

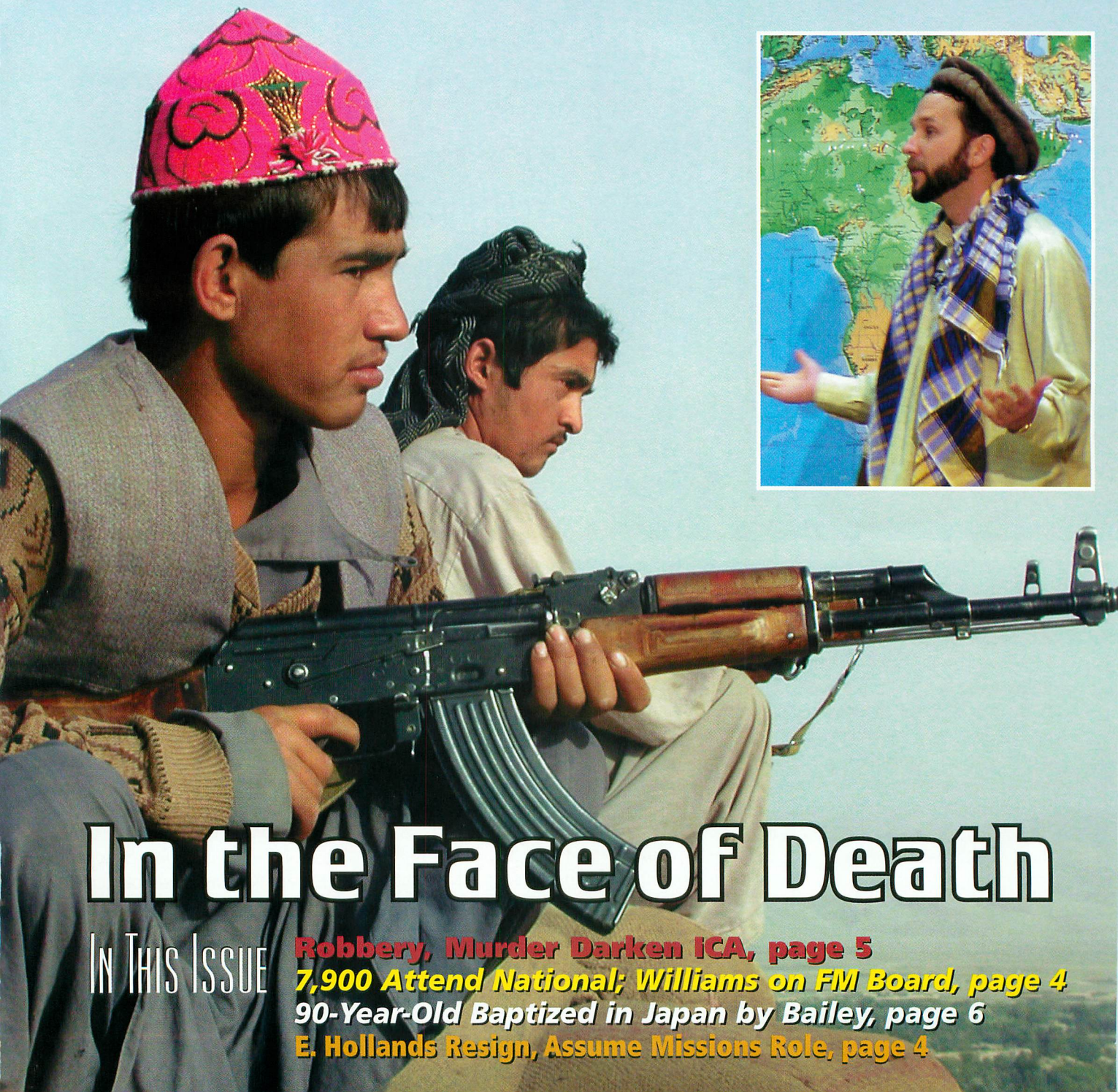


HEARTBEAT

of Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions

SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER
2002

Showing God at work around the world



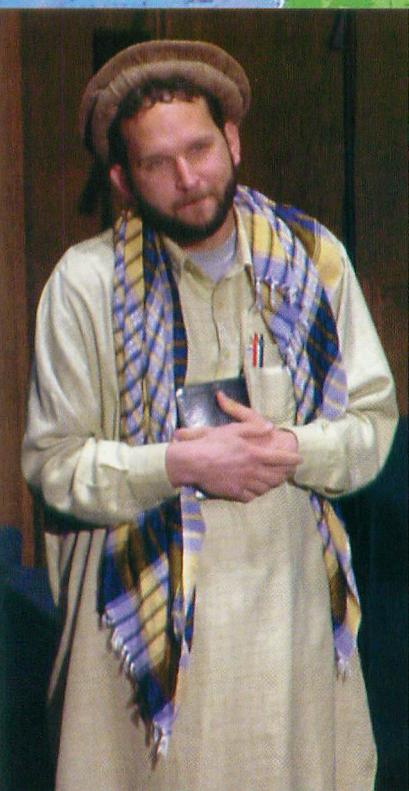
In the Face of Death

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In the Face of Death

By John Weaver



John Weaver (center) speaks to those attending the Global Focus seminar at Bethany FWB Church in Broken Arrow, Okla. He clasps his Bible (left) during a time of sharing and (above) he talks with a college professor.

An old hymn says, “To the hardest of places He calls me to go.” It is quite challenging, yet I find it to be an overwhelming opportunity to be in a restricted access area of the world. What an awesome thing to join God, who has always been working to strategically place His servants in areas where the devil is killing, stealing and destroying. Remember, light shines brightest in the darkest of settings!

The Nature of the Call

As followers of Christ we are the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the

world.” Yes, we were told to preach the gospel to all people and disciple the nations, but prior to that our Lord taught us how to live in this world. The essence of His life within us puts us in the perfect position to enter restrictive access areas. His goal is to make us shine as He did. His Spirit is to flow through us like a life-giving river.

Most of the areas in the 10/40 Window are in desperate need of food, clothing, medicine, shelter, education, economic development, training and examples of love, hope, grace and purpose in life. These situations give us the ideal context for putting into

practice the teachings of Jesus.

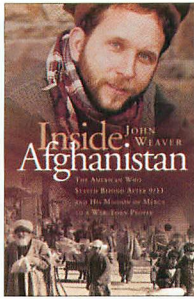
The Creativity of the Call

As we enter these areas to meet the felt needs of the people, we display the matchless grace and endless love of God our Father. He is creative in His work and also extremely practical. He can strategically place us in areas where we can serve as His channels of blessings. We don’t even have to go as “missionaries” but simply as servants.

Experience has taught me that if I will be imaginative and functional in addressing the needs of the people around me they will ask about my faith. Yes, they ask for various reasons

More Answers

Find more details and the answers to other questions in the book, **"Inside Afghanistan,"** by John Weaver, published by W Publishing in Nashville, Tenn. Read John's moving account of why he chose to minister in Afghanistan and why he determined to remain after September 11. It should be in the stores by September 9.



John says, "I pray the book will enlarge your view of the greatness of our God and His plan for filling the earth with His glory. Perhaps it will inspire you to join Him, even more passionately, in this worldwide mission of mercy!"

and certainly not everyone comes to believe. However, by compassionately serving people doors have been opened to plant the seed of the gospel. In fact, I believe it is more effective than the traditional missionary approach that some freely practice in "open" countries. We know of many people who have encountered the truth of Christ because of our presence in a place that can only be creatively accessed.

The Validity of the Call

As we show unreached people the Good News in action, we validate the claims of the gospel. As kids, it didn't matter how often our parents told us not to drink alcoholic beverages. If they drank, their message was in vain. I believe one of our downfalls in the West and with the traditional missions approach is that we don't give priority to issues of character and compassion.

When the gospel is coupled with Christlikeness and acts of mercy, it is harder to deny. This does not mean that all will accept. In fact, the religious crowd crucified Christ, who



John (right) gets acquainted with a couple in Central Asia in an effort to befriend them and share his faith.

fully embodied what we are to model here on the earth. But again, my experience has proven that sincere service blazes the trail for speaking the words of the gospel.

When the gospel is coupled with Christlikeness and acts of mercy it is harder to deny.

Why did I go? God gave me a dream of being His ambassador in the dark land of Afghanistan. Understanding His heart for the nations, times of prayer and fasting, the encouragement of others, the enormous need of the area, several divine door openings and sovereign leading brought me to this place.

What do I do? We serve the Afghan people by providing relief and development programs such as food

distributions, shelter and school buildings, various work programs, educational or community development, and road, water and irrigation projects. The goal is to help them rebuild their lives and give them hope. By doing so, we have the priceless privilege of access. We are there as God's children sharing His life, love and desire to bless the peoples of the earth. But we don't just tell them, we show them.

Some people wonder why I stayed after September 11, 2001. I had already been living on the front line for over a year. God had strategically placed us there on a mission of mercy. Why leave when you know you are where you need to be? Isn't the safest place right in the center of God's will?

John Weaver is a graduate of FWBBC in Nashville, Tenn. He has been working with Shelter Now in Afghanistan and is one of the few who remained after the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., and the subsequent bombings in Afghanistan.



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September-October 2002

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Don Robirds, *Editor*

Deborah St. Lawrence, *Editorial Assistant*

Jim Johnson, *Artist*



Tim and Kristi Johnson speak during the 11:00 a.m. Tuesday morning worship service of WNAC.

7,900 Attend National; Williams on FM Board

The National Association of Free Will Baptists met July 21-25 in Memphis, Tenn., with 7,900 people registered in three concurrent conventions.

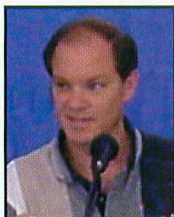
Danny Williams of Winfield, Ala., was elected to the Board of Foreign Missions to succeed Terry Eagleton of Nashville, Tenn., who resigned recently. Bill Jones, David Williford and Bill Van Winkle were all reelected.

Some 28 foreign missionaries and 56 home missionaries were on hand. A 2003 Foreign Missions budget of 7.4 million dollars was adopted.

Foreign Missions and Home Missions sponsored a joint rally on Tuesday afternoon, July 23, featuring Dr. Richard Harris, a Southern Baptist church growth specialist.

Missionary Ron Callaway spoke during a seminar of the Commission for Theological Integrity dealing with "The Omniscience of God and Open Theism."

Tim and Kristi Johnson teamed to present a missionary challenge Tuesday during the 11:00 a.m. service for Women Nationally Active for Christ.



Danny Williams, new Board member

Andersons Detained by Police; Robberies Noted

During a Friday night outing in June, Verlin and Debbie Anderson and their family were confronted by policemen as they drove from a deserted airstrip just outside of Bouna, Côte d'Ivoire. "Two policemen stepped out abruptly from the side of the dirt road and waved us to a halt," cite the Andersons. "After a verbal barrage to ascertain who we were, they pointed at the car with their machine guns and said, 'Get out of the car and follow us.'"

The police were afraid the Andersons were bandits coming to attack them. The situation soon calmed down. Only later did the missionaries find out that while they were at the airstrip a robbery and shooting took place five miles down the road.

18 Visit France, Help with Church Building

Eighteen people from the Liberty Bible Free Will Baptist Church in Gainesville, Ga., went to France June 12-24 to work on the church building in Nantes, participate in distribution of literature, and help with youth activities.

The group was made up of 14 students and four adults. Leading them were Matthew and Cristina Price who had spent a year in France studying and working with the Nantes church.

"Our kids worked hard for 18



A group from Gainesville, Ga., work on the new building in Nantes, France.

months planning, raising money, and studying for this trip," says Matt. "Our goal was to raise \$2,000 for the church in Nantes. The French people were shocked when we presented them a check for \$3,000."

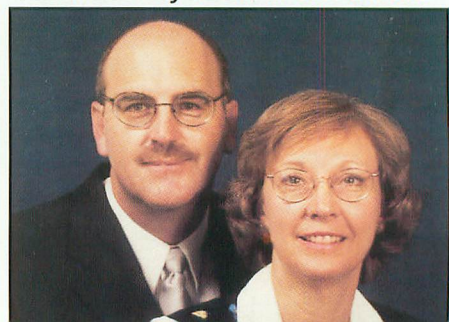
E. Hollands Resign, Assume Missions Role

Missionaries Ernest and Elaine Holland have submitted their resignations from service with Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions effective July 31.

"Even though this decision has been a difficult one, we now feel that we are in the center of His will," write the Hollands.

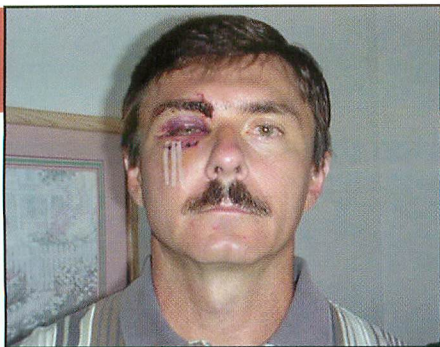
Ernest has joined the staff of Bethany FWB Church in Broken Arrow, Okla., as Pastor of Missions and Outreach. "We are thankful for the many years God worked through us on the mission field. It has been an honor to be called Free Will Baptist foreign missionaries."

Ernest and Elaine Holland have resigned from missionary service in Côte d'Ivoire.

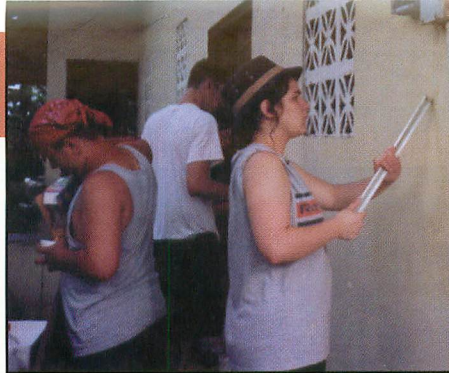


30 Day Muslim Prayer Guide Available

The **30 Day Muslim Prayer Guide** stretches through Ramadan, **November 6-December 5, 2002**. See our web site at www.nafwb.org/fm or order individual copies at \$2.00 each from Foreign Missions, P.O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37211-5002.



Mike Cousineau shows injuries received during a robbery and murder on the campus of ICA in Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire.



A church group from Buffalo, Mo., (left) work on a church in the area of Panama City, Panama. Teens and sponsors of the Indiana Teen Outreach group (right) are perched in a tree near Bouna, Côte d'Ivoire, where they worked and learned.



Robbery, Murder Darken ICA; Cousineau Hurt

A hail of head-on gunfire met missionary Mike Cousineau as he drove his car onto the International Christian Academy campus in Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire, on July 17.

Responding to a report that thieves were on campus, Mike soon discovered that seven armed robbers had forced their way onto the compound.

Cousineau was ordered from his vehicle and taken to the Free Will Baptist dorm. He found members of two building teams from the United States as well as Terry and D.D. Vandivort and a campus guard face down on the floor with gunmen in charge.

When Mike, who is the business manager for the school, told them the money was not there, he was pistol-whipped several times, suffering a fractured socket of the right eye, cuts and bruises. As they led Mike out to his vehicle, one of the men turned and shot the guard as he lay on the floor, killing him instantly.

Leaving the campus in Cousineau's auto the villains told Mike he was going to die. When they turned off the main road and stopped the car, Mike jumped out and ran a zigzag course into the bush as the men opened fire. Fortunately, he was not hit.

Eventually Cousineau was able to get help and return to campus. Deleen was at home, so she was not involved. They expressed praise to the Lord for His protec-

tion in helping Mike to escape and staying the gunmen from further murders.

The builders, though shocked and fearful, remained to finish their task on the new Free Will Baptist church building. Mike and Deleen and the Vandivorts returned to the States and the builders have returned home.

The Cousineaus left for Côte d'Ivoire August 16 to prepare for the next school term. The Vandivorts will retool in the U.S. for future ministry.

Missouri Church Group Ministers in Panama

A group of 27 people from Calvary Chapel Free Will Baptist Church in Buffalo, Mo., traveled to Panama on July 8 for a week of work on two main churches in the Panama City area.

The team did electrical installations, construction and poured a 20 x 30-foot slab of concrete for the Nueva Esperanza church which serves meals to 150-200 children three times a week.

The group was able to share the message of Christ with approximately 1,000 children in a Panamanian public school.

Indiana Teen Outreach Labors, Learns in Africa

According to Dr. Kenneth Egleton, nine teens and three adult sponsors from five Free Will Baptist churches in Indiana arrived in Bouna, Côte d'Ivoire, on June 8 and continued for 19 days. The

team was led by Joe and Carla Picklesimer of Emmanuel FWB Church in Wabash, Ind.

While in Bouna the group helped finish a house for a blind couple. They had raised the funds for the house.

Two classes were held each weekday morning to introduce the team to animism and African culture.

News Capsules

Côte d'Ivoire—According to missionary Alice Smith in Côte d'Ivoire, an evangelistic campaign was held in early July in Abengourou and Kodjina by the Abengourou mission church and 10 people from the Agnibilekrou church. Abengourou recorded 41 decisions for Christ while 76 followed Christ in Kodjina.

Brazil—The Second Free Will Baptist Church in Uberlândia, Brazil, celebrated its thirteenth anniversary on June 30. Missionary Curt Holland was the speaker for the special occasion and 196 people attended.

Japan—English classes and Sunday services have begun at the Good News Chapel, a new ministry in a suburb of Tokyo, Japan. On June 9 they had 12 in attendance.

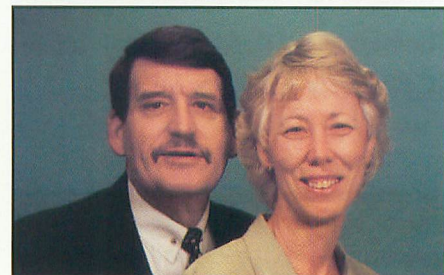
Côte d'Ivoire—For the second year in a row Mike and Deleen Cousineau were voted best staff couple at International Christian Academy in Bouaké, Ivory Coast.

News In Review

by the high school students.

Nashville, Tenn.—Curt and Mary Holland arrived from Brazil in July and have moved to Nashville, Tenn., where Curt will serve as Missionary In Residence at Free Will Baptist Bible College during the 2002-2003 school year.

Redding, Calif.—David Eagleton, son of missionaries Kenneth and Rejané Eagleton in Ivory Coast, married Jennifer Charter, another African MK, on July 21 in Redding, Calif. Both David and



Anthony and Lea Edgmon (top, left to right), Tim and Kristi Johnson, Jaimie and Tammy Lancaster (bottom, left to right) and Ron and Linda Callaway have returned or are returning to their fields.

GIFTS FROM THE HEART

These special gifts were received in June and July 2002:

| Donor | In Memory of |
|---|------------------|
| Benchmark Adventure Ministries, Inc. Nashville, Tenn. | Rev. Mike Creech |
| Gordon and Eleanor Hart Ayden, N.C. | Lizette Young |
| Mr. and Mrs. Rolla D. Smith Nashville, Tenn. | Bessie Vandivort |
| Smyrna FWB Church Smyrna, Tenn. | Ruby Edwards |
| Thomas Nelson Publishers Nashville, Tenn. | Dan Merkh |
| First FWB Church Richmond, Va. | Dan Merkh |

These gave special gifts in memory of Louise Owen:

| | |
|--|---|
| Lonnie E. and Martha Adams Highland City, Fla. | FWB Bible College Staff Nashville, Tenn. |
| Pathway FWB Church Winter Haven, Fla. | Florida State Assn. of FWB Auburndale, Fla. |
| Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Hampton Nashville, Tenn. | |

These gave special gifts in memory of Lois Reagan:

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Mr. and Mrs. Richard Thomas Belmont, N.C. | Mrs. Villa E. Richards Brewer, Me. |
| Carson A. Wright Fallston, N.C. | Glennville FWB Church Glennville, Ga. |
| Noel and Patricia Harrison Savannah, Ga. | Neal and Evelyn Reagan Savannah, Ga. |
| Betty and Harold Lewis Belmont, N.C. | Todd and Renee Anthony Gastonia, N.C. |
| James and Jane Washam Belmont, N.C. | Christine Perkins Dunnellon, Fla. |
| Steve and Judy Lytle Antioch, Tenn. | Flora Williamson Orrington, Me. |
| Mrs. Freida Stanford Savannah, Ga. | Mrs. Frances Anthony Gastonia, N.C. |
| Mr. and Mrs. William M. Mock Jr. Savannah, Ga. | |

Clip and mail

Special Gifts

Amount \$ _____ Date _____

Given in memory/honor of _____

Given by: Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please send memorial/honorary card to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Jenny attend Simpson College in Redding.

Cramerton, N.C.—Lois Squires Reagan, wife of former Foreign Missions board member Bill Reagan, died on July 6 following a long illness. Funeral services were held in Savannah, Ga.

Côte d'Ivoire—Dr. Kenneth Eagleton reported baptizing two young men in the village of Saye on June 9. Two weeks later Pastor Jérôme in Bouna baptized another 13 people.

Brazil—Andy and Andrea Moore reported having 20 people—10 couples—in their home for their first couples class on June 8. Andy taught on the value of a good marriage. The class is scheduled to meet once a month.

Nashville, Tenn.—Missionaries Anthony and Lea Edgmon became the proud parents of Emily Hope, a 9 pound 4 ounce girl, on August 9 in Nashville, Tenn.

Côte d'Ivoire—The Bouaké Free Will Baptist Church in Côte d'Ivoire was presented a gift in June by the sophomore class of International Christian Academy.

The group gave their tithe to the church to help in the expense of purchasing more wood for construction.

Uruguay—According to Molly Barker in Uruguay, the Melo church celebrated its twelfth anniversary on May 26.

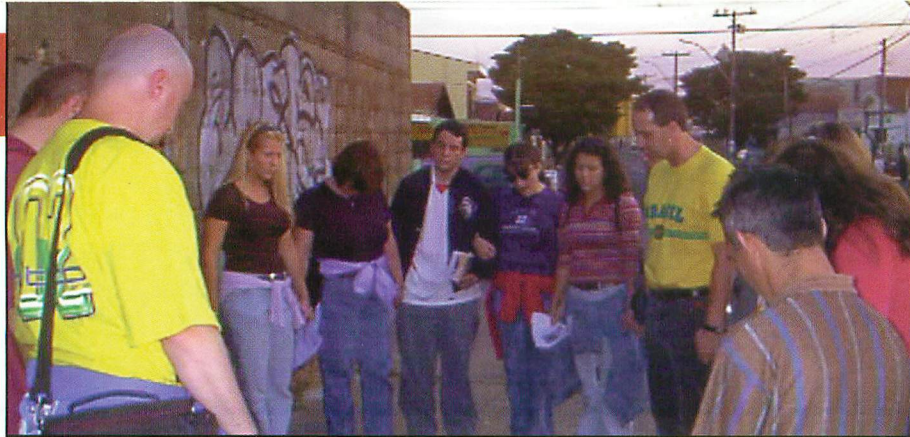
90-Year-Old Baptized in Japan by Bailey

Missionary Ken Bailey, in the Tokyo area of Japan, baptized 90-year-old Mr. Takaso on May 25. Because of his fragile health, the baptism took place in the Takasos' home. According to Ken, several Iriso church members and two unsaved women heard the gospel and Mr. Takaso's testimony of faith.

Four Couples Return to Fields of Service

Four missionary couples either have left or will soon leave for their fields of service following stateside assignment.

Jaimie and Tammy Lancaster and their two boys returned to Montevideo, Uruguay, on July 30.



Youth and sponsors from Donelson FWB Church in Nashville, Tenn., join missionary Curt Holland (right, center with yellow shirt) in praying for the area around the São José church in Campinas, Brazil.

Anthony and Lea Edgmon plan to leave for Spain on September 30 to resume their ministry in the area of Villalba, a suburb of Madrid.

Ronald and Linda Callaway were scheduled to return to Panama at the end of August to resume their Panama-Cuba ministry of training nationals.

Tim and Kristi Johnson plan to rejoin their missionary team in Villalba, Spain, early in October.

Donelson Teens Help in Campinas, Brazil

A teen group of nine people from Donelson FWB Church in Nashville, Tenn., went to Brazil on June 12 to minister in churches in Campinas and do some physical labor. The teens worked on the church building and distributed invitations to the *Jesus* film that the São José church presented.

Mike and Deanna Hollifield accompanied the youth who returned home on June 26.

Notice

Groups or individuals planning a trip to a mission field are asked to inform the Department of Mobilization and Recruitment giving dates, ministry planned and missionaries being visited. This will help M&R avoid overbooking any one field or missionary.

World Cup 2002 Team Witnesses in Japan

A group of 16 college students, including four MKs, left the United States on May 20 to participate in World Cup 2002 in Sapporo, Japan.

The group sang, distributed gospel literature and performed mimes for those who observed them. The team even met a crown prince of Saudi Arabia who agreed to have his picture made with them. In response, the man gave the group 28 tickets to a World Cup game. These tickets were valued at \$200 each. The group returned to the States on June 17.

Institute Students Hold Evangelistic Meeting

Students of the Bible institute in Bouna, Côte d'Ivoire, joined the youth of the Bouna Free Will Baptist Church on Saturday, June 15, to hold an open-air evangelistic meeting in a village near Bouna. One man was saved and several others are showing an interest.

The Bible institute classes finished on June 21 with all 10 students passing the year.

World Vision Workers Freed after Abduction

After five days of captivity, two World Vision humanitarian workers were released by their captors during the first week in August.

German Ekkehard Forberg and Kenyan Andrew Omwenga were reportedly in good condition as they flew to Kenya for medical checks and reunions with friends.

The men were abducted during a raid on Waat, in Upper Nile province, where World Vision runs a community health center.

FINANCIAL BEAT

Through July 2002

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Income for June..... | \$ 470,366.88 |
| Income for July..... | 486,872.21 |
| Total income through July..... | 3,144,358.52 |
| Projected income through July..... | 5,932,936.78 |
| Total expenses through July..... | 3,299,998.21 |
| Total 2002 Budget (including VISION projects) | \$10,170,748.77 |

These accounts are in the deficit:

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Bailey, B..... | \$ 446.00 | Little, S..... | \$ 17,589.30 |
| Bailey, K..... | 6,362.86 | Martens..... | 24,061.40 |
| Blanchard..... | 1,960.61 | McDonald..... | 5,981.26 |
| Bryan..... | 4,641.15 | McVay..... | 4,496.33 |
| Chang..... | 39,555.05 | Snow..... | 4,122.26 |
| Gainer..... | 6,953.05 | Wendlandt..... | 2,990.33 |
| Holland, C..... | 9,774.49 | India Bible Institute..... | 20,062.80 |
| Johnson, K..... | 7,467.01 | Russian Ministries..... | 32,698.00 |
| Lancaster..... | 5,115.70 | Support Services..... | 308,444.61 |

Totals.....\$502,722.21

These accounts are low and needy:

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Owen..... | \$ 3,628.41 | Turnbough..... | \$ 2,024.04 |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------------|

STATES IN ACTION

| State/Source | Gifts in July 2002 | Gifts thru July 2001 | Gifts thru July 2002 |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Alabama..... | \$ 8,255.48 | \$ 207,038.97 | \$ 167,219.35 |
| Arizona..... | 753.00 | 4,030.88 | 3,591.53 |
| Arkansas..... | 56,315.26 | 303,235.35 | 288,054.45 |
| California..... | 4,559.65 | 31,320.95 | 31,081.63 |
| Canada..... | 10.00 | 2,191.80 | 1,834.83 |
| Colorado..... | 178.26 | 1,484.52 | 1,523.52 |
| Florida..... | 11,853.69 | 93,527.88 | 94,085.93 |
| Georgia..... | 16,371.04 | 130,882.95 | 107,331.42 |
| Hawaii..... | 251.00 | | |
| Idaho..... | 249.15 | 1,853.48 | 1,649.84 |
| Illinois..... | 21,711.70 | 78,339.07 | 103,290.82 |
| Indiana..... | 2,949.91 | 37,973.29 | 31,899.42 |
| Iowa..... | 290.73 | 620.44 | |
| Kansas..... | 150.20 | 1,456.36 | 1,029.82 |
| Kentucky..... | 9,345.34 | 41,901.40 | 53,549.39 |
| Louisiana..... | 45.00 | 3,180.16 | 2,040.00 |
| Maryland..... | 5,196.39 | 38,010.08 | 38,497.86 |
| Michigan..... | 10,252.94 | 85,892.52 | 95,698.24 |
| Mississippi..... | 12,938.66 | 49,301.58 | 57,487.63 |
| Missouri..... | 58,505.26 | 251,081.68 | 292,111.57 |
| Montana..... | 185.00 | 1,290.00 | 1,450.00 |
| Nebraska..... | 1,750.00 | | |
| New Mexico..... | 114.43 | 744.36 | 1,193.45 |
| North Carolina..... | 69,118.81 | 386,218.47 | 494,592.31 |
| * Northeast Assn..... | 258.00 | 6,859.19 | 1,828.00 |
| ** Northwest Assn..... | 143.17 | 2,241.88 | 2,343.79 |
| Ohio..... | 16,597.60 | 71,611.86 | 99,658.61 |
| Oklahoma..... | 34,036.80 | 231,227.68 | 256,403.37 |
| Pennsylvania..... | 42.50 | 1,715.00 | 1,069.50 |
| South Carolina..... | 21,727.76 | 248,345.32 | 199,336.57 |
| Tennessee..... | 52,002.87 | 402,503.19 | 392,697.80 |
| Texas..... | 5,700.06 | 43,594.64 | 39,417.58 |
| Virgin Islands..... | 20.00 | 450.00 | 1,520.00 |
| Virginia..... | 10,824.42 | 46,699.60 | 49,359.14 |
| West Virginia..... | 9,069.20 | 78,246.82 | 84,878.42 |
| WNIAC..... | 23,462.93 | 100,834.24 | 107,658.04 |
| FWB Foundation..... | 26,872.81 | | |
| Miscellaneous..... | 345.77 | 2,020.18 | 3,220.63 |
| Totals..... | \$ 463,290.25 | \$ 3,016,469.89 | \$ 3,110,724.90 |

*Northeast Association
New Hampshire, Vermont, New Jersey, Maine, Connecticut, Washington, D.C., and Massachusetts

**Northwest Association
Alaska, Oregon and Washington

Does not include VISION projects

Note: Miscellaneous includes miscellaneous sources, states and interest income.



P.O. Box 5002
Antioch, TN 37011-5002

Board of Foreign Missions: Douglas Little, chairman; Milton Worthington, vice-chairman; David Shores, secretary; Bill Jones, David Williford, Bill Van Winkle, Sherwood Lee, Randy Wilson, Danny Williams.

Administrative Staff: James Forlines, general director; Don Robirds, director of public relations; Steve Lytle, director of field operations; Robert Conley, director of financial operations; Eddie Payne, director of mobilization and recruitment; Dr. Neil Gilliland, director of member care.

Please clip and mail this label with all correspondence.

Web address: www.nafwb.org/fm

Forlines' Focus

By James Forlines, General Director



The Persecuted Church

In the cover article of this *HEARTBEAT* John Weaver gives a brief description of his ministry in Afghanistan. We thank the Lord that Free Will Baptists contributed to the training which allows him to make a difference in the Kingdom.

Two years ago it would have been safe to assume that very few people could point to Afghanistan on the world map. It simply was not on our personal radar screens. Almost no one had heard of the Taliban. Osama bin Laden was only familiar to news junkies who watched C-Span and MSNBC. September 11, however, changed all of that overnight.

What happened? A crisis! A crisis that hit close to home and exposed our vulnerabilities. It is now one year since those horrible events. What lessons should we consider? As Americans we face security issues and economic concerns.

But ask that question now from our perspective as Christians, followers of the example of Christ. What things should be awakened within us?

Afghanistan is not the only country where advancing the Christian faith is difficult. Some missiologists and historians estimate that more people have died for the Christian faith in the last 20 years than in all of Church history before.

We have heard of the Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines who killed missionary Martin Burnham. The al-Qaeda network is prominently featured in newscasts. We all shudder when we hear reports of abuse in China, India, and North Korea. But in addition to these glaring examples, in nations rarely mentioned in our news media, our brothers and sisters in Christ are suffering horribly.

Are you aware of the level of persecution that exists now in countries like Sudan, Bhutan, Turkmenistan, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia? We do not know the names of most of our family members who are suffering there. We will not see their faces until we join them in the congregation mentioned in Revelation 5. No, their cases are not mentioned on nightly newscasts. But the suffering is very real, often incredible.

God has a special concern for the persecuted and the oppressed. Perhaps this is because His Son was included among them. Can we read Hebrews 13:3 and Matthew 25:31-46 without feeling as though we should become involved? I hope not!

Each year in November a Sunday is

set aside for this purpose. It is called **"The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church."** Though we should give more attention to this growing and horrific tragedy than just one Sunday a year, certainly this day should focus our attention and cause us to become more informed. The 2002 date is **Sunday, November 10.**

Special resources and information can be obtained from Foreign Missions or from several organizations that keep these issues before the Church. Check these websites:

Official Day of Prayer Website:

www.persecutedchurch.org

Voice of the Martyrs:

www.persecution.com

International Christian Concern:

www.persecution.org

The Caleb Project:

www.calebproject.org/persec.htm

Open Doors International:

www.gospelcom.net/od

We need not be discouraged to see such persecution. Jesus foretold it. The early church experienced it. No generation has been without it. And, praise God, the Church grows through it. Tertullian, the early church father, is credited with saying, *"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."* Today His Church is growing around the world. Let us all hold the persecuted up in prayer.

James Forlines