

INTO THE DARKNESS



75 Years of Free Will Baptist
International Missions



FREE WILL BAPTIST
INTERNATIONAL
MISSIONS

WELCOME

Into *The Darkness* is an appropriate title for this volume. For 75 years, Free Will Baptists from rural areas, small towns, and the great cities of the United States departed the land of their birth and voluntarily headed *Into The Darkness* to share His Light and Truth. From coast-to-coast, an unrelenting flow of men and women responded to the call to go.

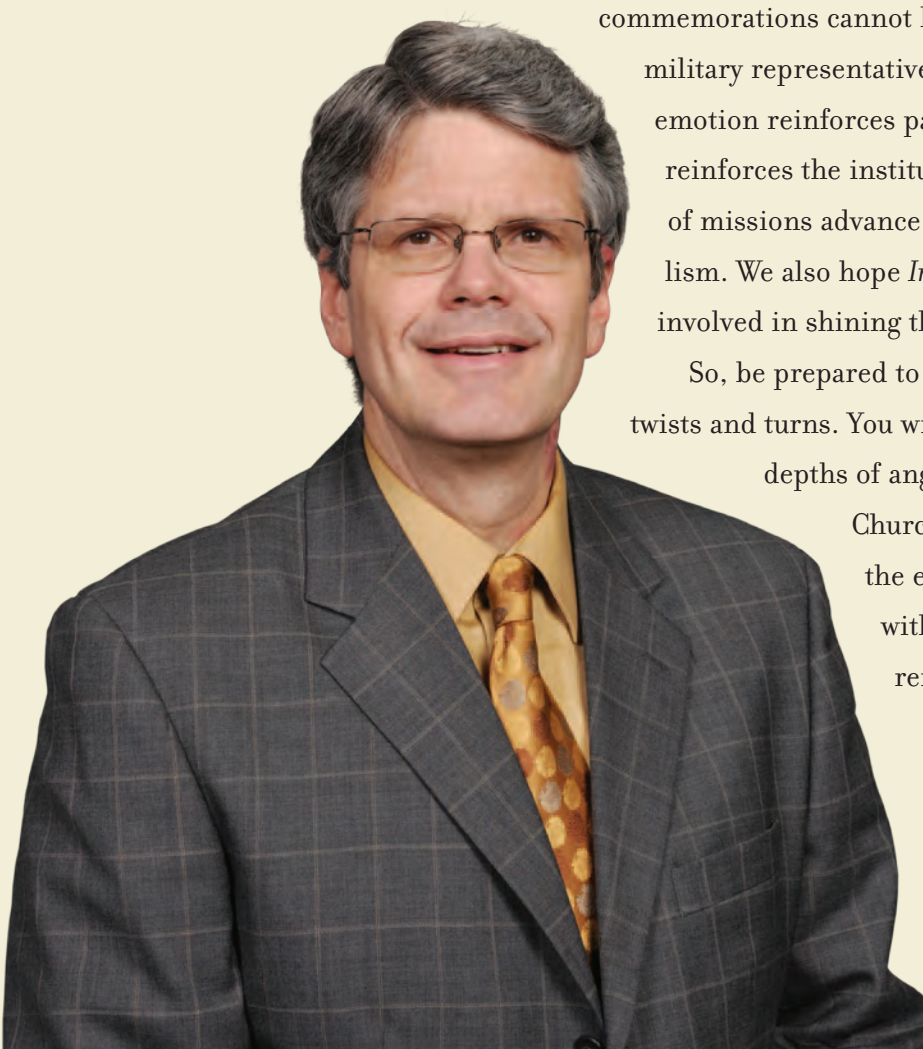
Obedience to God's call led them to tribal peoples in Africa and India. They faced spiritual darkness in the world-class cities of Europe, Asia, and Latin America. With abandon they labored in the midst of civil wars, military invasions, natural disasters, and abject poverty. These intrepid men and women battled discouragement, opposition, and the forces of evil in the attempt to bring worshippers to the throne of God.

In the midst of the darkness *He* has been their Light and Truth. What He promised, He has fulfilled, “. . . and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). *Into The Darkness*, therefore, is a book of celebration. We celebrate the faithfulness of God, and of His servants who answered His call. Celebration is important for any group of people. It can be a powerful instrument to reinforce values and beliefs. Celebration even serves as a vehicle to transfer values and beliefs to future generations.

Lloyd Kwast's model of understanding cultures states that our behavior is based on our values, and our values are based on what we believe. Ultimately, what we believe is based on our worldview. In transference of culture from generation to generation, the younger generation realizes what is considered important, worthy, and of value. A faithful reading of Scripture will always lead us to the conclusion that sharing the gospel with those who haven't heard is of ultimate and eternal value to God. We trust *Into The Darkness* will reinforce that truth.

In addition to celebration, the 75th anniversary of Laura Belle Barnard boarding the S.S. *Potter* in New York City provides us a perfect opportunity for commemoration. In any cultural group, whether a hidden tribal people, a college booster club, a branch of military service, or in our case, a denomination, the importance of rituals and commemorations cannot be overstated. We choke back tears when a United States military representative presents the flag to the widow of a fallen soldier. That emotion reinforces patriotism. A 50th anniversary celebration for a couple reinforces the institution of marriage. Likewise, this celebration of 75 years of missions advance reinforces the ultimate importance of global evangelism. We also hope *Into The Darkness* will deepen your appreciation for those involved in shining the Light.

So, be prepared to be surprised. The road *Into The Darkness* has many twists and turns. You will experience the heights of joy and victory as well as the depths of anguish and defeat. In the midst of it all He is building His Church and the gates of hell are not prevailing against it. In the end we hope that this chronicle of the journey will fill you with joy, encouragement, and a passion to reach those who remain in darkness.

James F. Forlines
James F. Forlines, General Director

INTRODUCTION

Ralph Winter, a missionary statesman of our generation, wrote, “[God] has given us a clear and simple task to finish: to see that Christ is worshipped and followed in every people. This is the essential missionary task. This we must do with utmost focus and passion until it is finished” (*Finishing the Task*, Mission Frontiers, June 2000).

Free Will Baptists have manifested their obedience to this task for the past 75 years through Free Will Baptist Foreign, and now, International Missions. The journey *Into The Darkness* began with Laura Belle Barnard on July 5, 1935. According to ship records that was the day she left New York City aboard the *S.S. Potter* bound for Bombay, India. Or, more accurately, we might say that the journey began again with her. One hundred years earlier, in 1835, Jeremiah Phillips and Eli Noyes departed as Free Will Baptist missionaries to a different part of India (now known as the state of Orissa).

From 1835 until 1911 Free Will Baptists had a foreign missions presence. A merger with Northern Baptists in 1910-11 left the scattered and unaffiliated Free Will Baptists without a foreign mission organization, and in many ways, without a missionary vision and zeal. Twenty-five years went by without any organized Free Will Baptist foreign missions efforts. God then sent a single, young woman in her mid-20s to awaken the denomination to this “clear and simple task.”

Former president of Free Will Baptist Bible College, Dr. L. C. Johnson said it this way,

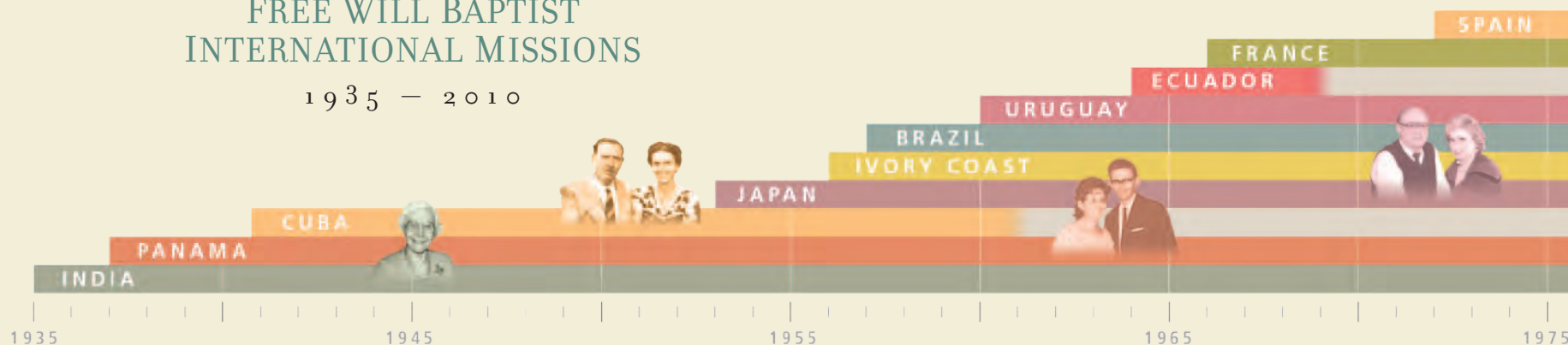
“An entire denomination was without a missionary conscience. For a quarter of a century no one had emerged to give an awareness of this responsibility to ‘the other lost sheep.’ The workings of God in Miss Laura Belle’s life, to prick the conscience of an entire denomination, becomes evident even though unusual” (*Touching The Untouchables*, p. 9).

The journey since the *S.S. Potter*’s voyage has been an incredible story of Kingdom advance. More than 300 Free Will Baptist men and women have followed in Laura Belle’s footsteps—leaving their home in the States to take the Light to unreached peoples on five continents around the world. Beginning in the Niligiri Hills of Tamil Nadu in South India, the Light has dispersed and now shines in over 20 countries. In 1935, Free Will Baptists had no churches outside of North America. In 2010, people in over 1,100 overseas churches and mission works worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Nearly 600 national pastors join our current missionary force of 100 in fulfilling our stewardship responsibility of reaching the unreached. Twelve Bible institutes and seminaries around the world are training an additional 400 workers for the harvest fields. This is the story we tell in *Into The Darkness*.

The purpose adopted and pursued by our early pioneer missionaries is still our purpose today. FWBIM has always reached out to unreached peoples with the ultimate goal of planting churches and initiating church planting

FREE WILL BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

1935 — 2010



movements. In June of 1935, Laura Belle met with the Eastern General Conference in Greenville, North Carolina. She had a clear understanding of their expectations. “I was to make it a definite aim to search out a *needy field* in India where Free Will Baptists would be invited to send further missionaries, develop a work, and *establish churches*” [Laura Belle Barnard, *Touching The Untouchables*, p. 49—emphasis supplied].

The call of reaching unreached peoples (needy fields) has been a defining characteristic of the Mission. It has determined the areas of the world to which we feel called. If another evangelical group is working in an area, FWBIM has chosen to go where no evangelical effort exists. Our goal is not to simply advance the Free Will Baptist denomination, our goal is to advance the Kingdom.

We adhere to the confession of the Apostle Paul in Romans 15:20 when he said, “And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation” (NKJV). This is the origin then, of our current purpose statement: We exist to facilitate church planting movements among unreached peoples.

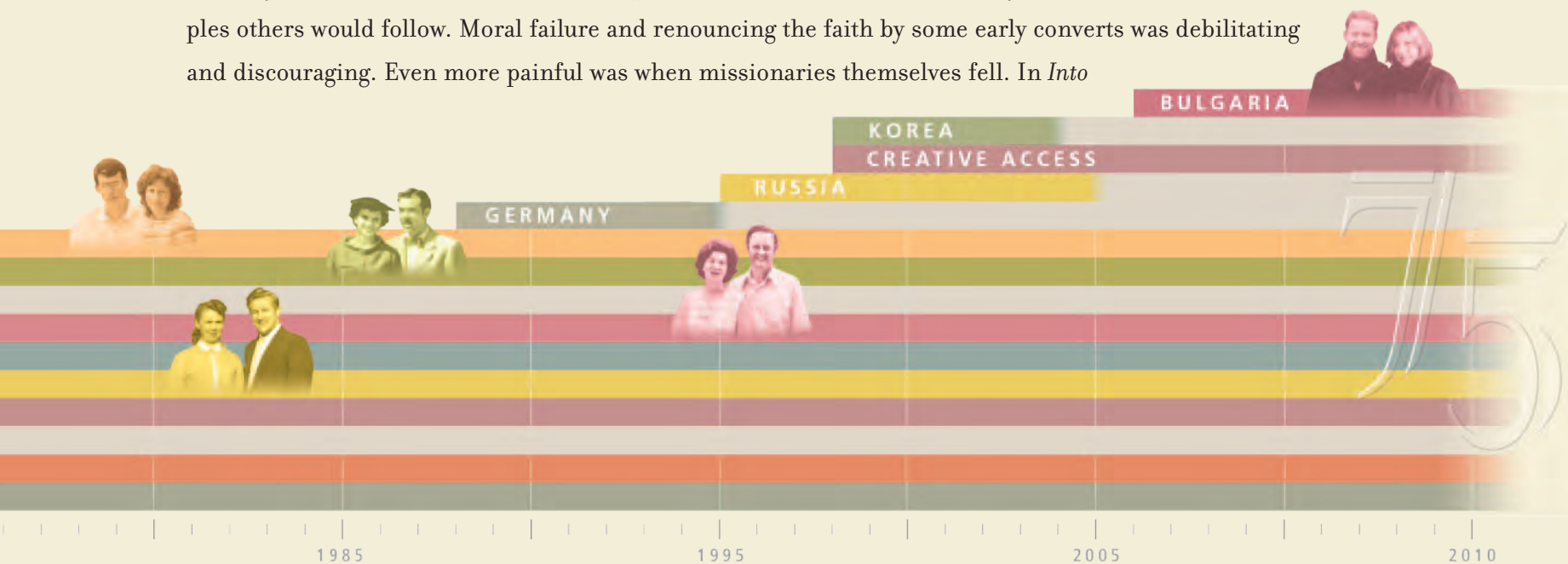
A prime example comes from the experience of Laura Belle Barnard herself. Upon arriving in Kotagiri, South India, Laura Belle learned of an earlier outreach effort to the Harijan (outcaste) people. A Scottish lady, Miss Cockburn, abandoned her outreach in the community. “Apparently, she had become thoroughly discouraged and withdrew, declaring confidently that she had found an ethnic group of subhumans who were decidedly incapable of responding to education or spiritual truth” [*Touching The Untouchables*, p. 15].

This did not dissuade Laura Belle.

When people enter our churches around the world, they usually do not come from the Nazarenes, Southern Baptists, or the Assemblies of God. They come from Animism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Islam, or Catholicism. We do not aim to rearrange the Kingdom, but to advance it.

This has been a laudable, but difficult road. Totally unreached people require much prayer and labor before harvest time. The early years were difficult as our pioneer missionaries painstakingly carved a church from the bedrock of superstition and false belief. Conversions were slow in coming. Leadership training was frustrating at times.

Early converts had few Christian examples within their own cultures. They, themselves, were the examples others would follow. Moral failure and renouncing the faith by some early converts was debilitating and discouraging. Even more painful was when missionaries themselves fell. In *Into*



The Darkness we acknowledge the contribution of those whose ministries did not end well. The message of their early years was true and their sacrifice worth noting.

Crucial to the cause was the willingness of pioneer missionaries who paid the price and remained faithful to the call. Wave after wave of missionaries followed the trailblazers. The promise on which they based their ministries was, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (NKJV).

Praise the Lord, on many of our fields it is now harvest time. The attendance in Free Will Baptist churches outside of North America has more than doubled within the past decade. Around the world, children are born into Free Will Baptist homes with parents who are second- and third-generation followers of Christ. The unrelenting faithfulness of missionaries and national pastors is now resulting in an exponential harvest.

As you read through *Into The Darkness* these are not the only changes you will recognize. Laura Belle would stare in disbelief at a sign on the front door of the church in Kotagiri which reads, “Please turn off your mobile phones.” In her day they did not even have electricity.

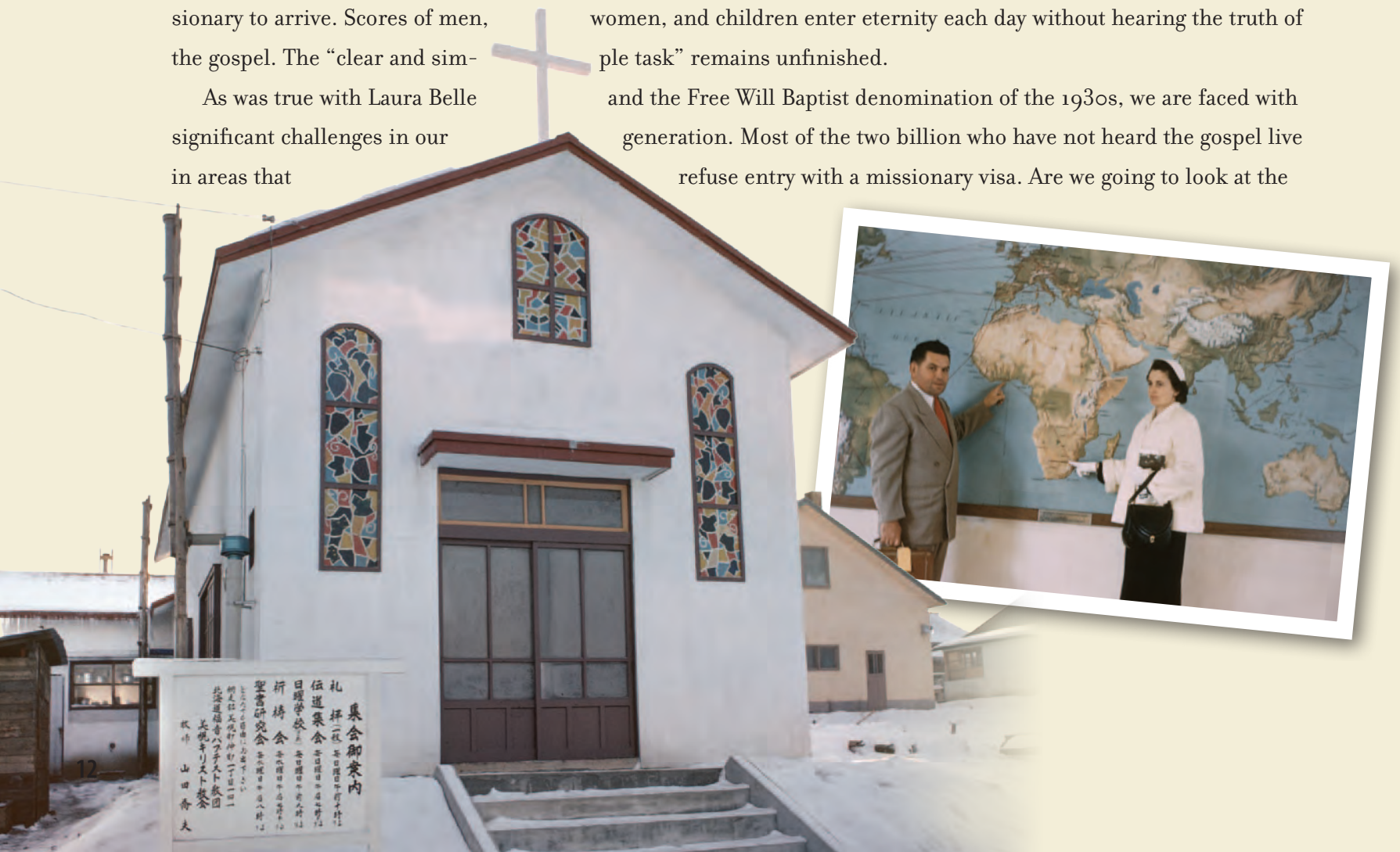
Some of our earliest missionaries served seven-year terms. It was just too expensive to make the long ocean voyages to and from the field more frequently. Visitors to the field were almost non-existent. Phone calls had to be arranged well in advance, or were only made in extreme circumstances because of prohibitive costs. Banking systems around the world were undependable and untrustworthy, making financial transactions and channeling support extremely challenging.

Things have certainly changed. Today, hundreds of Free Will Baptist teens and adults visit, see, and assist the works around the world firsthand. With the advent of the Internet, every missionary now has access not only to e-mail, but also to free video conferencing. Worldwide banking and property laws have strengthened, aiding the advancement of the Kingdom.

But, with all the changes, some things remain unchanged. Almost two billion people still have no access to the gospel. Cities, towns, and villages all over the world are waiting for the first witness, the first church, and the first missionary to arrive. Scores of men, women, and children enter eternity each day without hearing the truth of the gospel. The “clear and simple task” remains unfinished.

As was true with Laura Belle and the Free Will Baptist denomination of the 1930s, we are faced with significant challenges in our generation. Most of the two billion who have not heard the gospel live in areas that

and the Free Will Baptist denomination of the 1930s, we are faced with significant challenges in our generation. Most of the two billion who have not heard the gospel live in areas that refuse entry with a missionary visa. Are we going to look at the



challenges and say, “It’s too difficult?” or, “It’s too dangerous?”

This is *our* challenge. This is *our* calling. *Into The Darkness* is not only an attempt to chronicle the provisions of God and the faithfulness of His people in the past. The book, and the stories it contains, is meant to serve as an appeal—a challenge—to the current generation, and others who will follow, to continue piercing the darkness until the words of Jesus are fulfilled, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and

then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14—NKJV).

This task demands the same spirit, creativity, and tenacity that existed in our earliest missionaries. If governments will not allow missionaries to enter with missionary visas, we will have to find other ways. Some will enter providing humanitarian aid. Others will teach in schools or hold various occupations. Some will start businesses. Some will birth creative alternatives.

Though the means of taking the gospel has changed through the years, and will most certainly change as we head into the future, the purpose itself should not. “We exist to

facilitate church planting movements among unreached peoples.” Winning people to Christ, making them disciples, and gathering them together to form a church will always be the call.

As we face this challenging future, new colleagues are coming alongside us. Free Will Baptists from our churches around the world are sensing the need and answering the call to reach more than their Jerusalem, and are reaching into *their* Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Over the next 25 years, this may be one of the most exciting developments we will see. By the time we celebrate our centennial in 2035, more Free Will Baptist missionaries may originate from our works internationally than from North America. If current growth trends continue, more Free Will Baptists will be worshipping in churches internationally than in the U.S.A.

Perhaps before the next 25 years have elapsed, we will all be gathered around the throne of Heaven to worship the Lord together. The Apostle John had the unique opportunity to see that scene in advance. He records it for us in Revelation 7:9-10, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”

As we look, we will see a Bengali man from India, a Lobi woman from Ivory Coast, and a Frenchman from Châteaubriant. Scanning the crowd further, we will see a former Shinto priest, a mountain villager from Panama, and a senorita from Alpedrete, Spain. Thousands upon thousands of our brothers and sisters in Christ from all over the world will be present because of the sacrifice and commitment of Free Will Baptists who were obedient to send and be sent.

Into The Darkness tells part of that story. Praise the Lord with us for those who will gather around the throne as a result of the labors of those whose story is contained herein, as well as those whose story is being lived today.



OTHER WORKS

The larger story of the global missions movement includes heroes like Hudson Taylor, Adoniram Judson, Jim Elliott and dozens of others whose well-chronicled achievements are often shared. This is true of the story of

Free Will Baptist International Missions as well. Many people know the familiar names of certain Free Will Baptist missionary heroes and can easily connect them with recognizable, if not difficult to pronounce, places. Yet, the International Missions narrative is incomplete without the inclusion of lesser-known people and the places they served.

In many ways, the story of missions is a collection of life histories of people with willing hearts. When made aware of a place immersed in sin-induced gloom, missionaries set out to shine the Light—even when an established work was unavailable to receive them. The biographies of early Free Will Baptist pioneers follow this same line. They traveled to an unreached place where, through hard work and sacrifice, they established the foundations for longstanding and familiar works.

This same pattern is true of Free Will Baptists who sacrificially labored in lesser-known places. Whether the work became an established place for Free Will Baptists or not, workers were sent and went with passion to share the love of Christ. Some of their stories are lost in the pages of publications long out of print. Yet, they are part of His story—an important part of the team of people who took His light into the darkness.

Other stories are just beginning to be written. Workers are laboring in countries opened to Free

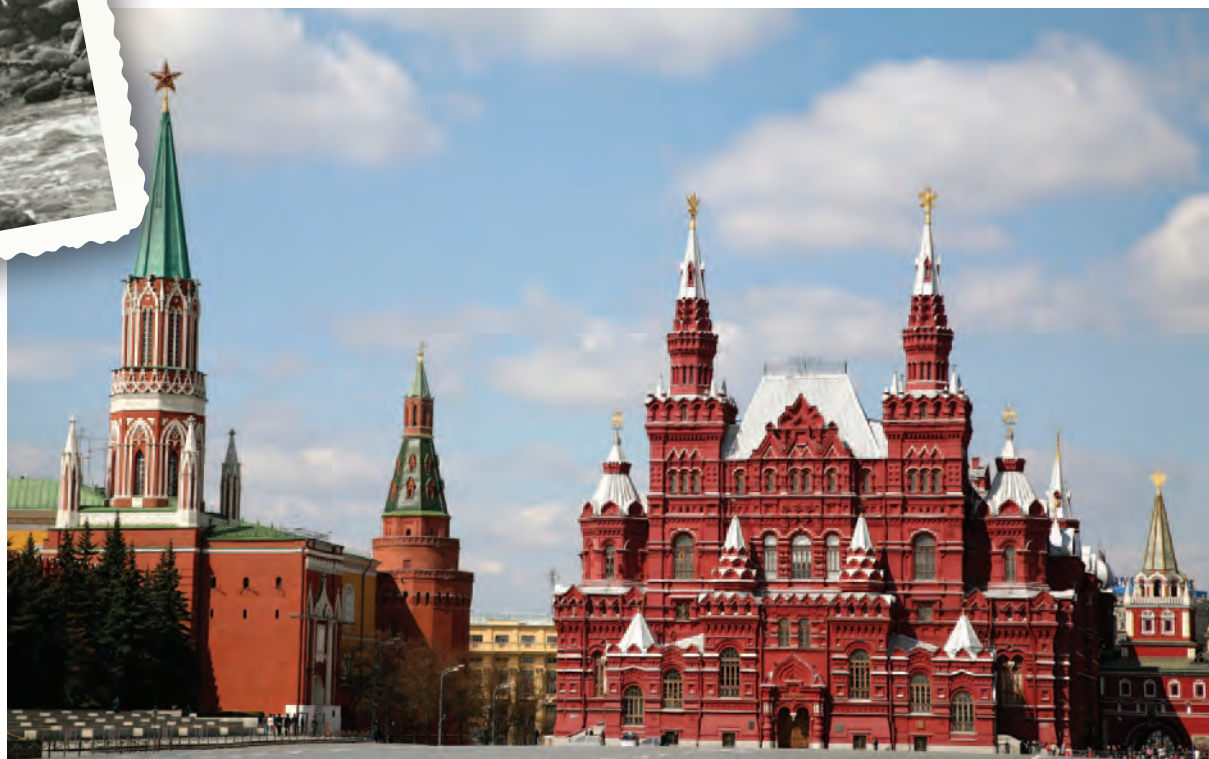
Will Baptists in recent years. These Light-bearers face many of the same trials and difficulties of pioneer missionaries from decades ago. Yet, lives are being changed as the truth of the gospel penetrates darkened hearts. New churches are being planted; new foundations laid for enduring works.



ABOVE RIGHT: A Bulgarian street scene is livened by a rare Christmas tree. Most Bulgarians do not celebrate Christmas.

ABOVE LEFT: Travel conditions in Ecuador's remote areas required four-wheel drive and determination.

RIGHT: Red Square, site of massive military parades during the Soviet era, is located in Moscow. Spires hail the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church, but offer little to aid people in finding Christ.



GERMANY

On a Mission

Technical Sergeant Dennis Heath and his wife Mary Jo had a special mission. For his career, Dennis served the United States Air Force in West Germany. He quickly became known for his high morals, and was recognized in a military periodical for an incident where he demonstrated “good Samaritan” behavior to a fellow serviceman. A dedicated soldier, Dennis recognized a higher calling. His true mission was to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dennis was a Free Will Baptist minister whose passion for God permeated his work and off time. He and his wife Mary Jo sought to establish a work at the Langerkopft Radio Relay Site, as well as one in the Ramstein Village, located two miles from the largest American military base in Europe. They soon secured a small facility in the village to house the new church, optimistic about what God wanted to do among the Germans and Americans living there. “Everything was falling into place,” said Dennis. Growth was slow but sure.

In time, Kim Zegelian arrived in Germany under the missionary affiliate program to assist the Heaths. They labored together to strengthen the Kusel church in Ramstein. Kim taught physical education at a recreation center when not carrying out church duties. A new facility in 1991 helped increase attendance from 10 to 22 members. A room was added for Bible studies and other outreach efforts.

Then Dennis and Mary Jo were transferred back to the States. Though the Kusel church’s closing was necessitated, all three affiliate missionaries asked God to raise up other laborers to continue a strong biblical foundation for the new believers’ growing faith.

BELOW: View at dawn of the famous Quadriga atop the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.



DENNIS AND MARY HEATH

were appointed as affiliate missionaries in 1988.

Dennis was an ordained pastor serving in the Air Force stationed at Kapaum Air Station, Germany. He and his wife planned to

establish a FWB church in Germany. The Heaths resigned in 1994 due to Dennis’ reassignment.



KIM ZEGELIEN

was appointed as an affiliate missionary in 1991. She assisted the Heaths in Kusel. Kim ministered to the children and wives of the military in Bible clubs, Sunday school, and monthly home Bible studies. Kim

left Germany in 1994, was appointed as a short-term missionary to Côte d’Ivoire in 1995, and became a career missionary in 1999. After much prayer Kim resigned in 2001 and took a teaching job in North Carolina.

ECUADOR

Light in the Darkness

*Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them:
for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee;
he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*

DEUTERONOMY 31:6

Ecuador, literally “equator,” is a country the size of Nevada that lies sandwiched between Columbia and Peru and borders the Pacific Ocean to the west. Famous missionary martyrs Jim Elliott, Nate Saint, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming, and Ed McCully helped put this dark, jungle territory on the map, graphically depicting the savage heritage and great need held by the Indians within its terrain. Home to the Galapagos Islands and some of the most diverse animal and plant life in the world, scientists also find Ecuador to be a perfect place for pursuing research. With a population of 13.5 million people, more than 95% of Ecuadorians consider themselves Roman Catholic.



Clearly, Ecuadorians needed to hear gospel truth. But who was willing to venture into the vast poverty and backward culture to bring the light of Christ? God raised up two single women to tackle what seemed to be an impossible task. In April of 1964, the Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions Board appointed Ella Rae Jones and Patsy Tyson as medical missionaries to Ecuador, teaming with World Radio Missionary Fellowship which operated the two hospitals where the women were assigned. After completing a year of language study in Costa Rica, they each served a year in a hospital in Quito, the nation’s capital city, and another year in Shell Mera, situated on the edge of the Amazon jungle.

While in Ecuador, Ella Rae and Patsy were overwhelmed with the number of orphaned or neglected children, as well as impoverished families trying to make ends meet. In addition to caring for their medical needs, both women



ABOVE: Ecuadorian pastors prepare to baptize a convert in a swirling river.
RIGHT: Ella Rae Jones teaches a Bible story to children in Shell Mera.



worked diligently to share the gospel through teaching Bible studies and clubs, training leaders, and instructing the community about preventive medicine. As they tended to Ecuador's physical needs, the light they brought with them illuminated the darkness and many souls were saved.

Burdened for the lost Indians in the eastern jungle areas where the gospel was not penetrating, the ladies requested the mission board grant them appointment to this area following furlough. However, the board felt the danger of sending single women to such a hostile area was too great a risk. Undaunted, the women returned to serve Ecuador anyway, sponsored by their home churches and independent of the Board of Foreign Missions.



Another missionary, Sheila Williams, experienced the same obstacle to her calling. Since the board placed a moratorium on sending single missionaries to the field, she served with Child Evangelism Fellowship under Christian and Missionary Alliance for five years, while also being supported by two Free Will Baptist churches in the States. Sheila focused her attention on the nation's children, teaching classes, training teens and adults to teach classes, and conducting three-week training courses in practical open-air evangelism to enable Ecuadorians to

return to their hometowns and effectively share the gospel with family

and friends. She also held vacation Bible schools in public schools and trained school teachers to teach the Bible. Through Ella Rae and Sheila's faithful witness, countless lives were changed, including the Villaci family. Of the 10 children in the family, all were converted from hopeless, futile lives and went on to work in various ways to strengthen churches in Ecuador. Luz, the sixth in line, became a career missionary, carrying to other children the same truth of Christ that so dramatically changed her own life.



ELLA RAE JONES

was appointed as a medical missionary to Ecuador in 1964. After one year of language school she served in a hospital in Quito and Shell Mera, at the edge of the Amazon jungle. The board decided in 1969 that they could not feel comfortable with sending a single lady into this type of ministry. Ella Rae served independently with the support of her church from 1969–1981.



PATSY TYSON

served under the foreign mission board from 1964–1969. When the board would not approve her return to Ecuador she decided to serve independently with the support of her church (1969–1974).

TOP: The Villaci family pose for a family photo. They came to Christ as a result of Miss Jones' ministry. Each of the children ended up in ministry as adults.

ABOVE: Sheila Williams, a Free Will Baptist from Detroit, Michigan, worked in Ecuador under Child Evangelism with Christian and Missionary Alliance.

RUSSIA

Iron Sharpens Iron — Behind the Curtain

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

ECCLESIASTES 4:9

*I*t is one of the largest harvest fields on earth. Stretching over 6,200 miles and across 11 time zones, Russia stands as a formidable former communist country more than two and a half times the size of the United States and occupying one-ninth of the earth's land surface.

Through the centuries, a variety of governmental regimes have ordered life in Russia's borders. But it was the rise of communism that darkened her visage and scarred her land and people unlike any other. For more than 70 years, Russia lay captive to its own deception, saddling its people with governmental control too heavy to bear. "It is true that our country has had many problems; however, the greatest problem we have is that God does not live in our land any longer," said Andrew Rietveld, a Russian Christian. "We must put God back into our country," he concluded.

Free Will Baptists agreed. Less than 0.56 percent of the vast Russian population—more than 149 million people—knew Christ as Savior. Most Russians had never seen a Bible or heard about its message. Many Russians were ravenous for the Bread of Life.

God moved the mission board to join efforts with Baptists in Russia who hold a very similar doctrinal perspective. Peter Konovalchik, president of the Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists of Russia, was elated, "I cannot express deeply enough my heartfelt thanks for the participation of Free Will Baptists helping Russian missionaries reach out in church-planting and discipleship." He was also grateful for Leroy and Fay Forlines, sent from the States to help teach and write literature for their people. In an unprecedented effort of unity, Konovalchik and Pastor Nikolai Sobolev organized a pastors' conference with more than 130 pastors in attendance. The conference provided the training, encouragement, and theological teaching they needed to grow their own flocks in their hometowns.

Though persecution and opposition still exists for Christians in Russia, and no one knows when the religious freedom currently available will end, the church of Christ is multiplying rapidly and strongly. Several seminaries, institutes, and churches have developed and flourished. Certainly the harvest is ripe.



ABOVE: Mike Corley (left) listens in on a conversation in Red Square.

RIGHT: Baptismal candidates await their turn on the banks of a river in the Ukraine.



JOY IN THE JOURNEY

The Mike and Cathy Corley Story

*I*t was not much, but it was a start. The Good News Church in Chelyabinsk, Russia, housed the Bible institute where Mike and Cathy Corley labored to train and equip national leaders. Every school day for three years, students set up sawhorse desks in the morning and replaced them with cots at night.

“Women from the church cheerfully volunteered their time and talents to prepare and serve meals,” Mike Corley remembered. “The church had no shower, so the men took care of personal hygiene in the church’s four sinks.” Despite the meager facilities, 11 young men diligently pursued theological studies in three-week increments to equip themselves for evangelism in their home country.

The Corleys knew equipped Russian workers were key to fostering the kind of growth capable in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Appointed as missionary affiliates in 1999, they eagerly began work in Chelyabinsk where many in the community were hungry for truth.

God blessed their united efforts and quickly grew the church and strengthened the institute. Then, in 2002, God provided a fantastic facility to house all the institute’s needs. “We were thrilled with the Free Will Baptists’ purchase,” said one of the students. Though it required renovations, the 1,000-square-meter, two-story building had plenty of potential. New classes, a church plant, and summer camp for children were possible because of the large space. A student explained, “We have a kindred spirit and believe the same basic doctrine. We would like to see more Free Will Baptist missionaries here like Mike and Cathy, who have been so helpful to us.”

All 11 students from the Chelyabinsk Affiliate of the Moscow Theological Institute (CAMTI) graduated with a ceremony in Moscow, celebrating the men’s discipline over the five, arduous years of training. Each appeared before a committee of Moscow Theological Institute representatives to defend their final papers. “Very few pastors in Russia today have a formal theological education,” Mike Corley explained. “The Chelyabinsk Bible Institute makes it possible for many men to receive the education they need and desire.” Many of the students already served as full- or part-time pastors in their home churches, but now were ordained and fully equipped to share the gospel in their hometowns and beyond. And the process is replicated again and again.

The Corleys repeated their efforts in Krasnodar, a city on the Black Sea, establishing a Bible institute and camp property for continuing to equip national leaders in that oblast to reach the wide expanse of souls waiting for the Word.



ABOVE: Mike and Cathy Corley stand with Steve Lytle in front of the Good News Baptist Church in Chelyabinsk, Russia.

LEFT: Mike Corley and a team from the United States hand out New Testaments to Russians in a hospital in Kopeysk.

CREATIVE ACCESS

Smuggling Hope

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

MATTHEW 5:10

Does God call missionaries into harm's way for the sake of the gospel? For all those who are coming to Christ because of missionaries brave enough to enter restricted areas with God's truth, the answer is an emphatic, "Yes!"

The International Missions department of Free Will Baptists recognized the need and the potential for growth in these restricted areas. Due to difficult logistics and networking, the agency teamed with like-minded Baptist Union churches in some areas, in order to reach the lost, despite inherent dangers and opposition. The most difficult part of the challenge lay in heeding governmental ordinance while creatively distributing the gospel where it was most needed.

With cautious and strategic planning, the board created a non-governmental organization designed specifically to operate where mission agencies cannot.

Small groups of missionaries braved parts of Central Asia, followed by several workers laboring on the coast of southern France and in Spain. Thanks to the help of other concerned Christians in pivotal locations, the gospel is now being carried into China, Laos, Viet Nam, Mongolia, and North Africa as well.

Though always cautious, Free Will Baptists believe firmly that through creativity, compassion, cred-

ibility, and commitment even the most intimidating obstacles can be overcome. Casting fear at Jesus' feet, they look expectantly beyond iron doors to the ripe harvests that lay waiting behind restricted borders.

Any information on Creative Access ministries and workers should not be published elsewhere.

ABOVE: Clint Morgan (right), his wife Lynette, and Craig Portell meet with leaders in Central Asia to discuss how Free Will Baptists' involvement can be most beneficial.

LEFT: James Forlines (left) and Clint Morgan meet with Russian leaders to discuss ministry roles of missionaries.



CONSIDER THE COST

*H*is mother described him as violent. Involved with drugs, he grieved her constantly. What was to become of Sergej Besarab?

In God's hands, Sergej became a born-again believer. His transformation occurred so dramatically that his bewildered mother gave her life to Christ, as well. And his ministry of evangelism began with a whole-hearted intensity born out of gratitude for God's forgiveness and grace.

Sergej applied himself to studies and soon became a missionary pastor of a small Baptist church in Tajikistan. Pouring himself into the community,

he braved the inherent dangers of a closed country and boldly shared his faith. Many listened, and joined him in his pursuit of Christ. However, the powers of darkness reigned strongly in that city.

On January 12, 2004, it seemed evil was winning the battle. Following a youth meeting at the church, Sergej and his wife met with another missionary couple. After they worshipped the Lord together, Sergej went to the meeting hall for his private devotions. Just before the 9:00 p.m. curfew, shots rang out across the grounds. A shooter murdered Sergej, hoping to silence his message forever.

Instead, Sergej's tragic death bolstered the believers. At his funeral, the gospel was delivered clearly, and with hope. Though steeped in pain and loss, Sergej's wife and daughter clung closely to Christ. The price of following Christ in Tajikistan is high; believers there—now more than ever—know He is worth the cost.

LEFT: *Bloodstain on the Silk Road* tells the story of Sergej's life and martyrdom in a 30-minute video.



SHANE & JOY DAVISON

were originally appointed as career missionaries to Côte d'Ivoire in 2003. They were reassigned to France in 2005 due to instability in Ivory Coast. The Davisons work with immigrants in France.

MICAH & BECKY DERBY

were individually approved as single career missionaries in 2000. They married in 2003 and began their ministry together. Health issues forced the Derbys to resign in 2009.



DAVID & ANGIE OUTLAW

were approved as career missionaries to Central Asia in 2006. The Outlaws and their five children departed for the field in 2008. David and Angie are involved in English camps and classes.



DARREN AND DANA PORTELL

were appointed in 2002 as part of the team ministering to immigrants in France. The Portells moved to a restricted country in 2009. Darren and Dana are teaching at the international American school in their city.



CLINT AND LYNETTE MORGAN

began their missionary career in Côte d'Ivoire, where they served for almost 30 years. In 2005, the Morgans moved to France and Clint became the regional director for Creative Access countries.



KEVIN STACY

was appointed to serve in Eurasia in 1997. He was involved in teaching English in Uzbekistan. Kevin returned home in 2000 and submitted his resignation.



MICK AND RACHEL DONAHUE

were appointed to career service in 2003. They serve the immigrant population in Spain.



CHARITY VANWINKLE

was approved to work in Central Asia in 1998. She returned to the States in 2000 and requested a year's leave of absence to weigh her future ministry options. Charity remained in the States and married a pastor in 2003.



ANGELA EMERICK

was appointed as a career missionary in 2004. She was assigned to Central Asia in 2005. Angela was involved in English camps, women's conferences and helped open an English library. Angela resigned in 2009 due to personal issues. She currently lives in Virginia.



SEAN AND JILL WARREN

were appointed as career missionaries to France in 2001. The Warrens were the leaders of the team serving immigrants. They returned to the States in 2006 serving as Missionary-in-Residence at Free Will Baptist Bible College. In 2008 the Warrens submitted their resignation, following a one-year leave-of-absence. Sean and Jill currently live in Missouri where Sean serves as the Director of International Missions for General Baptists.

SOUTH KOREA

Mission Springboard

And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

ACTS 16:5

Six new churches are started every day in South Korea. Literally hundreds of thousands of proclaimed evangelical Christians flock to mega-churches each Sunday, and the potential for further exponential growth remains strong. Compared to almost every other Asian and Pacific

Rim country where less than one percent of the population knows Christ as Savior, more than 21% of South Koreans claim to be Christians.

With such a large believing demographic, why open a new Free Will Baptist work in South Korea? After much prayer, God answered the question through Dr. John and Esther Chang, South Korean evangelists whose vision for the gospel extended far beyond their country's borders. "God gave us a vision, a plan," Dr. John Chang said. "We desired to plant a strong, Bible-teaching church with an emphasis on training young people. We wanted to develop a Bible-training institute where we could send Free Will Baptist missionaries from Korea to Asia and other parts of the world in the twenty-first century."

Born in Seoul, Korea, Dr. Chang was raised Buddhist, but converted to Christ through the Navigators' ministry while in the Korean Air Force. He began preaching when only 21 years old and was later ordained. He met his wife Esther at church, and together they raised three children who are now grown. Both John and Esther earned several college degrees from reputable institutions and felt prepared to undertake the responsibility of planting several South Korean churches, including a Bible institute to train national leaders.

In time, Dr. Chang was thrilled to report that the Free Will Baptist Association of Korea was organized with 32 ministers and 10 churches. In addition, nationals implemented the new Asia Free Will Baptist Theological Seminary in Seoul with the purchase of two buildings in Kyonggi-do. What was to be a training facility became a church and is no longer affiliated with Free Will Baptists.



ABOVE: Dr. John and Esther Chang.

LEFT: Dr. John Chang (front row, second from right) and many of the pastors and leaders who joined the Free Will Baptist Association of Korea. They later moved to another denominational affiliation.

FAR RIGHT: Russian leaders join Mike and Cathy Corley to dedicate the building purchased to house the Chelyabinsk Bible Institute.

RIGHT: Russian Federation coin.



ABOVE TOP: Dr. Chang baptizes new Korean believers.

ABOVE: German Democratic Republic postage stamp featuring philosopher and poet Frederick Schiller.

RIGHT: View down one of Quito, Equador's, crowded streets toward the winged virgin statue at the top of Panecillo Hill.

FAR RIGHT: A tribute to all who helped liberate Bulgaria from the Turks, this statue sits on the banks of the Danube River in Svishtov—the first Bulgarian city freed from Turkish slavery.



BULGARIA

Broken and Beautiful

*Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.
Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;
thy walls are continually before me.*

ISAIAH 49:15B-16

Ever since communists took over Bulgaria in 1946, the country sagged under the weight of its oppressive regime. Beautiful, rolling mountains with quaint villages tucked between them lost much of their allure. Sadness, disillusionment, and a pervasive fear hung over the people like a sunless, consuming fog. The new Bulgarian government declared that God was “Enemy Number One.” Members of the communist party purposed to eradicate any idea of Him.

They began with fires—huge bonfires to devour all Bibles and religious materials. Owning Bibles became illegal. Pastors and priests were captured and convicted as American spies. Most were imprisoned, tortured, or murdered. All churches were closed except for the few government-sanctioned Orthodox ones, where government-appointed pastors taught a dead and useless religion. Elementary schools taught that God did not exist, and colleges required all students to take and pass an atheism test.

No Christian was allowed higher education.

The government owned houses and jobs. They researched genealogies to locate those with a Christian heritage and forced them to live in remote areas. In time, the communists succeeded in their mission. Bulgarians began to believe that not only was belief in God wrong and dangerous, it was also foolish. Christianity practically disappeared. Without Bibles or teaching, the future grew darker with each passing day. But in 1988, the Berlin Wall fell, and with it communism’s fortress of spiritual oppression came crashing down. Introducing God to people who do not believe He exists is an arduous process. Less than one percent of the 7.5 million people claim to be Christian. In a significant move, the Free Will Baptist International Missions Board approved Bulgaria as a new field for missionary efforts in December 2005.



ABOVE: Each of the rooftops shown in this hillside view of Svishov represents dozens of people who have never heard the gospel.

LEFT: The Church of the Holy Trinity in Svishov is a beautiful emblem of the emptiness of the Orthodox church.

BURDENED FOR BULGARIA

The Tim and Lydia Awtrey Story

I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

ISAIAH 49:6B

She knew she was missing something, but Lydia was unable to put her finger on it. She was a good student at a reputable medical college, and her future prospects seemed hopeful. Friends abounded, and she worked to balance an active social life with successful academics. “But I was miserable on the inside. In my heart, life was meaningless,” she remembered. “It seemed there was no one I could really count on. I became depressed, even though it seemed I had everything going for me.”

Then God brought light to her darkness. In her hometown, she ran into an old friend who seemed strangely changed. He told her about Jesus and the difference He made in his life. At first, she laughed at the gospel, but when she attended the youth retreat he recommended and saw the gospel in action through the lives of other believers, she was changed too. “The people at the retreat demonstrated un-manipulative love—something I had never witnessed. All I had ever known was love given to gain something in return,” she explained. “They loved me simply because Christ loved them. And I wanted to be a part of that.”

Meanwhile, God was at work in a young man’s heart halfway around the world. Tim Awtrey, who was raised in a Free Will Baptist church in California, became a Christian as a child but lost interest in serving Christ. He chose the University of California at Santa Barbara because of its secular atmosphere, but God placed him in a dorm room with a strong Christian. His roommate invited him to attend a summer missions meeting. Convinced good food awaited

him there, he attended. Intrigued by the opportunity, he signed up for a summer in Bulgaria. He had no idea how



ABOVE: Lydia teaches several women’s Bible studies.

RIGHT: The fortress in Veliko Tarnova is an amazing presentation of medieval architecture.



strong an impression the Bulgarian people were going to leave on his soul.

Eager to return to Bulgaria the following summer, God solidified Tim's passion for the lost. When the trip came to a close and the team returned to the States, Tim stayed behind and began a six-year student ministry. "While I made some initial inroads through games, the real goal moved slowly. We had leadership challenges and little growth," he said. "For three of my years, I felt like the work was just barely progressing."

God, however, knew where hearts were stirred. God raised up a Bulgarian staff member named Trif who traveled with Tim throughout Bulgaria starting and developing student discipleship groups. "We saw unprecedented growth as students were saved and more campus groups were added. Within a year, we went from nothing to 14 groups with more than 250 students attending!" Tim said excitedly.

Despite the progress, Tim noted a growing need. Students who graduated returned to hometowns devoid of any churches or training. It became apparent that without grounded churches to help further their spiritual growth and train future leaders, new converts might flounder and possibly fall away.

So God stirred hearts again—this time by uniting Lydia and Tim in marriage. As a native Bulgarian, Lydia had a natural inroad to her people. After several years in the States, Tim and Lydia became the first Free Will Baptist career missionaries in Bulgaria, and soon opened the Good News Free Will Baptist Church in Svishtov on the Danube River where a small group of believers needed leadership. People are coming to Christ as a result of their ministry, with

church services and Bible studies overflowing with attendees. "After many years of dreaming, hoping, and praying, it is great to finally get up on a Sunday morning and have the opportunity to worship in a Free Will Baptist church in Bulgaria!" Tim exclaimed. "It is still a little baby of a church, but we have great expectations that in time it will grow."



TOP: Balcony view at the Rila Monastery in Bulgaria.

LEFT: This horse-drawn cart is a reminder of the merging of the past with modern life in Bulgaria.