

## Vol 68 | Issue 3 | 2020

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MR. A. N. PESSOA

LINE N°

SENDING MISSIONARIES WORLDWIDE · SINCE 1927

SENDING MISSIONARIES WORKING

# New Missionaries

202

WOMEN WHO ANSWERED GOD'S CALL

**YOUR BAGGAGE  
IS CHECKED TO**

**AIRLINE  
FLIGHT**

Milan

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# The Heart of The Matter



IN MISSIONS, WE NEED TO BE CONSTANTLY REEVALUATING OUR MOTIVES.

Why? Because we are always capable of losing perspective.

For instance: measureless good has been accomplished through Christians who gather in conferences, camps, and trips to embrace God’s mandate to “go” to the nations. The problem is, sometimes we think that the command is *only* to go.

When we overemphasize the command to “go,” we risk sending laborers who venture across the world for the wrong reasons. They might be driven by wanderlust, longing to experience the world, or perhaps even guilt, thinking they can win back God’s favor by simply moving to a new country.

Our Lord commanded us to “go,” but the heart of the matter is that Jesus didn’t stop there. He told us to go *and make disciples of all the nations* (Matthew 28:19). This requires serious commitment. That is why I love how ABWE prioritizes the fullness of the Great Commission.

ABWE trains missionaries to intentionally proclaim Christ, train disciples, and plant kingdom seeds of their own—spreading their gospel witness throughout their own communities, nearby cities, and the globe (Acts 1:8).

This year, despite change and uncertainty, we praise God for providing ABWE with an astounding 76 *new long-term and mid-term missionaries* who will join our teams to make his name great around the world.

Paul Davis, ABWE President



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**WHO IS ABWE?**

ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. We are dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission by multiplying leaders, planting churches, and launching missions movements among every people. Currently, more than 1,000 ABWE missionaries are working to advance God’s work in more than 70 countries by sharing the story of hope, building communities of faith, and serving the world with love.

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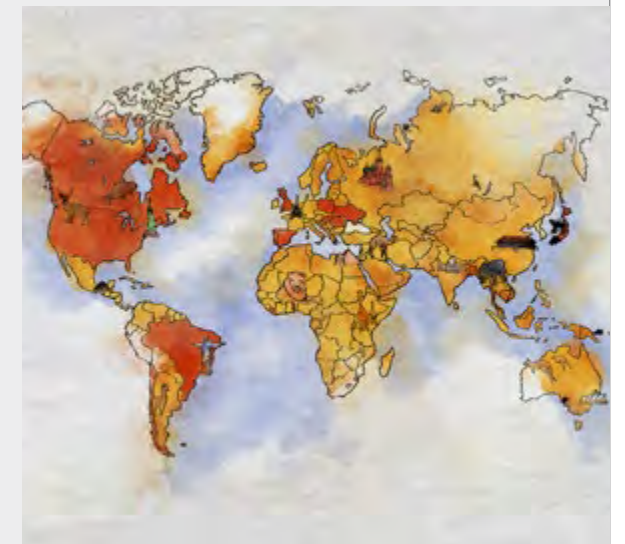
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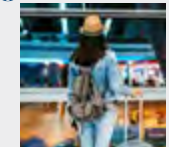
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ABWE appointed 76 new missionaries in 2020. These are some of their stories.



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Digital art by  
Lauren Farr-Miller

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THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE MINISTRIES & MISSIONARIES OF ABWE

## Tweetables

### New Life Church | Ministry Partner

📍 LOCATION: UKRAINE



**AT FIRST, THE CHURCH DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH CHRISTMAS GIFTS** to give to all 180 orphans at a boarding school. But later it was able to give out children's Bibles and other gifts during a Christmas concert the team put on for the children. Some of the children were begging for Bibles, saying "Give me, give me the little book where the prayer is written."

### COVID19 Relief

📍 LOCATION: SOUTH ASIA



**DURING THE LOCKDOWN,** an ABWE church plant has provided COVID-19 care packages containing food and financial aid to more than 600 people, including seven pastors. The church has also given away smartphones to some so that they can access church services and classes remotely.



📍 LOCATION: SOUTH ASIA

### Unreached People Groups

**THE PANDEMIC FORCED K & K TO EVACUATE** their field, but before they knew departure was imminent, they bought enough food to outlast the COVID-19 lockdown. Their church has since distributed the unused food to members living in the slums and has also used their vacant apartment to house other ministry teammates.



*Remember this:  
Whoever sows sparingly  
will also reap sparingly, and  
whoever sows generously will  
also reap generously.*

*2 Corinthians 9:6*



"We have a heart and a passion for the MKs at ECA. They struggle just like any other student, but they have a more difficult dynamic of adjusting to a different culture. They need people to help guide them, and we love being those mentors."



### Adam & Emily Byerly

📍 LOCATION: SPAIN

**WITH COVID-19 REGULATIONS** and other safety measures in place, the staff at Evangelical Christian Academy (ECA) is welcoming back its students for the 2020-2021 school year. What began as a school with one teacher and a few students in 1973 has grown into a vibrant academy with nearly 100 students.

**LEARN MORE** about how you can serve at [abwe.org/go](https://abwe.org/go)



### Jeff & Deanne Davoll

📍 LOCATION: ECUADOR

During the strictest COVID-19 lockdown phase, the Davolls and other ministry partners packed more than 1,000 food bags to deliver to poor and needy families in their community. Each bag contained a gospel tract.

**READ MORE** about how our missionaries are serving all over the world at [abwe.org/blog](https://abwe.org/blog)



### Tim & Leandra Hawes

📍 LOCATION: PAPUA NEW GUINEA

**THIS YEAR, GOROKA BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE HAD 18 GRADUATES** who will continue into their new ministry roles as pastors and Christian schoolteachers.

## ‘Powerful Partnerships

LOCATION: LEBANON & AUSTRALIA



Lebanese national Robert Ayoub and ABWE missionary Steve Mayo baptize a woman at Logos Christian Church in Australia.

**PASTOR RAYMOND AND HIS FAMILY WERE SHOPPING AT A MALL** situated on the outskirts of Beirut, five miles from the city’s main port. A reverberation rattled the complex, and a sudden intense pressure cupped their ears. The ensuing scene was pandemonium, with shoppers frantically racing for the exits.

“When we got outside the mall, to our surprise, people were running back inside,” Raymond said. “We thought it was an earthquake.”

Later, as they drove home, Raymond and his loved ones learned of the explosion over the radio.

Recorded as the most powerful non-nuclear explosion in history, the Beirut blast killed over 190 people and left over 300,000 displaced. The shockwave had shattered windows as far as six miles away.

Although his church wasn’t affected by the explosion, Raymond sought to help the city churches whose buildings were destroyed and members were now homeless. Assistance came from an unlikely source.

Logos Christian Church was founded by Robert Ayoub, whose family emigrated from Lebanon to Australia before civil war broke out in 1975. He left the Maronite Catholic faith of his family and became a born-again Christian as an adult. With the help of ABWE missionary Steve Mayo, Robert planted a church comprised primarily of Lebanese expats in the suburb of Sydney in 2017. The church has experienced tremendous growth, expanding to nearly 150 members in just three years.

Naturally, news of the catastrophe deeply affected Robert’s congregation, as many members still have relatives living in Lebanon. One of Logos’ deacons used to attend Raymond’s church, so a relationship between the churches was quickly forged after the blast.

Logos has raised nearly \$17,000 (USD) in relief funds for Raymond’s church to use, equivalent to more than 25 million Lebanese pounds due to the country’s crippled economy. But Robert intends to do more than just send money back to his home country—he seeks to send laborers.

“We will certainly be looking to partner with Pastor Raymond and multiple other Baptist pastors throughout Lebanon,” Robert said.

Lebanon is a strategic gateway to usher the gospel into surrounding Arab countries, which are some of the most least-reached regions in the world.

Once COVID-19 travel restrictions lift, Robert and Steve plan on conducting survey trips to Lebanon to scout out mission and church-planting opportunities. •

**LEARN MORE** about how you can help the churches in Lebanon recover from the port explosion on August 4, 2020.  
[abwe.org/givelebanon](https://abwe.org/givelebanon)



## Safe Through the Flood

LOCATION: SOUTH AFRICA

**A CYCLONE HIT DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, WITH NO WARNING.** ABWE missionary Kathy Ishler and her family were going through their morning routine as the rain steadily increased outside. Soon, the rainfall intensified into sheets of water dumping from the sky.

The Ishlers moved to soak up leakage with towels, but it was futile. The water poured into the house at a rate they couldn’t keep up with. They glanced outside to their driveway—a storm-carved river rushed downhill toward their front door.

Their bowl-shaped backyard was already filled with feet-deep water, and their two dogs desperately paddled for survival. Acting out of impulse, Kathy opened the kitchen door, and the dogs flew past her head on a tidal wave. The Ishlers knew they had to flee the house immediately. There was only one exit—out the front door to face the torrent of water.

The family started slowly up the treacherous slope, but the current was too strong. Just six feet in front of her, Kathy saw her daughter, Alexis, stumble and get swept off her feet, the unyielding river forcing her back down the incline. With a dog in one hand, Kathy reached out with her free arm and caught her flailing daughter, refusing to let go of either. All three were trapped at the front door.

A week before the cyclone, their neighbor was learning to drive when she knocked down a portion of the wall that separated her part of the driveway from the Ishlers’. It was a minor accident at the time, but in the moment of the Ishlers’ despair, it proved to be their means of escape. Ella, Kathy’s older daughter, helped pull Kathy and Alexis over the fragmented concrete and into calmer waters.

Although the Ishlers lost almost all their belongings, they were grateful God had prepared in advance a way to save them through the broken wall.

“God sends us trials like a flood for different reasons,” Kathy later wrote. “It brought our family closer to God and each other. We just have to trust that Christ knows what is best, and that he loves us and is good no matter what circumstance we are facing.”

Their youngest daughter reminded the family of this truth a few days later, when they returned to the house to assess the damage. Kathy and her husband, Darin, were overwhelmed by the destruction. Amid the wreckage, on the dining room floor, Alexis, who had almost washed away and nearly drowned, wrote “I Love Jesus” with the tip of her shoe in the thick mud.

“The inscribed message served as a testimony to everyone who came to help,” Kathy remembered. “To the insurance adjusters, neighbors, our friends, and especially to me.” •



# THE MAN WHO HATED CHRISTIANS

LOREN SKINKER  
Photography by Andrea Carhuachin

TRAINING LEADERS. PLANTING CHURCHES.  
STARTING MISSIONS MOVEMENTS.



**S** Stephen and Debi Douglas watched helplessly as Peruvian FBI agents entered their home without legal warrants and searched all of their rooms.

Less than a year had passed since Stephen and Debi first arrived to help pioneer a mission field in Arequipa—known as “Little Rome” for its longstanding Roman Catholic roots. Although Arequipa boasted a population of more than 1 million inhabitants, the city only had four Baptist churches at the time, two of which later failed due to similar hostilities.

The invasion represented just the beginning of what would become a long list of attempts from the local priesthood to sabotage the Douglas’ church-planting ministry over the next couple of years in Arequipa, Peru.

Stephen and Debi had recently planted a church called Christian Baptist Church of Alto Selva Alegre (ASA) across the road from a Catholic parish.

Infuriated at such an encroachment, the priests gave the authorities a fabricated story, accusing the Douglasses of being the ringleaders of a cult.

Peruvian FBI officers searched their home for evidence and even attended church services incognito to keep an eye on the “subversive” Christians.

The Douglasses and their congregation were frustrated as rumors swirled.

Discouraged, Stephen and Debi wondered how God would ever loosen Catholicism’s vice grip on Arequipa and make room for the gospel.

The Lord’s answer was found in a former Catholic alcoholic named Daniel Araujo.

## ALONE

*As a young boy, Daniel typically hid in the house when his father’s temper was ignited by alcohol, the drunken outbursts unabating until he had exhausted a beating on his wife.*

In the past, Daniel flinched with every blow his mother endured—but not tonight.

Channeling his fear into a burning rage, Daniel stood between his parents and shielded his mother from her husband. The action earned Daniel a vicious order to leave the home permanently.

The next night, when Daniel still hadn’t left, his father threatened to kill him with a knife. At 12-years-old, Daniel had no choice but to survive on the streets of Arequipa.

**WATCH** a video about Daniel at [abwe.org/Daniel](https://abwe.org/Daniel)

**THE NEXT NIGHT, WHEN DANIEL STILL HADN'T VACATED, HIS FATHER THREATENED TO KILL HIM WITH A KNIFE.**

Eventually, the resourceful boy made his way to the coastal city of Mollendo, where he found a job at a restaurant. The family who owned the business took Daniel in as their own. He became a manager, overseeing the restaurant's finances, as well as its food and liquor spending. But such a responsibility proved to be too much for Daniel. He began drinking in secret, falling victim to the same habit that had overtaken his father.

#### CALLING IN CUSCO

Daniel remained in the restaurant industry until he turned 19, when he discovered his skill in construction. He moved back to Arequipa and started his own contracting company.

He interacted with Christians on his crew. However, as an ardent Catholic, Daniel took up his father's loathing of Christianity. Daniel often pressured his Christian co-workers into violating their convictions by getting them drunk.

After being hired by a major construction company in Cusco, he continued to spiral.

"We would get paid on Fridays, and then go drinking that night, Saturday night, and Sunday night," Daniel recounted.

Although he made good money, Daniel had little to show for it. He resided in a hotel and only had a couple items of clothing and a

radio to his name. Some co-workers challenged Daniel, who was now in his late twenties, to find purpose in life beyond the bottom of a bottle. Occasionally, he was able to stave off the addiction and maintain sobriety for a month or so, only to be sucked back into the hopeless, lonely cycle.

There was no escape—until God interrupted his destructive life.

While walking the streets one Sunday, Daniel crossed paths with Sonia. The young woman and her mother ran a local restaurant that Daniel often visited on lunch breaks. He liked Sonia, but her strong Christian faith was unsettling to him.

Sonia was on her way to church when she encountered Daniel, so she extended an invitation to join her. He agreed to walk with her until they were a few blocks away from First Baptist Church of Cusco, but he declined to go inside.

This became a routine. Daniel would escort Sonia to church, their parting points inching closer and closer to the building with every passing Sunday. Finally, Daniel drew so close to the church doors that he felt obliged to go in.

***He felt like a traitor to Catholicism. As a scout surreptitiously surveys enemy territory, Daniel resigned himself to the backmost pew.***



(left) Daniel worked in construction during his twenties. It was during this time that he met his future wife, Sonia. (middle) After Daniel was saved, he accompanied a pastor on mission trips to the mountains. (right)

THE GLOBAL GOSPEL FUND HELPS ABWE MISSIONARIES TRAIN LEADERS, PLANT CHURCHES, AND START MISSIONS MOVEMENTS

***The pastor garnered his full attention by rebuking the idolatry of Catholicism. Daniel fumed on the inside. He vowed to humiliate the pastor by learning what he could about Christianity and then disarming the preacher with counterpoints.***

Daniel took copious notes of the sermons over the next three months and attended every church meeting and service.

"The only day I wouldn't go to church was when they had a women's meeting," Daniel later joked.

Immediately after Sunday services, he would confine himself to his room and dedicate hours to composing arguments and rebuttals that refuted the pastor's message.

But he labored in vain.

The Christian God he tried so desperately to disprove became more and more real to him. At one service, the gospel was presented, and Daniel's conscience weighed heavy under the burden of alcoholism. He repented of his sin, trusted in Christ, and was baptized that same week. Three weeks later, alcohol no longer wielded power over Daniel, for he had tasted something sweeter—the glory of God.

Daniel burned with a zeal to serve the church in any capacity, so he volunteered to do janitorial work. Later, he accompanied his pastor, a former dentist, on mission trips to remote villages in the mountains. While villagers waited in line for oral treatment, Daniel would proclaim to them the same gospel that had penetrated his heart.

#### MINISTRY IN AREQUIPA

Three years after his conversion, Daniel returned to Arequipa with a desire to cultivate a generation of Christian leaders. He started going to Stephen Douglas' church plant, ASA, and soon expressed his interest to receive pastoral training from the ABWE missionary. For the next nine years, Stephen disciplined and taught Daniel.

From teaching Sunday school to preaching from the pulpit, Daniel's responsibilities gradually increased under the tutelage of Stephen and his team. Many church members traveled far distances to attend ASA, as it was one of only a handful of Baptist churches in all of Arequipa. Their journeys served as an acute reminder to Daniel of the vast need for more churches in the city. This inspired Daniel, with the help of Stephen, to plant a church in the mountainous region outside of Arequipa.

Daniel (left) with some of his friends after he was kicked out of his house for defending his mother from his abusive and alcoholic father.



Pastor Daniel and his son Junior performed house visits to church members and baptisms this year, even during COVID-19.

Today, the seminary Daniel began in 1993 has produced eight graduates, three of whom have continued on to establish their own churches. The school has also prepared missionaries who have been sent to Bolivia and Uruguay.

“Daniel is a key man to this movement,” said Stephen, Regional Director for South America. “There’s a reason his mother church has so many daughter churches—he’s the one carrying the vision forward.”

Under Daniel’s leadership, ASA is responsible for more than 15 churches, some fully functioning and others in the developing stages, while the greater Baptist denomination now has over 70 churches ministering in Arequipa.

The impact of Arequipa’s church-planting movement expands beyond the city limits. The Baptist churches in Arequipa, Lima, and nearby cities have trained and commissioned Peruvian missionaries to more than 25 different places, including Peru, other South American countries, and nations worldwide. ✕



Under Daniel's leadership, his church has planted 15 churches, and he began a seminary to train more Peruvian leaders.

By the time Daniel took over as head pastor of ASA, church planting was engrained in his pastoral philosophy. So, in addition to his day job and responsibility as pastor, Daniel managed to find the time and energy to launch a seminary.

By abandoning Catholicism for Christianity, most of the seminary students had been evicted from their homes, so they lived at the church. Daniel provided the education while the food was cooked by Sonia, whom Daniel had married some years after returning to Arequipa.

When asked about his legacy of ministry work over the past 35 years in Arequipa, Daniel’s humble answer reflects 1 Corinthians 3, the passage where Paul attributes the source of a seed’s growth to God.

*“The little I’ve done has been multiplied by the Lord.”  
And multiply it has.*

—*“THE LITTLE I’VE DONE  
HAS BEEN MULTIPLIED  
BY THE LORD.”*

- Daniel Araujo -



[abwe.org/globalgospelfund](https://abwe.org/globalgospelfund)

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

For more than 90 years, the abiding heartbeat of ABWE has been to spark mission movements by the power of the gospel.

The story of Arequipa perfectly captures this vision in real life, through real people.

Our goal isn’t to just plant churches—we want to multiply them.

We want our missionaries to pour into nationals, like Daniel, who wholeheartedly embrace the Great Commission as their own, and help take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Will you consider a gift to the Global Gospel Fund to help ABWE’s 1,000 missionaries multiply their gospel impact around the world?

Paul Davis | ABWE President



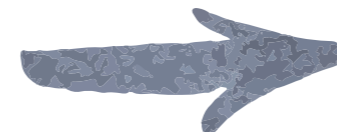
# MEET OUR NEW MISSIONARIES

This year, 76 missionaries joined our ABWE family. While not all 76 are found within these pages because of security, all are stepping out obediently into new endeavors for the work of the Great Commission.

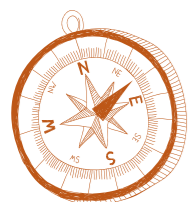
- 69 MKS
- 24 countries
- 19 *missionaries serving national partners through Live Global*



ABWE has 900 missionaries in more than 70 countries. As a result, approximately 5,000 churches have been started globally and, in many areas, national believers are now sending out their own missionaries to the nations.



**ABWE.ORG/LOCATIONS**



# Latin America



MEXICO

THE BIBLE TRAINING CENTER IN MEXICO CITY OFFERS LOCAL BELIEVERS A PLACE TO RECEIVE HANDS-ON TEACHING, TRAINING AND MENTORING TO HELP EQUIP THEM FOR MINISTRY.

Justin Harper

NEW LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH, DALLAS, TX

*“Unfortunately, my story involves a lot of backsliding,”* Justin said. “The faith of my childhood was genuine, but it took a long process of sanctification to get me where I am today.”

Once he finished reading the Book of Revelation in the car after church, Justin confessed his sins and believed in Jesus. Although he didn’t understand the text, its grim picture of fire and brimstone moved the frightened, young 11-year-old boy to repentance.

Over time, Justin grew resentful toward this fear-driven faith, rebelling against it in high school by taking up drugs and even getting arrested. As these worldly habits followed him into college, an overwhelming emptiness hung over his shoulders.

His hollow desperation led him to church, where he rededicated his life to Christ after hearing the gospel in a pure light. The Lord placed a yearning in his heart to pursue ministry. Today, Justin plans to serve as a Bible educator in Mexico City, helping aspiring church planters firmly place their feet on Scripture’s foundational truths. •

MEXICO IS THE SECOND LARGEST ROMAN CATHOLIC COUNTRY IN THE WORLD. BUT IN THE LAST DECADE 4 MILLION MEXICANS HAVE LEFT CATHOLICISM.

Aliza Curtis



COMMUNITY BIBLE CHAPEL, COOPERSTOWN, NY

*Aliza’s faith journey began with her father, who became saved in adulthood when she was 13 years old.* Young Aliza noticed a change in his character. He spoke with wisdom and extended more patience. He shared the gospel with Aliza frequently over the next six years, but she dismissed the idea as irrelevant and fanciful compared to what she was learning in public school.

Then came the turbulent and disorienting years of adolescence, and along with them a quest for purpose and meaning in life. Travel seemed like it could be an antidote to her aimless wandering, so Aliza decided to participate in a foreign exchange program to Mexico—she had vacationed there as a teenager and had fallen in love with its strong, familial culture. Aliza did end up finding direction, but it had little to do with her destination or the number of miles that separated her from home in upstate New York.

“That was a formative year of my life,” Aliza said. “God began softening my heart toward his word.”

Upon her return to the US, Aliza entered college

and roomed with two girls who were Christians. She quickly befriended one of the roommates, and after attending church and Bible study with her, Aliza herself chose to follow Christ as well.

In the preceding years, Aliza sensed a strong calling to minister in Mexico. In 2018, she interned with Wycliffe to learn about translating scripture into indigenous languages. Although she held higher degrees in Spanish and ESL Education, she soon realized that her love for language acquisition stemmed from a desire to build relationships, not an aspiration to conduct meticulous translation work. More specifically, her heart belonged to evangelism and discipleship.

She prayed for open doors and researched over 200 mission agencies for such an opportunity. ABWE became the clear option. Aliza will be partnering with local churches to organize Bible studies in agrarian, low-education farm camps on the northeast coast of Mexico. •

South  
Am



## Austin & Kaleigh Bowden

*"You see that girl," Austin commented to his friend as Kaleigh strode across the room. "I'm going to marry her."*

Unfortunately, despite his confidence, Austin didn't get the chance to meet Kaleigh that night. But, by the Lord's providence, the pair happened to cross paths one day on the sidewalk at Liberty University. Knowing that he might not have another opportunity like this—as over 15,000 students populate Liberty's campus—Austin quickly introduced himself and exchanged numbers. They were married 16 months later.

In Austin and Kaleigh, God had brought together two servants with strikingly similar faith journeys. Both grew up in Christian families and were saved at young ages, wrestled with secret sin into high school and felt unworthy due to an unbiblical fixation on good deeds, and were freed from their bondage when they confessed their struggles to trusted Christians and surrendered their lives to the grace found in Jesus. And both attended Liberty in the hopes of entering ministry following graduation.

But there remained one major difference—their attitudes toward overseas missions.

Kaleigh went on her first missions trip to Mexico when she was in middle school and continued to participate in ministry to South America throughout high school and college. In 2011, she combined her passions for missions and education

by helping Christian Peruvians learn English so that they could translate for American missionaries. And although Austin would happily serve wherever the Lord called them, he thought it would be stateside.

However, during Liberty's Missions Emphasis Week, they were presented with an opening from ABWE missionaries to serve as teachers at the Santiago Christian Academy (SCA) in Chile. Equipped with graduate degrees in teaching Bible and other subjects, Austin and Kaleigh knew an irrefusable offer had been set in their laps. Since 2016, they have been serving at SCA and in youth ministry at local churches.

By 2023, they hope to return to Chile and continue their roles of teaching and discipling a younger generation of Chilean believers. •

Ben & Tati  
Candee



PLACERITA BIBLE CHURCH, NEWHALL, CA

*Although thousands of miles apart, Ben and Tati led similar lives early on.*

Tati was born in Brazil, and her family was very involved in their local church. She acted like a model Christian, memorizing Bible verses and attending youth group.

"I knew the about the cross, the gospel, and Christ," Tati said. "Sometimes I would speak with others about them, but in my heart I didn't believe." When a woman at a Word of Life seminary in Brazil asked Tati if she was a Christian, Tati realized she had never truly repented of her sin and put her faith in Jesus. Years later, Tati still hadn't entrusted her life to Christ when adversity hit with her parents' divorce. During that dark time, she remembered her revealing conversation with the woman, and she decided to stop living a double life and finally threw herself at her savior's feet.

Ben was also raised in the church and seemed so spiritually mature that he even taught Sunday school for the younger-aged classes when he himself was just in 6th grade. But Ben lived under a false pretense of salvation, finding his assurance in good works like youth leadership and outreach ministry.

It wasn't until college that he eventually realized he was a fraud and an unbeliever. Ben finally understood that head knowledge wasn't enough. True faith required total and utter dependence on Jesus as Lord.

His life trajectory changed after his conversion, and Ben began pursuing missions work. His home church had a legacy of ABWE missionaries, and he himself was appointed by ABWE in 2015 to serve in Brazil, where he met Tati at a ministry event. They are currently helping an ABWE church plant in south Brazil. •



Sarah Rogers

ROCK POINT CHURCH, CRAWFORDSVILLE, IN

*Doubt threatened to overwhelm Sarah as she sat in the airport.*

After surrendering her life to God when she was 17, Sarah knew that she wanted to go into ministry. She was a magnet for spiritual conversations in college, frequently sharing the gospel with her peers.

Once graduated, Sarah attended a missions conference in Germany, where she met ABWE missionaries who invited her to visit their field in Brazil.

But life circumstances seemed to crumble when Sarah returned home. The relationship she was in ended when he learned of her seriousness to pursue missions. Sarah also sacrificed the job that she wanted in order to go on a survey trip to Brazil.

The recent turn of events had Sarah questioning her decisions as she waited for her flight.

"What if this opportunity really wasn't from the Lord? What if I hated it in Brazil? What if this was all a mistake? I had thrown away everything for this, and what if it was all a waste?"

Despite these negative thoughts, they didn't prevent Sarah from boarding her flight. An indescribable peace passed over her when she arrived in Brazil. She connected well with the culture, and the Lord affirmed her ministry calling as she served alongside ABWE missionaries David and Sarah Carrel. In 2021, she will be joining them again. •



ABOUT 77% OF ECUADORIANS  
IDENTIFY AS ROMAN  
CATHOLIC. AND ABOUT 11% AS  
EVANGELICAL BELIEVERS.

## Wesley & Jessica Kranenburg

FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH, BURFORD, ONTARIO

*“Are we any different?”*

*Jessica and Wesley felt convicted while leaving Bible study, where they were challenged as Christians to be set apart from the rest of the world.*

Both Wesley and Jessica were raised in Christian homes. From an early age, Wesley sensed the Lord leading him to the mission field, so he went to Bible college to prepare for ministry. Jessica grew up moving many times as a pastor’s kid, learning to depend on the Lord for strength through each transition.

However, once married, they moved the missionary dream to the backburner. As Wesley put it, they lived “typical North American Christian lives,” attending church and chasing holiness as

best they could as a suburban Canadian family.

But 19 years later, after multiple job changes and living relocations, the Kranenburgs decided to reach for greater ambitions. They got in touch with ABWE Canada and found a need in Ecuador, where they will be engaging communities through a sports ministry, as Wesley uses his expertise in physical education. They hope this platform will lead to fruitful relationships and disciple-making opportunities. •



Katie Madara

CALVARY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP, SHAMOKIN, PA

*Katie’s path to the mission field didn’t kick off on the right foot, or to be more precise, the right ankle.*

At 16 years old, she severely broke her ankle during an accident. The injury required surgery and a six-month recovery. By the end of that painful season, she would take her first steps in a new direction.

While bedridden, God revived her childhood dream of going to Japan. She began to educate herself on Japanese culture, watching TV shows and doing her own research. Her heart broke for the people as she learned more about the spiritual lostness that enveloped the nation. Nevertheless, Katie remained uncertain if she should pursue missions work to Japan.

“I’ve always told God that if he wanted me to do something, he must make it painfully obvious,” Katie said.

Over time, Katie grew confident in her calling, and she continued into Bible college after her injury and then traveled to Italy to attend a missions school. Her peers affirmed her zeal for ministry, so Katie decided to put it to

**MOST JAPANESE PEOPLE HAVE NEVER MET A CHRISTIAN, SEEN A BIBLE, AND HEARD OF JESUS. IN FACT, JUST TWO PERCENT OF JAPAN’S 128 MILLION PEOPLE CLAIM TO BE CHRISTIANS.**

the test in 2018 by serving in Japan for the summer.

Returning the US, Katie was determined to go back to Japan for the long haul. Her original plan was to prepare and raise support for a few years first. However, God shortened those years into months when an opportunity arose with ABWE to be a missionary kid (MK) educator in Japan starting the fall of 2020. •

# Africa

Liz Ortiz

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, HOLLAND, MI

*“I went to Togo to do media, but God had much more in store for me,” Liz said. “I’ve learned that God can use anything for his purposes.”*

In 2015, Liz graduated from Liberty University, where she studied Studio and Digital Arts and minored in American Sign Language.

When Liz arrived in Togo in 2018, she focused on photography and crafting field stories. However, her role transformed when God opened a door for Liz to use her sign language skills to serve special needs and deaf children.

Liz’s initial task of teaching one deaf boy soon grew into an entire ministry, as a great need was exposed for people to teach Togolese deaf children.

Its success garnered attention from deaf schools around Togo and has even presented opportunities to plant similar ministries in neighboring countries like Ghana and Benin.

Liz has borne an enthusiasm for missions since she was nine years old, when she created her missionary notebook—a memento that continues to ground Liz to her original passion when hardships threaten to overwhelm her.

She plans on returning to Togo in West Africa to build relationships with more public deaf schools, start Bible studies for the deaf, train more signers, and connect deaf people to local churches. •



Faith Shaffer

KUNA BAPTIST CHURCH, KUNA, ID

TOGO

desired to serve the Lord, and interacting with missionaries only fueled that dream. As she grew older, Faith became a leader in her church’s Awana program. It was through this experience that Faith developed a love for teaching and shepherding young children.

However, during her sophomore year of high school, she came to a crossroads.

The exciting missionary adventures Faith had heard in her childhood were now frightening to her as an adult with a more realistic grasp on the discomforts and dangers of serving abroad.

But her heart’s posture changed after an ABWE missionary spoke at her church about the need for

MK education in Togo. Faith’s heart swelled, and she knew God was calling her. Such was her passion to go that she accelerated her studies by entering a dual enrollment program to earn her associate’s degree in teaching.

Lord willing, she plans to attend language school in the summer of 2022, with the intent of moving to Togo soon after to teach MKs whose parents serve at ABWE’s Hospital of Hope. •

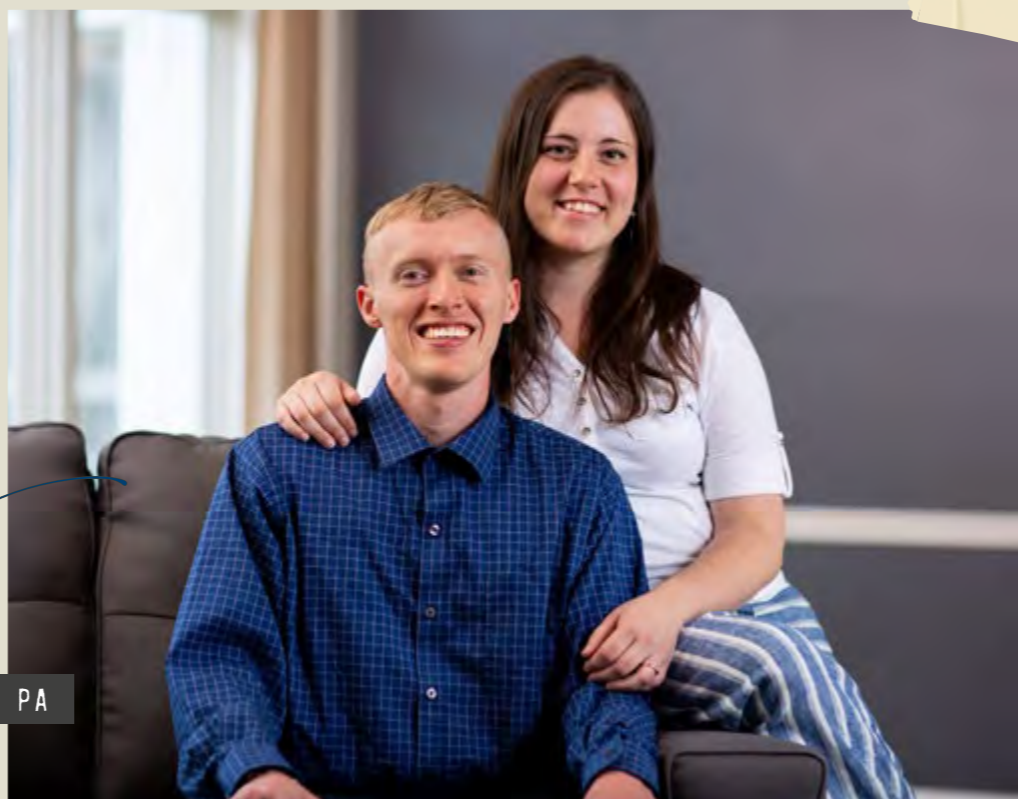
*Faith’s favorite time of the year was when her church had its annual missions conference each February.* She loved hearing stories from the mission field and enjoyed when her parents invited missionaries as guests to their house.

Faith was saved at just six years old when her mother explained the gospel to her one night. She

MORE THAN 20 PERCENT OF TOGO'S INHABITANTS ARE MUSLIMS. AND NEARLY ONE-IN-THREE TOGOLESE PRACTICE SOME FORM OF ANIMISM.

## Caleb & Mary Ellen Curry TOGO

FAITH BRETHREN BIBLE CHURCH, NEW PARIS, PA



*Caleb grew up in a divorced family from east Georgia. His parents were members of a pentecostal cult and separated when he was seven years old, at which point Caleb went to live with his father and older brother, Josh.*

The way Josh so personally talked about God confused Caleb. Josh encouraged Caleb to pray and read the Bible regularly, and to seek to know God as a gracious and loving father. This intimate view conflicted with the God of Caleb's past, who needed to be appeased and won over by good deeds.

Despite his brother's influence, Caleb couldn't shake off his perception of Christianity as a works-based faith, so his pursuit of perfection made him weary. He turned to drugs and alcohol for fulfillment. It wasn't until he was 17 that Caleb finally understood that his own wickedness could never be redeemed by any amount of self-reform.

Nine years after his rededication to the Lord, a young missionary woman caught Caleb's eye when she spoke at the church he was attending.

While her parents served as church planters in rural America, Mary Ellen became bitter toward the people. Her parents seemed to constantly receive undue criticism for their efforts, and as an MK, she felt burdened by unrealistic expectations to be a perfect child.

"We couldn't even wiggle too much in the pew without someone complaining to my parents later," Mary Ellen recalled. "I didn't want my future husband or children to have to endure this."

From the age 10 to 17, Mary Ellen wrestled with assurance in her own salvation. Finally, she gave it up to the Lord, repented of her sin, and stepped forward to be baptized. Although disenfranchised by ministry, she couldn't shake off God's purpose for her life.

Mary Ellen spent the next two and a half years serving in the Philippines as a medical missionary and midwife. Upon her return to the US, she started speaking about her experiences at different churches, including Caleb's.

Caleb was eager to give missions a chance while dating Mary Ellen. Now married, they are headed to Togo next summer. Caleb will be helping plant churches while Mary Ellen serves as a midwife and discipler to other women. •



## Bill & Kathy Brittain

BETHEL CHURCH, CROWN POINT, IN

*Being the youngest of eight children, and having both of his parents pass away by the age of 11, meant that Bill grew up largely under the care of older siblings.*

Bill heard the gospel from his brother, but he didn't act on his need for a savior until college, when an unfulfilling and broken lifestyle directed his heart toward God.

Kathy was saved at a young age. She always enjoyed hearing missionary stories and sensed that God was leading her into full-time ministry through the influence of youth leaders and places like Word of Life camp in New York.

Bill and Kathy met at Bible college, and after graduation they moved to Michigan to become houseparents with the Baptist Children's Home (BCH). After many years with BCH, their longtime church family in Michigan asked Bill to be their

pastor. Bill later returned to BCH as its president in 2013.

In 2004, after dialogue between ABWE and Jim Geurink, former BCH president and ABWE board member, BCH became heavily involved in helping Liberian children who were orphaned and displaced due to the country's civil war. After Bill's first exposure to the country in 2004, he returned thinking that he could be a missionary to Liberia. Now that inspiration has come true.

The Brittaines have been making regular visits to Liberia for the past 15 years.

With ABWE, Kathy and Bill will be supporting and developing projects as they assist and promote church planting, evangelism, field recruitment, and youth outreach in Liberia. Their next trip will occur later this November. •

LIBERIA



## Jason & Charity Funk

SALEM UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST, CHAMBERSBURG, PA

*“I wonder if that person over there knows the Lord.”*

*Charity’s father often mulled on this thought in public spaces, compelling him to perform street evangelism in downtown Chambersburg, Pa.* Charity routinely accompanied him on these outings, starting at 12 years old. No matter their social class or standing, her father treated each person with equal dignity, teaching Charity the sacredness and value of every image bearer.

Groomed by her father’s zeal and her mother’s hospitality, Charity grew up loving to serve people. That’s why when she met Jason at church, his passion for evangelism attracted Charity.

As a child, Jason thought Christianity was something to be achieved through service, so his boyhood aspiration revolved around becoming a missionary pilot. He earned his pilot license, but instead of going into missions, Jason joined the Navy. However, complications forced Jason to leave the military at 21, and he took up welding.

Jason then decided to take Christianity more seriously. He started reading his Bible and reached out to a mature believer at his church, who ultimately led Jason to Christ.



Jason and Charity were married in 2001. Over the years, they sensed a calling to receive formal Bible training and go into full-time ministry. But their church leadership at the time discouraged their ambitions, so instead they focused their efforts on the home front—discipling congregants, forming Bible studies, and organizing outreach events. After 20 years of feeling repressed, Jason and Charity left the church for a more missions-centered congregation—only to meet more closed doors.

“I talked to a director of the denomination’s mission for a possible opportunity, but nothing was open,” Jason said. “I was convicted that we wouldn’t be prepared even if one came.”

They started marriage counseling to heal wounds and divisions created by the previous church, sold their house to pay off debt, and Jason got back into flying.

Despite growing up less than an hour from ABWE’s International Headquarters, Jason and Charity had never heard of it until they met Ron Washer, who asked them to consider aviation ministry in Togo. Today, they are currently taking steps toward leaving for Africa by August 2021. •



TOGO

## Nate & Erin Weston

STONE CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH, LONDON, ONTARIO

*Nate’s vigor for the Lord was waning.*

*He was a teenager when he began to take his faith and Bible-believing home for granted.* Determined to get him back on the straight and narrow, his uncle brought Nate to a Christian camp, where he served alongside missionaries who not only taught him the trades, but also what it meant to be a man of God.

“They poured into my life, and that kind of set my course for missions,” said Nate.

Nate met Erin while working at the camp. She was also raised in a Christian family and became saved and baptized when she was just 12 years old. Erin was first introduced to missions when she participated on a trip to Ireland at 19.

Once married, Nate and Erin joined a missions-minded church and jumped on opportunities to assist long-term ABWE missionaries in Ukraine and Africa. In 2011, Nate went to Togo and used his carpentry skills to help build the Hospital of Hope. When he returned to Canada, both Nate and Erin sensed the Lord leading them to take bigger steps toward ministry.

Their first stride was a two-year stint to Togo, which ultimately ended a year early due to health complications with one of their

children. Although exhausted and discouraged, they trusted in God’s plan and tried serving in Togo again for two more years in 2016. Nate continued his work in construction while Erin ran the missionary guest house.

Since their return to Canada in 2018, Nate has operated his own contracting company, taking every chance to tell his clients and coworkers about his ministry experiences. Erin has helped her five children readjust back to life in North America.

Nate and Erin have committed to a longer service pledge, becoming mid-term missionaries with the intent to go back to Togo next year. •



# Europe



UKRAINE

*Kristin Jonas*

COW CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH. PALO CEDRO. CA

*When guest missionaries spoke at her church, young Kristin would eagerly await the moment she could scurry off from her pew and make a beeline for their tables.*

Kristin graduated from college burning with a dream to enter the mission field, but she didn't know in what capacity. Trusting in the Lord's timing, she sought to faithfully serve the Lord wherever she found herself. So, Kristin became her church's secretary for the next 14 years.

"I stayed vigilant," Kristin said. "Every couple of years, I would look into different mission agencies for a position where I felt like I could serve."

Keeping her church connected with their missionaries was a priority, so Kristin frequently inserted their newsletters in weekly bulletins and forwarded their emails.

Kristin's passion reemerged after attending a missions course, and she expressed this love to her pastors upon its completion. Having not sent out a missionary in over 20 years, her pastors were eager to act upon her desire and recommended partnering with ABWE.

In August 2018, Kristin embarked on a two-year trip to help a church plant in Kyiv, Ukraine, and disciple ladies at the Kyiv Theological Seminary. During her time on the field, she enjoyed mentoring the MKs. She plans on returning to Kyiv as a long-term missionary and will continue working at the church plant, discipling women at the seminary, and investing in MKs. •

*Mike & Fawn Southwell*

*In less than a year, God used three connections to send Mike and Fawn to the mission field.*

It began when Mike met two students at a camp in New York who attended the International Christian School of Budapest (ICSB), a school for MKs, Hungarian nationals, and international students. With Mike's experience in education and their combined openness to missions, they started to pray and research the possibility of serving there.

Nine months later, they met with friends of Mike's parents who, unbeknownst to Mike and Fawn, had served as missionaries in Budapest and had children who were attending ICSB.

"We thought it was pretty amazing that God would bring another connection into our lives," Mike said.

Then Mike and Fawn visited other friends and were stunned to hear that they also supported missionaries at ICSB. Mike and Fawn immediately knew that God was drawing their attention to this small school in Hungary. They applied to ABWE the following week. Mike's family has a history with the mission. His father sits on the board, and his aunt and uncle are retired ABWE missionaries. Some 12 months later, the Southwell family found themselves on a plane to Hungary.

Over the past two years, Mike has served as the Director of Teaching and Learning, until he took over as principal in 2019. Fawn is active in the women's ministry at their local church. They are currently transitioning into long-term ministry with ABWE and will continue in their roles with the field team in Hungary. •

HUNGARY



CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH. KALKASKA. MI

IN A POPULATION OF 37 MILLION, 85% IDENTIFY AS ROMAN CATHOLIC. ABWE FIRST OPENED WORK IN POLAND IN 2006 BUT CURRENTLY DOESN'T HAVE A TEAM THERE.



Ron Davis

LANDMARK BAPTIST CHURCH, ELKINS, WV

POLAND

*Ron was 12 when he publicly committed his life to Christ, practically climbing over other teenagers as he hastily responded to the altar call at a church youth event.*

Later, Ron met missionaries at the same church where he was saved, but, uncomprehending of their purpose, he thought they were strange people. Ron turned his interest to aviation and often flew with his uncle. Later, he joined the Coast Guard, following in the footsteps of his father, who had died of a heart attack when Ron was just a boy.

"I would have spent the rest of my working days in the Coast Guard," Ron said. "But God had a change of plans."

In 1984, the Coast Guard stationed Ron in Elizabeth City, N.C., and he quickly became involved in a local church. It was there that God ironically steered him toward the direction of those people whom he had thought odd from his childhood—missionaries. He parted ways with the Coast Guard the following year and attended a small Bible college in Richmond, where Ron met his future wife, Riki, and was compelled to go to the mission field by a poster advertising for bold Christians to take the gospel behind the Iron Curtain.

After graduation, marriage, and the premature birth and death of their first son, Ron and Riki

embarked for Slovakia in 1999. But just four years later, due to team issues and other unforeseen obstacles, they returned to the US, and Ron began pastoring at a church in Elkins, W.Va.

As they neared retirement, Ron and Riki frequently considered returning to the mission field, but in November 2017, Riki was diagnosed with breast cancer. Near Riki's final days, she and Ron sat down to face the sobering and undeniable reality—if Ron were to go back to missions, he would be doing so without his beloved wife.

"You need to go back because that's where your heart has always been," said Riki.

It was one of their last conversations. Three days later, Riki entered a semi-comatose state before passing away in 2019. Ron followed the advice of his wife and will be re-opening the field of Poland through church planting and other ministries.

A Christian author once compared the death of a loved one to an amputation. Ron has discovered that it's not a precise and skilled removal but a horrible tearing from the body. Yet, he knows that God's power is perfected through his weakness.

"I don't care where you go or what you do, God's grace is absolutely sufficient to supply your needs," Ron said. •

Chris & Laura Hilburn

UNITED KINGDOM

*"Hey, there is one with some people inside it."*

Chris' brother pointed with surprise at a full church while driving through England's countryside. Chris and Laura were leading a short-term missions trip to Birmingham in 2018, and so far the team had only seen empty sanctuaries, or church buildings which had been converted into pubs or coffee shops.

They later discovered that less than 1 percent of England identified as Christian, an astonishing figure when one considers that this region produced such Christian figures as Charles Spurgeon, John Wycliffe, and Hudson Taylor.

But the statistic became more poignantly clear as Chris and Laura navigated the crowded train hub of Kings Cross Station. When they arrived at their desired platform, Laura verbalized what was already on both of their minds.

"Probably none of the dozens of people we bumped shoulders with while crossing the station know Jesus," Laura told Chris. When they returned to the US, this experience propelled them to pursue long-term missions to the UK.

Given the fact that Chris didn't even find out what a missionary was until college, despite his family regularly attending church his entire childhood, this is a supremely God-ordained step. Chris and Laura grew up in the same hometown of Albertville, AL, where church life was simply an accepted and normative part of Southern culture. However, legalism saturated church teaching, and both Chris and Laura walked through their teenage years believing in a domineering and terrifying God who might strip away their salvation at a moment's notice.

In college, they began attending a church which emphasized the gospel of grace, and their faith was reestablished. Chris jumped on the opportunity to serve on a missions trip to Mexico, but he felt unsettled coming back and continuing with their lives unchanged.

"Returning home was a bit of a struggle. I was frustrated with our ease and comfort in the US, and it took some time to realize that Laura hadn't experienced the same things I had," Chris said. "I was ready to sell all that we had the day I got home."

But Laura soon adopted Chris' passion, and now both have served on 14 different trips. Although they aren't serving in Latin America, the Hilburns will be heading to the UK next year to do church-planting ministry. •

LIFEPPOINT CHURCH, ALBERTVILLE, AL





RAWLINSON ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH, ROCK HILL, SC

*Ten-year-old Angela racked her brain as she tried to recollect and confess every sin throughout the week so that she might not go to hell if she suddenly perished.*

This was a typical exercise for Angela, as her family followed a false Christianity centered on good works. Long hair, ankle-length dresses, and minimum makeup were part and parcel of a religion that was fixated on the exterior—this “gospel” had nothing to do with the heart.

But over time, Angela grew weary of such a rigid lifestyle.

“When I was 15, I cut my hair, and my mom cried and cried,” Angela said. “I wanted to get out, and my parents respected that wish and let me live how I wanted to.”

Almost a decade later, Angela reluctantly agreed to accompany her parents to the Baptist church they had started attending after she graduated from high school. Angela ran into Robert at the church, whom she had known from growing up.

Despite being raised in a Christian household with parents who were active in the church, Robert didn’t place his trust in Christ until his senior year in college. He plugged into a church and began reading the Bible regularly. After graduation, Robert

returned home and started working in the church, which included overseeing short-term missions.

By the time he reunited with Angela, Robert had been serving within the church for several years, gradually stoking a passion for missions. They were married within a year of dating, and the overseas ministry dream fell by the wayside as Robert continued his student ministry responsibilities.

Ten years flew by, and in the busyness of life and career, Angela still hadn’t surrendered her life to the Lord. But after her diagnosis of chronic backpain, she fell into deep despair. While listening to a sermon, Angela realized that she wasn’t just broken but dead in her sin. She accepted Jesus as her Lord that night through tear-stained eyes.

Over the next three years, missions came to the forefront of the Jacksons’ lives as God opened their eyes to an eternal perspective. Temporal pleasures became less and less attractive.

Despite joking that they would never serve in a non-English-speaking country, Robert and Angela found themselves gravitating toward Portugal in 2019. Today, they are hoping to arrive in Portugal by spring of 2022. •



# Megan Kuhn

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH, DAYTON, OH

*Megan was raised in a household steeped in Christian practices and values.*

“Not only were we at church every Sunday, but my parents also instilled within us habits of praying at mealtimes, before bed, memorizing scripture, giving to missions, and serving others,” Megan said.

Of course, this lifestyle influenced Megan’s interests. She remembers being drawn to biographies of well-known women missionaries like Amy Carmichael and Gladys Aylward, inspired by their bold faith and how they utilized the gift of singleness to serve the Lord more effectively. Her respect for current missionaries grew as she heard their stories at church and in their newsletters.

In high school, she also discovered her gift for elementary education, a passion she attributes to her being the oldest of four siblings and most of her cousins. By the time she arrived at Cedarville University, the faint calling for the mission field increased to a resounding cymbal. But when Megan graduated in 2014, instead of immediately sending her overseas, God directed her to teach at a Christian school in Dayton, Ohio.

An opportunity appeared in 2018, when she participated in a missions trip to Spain to work at an ESL camp for children. Megan returned the following year to help at a bilingual VBS. As she watched the children happily sing songs and read the Bible, Megan’s heart broke for them, well-aware that none knew Jesus as their savior.

Megan will be serving at ABWE’s Evangelical Christian Academy in Madrid, with the hopes of teaching officially in January of next year. •

SPAIN



LESS THAN 1% OF SPAIN’S POPULATION CLAIM TO BE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN, WHICH IS FEWER THAN SOME MUSLIM COUNTRIES.

## ROMANIA



*Kayla Meier*

GENESIS CHURCH, MEXICO, MO

*It took Kayla just 15 days for her to know the Lord wanted her to stay on the field longer.*

Soon after her arrival to Romania, Kayla felt the Lord challenging her to increase her short-term ministry assignment from one to two years, affording her more time to invest in others and build relationships.

Previously, Kayla had attended a local community college before transferring to Hannibal-LaGrange University, a Baptist school in her home state of Missouri, to finish her academic and athletic career. But she ended up gaining something much more valuable.

The moment she stepped onto her new campus, Kayla noticed something different about those around her. Her classmates, professors, and teammates carried a joy

that fascinated her. Having gone to a Catholic school, Kayla believed in God, yet she knew something was missing in her faith.

The Lord began stirring her heart, and when friends invited Kayla to an evening church service, curiosity got the better of her, and she accepted. She remembers being convicted of her sin during the sermon and the pastor offering hope through the gospel.

“No matter how far you walk away from God, all you have to do is turn around, and he will be waiting,” said Kayla, echoing the pastor’s words from that life-changing night. Realizing her deep need to repent and turn from sin, Kayla entrusted her life to Jesus.

After college, she embarked on three separate missions trips to Romania, acquiring short-term

experience. Seeing the educational needs of MKs in Romania, Kayla contacted ABWE in the fall of 2017. She left for the field just eight months later.

During her time in Romania, God laid a passion on Kayla’s heart for college students. She is now in prefield ministry in the US and plans to return to Romania as a long-term missionary serving through college ministry, discipleship, and mobilization. •

**MORE THAN 93% OF ROMANIANS CONSIDER THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS BECAUSE THEY WERE BAPTIZED IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AS INFANTS.**

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# North America

ALTHOUGH 77% OF THE AMERICAN POPULATION CONSIDERS ITSELF CHRISTIAN, LESS THAN 18% ATTEND CHURCH.

SENDING MISSIONARIES SINCE 1927

Joel Winget



MK MINISTRY

*God used a whale to draw Jonah closer to him. Joel used whales to run away from God.*

Joel's parents have served with ABWE for nearly 30 years in Europe, where he grew up. Even though he wouldn't trade his experience overseas, Joel learned firsthand the struggles that MKs experience living on the field.

For three years during and after college, Joel served on the MK Care Team at Cru's headquarters, leading missions trips, conferences, and debriefs for MKs all over the world. When presented with an offer to work at SeaWorld Orlando, Joel jumped on the opportunity to help marine mammals and their caretakers. After four years, that childhood dream dwindled, and Joel was faced with the options of pursuing a career that made good money or stepping back into ministry.

Joel chose money—a life of financial stability and success. He worked in project implementation and management for technology groups for the next five years. In time, Joel again grew dissatisfied with his career and wandered to a different one. However, he discovered that the toxicity in the workplace was leading him to an unhealthy lifestyle. Physically exhausted, spiritually depleted, and mentally unwell, Joel left the workforce.

As Joel began to wonder about his next steps, the Lord kept bringing MK Care to his mind.

Until then, Joel's excuse for not returning to ministry was seeing family members and his best friend being mistreated by others in various ministry positions. During the summer of 2019, he was challenged by his parents and a Cru staff member to consider serving in MK Care again.

"For about three weeks, I prayed and fasted over the choice," Joel said.

Ultimately, in October 2019, Joel joined ABWE's MK Ministries, coming full circle as a former MK himself. There, he is using his career experiences as a project manager and skills that were cultivated at Cru to create new standards and strategies to reach and engage MKs within the organization. •

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW WE  
SUPPORT OUR MISSIONARIES  
THROUGH THE MEMBER CARE TEAM  
[ABWE.ORG/MEMBERCARE](https://abwe.org/membercare)

ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD, OF THE 502 PEOPLE GROUPS LIVING IN THE US, MORE THAN 184 OF THEM ARE CONSIDERED UNREACHED.

Richard & Jo'ell Bruggeman

BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH, SALEM, OR

EVERYETHNE



*Rick was 23 when he came to the realization that he had his feet planted “firmly on the path to destruction.”*

As C.S. Lewis put it, the route to hell is a gradual slope without sudden twists, and Rick had been slowly walking on it since his teenage years, leaving behind the faith of his family. But that changed when a friend shared the gospel with Rick, transforming him into a devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

He started attending an evangelical church, and on his first Sunday he heard former President of ABWE, Wendell Kempton, proudly declare that his missionaries were “knocking holes into the darkness,” allowing the light of Christ to shine through. His words struck Rick broadside,

convincing him to prepare his evangelism skills so that he could one day go to the field if the Lord called him to.

Seven years later, Rick met Jo'ell at Bible college. She came from a military family and was saved at a young age after a conversation with a friend. Jo'ell was always fascinated by missionary stories growing up, and while at Bible college, she resolved to put Christ at the center of her life, through career or ministry.

Once married, children and paying off debt pushed the thought of missions to the background until 2007, when Rick and Jo'ell moved their family of seven to Mexico to start youth groups, host Bible conferences, and do evangelism training.

In 2015, they returned to the US after Jo'ell was diagnosed with colon cancer. Thankfully, God blessed them with a successful surgery to remove the tumor. For the past five years, they have been raising up and coaching aspiring Christian leaders and church planters in the Hispanic community in Oregon.

They will be joining ABWE's EveryEthne ministry to continue reaching the Hispanic population in North America. •

Todd & Katherine Gate



GRAND LEDGE BAPTIST CHURCH, GRAND LEDGE, MI

*Growing up in a pastor's family, Katherine and her siblings were expected to be role models for the rest of the church.* So, when Katherine's sister attempted suicide, her parents were overwhelmed with shock. They had always thought spiritual education would prevent mental illness. Consequently, the congregation asked her father to resign, doubtful of his ability to shepherd a church when such familial problems festered undetected.

This crisis prompted Katherine to pursue a career in psychology, eventually becoming a certified mental health professional. She will be joining ABWE's Member Care team, using her skillset to help missionaries who are struggling with mental health needs on the field.

Todd is an experienced architect and will be serving in the Project Office to support facilities and expansion across ABWE's mission fields. He first developed a love for architecture when he was just a teenager and has been working in the field ever since.

Todd was a veteran draftsman when God placed ministry on his heart. After many years in the secular workforce, he and Katherine agreed it was time to use their skills and professions for kingdom work.

“As an architect, plans are what we do,” Todd said. “But God's plans are better than my simple ones.” •



PROJECT OFFICE & MEMBER CARE



READMORE  
from our missionaries  
[abwe.org/blog](https://abwe.org/blog)

“I must confess, I am not brave. There were many days on the field when I sensed God dragging me from place to place.”

## Long Lines & Exit Signs

*What keeps you from running from God's call?*

- E.B. ABWE MISSIONARY TO THE 10/40 WINDOW -

**THE LINE WAS NOT MOVING. HONESTLY, I DIDN'T WANT IT TO MOVE.**

Ahead of me was the check-in counter for Swiss International Air Lines. My family stood with me, and I wanted desperately to express how much I would miss them. Unfortunately, my tendency to bury emotions prevented any words from leaving my mouth.

My mind preoccupied and distracted, I heard my mother say distantly, “You should have eaten something.” I wanted to tell her, “I couldn't eat anything if I tried.” I was too nervous. The airport exits were close, tempting me to run back to the car and drive home. However, after a rush of goodbyes, I took my seat in 28C, and about 14 hours later managed to find my way to the city of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, where I would study French for the next nine months.

The days leading to my departure for language school were marked by the ebb and flow of conflicting emotions. At times, I felt great excitement and relief as I received the last of my financial support and prefield clearances. But these sweet moments of victory were often followed by overwhelming waves of fear that made my body feel heavy and caused periodic ringing in my ears. Although confident in God's leading and sovereignty, I still dreaded saying goodbye. These emotions are not unique to me. I am just one of thousands of missionaries who regularly undergo this process.

People often comment, “You're so brave.” Disappointingly, I must confess, I am not brave. There were many days

on the field when I sensed God dragging me from place to place. There were many times I thought, “There is no way I can do this.” Fortunately, the Holy Spirit would intervene and lovingly whisper, “Trust me. Depend on me.” Time and again I returned to the words of Jesus in John chapter 15: “Apart from me you can do nothing.” The knowledge and faith in God's absolute sovereignty throughout this life-changing journey seems to always surpass the human fear I regularly experience.

To combat the worry of stepping into the unknown, I dedicated much time to reading scripture. I conveniently buried my checklist at the bottom of my purse and clung tightly to the word. It imparted the courage and strength I needed. I began to see more vividly God's miraculous work through men and women who became foreigners but continued to obey the true God. I can't begin to grasp the emotions Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah must have felt as they were captured and taken to Babylon, given new names, and forced to learn a new language and culture. I can't imagine what Ruth felt as she gleaned in Boaz's field for the first time. These courageous examples demonstrate God's omnipresence in scripture, as he stood fast with them in blazing furnaces and unknown pastures.

God is just as present, active, and powerful in Switzerland as he was in the US. He is always working through his servants to accomplish amazing feats that bring him glory. This is my constant reminder and hope. It's what keeps me from sprinting toward exit signs. •



## 3 Reasons To Care About the CARES Act

- DUANE EARLY, VICE PRESIDENT OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS -

**EVEN AS 2021 APPROACHES**, COVID-19 hasn't relinquished its hold on the world. But ABWE serves a God who is steadfast and enduring, while even the most severe pandemics will dissipate.

During these trying seasons, ABWE is especially grateful for the unending support from our donors. Despite the financial hardships it's beset, 2020 may be the best year to give due to the passing of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (the CARES Act). The new stimulus bill offers greater deductions for donations to qualified charities and nonprofits, including ABWE. Here is some information on the CARES Act that you should care about.

### 1. The Standard Deduction Has Changed

For standard deductions, the CARES Act introduced an above-the-line deduction for non-itemized, charitable donations. Individuals can claim up to \$300 (\$600 for married filing jointly taxpayers) if they aren't itemizing for the 2020 tax year.

### 2. Itemized Deductions Have Changed

Under the CARES Act, exclusively for 2020, 100% of your adjusted gross income (AGI) can be deducted, as opposed to the usual 60% AGI cap. It has also boosted businesses' AGI deduction limit from 10% to 25%.

For example, say Bob has an AGI of \$100,000. In the past, he would normally only be able to deduct up to \$60,000 for gifts to charity. But for the 2020 tax year, with the temporary changes in the CARES Act, Bob can now deduct his entire AGI of \$100,000. Theoretically, this means that extremely benevolent givers could end up with zero taxable income.

### 3. The CARES Act is Different from Previous Tax Legislation

The CARES Act is designed to be fast-acting for all Americans, without stiff and rigid criteria that pose high barriers of entry. At the time of the CARES Act's passing, the country feared for nonprofits, expecting they would be hit the hardest as donors pinched their wallets tighter this year. The government realized that these are invaluable organizations to effect change in times of crisis. It wanted to stimulate generosity in a difficult COVID-19 economy by providing some extra incentive for Americans.

When planning your financial stewardship, prayerfully consider capitalizing on the CARES Act. Our mission wouldn't be possible without your generous giving. Contact your accountant or financial advisor for more information. •

*\*Lamar King, financial advisor for BARE Wealth Advisors, contributed to the writing of this article. ABWE is not a financial advisor. Please consult with your accountant.*



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## 'Burning the Idols

LOCATION: TOGO, AFRICA

**DOWN A LONG DIRT ROAD, PAST THE POINT WHERE THE ELECTRICAL LINES STOP RUNNING**, an elderly man gathered his extended family and fellow villagers under a large leafy tree. Father Martouka was the chief and leading fetisher (animistic religious leader and healer) of his village. The reason he had assembled everyone there was to publicly profess his faith in Christ, burn his animistic idols and amulets, and then be baptized.

Martouka's adult children are all born-again Christians. The lives of his sons, who are now pastors, were changed by the strength of the Holy Spirit in the 1990s, and his daughter was saved in 2013 after witnessing the healing

power of prayer and the compassion of ABWE's hospital staff during a life-threatening illness. But Martouka continued to put his trust in the family idols and spirits. His children prayed for Martouka for 25 years until his heart finally softened to the gospel and Christ.

With the local church closed due to COVID-19 regulations, the family and many villagers met outside, and Martouka shared his testimony. I was asked to pray for the Holy Spirit's protection against the demons he had rejected. Then they poured gasoline on the pile of idols and spiritual objects. After ensuring that Martouka's past was consumed by the fire, his sons baptized him. •



**ANDREW PAUL WARD IS AN ABWE MISSIONARY TO TOGO**, sent from Grace Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tenn. Andrew is the husband of Mary, father to Emmanuel, Cyrus, and Alethia. He holds a B.S. from Bob Jones University, an M.Div. from Temple Baptist Seminary and an Ed.D. from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.



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