italy. Allen's ideas become much more important with the southward global shift of Christianity.

One principle related to this is the importance of developing and implementing a reasonable exit strategy before entering the mission field. Some mission agencies, perhaps taking these principles to an extreme, have tried to implement a short-cycle church-planting strategy, meaning a fairly strict "5-years in and then out", leaving the nationals to implement the next phase after a small church is started. While this strategy imitates the Apostle Paul's practice as described in Roland Allen's work, it seems to have experienced limited success.

Regardless of the time a missionary spends in his/her mission field, it is always important to be equipping and passing off leadership to national leaders as soon as possible and as much as possible. I have been learning that the more I can stay in the background of the church, the more the people in the church begin to see and trust the European deacons in leading the church.

Finances is another easy trap into which a missionary or missionary team can fall. While financial support is often necessary to start a new church, it is very easy for the missionary church to become too financially dependent on missionary funds. This unhealthy dependence on foreign funds can cripple a young missionary church. While this principle always holds true, it becomes even more acute in less developed countries where there is a significant difference between the local economy and the missionary economy. The book When Helping Hurts¹⁰ explains these principles well.

With our church in Italy, we started with an exit strategy that seems to always get modified and adjusted. Missionaries did assume the responsibility of pastoring and leading the European church, primarily because of the need for leadership among the young university students who became the core of our church. After 15 years, the church is now financially independent, but we are still working on effectively passing off leadership to European leaders.

We do have a Servant Leadership team in place who shares in the leadership and teaching responsibilities of the church, but no European pastors have been recognized. This will hopefully change in the next few years as the servant leadership team grows and matures. Some of the challenges to recognizing European church leadership in Italy relate to a cultural lack of an entrepreneurial spirit, a general suspicion of leadership (from their totalitarian history), and the cultural bias that one must be at least 40-45 years old in order to lead a church.

6) Making Disciples or Planting Churches

Herschel Martindale, the former director of Great Commission Europe, once stressed to me that God never calls us to plant churches. He commands us to make disciples, and as disciples are made, the Holy Spirit is responsible for planting the churches. Mike Breen in [Building a Discipleship Culture in your Church](#) wrote: "If you make disciples, you always get the church. But if you make a church, you rarely get disciples."¹¹ Therefore, the missionary focus needs to stay fixed on making disciples, and not on merely planting a church. Converts need to learn to live the gospel and not just play church. In some people's minds, the acronym "CPM" (church planting movement) is being replaced by "DMM" (disciple making movement). Within Great Commission Europe, the association of churches we serve with, missionaries are encouraged to have a mindset that they will be "catalytic" in ministry. This essentially means that they primarily try to start something, rather than plan on long-term leadership. As mentioned earlier, we failed to do this in Italy, and consequently, it has been difficult getting the nationals to take on responsibility. Doug and Sarah Whitney are currently preparing to move to Italy with their family with the vision to evangelize, but also to help equip young Italian families in our core value of strong families built on biblical principles for relationships and raising children. It would be their ultimate desire to help train and equip another Italian couple with this passion who will then be able to pass on the principles and values they have learned to others in the church. This is a catalytic mindset.

7) Closed Countries and Religious Persecution

As mentioned above, in Iran and other countries where there is persecution, there is often also a great work of God. Tertullian is often quoted, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."¹² It does seem true that the persecution of Christians fuels whole-hearted dedication to Jesus, since just identifying with Christ brings sacrifice and risk of physical harm, imprisonment, or worse. Years ago we hosted a Palestinian Christian who came to know Jesus in an Israeli prison. His family sent his brother to kill him (honor killing); once as he distributed Christian tracts in Egypt, someone broke his wrists. For Muslims, converting to Jesus generally means losing their family as a minimum, which requires that the church become their family.

Whether the church thrives and grows under persecution, or is diminished because of it, is not clear - biblical historical and modern evidence shows both.¹³ It is clear, however, that persecution unites believers of different theological perspectives. In the presence of a strong outside persecuting force against all believers in Jesus, doctrinal differences become less significant.

We first heard this when we were praying for the persecuted church under communism in the early 1980s. About 5 years ago, God brought to mind these weekly times of prayer. Our pastor encouraged us to "adopt" a particular country where Christians were persecuted. This meant learning more about the situation in that country, writing letters to the government, and writing letters of encouragement to the families of imprisoned believers (usually the church leaders). Janice chose Albania, the country boasting a purely atheistic communism that fought against all religions. I chose Romania where pastors were regularly imprisoned and government informants were everywhere.

In God's providence, almost 20 years later, He led us to the ONLY place in the world where there are very large numbers of both Romanians and Albanians. Our small church in Italy has good representation from both of these significant immigrant groups in Italy.

There are good sources that can be used to pray for the persecuted Christians in the world, including Open Doors

(www.opendoorsusa.org), Voice of the Martyrs (www.persecution.com), and Operation World (www.operationworld.org). Joining a small prayer group is always a wonderful way to become informed, make a difference, and even envision how God might want to use you in the lives of people in spiritually needy parts of the world. In God's sovereignty, maybe He will choose to use you to personally bring the power of the gospel message to these desperate places.

8) Europe's Strategic Importance

Europe is often forgotten as a mission field, but in reality, many see it as both the neediest and most strategic continent in the world today in regards to world evangelism. European university students are not only one of the most un-evangelized groups in the world, but also the most critical for the overall success of world evangelism. It is also a very difficult place to minister because of the pride and hardness of heart of many European university students.

The gospel is exploding in 2/3 of the world today, in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Even in the Muslim world, there are reports of significant conversions, such as was mentioned in Iran. But Europe has seen a 35% decline in number of evangelicals in the previous century and today is experiencing only a 1.1% growth. Europe is also still the leading educator of the world, and wields powerful influence on world thinking.

"Unbelief" is the fastest growing belief system in the world, which is being exported by Europe through its universities, which attracts young leaders from all over the world. In 1900 there were approximately 225,000 atheists, with 90% of them being in Europe. In 100 years this small group grew to over 150 million, but now only 18% are estimated to be in Europe. There were estimated to be approximately 3 million agnostics in 1900, but today it is estimated to be 750 million (about 12% of the people in the world).¹⁴

The old saying still holds true today, "As Europe goes, so goes the world". In reality, today Europe is believed to be the place where the most significant global battle for the gospel is being fought. European university students are some of the most difficult people to reach with the gospel because of their embedded unbelief and

naturalism combined with an attitude of pride and general hardness of heart. But still traces of spiritual interest remain as they generally show a willingness to discuss, at least from a sociological perspective, issues of philosophy and spirituality, because no real answers have been found.

9) Balkan Peace in Jesus

A few years ago, after 14 years of service in Europe, I was blessed with the privilege of a sabbatical. We stayed near St. Louis, Missouri, which boasts the largest Bosnian population outside of Europe, approximately 70,000. Many immigrated after the Balkan wars in the early 1990s. The tremendous need in the Western Balkan countries (the former Yugoslavia) began to penetrate my heart at that time.

Both Bosnia and Rwanda experienced tragic ethnic cleansing in the early 1990s. One Bosnian participant in our English clubs a couple years ago recounted the story of how he and his family walked from Bosnia to Italy because his father's brother (a Bosnian Muslim) wanted to kill his mother (a Bosnian Croat). A Rwandan man who lost his entire family during the ethnic cleansing in his country, surviving only because he was studying in South Africa at the time, leads one of the GCE ministries in Sweden.

Twenty years after these tragic events, Rwanda is frequently cited as a success story, while Bosnia seems to teeter on the brink of renewed violence.¹⁵ At one of the European Leadership Forums, I met a Rwandan Christian leader who was working with Christian reconciliation groups in his country. It is believed that the Christian influence combined with encouragement to move beyond retributive justice to restorative justice and forgiveness is a major factor in the healing and overall recovery of Rwanda.¹⁶

The ideas of Balkan Peace in Jesus began developing during my sabbatical in 2014, partly because of the large number of Bosnians in St. Louis, coupled with the tremendous spiritual need and its vicinity to Italy.

Spiritual Needs in the Western Balkan Countries:

The western Balkan states are known for its millennium-long

conflict ridden history. Ethnocentric passions have poisoned the region. The peace that comes through Jesus is the only hope. Personal forgiveness from Christ can bring the power to forgive the savage remnants and memories of ethnic cleansing. While some of the countries might be Catholic or Orthodox in tradition, their ethnocentric passions become idolatrous. Operation World provides a summary of the number of evangelicals in each country, which show the Western Balkan countries as some of the neediest places in the world today.



Countries involved:

- Bosnia - Herzegovina, 0.1% evangelicals. Bosnia has the fewest evangelicals (0.1%, about 500 in the entire country) and it is the most ethnically divided and is still under NATO peacekeeping control.

- Serbia - 0.6% evangelicals. Serbia is the most recent aggressor and contributor to ethnic cleansing in the 1990s.
- Albania - 0.5% evangelicals. Albania is the 2nd most ethnically divided Balkan country. Possible point of focus could be in Shkodër, a university city close to Kosovo.
- Kosovo - 0.1% evangelicals. Kosovo is a victim of Serbian and Montenegrin ethnic cleansing in the late 1990s and is still under NATO peacekeeping control.
- Macedonia - 0.2% evangelicals. Macedonia is the 3rd most ethnically divided Balkan country.
- Montenegro - 0.1% evangelicals. Montenegro has a very low percentage of evangelicals and is closely united with Serbia.
- Croatia - 0.4% evangelicals. Croatia was a victim of Balkan wars with Serbia but during World War II was allied with Nazi Germans and committed crimes against Serbia.
- Slovenia - 0.3% evangelicals. Slovenia was the first Western Balkan country to be admitted into the European Union and is currently part of the Euro-zone. It has one of the highest percentage of atheists in Europe.

Potential strategy:

1. Find a Christian man of peace who is willing to co-labor with us in each country's capital city / public university. Relationships exist with IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) in Serbia and Croatia. Alternatively, pray and send exploratory teams and pray for an unbelieving man of peace who comes to salvation.
2. Strengthen our relationship through regular visits and distance mentoring.
3. Pray for and solicit US or European churches to adopt one of these countries. Adopt ideally means that the church will 1) Pray,

- 2) Send Short Term Mission teams (STMs), and 3) Recruit and send long-term missionaries.
4. Together with the national believers (for cultural understanding and sensitivity), prepare English Club materials (5) and follow-up discovery bible studies (7) focused on the specific needs of peace, intercultural acceptance, forgiveness and love in Jesus.
 5. Work together to organize a week-long English Club in conjunction with a US / European church, using Biblical themes related to the peace and forgiveness found in Jesus.
 6. One primary prayer goal and focus of the English Club is that after the weeklong English club, there would remain a small group of participants who would want to continue to meet and study / discuss the themes of peace, intercultural acceptance, and Jesus' love and salvation in their native language.
 7. Continue mentoring with the goal that this small group discussion becomes a simple church.
 8. Continue growth and multiplication through inviting friends to Alpha-type gatherings (dinner followed by Bible discussion), with the theme of peace and forgiveness in Jesus.

How churches can get involved

1. Pray about adopting one of the Balkan countries. Pray, send STMs, and recruit and send long-term workers.
2. Pray for God to connect us with God's prepared people of peace.
3. Through the man of peace, help organize a short-term mission team to teach in the various English Clubs at the main universities within each Western Balkan country.
4. Pray and work to see God start small reproducing home / simple churches within your adopted country.
5. Pray for God to raise up full-time workers from your church to help nurture and mentor / teach the local contacts and new converts in biblical principles and core values.

Helpful Resources and Websites

Great Commission Europe website "www.gceweb.org"

Great Commission Churches website "www.gccweb.org"

Reliant Mission "www.reliant.org"

Long-Term Missions Resource Manual. This can be obtained from
Great Commission Europe, "info@gceweb.org".

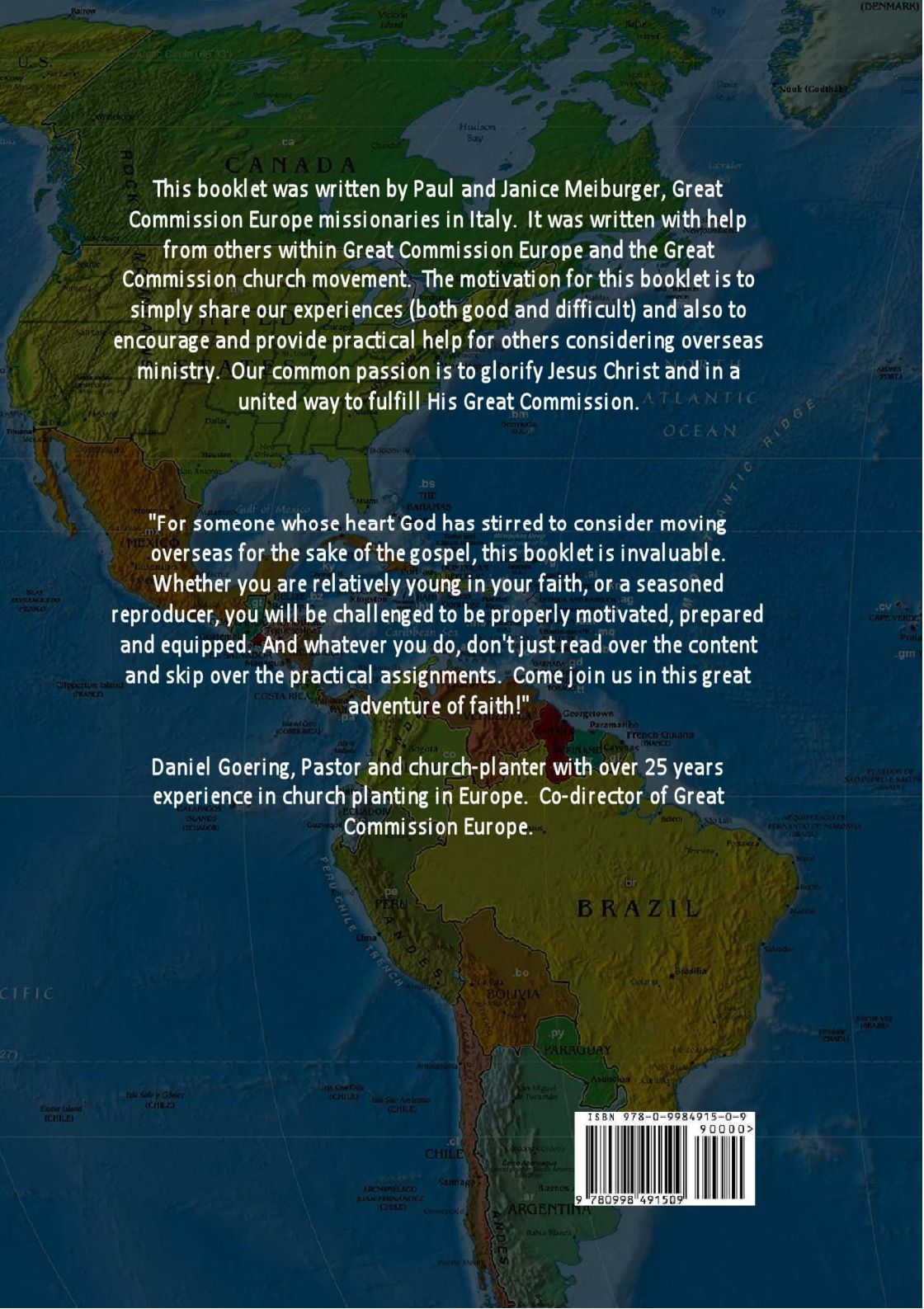
In-Church Missions Mentoring Manual to help churches better equip
its members for foreign missions, including evaluation tests.
This can be obtained from Great Commission Churches,
"info@gccweb.org".

Mission Training International website "www.mti.org"

Missionary Care website "www.missionarycare.org"

End Notes:

- ¹ Used by permission from Aggie: The inspiring story of a girl without a country, Aggie Hurst, Access Publishing (Gospel Publishing House), Springfield, Mo. ©1986.
- ² "Draw Me Close to You" words and music by Australia Hillsongs
- ³ The Core, Beliefs and Common Practices of the Great Commission Churches, 2006
- ⁴ Christianity in its Global Context, 1970–2020, Society, Religion, and Mission, June 2013 by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, pages 80.
- ⁵ Ibid
- ⁶ Ibid
- ⁷ Operation World by Jason Mandryk, 2010, 7th edition, Biblica Publishing, page 216
- ⁸ Perry Chiaramonte, "Underground Church movement grows in Iran despite regime's efforts", published November 28, 2016 FoxNews.com
- ⁹ Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours? by Ronald Allen, (London: Robert Scott, 1913)
- ¹⁰ When Helping Hurts: Alleviating Poverty Without Hurting the Poor. . .and Yourself, by Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett, (Moody Publishers, 2009)
- ¹¹ Building a Discipling Culture by Mike Breen, 3dm Publishing, 10 Sep 2014
- ¹² Tertullian, Apologeticus, Chapter 50
- ¹³ Morgan Lee, "Sorry Tertullian", Christianity Today, December 4, 2014
- ¹⁴ A Global Vision of the Gospel and the Strategic Importance of Europe, Dr. Greg Pritchard, Director, European Leadership Forum http://www.foclonline.org/sites/foclonline.org/files/outline_288.pdf
- ¹⁵ Michael F. Harsch and Tyler Y. Headley, "Life After Genocide, Comparing Bosnia and Rwanda". Foreign Affairs Magazine Published by the Council on Foreign Relations, July 2, 2015
- ¹⁶ World Christianity in the 20th Century by Noel Davis and Martin Conway, 2008 SMC Press, Page 229.



This booklet was written by Paul and Janice Meiburger, Great Commission Europe missionaries in Italy. It was written with help from others within Great Commission Europe and the Great Commission church movement. The motivation for this booklet is to simply share our experiences (both good and difficult) and also to encourage and provide practical help for others considering overseas ministry. Our common passion is to glorify Jesus Christ and in a united way to fulfill His Great Commission.

"For someone whose heart God has stirred to consider moving overseas for the sake of the gospel, this booklet is invaluable. Whether you are relatively young in your faith, or a seasoned reproducer, you will be challenged to be properly motivated, prepared and equipped. And whatever you do, don't just read over the content and skip over the practical assignments. Come join us in this great adventure of faith!"

Daniel Goering, Pastor and church-planter with over 25 years experience in church planting in Europe. Co-director of Great Commission Europe.

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