

SECOND ISSUE 2012



INTERSERVE

SERVING [WITH] THE
Local
Church



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[482] An Arabic-speaking **Evangelist** is needed for a small expat team in North East Asia. A commitment of 2+ years is required.

[815] A multicultural church in Thailand is seeking an experienced **Children's Ministry Leader**. 1-2 year commitment required.

[886] A **Pastor** is needed for an international church in Bangladesh. *Some remuneration provided, 2 years+ commitment required.*

[205] An appropriately qualified **Persian speaker** is needed in Pakistan to assist in training pastors. 2 years+ commitment required.

[814] A **Pastor** is needed for an international church (250-300 people) in Central Asia. 1-2 year commitment required.

[57] **Pioneering Church Planters** are needed to establish indigenous, self-reproducing churches in the Arab world. 2 years+ commitment required.

[545] An international school in the Arab world is recruiting **Teachers**. *Some remuneration provided, 1-2 year commitment required.*

[860] A **Country Director** is required by an organisation in SE Asia. *Some remuneration provided, 2 years+ commitment required.*

[863] A microfinance institution in West Asia is seeking an English-speaking **Deputy Director**. *Salaried position, 2 years+ commitment required.*

[791] **Host(s)** are needed for a guesthouse in the Arab world that provides R&R to mission workers. 1-11 month commitment required.

[840] A bilingual **Editor** (English/Hindi) is needed for a magazine in North India.. *Salaried position, 2 years+ commitment required.*

[694] An international school that supports expats in Cambodia requires a **Human Resources Manager**. *Salaried position, 1-2 year commitment required.*

Interserve is an interdenominational, international mission fellowship working amongst the peoples of Asia and the Arab world. Our mission Partners seek to share the love and message of Christ by utilising their many and varied professional skills. We work in partnership with local and national churches and partner organisations, amongst the most marginalised and where Jesus is least known.

Lives and communities
transformed through
encounter with **Jesus Christ**

GO Magazine

Second Issue 2012

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PUBLISHED BY

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For security reasons, some names and details have been
modified or omitted. Photos used do not always represent
the locality referred to in the adjoining article.



I am excited about this new GO magazine! Each article is a tremendous testimony in itself and also a deep reflection on how we believe God has called Interserve into mission.

‘Serving (with) the local church’ reminds us that we, as expatriate ‘sent-ones’, are not the sum of mission – not even close to it. We have roles to play, yes, and very important ones at that. But as times have changed, so these roles are changing as well.

As Dr Paul Bendor-Samuel, our International Director, reminds us, God, over these past few hundred years of mission effort, has planted a local church in most of the hard and unreached places. If that was not a reality, the past mission of His church would indeed be a dismal failure. But it is not a failure – and from North Africa to North Korea, the church of Jesus is emerging and growing. Buffeted, weak, challenged or hidden away as it at times may be, it is still His church. More often than not it is actually stronger in faith and far more radical than ours in the so-called post-Christian West. And as His church it is called into mission – from its own Jerusalem to all of its own Judea, and on to the ends of the earth. That has indeed shifted some goalposts for mission today.

If we are to participate in this mission we need to grasp what I like to call the Acts 16

principle. Here we see Paul on mission – on the go, ready to conquer the world. Yet God is holding him back, not allowing him to move his own programme forward. But then one night Paul has a vision and hears the ‘Macedonian Call’: “Come over here and help us!” The coming alongside and helping where God already is, and has long been, at work must accompany and temper our “going into all the world to make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28).

So what could these new roles look like, and how might these shifted goalposts affect us?

As the articles for this edition came in and I read the reflections of our Partners, I had to think about ‘true conversation’. We cannot really engage in meaningful conversation with another without being changed in the process. As we go on mission we need to be open, willing to converse deeply, willing to let others change and shape us. These ‘others’ include the local brothers and sisters our Lord places us with. That contrasts with a paternalistic, or neo-colonial, attitude where we expats hold all the power, make all the decisions, and impose our solutions.

Like Jesus, we need to divest ourselves of our power and go as fellow sojourners on the road of discipleship. The people in what we love to call ‘the hard places’ need us and our with-ness much more than any solutions and resources we might also bring.

Where we as Christ-followers are willing, at times sacrificially, to go and genuinely journey and converse deeply with those we are sent to, there we will find invitations to come alongside, befriend, support and, eventually, mentor.

There may still be a need to co-pioneer in areas where the light of Jesus has not quite penetrated or taken hold. As we do so we may also discover that leadership is often the least required of the assistance we can offer; God may have already blessed His church with wonderfully gifted leaders. Supporting and befriending them is a tremendous gift that becomes mutual; it opens the door wide for us to ask advice, seek input and direction, and submit ourselves and our strategies to each other. Thus mission becomes what we do together. Now that is where I am convinced the Lord will truly send His blessing!

Paul



Leadership meetings in Thailand

In June 2012 the National Office and Country Team Leaders met with the International Leadership Team and Council in Chiang Mai.

Three primary aims were identified: growing a shared understanding of our mission; growing a deeper empathy for each other and an appreciation of the differing responsibilities we carry; and beginning to agree on responses to the five Interserve Crossroads Challenges.

The meetings were prefaced by two days of prayer and worship, a deeply encouraging time which helped to produce profound experiential alignment within the global

leadership. This was based on mutual interest and submission, and in community and service towards one another. There was a renewed and deepened desire to walk together in our varied roles and calling, in the midst of changing and challenging environments.

In our last GO we shared that Dr Paul Bendor-Samuel, our International Director, was stepping down from his role in late 2013.

At the June meetings in Chiang Mai, however, it became clear that Paul's season as leader was not yet finished, and it is with great joy that we can revise the earlier announcement. Paul and his wife Liz will continue in their role for at least the next three years. ☺

Protecting children in Kurdistan

Ajwan was just fifteen years old when she was raped by one of her brothers. She was living with her parents and siblings in a village in Kurdistan, Northern Iraq.

When Ajwan was found to be pregnant as a result, she was sent off to a reformatory to have the baby, which was then taken from her.

Ajwan agreed to charges being laid against her brother, despite family pressure, and he was convicted and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. But when Ajwan returned home, she was murdered by another brother in an 'honour killing'.

'Honour killing' is illegal in Kurdistan, but

even though it is outlawed it still happens and it targets the weakest. Tear Fund (NZ) and Interserve are helping support a new initiative through an NGO in Northern Iraq to upgrade child protection services in that region. The NGO is consulting and working with the Regional Government authorities, awaiting their final go-ahead and financial commitment to put the plans into action. A highly experienced social worker from New Zealand is working with the NGO to design training programmes for local social workers and is introducing systems for child foster care.

The planning and preparation by the NGO to set up systems and policies is expected to be completed and ready to go by the end of this year. ☺

Destination World: the Call

The last weekend in August saw about 30 mission agencies united in bringing this quintessentially Kiwi Missions Conference to the Christian public of New Zealand.

Preceded by Mosaic, a day when more than a hundred pastors, mission leaders and mission personnel came together, 'The Call' attracted around 260 mission-minded New Zealanders from across the country.

Challenging messages TED-talk style were varied with dramatic presentations and surrounded with worship; interactive workshops allowed participants to dig deeper; and biblical reflection in the evenings placed our missional calling today squarely within a biblical framework.

Mission was considered as both here, at home and within the opportunities we encounter locally, and out there, amongst those who do not have the opportunity to hear about Jesus. Much time was given to informal conversation where interested enquirers were able to meet with agency reps or counsellors to explore God's call on their lives.

Going by the results of the first 'Call' a couple of years ago, we will see more Kiwis, young and not-so-young, stepping out into a missional life in the weeks and months to follow. ☺

GROWING GOD'S KINGDOM

We, God's people, are a people of diversity. Each one of us is an individual, a unique inhabitant of a globe that sustains countless lifestyles, languages, religions and cultures. In the midst of that diversity, we as His people must strive to live as the body of Christ, that it might be His instrument of change in this world.

What exactly does that mean? Consider someone who uproots their life and replants in a foreign culture; the experience is unsettling yet is often born out of a desire to grow God's kingdom. The temptation is to hit the ground running, pioneer new initiatives, hand out social aid and pour financial support into the local church (which, praise God, now exists in most places). Yet in a restricted-access country, these approaches are neither so wise nor sustainable, as you might well imagine!

The limitations of working in a restricted environment come with a silver lining. We are forced to think outside the square as we do not have the freedom to publicly declare God's love. Instead, we must recognise that we are united with the national church as the body of Christ. The question becomes: 'How can we get on board with what God is already doing here? What can we do that will equip and empower local believers to be kingdom builders?'

Although one branch of the local

church here exists above ground, the approval of the government does not exempt that community from struggles. That very stamp of approval curtails freedom and dictates how the church can interact with international workers. Official partnerships are inherently difficult, as often those who invest money and those who co-ordinate a project hold strong and differing opinions, or the church's need for financial input biases the decision-making process. Granted, there is a place for some to invest money and resources into the national church, but this often comes at a cost. In a nation with an ingrained culture of suspicion, to acquire resources without working for them fosters the scepticism and doubt of other locals, and it nurtures an expectation of favouritism and handouts amongst those who believe.

For many local believers, the very act of association with foreigners invites social exclusion and prejudice against their faith community. Take, for example, a woman known as 'Auntie'. She is a faithful believer and runs a hostel near the city where she cares for about fifteen young people, many from backgrounds of drug addiction. Her investment in these young lives is both practical and spiritual. Supporting so many is backbreaking work, yet she will not open her door to foreigners, nor openly accept practical support. To do so would set her apart; it would arouse suspicion, jealousy and judgement from the neighbours. Her witness depends on her integration with

her community. Integration enables her to stand, to acknowledge her faith, and to let the results of her hard work and of God's grace speak into the community. For the desperate parents of drug-addicted kids in a nearby village, sending their children to live at her hostel is considered a last resort because of Aunty's faith, yet is respected as a sure way for them to find freedom.

Where official partnership and public associations fail, one thing prevails: the pure simplicity of enduring friendship. Friendship, discipleship, mentoring – these are personal investments that may develop into rich and fruitful relationships with the passage of time. In reality, Aunty doesn't stand alone – she has international support in the form of a friend: a friend who, with grace, must accept that she can never visit Aunty at the hostel, who can never openly admit their friendship, yet who stands by her in solidarity of purpose, who slips her the extra cash when bowls are empty, who prays with her throughout the joys and tribulations.

For the body of Christ to live with integrity there must be a dynamic and mutual investment in both development (social and economic) and in the growth of God's kingdom. The local church must take initiative, must demonstrate their care for the people of their nation. Over the past 20 years, the church here has learnt key lessons about what it means to live, not just as individuals who believe, but as a

community of faith. They recognise that physical and social ministries are required, that they can't focus only on the spiritual. This journey, albeit a slow one, is sustained and nurtured by the encouragement and advice of international workers who have journeyed alongside church leaders for a decade or more. These international workers have overcome the culture of suspicion through their faithfulness over time; they have not forced the hand of local believers but have patiently waited for the impetus and passion to emerge amongst local leadership, so that Christ's body here might be an agent of change in a country that has abundant needs. Many international workers have established examples: they've pioneered initiatives to train the unskilled, free the addicts, love the neglected, rescue the trafficked and feed the hungry. Yet only when initiatives such as these are taken on by local believers can they be undertaken to the depth that is needed.

The mission of Christ's body in this broken and hurting nation is to stand up and declare through actions that the people of this country are worth loving, and to show people that they are loved. International workers must model that love as they journey alongside local believers as disciplers, mentors and friends. On a practical level, this may seem like a drop in the ocean, yet it allows local believers to learn by experience how to disciple the

future generation: it prepares the church for growth – the growth of God's kingdom. ☞

The author has a heart for medical education and development, and is currently serving as a teacher in South East Asia.



UNIFIED THROUGH PRAYER

I had been serving in Pakistan, mostly as a homeschooling mother, for 23 years when God started challenging me to become more involved in the national church. He was very specific about what He wanted me to do – start a prayer meeting for all the pastors in our town.

“You’ve got to be kidding, God! There’s no way!” I protested. “Me? Start a prayer meeting for all these pastors?”

With all their fragile egos, backbiting, infighting and competitive spirit, I could not imagine their getting together and praying! And I was a *woman*, without a seminary degree – why would they listen to me? When I ran the idea by some colleagues, their reactions were similarly sceptical.

“I hate to say it, but those guys are almost a lost cause. They are more concerned with church politics than prayer,” said one.

“There’s just not much life in them. Why not concentrate on the ordinary parishioners?” asked another.

“If you’re going to start it, just start small, with pastors from within our denomination, and see how it goes,” suggested yet another.

Even my husband, a missionary pastor, was dubious. So I brought it back to the Lord. He

was adamant – yes, the *pastors*, and not just those of our denomination, but *all* of them. And He wanted *me* to do it. God and I argued over the next five months.

In the meantime, God started changing my own heart. Whereas before I would often sit in church with a judgemental spirit, mentally criticising the pastor’s poor preparation and lacklustre sermon, now God started helping me to see these pastors through His eyes. They were His chosen vessels, but they were like scattered sheep without a shepherd, with little encouragement and few opportunities for growth. I started to see them as feeble lights in the midst of a great darkness, struggling to stay alight, like burning sticks separated from a fire and slowly growing cold. They were wide open to the darts of the evil one. Their congregations were not supporting them much in prayer (at least that seemed the case in our church!). The local Bishop over them did not seem to pastor or disciple them but only had critical words for them. It was no wonder that their faith was growing cold and they were discouraged! As I started praying for them, my critical spirit diminished and my compassion for them grew.

The Lord showed me that if they gathered

in prayer, their feeble lights would increase manyfold, like firebrands returning to the fire. I realised that they, as the spiritual authorities over this town, could have a tremendous impact on the area if they joined together in prayer. The Lord instructed me to have a different church host it each time, to encourage the pastors themselves to start to take ownership of it. And He wanted all the pastors to pray for the blessing and fruitfulness of the host pastor’s church and ministry, to counteract the spirit of competitiveness among them. The ideas grew, and the Lord finally talked me into it.

We’ve been meeting for a year and a half now, Baptist, Catholic, Pentecostal and Church of Pakistan pastors, for monthly three-hour prayer retreats. I see now that my being a non-seminary-trained woman was actually a huge advantage. The pastors aren’t threatened by me as they probably would have been by another pastor trying to organise this. I am simply there as one to serve, encourage and occasionally teach. Each retreat can have a variety of activities: sharing joys and trials in ministry, prayer in twos for personal needs, listening intercession to see how the Lord would have us pray over our town and nation, Bible teaching, soaking prayer, worshipping quietly through music, and intercession for one another. The time flies. Our hearts are slowly growing together and the pastors feel less alone in their struggles.

What a joy it was to see pastors gather around and pray for a colleague who had shared that

**How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together
in unity. (Psalm 133:1)**

the numbers in his church were really down. Rather than gloating that their own churches were doing better, they cried out for God to move in that neighborhood, to draw people to Himself through that church and to bring revival. And then we were able to celebrate together when the pastor reported the following month that attendance had significantly improved.

The pastors have even started collaborating on projects. Recently we held a 'Purity Seminar' for about 70 teenage girls, the first seminar of its kind offered to people across denominations in our town. The girls were so enthusiastic they wanted to have meetings like this regularly! I wondered how to do follow-up prayer ministry with some of the Catholic girls who requested it, fearing we may step on denominational toes by coming to minister in neighborhoods that are traditionally Catholic. But the Catholic Father in our prayer group offered to organise a follow-up meeting for us so we could help those girls who really wanted some prayer for inner healing. We hope it will be another step in bringing the different Christian communities together. A similar multi-church seminar for teenage guys is planned for November.

The pastors are beginning to ask, "How can we start prayer meetings like this in our churches? How can we teach our people more on prayer? How can we encourage revival? Should we start a meeting for all our churches to get together for prayer?"

One pastor said, "I can sense the presence of the Lord in these prayer times. It brings a freshness."

Another said, "Our burdens seem lighter when we come to these meetings."

"We in the NGOs are all doing our own thing," was another feedback. "We're all

Christian organisations. Why aren't we sharing ideas and resources more, and praying together? Can you start these kinds of meetings for the Christian NGOs in this area?"

I am tempted to protest to the Lord that I am inadequate for the task, but figure it will probably be futile. It is God's delight to use inadequate people. And it is my delight to have a small part in seeing the Christian unity in our area grow. ✨

The author is an Interserve Partner in Pakistan.



A STORY OF REVIVAL FROM THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

I came to the field in early 2005 as a full-time worker, but I had already been living and working in China for a few years by then. My wife had come as a full-time worker in 1999.

We met in 2005, married the next year, and now have four children. We are called to share the good news of Jesus with the Han (the majority ethnic group) and the Tibetans.

Much effort and many prayers have been poured into the Tibetans over the past centuries. I recently read the unpublished letters of W.E. Simpson (1901-1932), an American missionary who toiled tirelessly for 15 years to bring the gospel to the Tibetans. Up to the day he was martyred by Muslim bandits, though, he saw only one Tibetan make a decision to follow Christ. All of Simpson's letters contained an appeal for more workers from the West, and his missionary father made similar appeals on his son's behalf. Below is an excerpt from one of his father's letters, dated February 1925:

*When I first reached the
Tibetan border in 1895*

very few places were open for missionaries, though many people of God were praying for Tibet to open to the Gospel. Now all North East Tibet that can be reached from Kansu [Gansu] Province is open. Central Tibet must be reached from India because an almost impassable uninhabited mountain range lies between Kokonor and Central Tibet, while East Tibet must be reached from Szechuen and Yunnan. Now the need is not prayer for the opening of Tibet, but dauntless courage and flawless consecration and regretless sacrifice to enter the open door set before us ... we need at once six men of God, chosen men who will not flinch from any toil and privation, who esteem it a joy to bury themselves from the outside world in the heart of shameless heathenism in order to bring Christ to those who have no other way of learning of Him.

Anyone serving in Tibetan areas knows how difficult it is, even today, to see one Tibetan come to the Lord. I read somewhere that it takes an average of 14 years of a missionary working with a Tibetan before they will come to the Lord, if they come to the Lord at all.

Indeed, until four years ago, our two laments regarding Tibetan work had been that 1) there were more martyrs than believers in Tibet, and 2) there were more foreign mission workers than local mission workers in Tibet. But this all changed for good with the 2010 Yushu Earthquake.

The earthquake, which hit at 7.49 am on 14 April, registered 7.1 on the Richter scale and

killed an estimated 3000 people. Yushu has over 100,000 residents, with more than 90% of them ethnic Tibetans. The remainder of the people are Hui (Muslims), Han, and some Mongolians.

We hadn't intended to become involved in the Yushu relief work, but when the Lord made it very clear He wanted us to go, we obeyed. The road to Yushu was long and treacherous (it later became known as 'the death road'), and on our journey to Jiegu (the hardest hit town) we encountered temperatures of -15 degrees Celsius, and drove across a 4877 metre pass.

Our first day in Yushu was chaos. We had no connections, no plan, no leadership. Our team was – and still is – a motley crew, made up of laymen armed with a wide pool of skills, none with experience in doing professional disaster-relief work. Everywhere around us we saw brokenness and need, but we were at a loss as to how to help or even function.

On the third morning, team members who were leaders from various churches across China all gathered around me. Brother M began by saying, "We had a good meeting last night. We all agreed that we have to learn from our mistakes in Wenchuan [where there had been a serious earthquake in 2008] regarding separatism. The Lord does not delight in His churches working in parts and attacking each other."

"That's right," Sister L from Tianshui agreed. "There are seven churches present here.



We will share all our resources and work together."

Brother X of Lanzhou continued, "So we will establish this platform for churches from everywhere to work together. And we all think that you are the most suitable candidate to lead us."

Although I felt that I did not have the experience or skill for the job, I accepted the appointment on one condition: that I would do it as an interim candidate until they found the right person to replace me.

That night, we, the founding members, drafted our Vision and Mission statements. We all agreed that the vision the Lord had given us was Unity. We would strive to work together to lift up Jesus, and put aside our personal, denominational, and background differences. We would leave all our respective

banners outside Yushu, for here we would raise only one banner: Jesus Christ. We would learn to submit to His Lordship, to one another, and to help one another to fulfill his or her calling as long as it was not opposed to our collective vision. We would be flexible, willing to serve wherever we were needed. We would focus on long-term work, so we could build relationships with the locals, and would not engage in short-sighted stratagems such as handing out tracts or Bibles and evangelising strangers on the streets. In fact, we specifically forbade such inappropriate methods in Tibetan areas. We would love each other as the Lord loves us, and we would love the people we came to help unconditionally, as He loves us.

And as we humbled ourselves to follow and

submit, miracles began to happen. Yushu, as a Tibetan area, is extremely wary of Christians, but by May we were the only non-governmental organisation to be granted permission to run medical stations there. By July we had helped treat more than 9000 patients in our two medical stations, delivered more than 250 tons of relief aid, helped better the lives of more than 3,000 households, signed a long-term agreement with the Yushu Prefecture Health Bureau to run a Mobile Clinic, and even received accolades from the government.

But we did not come here only to do charity. If that was our goal, then we would be no different from any of the Living Buddhas or imams or philanthropic celebrities who dumped millions of yuan to leave their name and face in Yushu. Our ultimate goal was to save lost souls, but we were making no progress.

Then the Holy Spirit really shook things up. One evening an experienced servant from Henan province declared that the earthquake was God's punishment for the rampant idolatry in Yushu. But then brother MP, a Jew, stood up and said, "This morning I talked to three Tibetans about Jesus. None of them had heard of the name of Jesus, ever. So when we sit on our high chair and judge these people, have we ever considered why they worship idols in the first place? If they have never even heard the gospel before, what choice do, or can, they have? Whose fault is this that the Yushu people have never heard of Jesus?"

As this question echoed through the tent, I also began to ask why, with 100 million Christians in China, we still find more foreign mission workers serving and dying in Tibetan areas than Chinese mission workers?

The Holy Spirit convicted everyone. Slowly the reply came from our Chinese brothers and sisters: "It is our fault. It is the Chinese churches' fault!" We all fell down on our faces in the dirt

and cried out to the Lord for forgiveness. There were more than 30 of us in that tent that night, Han, Tibetan and foreigners. The Holy Spirit swept through us and there were cries of repentance and wailing from all corners.

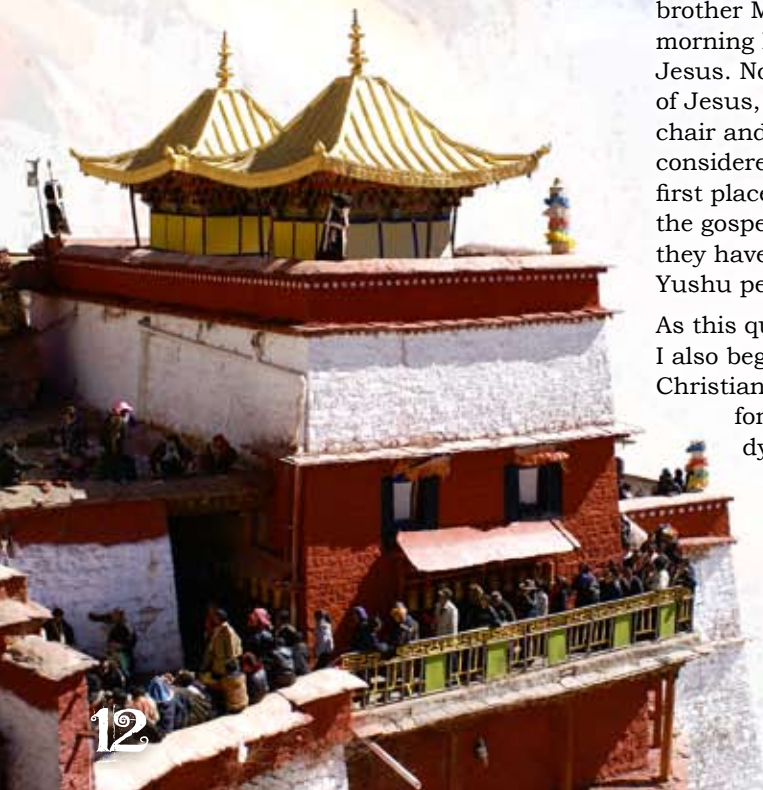
"We have sat on our high chair to judge the Tibetans, O Lord!" cried our Han brothers and sisters. "We have thought that they are smelly, dirty, backward and inconsequential. Forgive us, O Lord, for such a wrong attitude." That evening they chose to lay down their Han pride, and instead love the Tibetans with Jesus-powered, unconditional love.

That was the turning point in Yushu. Now that our spirits were broken and our hearts were crying out for forgiveness, the Lord was ready to use this bunch of broken vessels. From that day on, things began to move, and by July there were more than 70 new believers: 12 were Tibetans, six were Huis, and the rest were Hans.

Many unbelievers came to work among us and ended up believing. A man who owns a chain of hotels in Gansu came to do good work. After one week he left, but returned a month later, not knowing why. "I could not sleep or eat. I have this fire in me. I had to come back to Yushu!" In July he accepted the Lord and became our brother.

A doctor who came from Qinghai in April told us, "I have no belief; I have come to help people and feel good about myself." One month later, he accepted the Lord.

A Tibetan policewoman was helping us do





translation. She went to the medical station where our foreign medical personnel were serving, and when she saw the foreign nurses kneeling down to clean the sores and wounds of her fellow-Tibetans' feet, she was moved to tears. She said, "We Tibetans are not even helping our own kind. These foreigners willingly clean up the pus and blood of the dirty Tibetans' feet. No doctors in China would do such things!" Sister L, who was with her, took the opportunity to ask her, "Do you know why they would do such a thing? It is because they are following Christ." The Tibetan policewoman became a believer a few days later.

A Tibetan girl who was helping out at our medical station accepted the Lord after our visiting doctors shared with her, and her whole family started attending fellowship. Her brother, a monk, was so touched by the Holy Spirit and the love he received that a couple of months later he left his monastery to follow Jesus.

Surely the Lord is building His church in Yushu! No single person can claim credit for

all these conversions: this impressive result belongs to all as we work in unity, and the glory belongs to Jesus Christ alone. After all, He is the One drawing all people to Himself.

At the peak of our operation, there were over 100 people in our base. Most who came to work with us were believers, from many different backgrounds: there were Tibetans, Hans, Huis, Mongolians, Lisus, Jews, Malaysians, Singaporeans, Americans, South Africans, Koreans, Norwegians and people from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. When we prayed, we each did so in our own heart language. It was touching to behold men everywhere lift up their holy hands without anger or disputing (1 Tim 2:8).

The biggest miracle of all has been to witness and experience the Unity of the Body at work. I have no words to describe the beauty of this. I have been serving in the field for quite some time now, but never had I, in or outside China, seen such unity at work. During those days we literally put all we had in the middle for all to share. We ate, worked, prayed, praised and worshipped,

laughed and cried together. Everyone had but one desire: to glorify God. Old men would dream dreams, and young men would see visions. Non-believing strangers who came in contact with us would end up believing sooner or later. Even the Tibetan government officials visited, and told us, "Most people came to Yushu to do charity in order to feel good about themselves or to make a name for themselves. But we have been observing your group for two months now. You are different. You are genuine. We, the Tibetan people, want to thank you from our hearts. If anything happens and we end up losing our jobs because of you, we will bear this responsibility ourselves, we will have no regret!" They then put their palms together and lifted them to touch their forehead, which was the Tibetan way of paying respect to their high ranking lamas or leaders.

The unconditionality of our service was crucial: we cannot, and indeed must not, cheapen the love of God and His gospel by offering our help with strings attached ("I will give you a tent/food/clothes if you believe in Jesus"). We came to love and serve with absolutely no strings attached. We believe this is what He calls us to do. As we are faithful in our calling, the Holy Spirit can work through our faithfulness in the little things to reach the unreached hearts. Heart-changing is entirely the Holy Sprit's work, not ours. Our job is to obey. Plain and simple. ☺

PROFESSION AS MISSION

As we stand here at the beginning of the fifth generation of Interserve, our International Director, Paul Bendor-Samuel, has issued us with a challenge: to explore the use of new wineskins in mission. He wonders whether we could be missing the most obvious new wineskin right in front of us: the national church. How much of an impact would there be if international workers served in partnership with local churches, rather than apart from them, and helped resource them to reach out to their own people?

This article outlines one such initiative in a South East Asian country, where Interserve has actively worked to support the local church in pioneering a world first. It began in 2006, when two Interserve representatives met with the country's network of Christian leadership to investigate whether there was a need for Interserve to establish work in the country. As a result of that meeting, Interserve was invited to facilitate the Profession as Mission (PAM) project, and agreed to be directly accountable to the national Christian leadership.

It was apparent that the mission movement and the national church had failed to penetrate the majority culture to any degree. The PAM strategy was simple but brilliant: inspire, empower and support local believers to become tentmakers, encourage them to cross cultures to live and work in an unreached

people group (UPG) region, with the end goal of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

The initial phase, from 2007 to 2009, involved developing and piloting training materials on how to be a tentmaker, how to make disciples, how to plant culturally appropriate 'churches' and how to cross cultures to live and work in a UPG region. The Interserve representative, in New Zealand, provided daily email support and held weekly Skype meetings with the national team. Every two months he made ten-day visits to the country, funding them primarily through his consultancy business. A second Interserve team member, resident in the capital city at that time, played a key role in supporting and contributing to the development phase of the project on a day-to-day basis. Local Christians took the cultural and spiritual leadership; Interserve's role was to come alongside, co-pioneer with and support them.

In 2010, following an extensive review, the materials were updated to include two levels of training. Level 1 involves six two-hour sessions, which include input from local leaders on DVD and group discussion questions. Upon completion of Level 1, the participants start working their way through Level 2: 50 self-paced readings that involve answering reflective questions, an action plan and monthly discussion groups. The 50 readings move the learner through the essential issues and skills involved in PAM, such as: the Biblical Foundation of Tentmaking, Tentmaking in Practice, Work,

Witness, Discipleship, Cross-cultural Issues, Spiritual Warfare, and Church Planting. At the end of the training programme, follow-up and support is provided by local PAM staff.

Interserve has now held PAM training events (at the invitation of local church leaders) in 18 cities throughout the country, including several in the middle of a UPG region.

This year two further modifications have been made to the training. Firstly, 'Train the Trainer' modules have been added, to enable graduates to then go and set up their own groups for Level 1 and Level 2 training. Secondly, local PAM staff are starting to facilitate and lead the training events without any physical Interserve presence. Interserve still provides high levels of support through Skype, SMS and email.

To date, some 1000 participants have gone through the Interserve PAM training. Many of those have consequently set up their own groups to reproduce the training, which brings the big picture number to around 2000 individuals who are committed to a deliberate choice as to where and how they work, to enable them to share the gospel.

This project is a prime example of how Interserve workers can support the vision and direction of the national church, to enable them to reach out to their own people in their own style and context, and at their own pace. It also modelled another strategy that Interserve is developing – Consultants in Mission.

The primary player in this project was not an Interserve Partner or On Tracker, but an Interserve supporter who, though based in NZ, has become familiar with this particular South East Asian country through his consultancy business. This project was developed and implemented using the strong relationships he had already formed in-country, and through much time spent on email, phone and Skype. This steps outside of the traditional Interserve methodology but illustrates the role and value of harnessing the movements and time and energy of the modern international consultant with intentional missional motivation.

Consultants with a primary missional focus can and do have a key role to play in the new world of Interserve. This is just one example of how God can use someone who is in the right place at the right time, the consultant's skills and experience, along with a flow of work and remuneration, to allow this development and implementation to take place.

Please pray that PAM will become a powerful movement within this country where Christians are a small minority and that, under God, there will be created an army of local believers who adopt a missional stance and allow themselves to be moved to another region to be Jesus in that place. From there we let the Holy Spirit do what the Holy Spirit does, so that people come to know, and grow in, Jesus Christ. ☞

TESTIMONIES

BUDI ENJOYED TEACHING at a Christian school and sharing Jesus with non-Christian students. But when the school administration stopped all teachers from talking about Jesus, God led him to a different city. He enrolled at a public university, having been awarded a scholarship for his Masters Degree, and at this new place, among those of the majority religion, doors are opening for the good news to be shared. ☞

SRI WORKS AT A CHRISTIAN PUBLISHING HOUSE, and also studies at a university where most of the students are of the majority faith. She encourages her Christian friends to explore how their profession can open doors for the good news to be shared, and provides training from the Interserve PAM material. She hopes that when they return home that they, too, will pass on the tentmaking principles. ☞

A CHRISTIAN FAMILY lived among unbelievers in a village where they were not very welcome because of their faith. After the couple received some PAM/BAM training, they started a business selling drinking water and began to build relationships with the people they lived amongst. As they prayed and cared for each person they met and sold water to, they found that the villagers' attitude toward them changed. Now, as a result of their caring and love, another family have become believers. Business and God's principles have opened the door for the good news of Jesus. ☞

Unity IN Turkey

It was in Antioch that followers of Jesus were first called Christians. That ancient city, now known as Antakya, lies in modern Turkey, near the Syrian border.

The Church has an ancient and glorious history in Turkey that started in the book of Acts. It also has a painful and bloody more recent history. Following the end of World War I, in history's largest population exchange, the Christian population of Turkey dropped from over 20% to less than 1% when Greek Orthodox citizens of Turkey were moved to Greece and Muslim

citizens of Greece were relocated in Turkey.

Turkey today is a country of nearly 75 million people with fewer than 60,000

Christians, most of whom are nominal Armenian and Syrian Orthodox. But the number does include approximately 5,000 Protestant converts from Islam ('Muslim Background Believers' or MBB for short). When we talk of the Turkish church, it is often this small minority of a minority that we are referring to.

The modern MBB church in Turkey dates from the 1960s when missionaries, mostly short-term, began 'touring' Turkey, making friends and handing out literature. Sometime in the mid-1970s, when the foreign mission community numbered about 30 and the convert count was about the same, a foreign worker suggested that the community would do well to meet together to pray and to share ideas about plans and programmes. That was the start of what is now called the Leadership Advisory Council or LAC. With well over 1000 foreign workers and numerous organisations now working in the country, this tradition of cooperation has given us a forum for working together. The resulting unity among the foreign workers has been a blessing to the country in countless ways.

One surprising

outcome of this tradition came in the 1990s. Following a difficult two years in the late '80s, when foreign workers and local believers were arrested and some converts were tortured, the MBB church started to grow. As a result of this growth, the pastors of the new, small churches looked to their friends and teachers to see how they behaved together and decided that they should have something similar to LAC, a regular forum where they could meet for prayer and encouragement and through which they could work on common concerns. This was the beginning of TeK, the Representatives Council (Temsilci Kurulu in Turkish). TeK now includes the leaders of about 30 different churches from around the country, representing almost all Protestant churches. These churches have different charters and theologies, backgrounds and tastes, but have committed to work together, affirming that Jesus has only one Church.

An important rite of passage for TeK was the administration of relief after the massive 1999 earthquake near Istanbul. Over 17,000 people died in this catastrophe which caught the attention of the world. With help from LAC and the world mission community, TeK took the lead in coordinating the distribution of hundreds of thousands of dollars of help from churches around the world. Teams of volunteers from dozens of countries (including New Zealand) also effectively demonstrated the global nature of the Church and the partnership the Protestants

shared with their brothers and sisters around the world.

As the Interserve team leader in Turkey, I am part of LAC. The greatest joy of this role is the opportunity to join the TeK meetings and to get to know the Turkish pastors as friends. I have been involved with them on different projects and have asked for help and guidance as we have started various projects and initiatives. One significant point for us was a joint meeting of Turkish pastors and foreign organisation leaders, during which several of us explained the vision and plans of our groups to our Turkish brothers and sisters. This was considered risky by some, but it proved to be an important demonstration of trust by the foreign workers, which helped build deeper relations. We in Interserve explained that our vision was not so much to plant new churches but rather to encourage and support existing churches. We were greatly encouraged when several of the pastors who attended this session told us that our vision was refreshing and that they wanted to work more closely with us.

In 2008 TeK sponsored a major review of the church in Turkey with a desire to identify together important initiatives to support. It was a slow and sometimes challenging exercise as Turks don't typically work so methodically. But after nearly two years of work TeK agreed on seven key priorities for the church and started initiating projects according to the priorities of Prayer, Social

Action, Church Planting and Evangelism, Family and Children, Discipleship, Leadership Development and Media. Together we are working on various projects under these headings.

The Interserve Country Leadership Team in Turkey feels strongly that we are part of the church in Turkey and must always work in cooperation with our national brothers and sisters. We see our work as complementing and supporting the churches in Turkey. At our national conferences we regularly invite Turkish national church leaders to address us. We have also made plans for this autumn to have a special leadership team meeting with several Turkish pastors in the hope of getting help in setting our future direction as a team.

Turkey is an ancient, young country. The Republic was founded in 1923 but most of the cities are over 3,000 years old. Some of the world's oldest churches are in Turkey, yet the Protestant communities are mostly first-generation churches. This odd mix of old and new, ancient and infant, gives Turkey a remarkable dynamism. We are greatly blessed that the Lord has allowed us in this setting to build healthy, mutually submissive relationships between foreign mission workers and national converts. Our prayer is that we will be able to continue to grow deeply as a community of Jesus' disciples in this country, so that we may bless the nation in remarkable and godly ways. ☺



THE CAMBODIAN CHURCH

The church in Cambodia is growing again. Praise God. The work of hundreds of years of Christian mission – from the 16th century when Catholic missionaries and refugees came from Portugal, Japan and Vietnam to the last 90 years of Protestant activities – was decimated during the Khmer Rouge's genocidal regime in the 1970s.

The ultra-communist Khmer Rouge was anti-religion; even in the majority Buddhist community monks were killed and temples were turned into barracks. Many Christian pastors were killed; Christians and Muslims (a minority group called the Cham) were targeted as enemies of the state. Of the many thousands of Christians in the early 1970s only a few hundred, including three pastors, still survived on 'liberation day' in January 1979.

After a decade of communist rule, and an ongoing civil war with the remnant of the Khmer Rouge in the border areas during the 1980s, it was commonly thought that there were only about 30 small churches across the country by the early 1990s.

Today, in 2012, the most recent statistics suggest the church here is made up of between 5,000 and 7,500 congregations. The large variation in estimates indicates how hard it is to count churches, and a range of definitions of 'church' also confuses things. The common estimate of Christians

in Cambodia is 2-3% of the population of 14 million.

Whatever the actual figures are, some things are clear:

- The Cambodian church has grown hugely in the last 15 years since the 1997 coup released the control and oppression the church experienced under communist rule and during the early days of 'democracy'.
- Most believers and leaders are young in both faith and age (the average age of leaders is 38 and they are often new believers).
- Only 12% of leaders are in full-time ministry while most are rice farmers (60%) or students (10%).
- Many church leaders are living on or below the poverty line.
- Only 5% of church leaders have graduated from high school, and 71% have only some primary school education or none at all.

The majority of all churches are initiated and led by Cambodians who have come to faith

through the ministry of other Cambodians. The most effective evangelists are local villagers who come to know Jesus through someone else's witness or directly through an encounter with Jesus in a dream. They then share with their family and neighbours and, before long, a small group of believers becomes a 'church'.

Whilst there is little overt anti-Christian sentiment today, there is still a general suspicion of Christianity in some places. The biggest challenge comes within families and the local community as new believers struggle to find ways to explain their new faith and to make clear why they can't continue with some of the old religious traditions. This is an issue particularly at festivals and weddings when veneration of the ancestors and spirits is a part of religious practice. These young believers need to find new ways to show that they still love and respect their parents, the community elders and the 'ancestors' and that Christianity does not teach disrespect to parents and elders.

Jesus is truly good news to Cambodians, many of whom have a huge issue with fear. Because of the traumatic past and an ongoing fear of spirits and ghosts, many Cambodians spend their meager incomes on amulets and belts to ward off evil. Many also regularly seek help from local spirit doctors, mediums and fortune-tellers. But the Holy Spirit is active across this country, moving people from powerlessness at the hands of evil spirits to the freedom of life in the Spirit.

After decades of war and trauma, Jesus' message of peace and love is challenging

Cambodians to consider other ways of living in community. One Christian ministry here focuses on 'peacemaking', helping local Christian leaders understand the importance of being 'people of peace' in their family and community, and giving them skills to be conciliators in disputes and misunderstandings.

So what is the role we, as a group of international mission workers, can play alongside the Cambodian Church? Do we even have a role?

I believe our role is to support, mentor and encourage the leaders of these small Christian communities (each with, on average, about 16 active members), to enable them to 'keep going' after the initial passion wanes. By encouraging knowledge of the Bible and healthy Christian lifestyles, we can help them to build solid Christian churches that are an effective witness in their communities.

Connecting with the church is a new focus area for Interserve Cambodia and we are taking our time to find the best way for our workers to minister with the local church. Supporting leaders seems a good place to start. For example, we have some Partners working alongside a small Christian community in a 'garment-factory area' where young people from the provinces, mostly women, work long hours in the factories. The ministry was started five years ago by four young Cambodian Christians, who established English and computer classes

for the community. Today they also have a small church, a kids' club and a pre-school. Our Interserve workers share life with this community, encouraging the leaders, helping to disciple new believers and generally 'adding value' to what is happening there.

I recently asked a key Khmer church leader to tell me the kind of international mission workers he would like to see join with the Cambodian church. He identified the following criteria: they must be people who are willing to go deep in language and culture, to commit time (measured in multiple years, not months), and to come as 'servants' with humble hearts and a passion for pastoral work.

Our main challenge as mission workers is to take time to really hear from God about the

needs of the Cambodian church and wider society. This is crucial, as is allowing the Holy Spirit to guide the creation of materials and ministry practice that enable deep connections between people and their God.

As international mission workers and the local church walk together in partnership, and together seek God's leading in ministry and mission activities, God's kingdom will grow in Cambodia. What an amazing opportunity we have here to be a part of a first-generation church that is finding its way into maturity. ☞

Scott and his family have lived in SE Asia for much of the last 20 years. Scott is currently serving in a leadership role with the Interserve team in Cambodia.



THE power OF ENCOURAGEMENT

When we left New Zealand for Central Asia ten years ago, we had only a very vague notion of what we were actually going to do: just a knowledge that God had called us there and an assurance that He would open up doors of ministry, where we could make a difference for His kingdom in a very needy country!

Of course, we knew the usual thinking about the task of a mission worker: preaching and reaching the lost and unsaved with the gospel. But what God actually opened up was, in fact, very different; the role of evangelism was, at least formally, not ours but that of the wonderful local believers we found ourselves befriending, mentoring and encouraging.

Let me introduce you to some of these people:

We first met Azamat* when he arrived at our apartment with a huge removal truck to help us shift into our house – the truck four times bigger than we actually needed!

But he had negotiated such a good price for it we were not complaining! In fact, Azamat was a wonderful negotiator of prices, and if we ever needed to haggle it was Azamat we took along to help!

However, one thing was non-negotiable for him and that was his faith, and his vision and call to reach his own people with the gospel.

Azamat and his wife Elmira* work in student ministry, running various outreach programmes including English and Chinese language classes, computer classes and sports teams. They oversee a small but dedicated team of local believers, all committed to seeing students' lives changed for good. We had the privilege of walking with Azamat and Elmira from the time they started out as interns in this ministry, and of later seeing them head it up. I don't remember any formal mentoring as such, but we shared many meals with them during which they talked about their challenges as a young couple with a very demanding ministry, their needs and hopes for the students and the difficulties facing those who made commitments. We listened to them, shared with them, prayed with them and generally encouraged them. We also enjoyed lots of fun times together, when they just relaxed with us – that too was really important for them.

Certainly, they were far more effective in this ministry than we could ever have been; they had no language or cross-cultural problems, and met fewer restrictions than we would have as foreign workers. Although we have now been back in New Zealand for almost two years, we still walk with them, having Skype conversations fairly regularly and

praying with and for them in their work.

We first had contact with Murat* and Sveta* after they lost their first baby. They were good friends of another friend of ours, and on hearing about their loss we felt compelled to write to them and share our experience of losing a baby. This letter touched their hearts and over time we developed a lovely friendship with them. At this time, Murat and Sveta were both working in student ministry but had a strong sense of call to go and work in a village and plant a church there. They had very few resources, but eventually had the option of purchasing some land in a village near the capital. By this time they had left student ministry and Murat was pastoring a church in another village. They also had a beautiful daughter, and a son on the way! We were privileged to walk with them as they came to realise their vision of moving into the village, and also, as we met with them regularly, to support them, both financially and prayerfully.

The move was tough. Murat and Sveta lived in a two-room mud-brick hut for four years, whilst they built their own house, literally brick by brick, as and when they could afford it. To support themselves they started to farm sheep, taking on the weak sheep that no one else wanted and nurturing them into healthy animals, from which they could breed. When asked what made the difference, Murat would always reply that he prayed for his sheep and God healed them! Gradually they saw barriers starting to fall



and neighbours coming to them asking for advice and help with family problems as well as sheep concerns. This provided them with opportunities to share the true Good Shepherd's heart with their neighbours.

What was our part in all this? Simply to encourage them, talk with them, listen to and believe in their dreams, help them where we could and, above all, pray with them and for them as God led them to start this ministry to their own people. If you are interested in knowing more, their

story is told in a 5-minute video clip on the following link: <http://deidox.com/films/pastors/?f=MURATG>

We still pray for them. And we still keep in touch with them and support them. It is such a blessing to see how God is using them to share the gospel through their lives as a family in the village – something it would take us years and years of language and culture learning to achieve, quite apart from the suspicion a foreigner would attract in a village.

Nurlan* is a local believer who helped run the small church we attended. In addition, he is involved with running a TEE programme, providing training, resources and support for pastors who live in very remote rural areas and who often face stiff opposition to their faith. Nurlan's vision was to develop a mobile library that could take resources around the country to the remote areas and provide encouragement for the pastors.

We often had Nurlan in our home for meals so we could encourage him. His was a lonely job, especially as he was single. There was pressure for him to marry, but he only wanted to marry a fellow believer; this caused great conflict with his family, who could not

understand this or his choice of career! So he often came round to us to talk and to unload. We prayed with him and for him and encouraged him in his vision.

On our return to New Zealand, Nurlan asked if we could help him raise money for this project, in particular, to help fund a van for the mobile library. We felt that this was right and so asked people, if they wanted to, to redirect their support for us into this project. It hasn't realised huge sums of money, but what has come in is highly appreciated. In a very poor country there are simply no extra resources to go into projects

like this. So Nurlan
has been very

grateful for a trickle of funds coming from New Zealand. But perhaps most encouraging to him is the knowledge that people are praying for him and for this project.

Again, this ministry grew out of a vision by a local believer who wanted to reach his own people – a vision that would be almost impossible for a foreign worker to realise. And once again all that was needed was a word of encouragement here and there, someone to believe in his vision with him, and a foundation of prayer.

There were many others that we had the privilege of walking alongside: the man in our church with a vision to reach Turkmen people with the gospel; Aibek* and the television studio (see *GO News*, August 2010); the couple living and serving in the troubled south of the country... and so the list could go on. As I think back, I am amazed at just how many people came through our home with a vision to reach their own people, in search of prayer and encouragement and someone to help them believe in that vision. How many more people have been touched with the gospel we may never know, but we feel blessed to have played even a small part in helping spread the good news of Jesus Christ in Central Asia, and truly thank God for the privilege. ☺

The author and her family served for eight and a half years in Central Asia in the field of community health education.

* Names have been changed



AN APPEAL FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

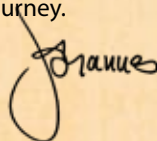
I hope that you found this GO magazine as exciting as I did! God is indeed at work throughout Asia and the Arab world.

It is humbling to realise that Interserve has been serving God's purposes among the marginalised peoples of Asia and the Arab world for 160 years now. Many thousands of lives and communities have been transformed as a result of the investment from Interserve Partners around the world, and that could not have happened down the generations without the sacrificial gifts of our supporters.

As we currently have a number of under-supported Partners and projects we are **urgently** seeking additional folk to join their support teams. Are you able to help? If you would like to learn more about these opportunities to make a difference through giving to an Interserve Mission Partner, please contact me by calling 0800 446 464 or by email: johannes@interserve.org.nz

At the same time I want to express our profound gratitude for the bequests we have received over the years; they have enabled us to continue doing our work as an office. They are indeed gifts that keep on giving. Do you currently have a Will? Are you considering making a Bequest? If so, we would sincerely appreciate you considering the inclusion of Interserve (NZ) in this, and again I would be happy to talk with you about this option.

My heart is longing that 'all the families on earth, all the nations' (Genesis 12 and many other scriptures) would hear and experience that our Lord is good, and that Christ's message of forgiveness and hope would reach the yet-unreached, the least and lost. And I want us to do this together, focusing our shared resources where most needed. It is Jesus and His honour I am seeking. Thank you for being part of this journey.



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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr Paul Bendor-Samuel, our International Director, will share on the direction in which he sees mission moving, and how God wants to build into the next generation of mission workers.

PLUS

Kiwi Partners and On Trackers.

Bring a friend! All interested people are welcome to attend!

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