

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.

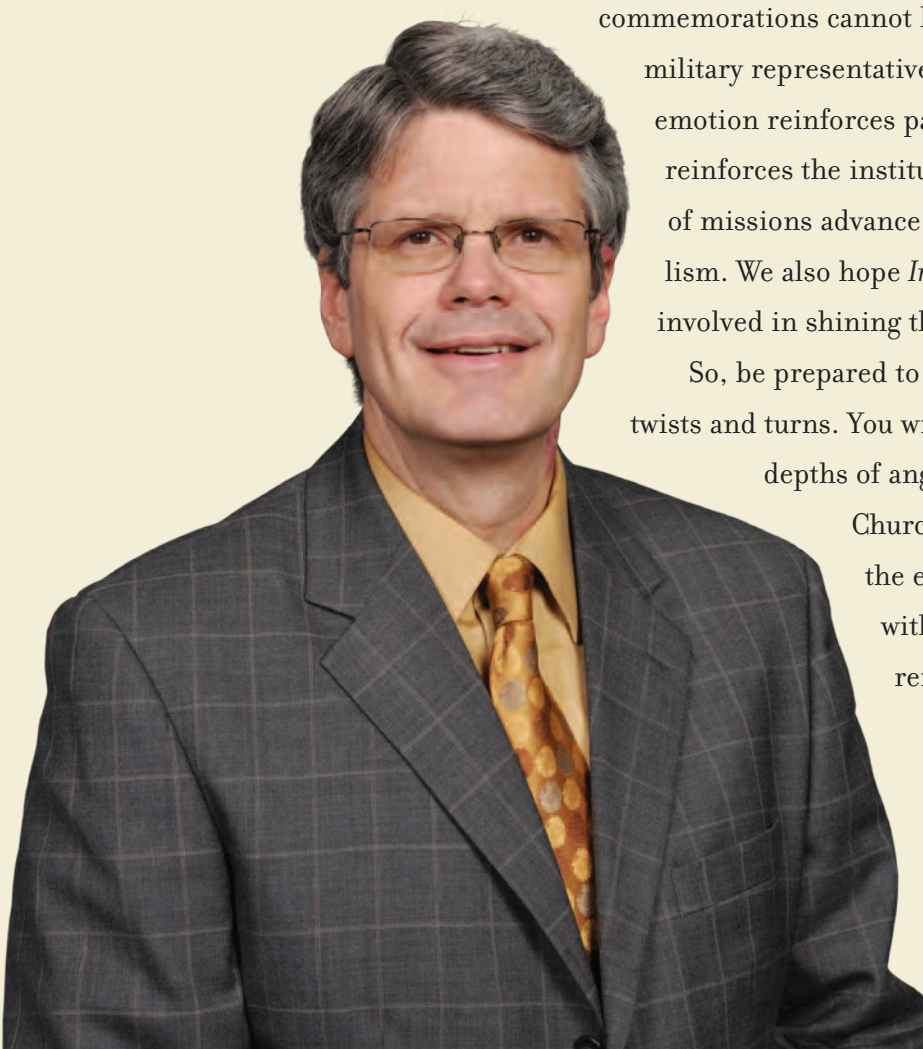
Obedience to God's call led them to tribal peoples in Africa and India. They faced spiritual darkness in the world-class cities of Europe, Asia, and Latin America. With abandon they labored in the midst of civil wars, military invasions, natural disasters, and abject poverty. These intrepid men and women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

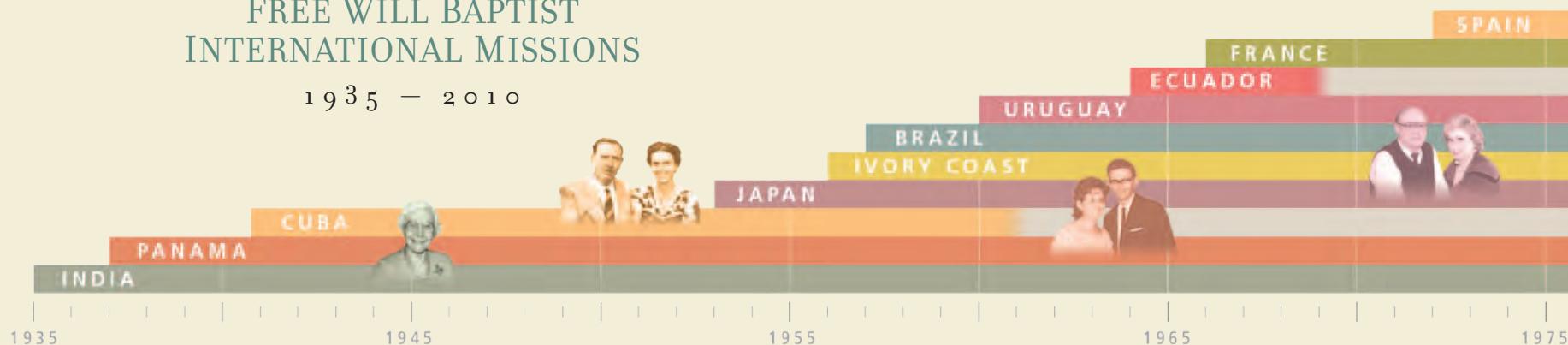
workings of God in Miss Laura Belle’s life, to prick the conscience of an entire denomination, becomes evident even though unusual” (*Touching The Untouchables*, p. 9).

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.

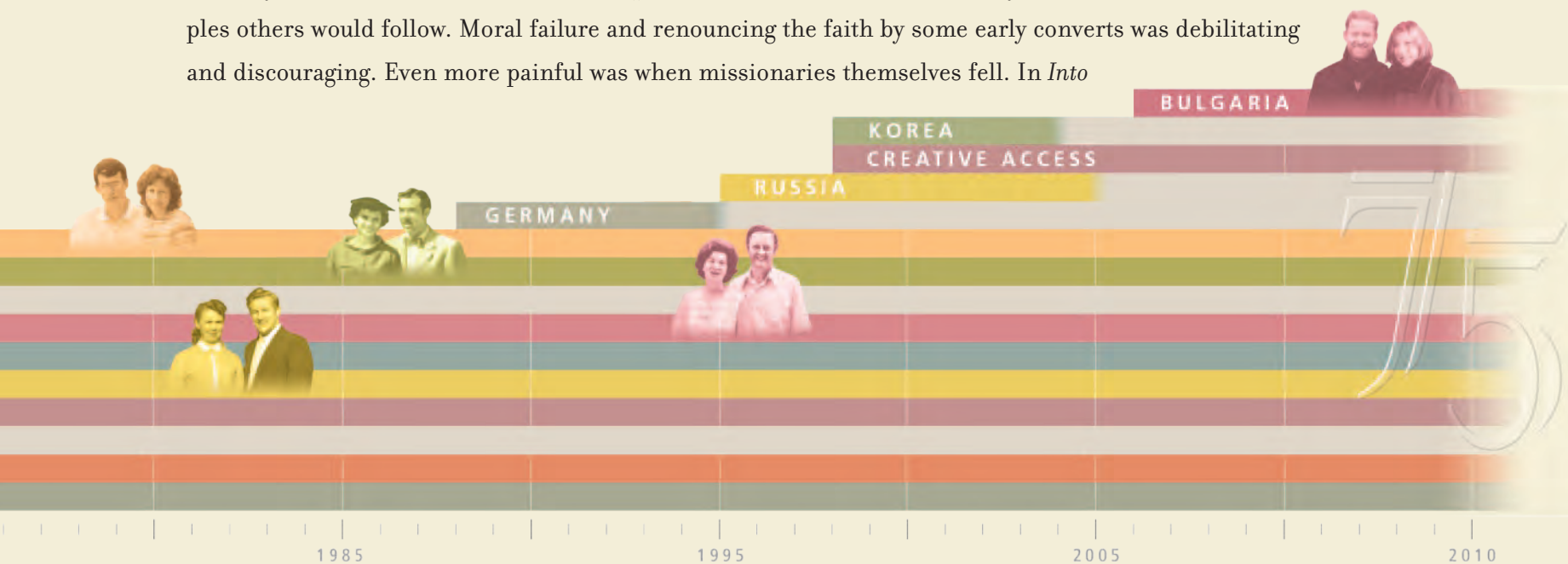
A prime example comes from the experience of Laura Belle Barnard herself. Upon arriving in Kotagiri, South India, Laura Belle learned of an earlier outreach effort to the Harijan (outcaste) people. A Scottish lady, Miss Cockburn, abandoned her outreach in the community. “Apparently, she had become thoroughly 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.

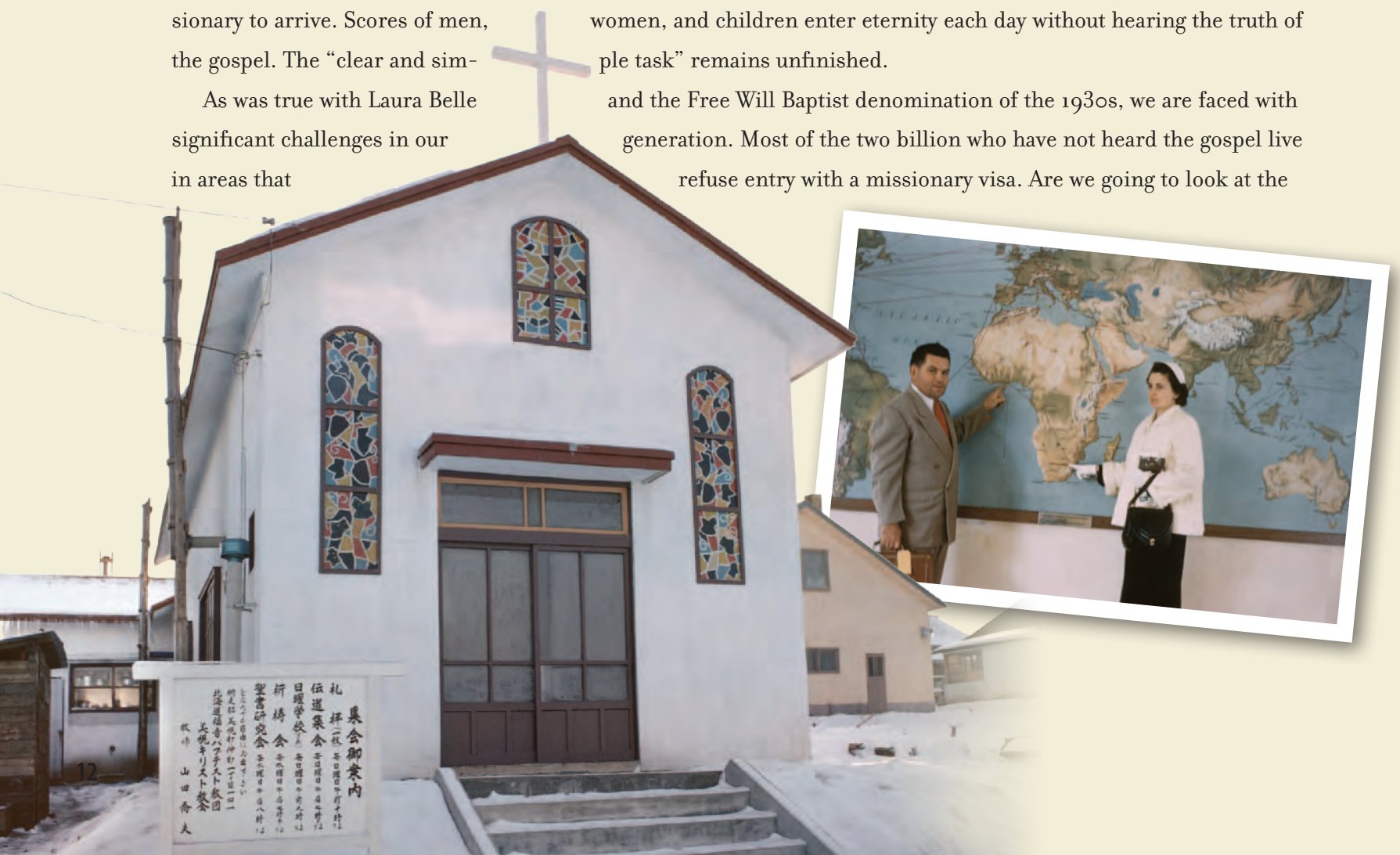
Some of our earliest missionaries served seven-year terms. It was just too expensive to make the long ocean voyages to and from the field more frequently. Visitors to the field were almost non-existent. Phone calls had to be arranged well in advance, or were only made in extreme circumstances because 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.



PANAMA

Fishing for Men

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

MATTHEW 4:19

The Board of Free Will Baptist Foreign Mission did their homework. They surveyed and studied Central American countries for three long months. They reviewed demographics, history, and the feasibility of opening a new mission field. They trekked on foot the terrain prospective missionaries might tread. They prayed for God's most strategic location. And God kept leading them back to Panama.

Panama is an Indian word for "an abundance of fish." Certainly, the snaking isthmus nation connecting Central and South America boasts a wealth of marine life. Its shores border both the Pacific and Caribbean waters, with a U.S.-made canal linking the two oceans straight through the heart of the country. Lush, tropical vegetation yields produce of rice, corn, bananas, and cacao. Heavily forested areas watered by hundreds of winding rivers provide ample timber resources. But the board members who were considering the next mission field weren't persuaded by the abundance Panama offered. They were convinced by what Panama was missing.

Panama was comprised of three primary people groups: a cosmopolitan urban group, an agricultural group, and Indian tribes. Of the three million plus people living in Panama, more than 70% considered themselves Roman Catholic, a religion most people wore like a school uniform—convenient, impersonal, and largely cultural. It was as if their souls suffocated under the weight of pointless legalism long ago, and all that was left was a shell of spirituality, devoid of any truth or power. Hundreds of bars and cantinas lined the city streets, empty promises of escape from a life that left their patrons lost and alone.

The need was clear. These disillusioned people were desperate for true hope. Someone needed to share the truth that God is more than ritual, and that He longs for a relationship with each person. The board members envisioned a harvest of souls, ripe for the picking... if they were able to penetrate the hardened defenses that seemed to surround the entire nation.



LEFT: Opened in 1914, the Panama Canal provides safe passage between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.

RIGHT: Panamanians sport festival dress during one of their annual celebrations.



Tom Willey Sr. and his wife Mabel saw the same look of hopelessness some 25 years before the study was conducted. True Free Will Baptist pioneers to the field, “Mom and Pop” Willey first crossed Panamanian borders in 1936, hoping to reach the country’s Indians in the interior. A few inroads were made and relationships forged, but political turmoil forced the young couple and their two children to leave the country.

Mission Facts

Nine churches and 10 mission works provide light to the Catholic-entrenched culture of Panama. Established churches are spreading their influence to mountain villages and other locations with no evangelical witness. A newly centralized Bible seminary provides training to those seeking full-time work in ministry.

They moved to Cuba where the Willeys perfected their Spanish and demonstrated their love for the Latin American people.

It provided the perfect training ground for God’s next call—to return to Panama. In 1962, the board solidified their decision, choosing Panama as their Central American mission field. Tom Willey Jr. and his wife and daughter agreed to go, followed by his sister Barbara and her husband John Moehlman.


The work in Panama was slow, difficult, and filled with dangers. Anti-American sentiment made it difficult to establish friendships, even though a majority of the Panamanians appreciated the missionary work in their country. An intensely volatile political environment threatened the progress of the work begun in the communities. Several times missionaries were asked to leave in the wake of turbulent uprisings. Strangely, the upheaval and suffering worked miracles in softening hardened hearts toward the gospel. As people acknowledged a need for physical, emotional, or financial help, they began to see their deficit in spiritual areas as well. God used the most difficult of circumstances to bond missionaries to Panamanians. In turn, all were drawn closer to the Father.

Over the course of time, through patient and steady perseverance, the gospel penetrated the heart of Panama. Communities, like the Isla de Cañas, turned to the Lord for hope. Churches are growing, their missions expanding. It seems as if Panama, the land of “abundant fish” lived up to its name. When the nets are lowered in God’s time and in God’s place, the nets always return full.



RIGHT: This was an early meeting place for evangelistic campaigns.

BOTTOM: The First FWB Church of Panama occupied this building for many years.

 PANAMA	
CAPITAL	Panama City
LARGEST CITY	Panama City
AREA	75,420 sq. km.
POPULATION	3,360,474
CURRENCY	Balboa, U.S. dollar
PER CAPITA INCOME	\$11,700
RELIGIONS	
Roman Catholic	76%
Evangelical	18%
Islam	3.5%
Buddhism	2.1%
Unreached People Groups ..	1

Sources: CIA World Factbook, Joshua Project



A WORK OF FAITH REVISITED

The Tom and Emma Ruth Willey Story

He took a deep breath as he crossed the border into Panama in 1962. Tom Willey Jr. knew the difficulties that lay before him. His own father, Tom Willey Sr., forged a path for the gospel among Panamanian Indians several decades before. Tom Willey Jr., his sister, and his mother joined the pioneer missionary the next year in 1937. But it was not long before the Panamanian president ordered the missionaries out of the country due to the Indians revolt against the government.



In a way, Tom Willey Jr. felt he was going home. At least, he was returning to complete a work his father started. Missionary work in Panama was not easy then, and conditions were still in great need of improvement. Within just a 10-mile radius of the city, more than 300 bars lured locals to spend what little money they earned on alcohol. Vice and drunkenness were so commonplace that area police were ordered to “shoot to kill” in slum areas. Open immorality flourished even in the highest circles.

As his car jostled over bumpy roads, the sights and sounds of Panama filled Tom Willey Jr.’s senses. Emma Ruth, his wife, surveyed the scene alongside him. It was clear the people were desperate for hope. Tom and Emma Ruth’s souls were stirred. They knew they were called to reach these people. But how?

The Wileys went to work just east of Panama City in Canitas, a rural area almost inaccessible during the rainy seasons. Though they faced opposition from the Catholic Church, the need for the gospel was not suppressed. Wading through rivers and hiking on foot, Tom Willey Jr. and an American friend carried the Good News in their hands and their hearts, sharing Christ all along the way. Tom coordinated special medical and dental assistance for the impoverished families in the community. He and his friend also taught the communities how to better utilize their land and water—yielding more crops, more profit, and more opportunities for education, health, and growth.

As they interacted with people who had no access to television, magazines, or newspapers, they made an interesting and exciting discovery. Even the poorest families managed to save enough to purchase a transistor radio, a relatively new invention at the time. Families eagerly gathered around to listen to music, radio broadcasts, and the

news about the tumultuous political events surrounding them. Through modern technology, God gave the Wileys the perfect platform to preach the gospel, right into the homes of even the most remote Panamanian villages. Through Christian radio programming on commercial radio stations, many Panamanians heard the gospel for the first time, and were encouraged to turn to the local Free Will Baptist church for more information.

Two years after Tom Willey’s arrival in Panama, the Estenio Garcia family joined them to start works in Panama City and Agua Buena. Bill and Barbara Phipps arrived shortly after, to develop the Central Provinces, 150 miles west of Panama City. These



three families worked together to keep the momentum of the gospel moving forward in each strategic area. They were blessed to have each other for support and camaraderie, despite the distance between the cities. The church in Panama City began to grow, and several young converts joined the Willeys in evangelistic outreaches to the rural areas of Canitas and Janene.

In 1967, the Phipps returned to the United States, giving the Willeys jurisdiction over the Isla de Cañas community. They built on the foundation laid by the Phipps, and soon saw more than 80% of the population come to faith in Christ.

But it was not an easy road. Emma Ruth and Tom mourned the death of Alicia, their 13-year-old daughter, after a battle with cancer. Not quite two years later, Emma Ruth herself fought the disease, and went to be with the Lord in 1972. Left with a 10-year-old daughter and a three-month-old son, Tom learned firsthand what it meant to lament the pain and brokenness of this world. God was faithful, though, and through friends He gave Tom and the children the grace and strength to carry on. In the course of time, Tom married Patsy Tyson who joined Tom in his relentless work among the Panamanian people.

Tremendous strides were made in Panama, thanks to the diligent labors of each missionary family who obeyed the call to go. A native pastor now serves the large and growing Free Will Baptist church in Panama City, and fruit from their work reaches into many of the communities. But the need is still great.

SECRET MISSION

The Estenio Garcias' Story

Tom Willey Jr. poured his heart and soul into the Panamanian community. He knew God was at work, but he saw so little fruit. "Lord," he prayed, "we need someone the people will respect...someone who can reach their hearts."

Tom prayed believing, but never suspected God was busy at work in Cuba, answering his prayer. A Cuban cadet who experienced the worldly life available in Havana, Estenio Garcia returned home to find his old cronies very different. They led Estenio to Jesus Christ through the work of Free Will Baptists and encouraged him toward ministry. He enrolled in the Bible institute and became a pastor within a year.

Later, as president of the Cuban Association of Free Will Baptists, his influence and position made him a target of the communist regime. He was forced to leave. His departure coincided with Tom's prayer for help.

Tom hardly believed the difference Estenio made in the community. People lowered their defenses, welcoming the News this Cuban brought. Garcia joined Willey in evangelistic outreaches to villages all over Panama, and people received the gospel.

Mrs. Garcia's recurring bouts with malaria led the couple to resign from the Mission and settle in New York City, but through Garcia's efforts and God's grace, a new church was established in Panama City.



FAR LEFT: Tom Willey Jr. befriends neighborhood children.

ABOVE: Emma Ruth Willey captures the attention of children as she plays the accordion during village ministry.

RIGHT: Estenio Garcia enters a village for evangelism.



MAKING DISCIPLES

The Ron and Linda Callaway Story

Everywhere they go, the Callaways find a mission field. God continues to give them spiritual eyes and compassionate hearts for all the people He places in their path.

Ron's heart for missions grew after his conversion at Fairmount Park Free Will Baptist church in Norfolk, Virginia. Though still in the navy, God began tugging his heart toward a different vocation. After his discharge, Ron began work right away—in his own home church and town. He served as a Sunday school teacher, worked bus routes, sang in the choir, went on visitations, and taught CTS. Still, he felt God calling him to more specific ministry. He enrolled at Free Will Baptist Bible College in 1973, where God made clear His intention for Ron to serve as a missionary to Spain. Linda, his wife, had a heart for missions from the time she accepted Christ at the age of nine. She considered Ron's call to be her own.

In May of 1975, the Callaways left for Spain, where they began an intense, two-year study of the language. They became deeply involved in the local church during their first term. Following furlough, the Callaways focused their ministry in Mostoles. There, Ron began work translating Christian commentaries and theological books into Spanish, and developing training curriculum for national pastors and teachers.

With a growing burden for training nationals to minister among their own people, Ron began teaching in Free Will Baptist Bible institutes, first in Spain and then in Panama and Cuba, where the need for curriculum development and training was greatest. Ron equipped men and women with the skills they need for successful ministries in their respective countries. Now Ron teaches missions students at Free Will Baptist Bible College and continues to teach modular courses in Cuba, Panama, and Russia.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.

HEBREWS 13:20-21A



ABOVE: Linda Callaway works with children in a vacation Bible school program.

LEFT: Ron teaches a Bible institute class.



UPPER LEFT: Tom Willey Jr. and Estenio Garcia pose with a family in front of their home in a Panamanian village.

UPPER RIGHT: Stan Bunch prepares to baptize a convert while others await their turn.

MIDDLE LEFT: Larry Incoe leads a house church.

ABOVE: A postage stamp celebrates Panama's maritime importance.

BOTTOM: Tom Willey Jr. poses by the airplane that helped him gain access to many villages.

LITTLE BY LYTLE

The Steve and Judy Lytle Story

Steve and Judy Lytle knew their calling to Panama was not the fast track to glory. From the early ages of nine and 10, Steve and Judy knew God was leading them to the mission field. They spent several years in training at Free Will Baptist Bible College, where they both graduated. Then they married, completed their internship, and were officially appointed to the field of Panama in 1975.



Before reaching Panamanian soil, however, they spent another year in Costa Rica learning the Spanish language. In August of 1977, they began their church-planting career in Betania, Panama. They worked alongside Bill and Glenda Fulcher. It did not take long for the Lytles to recognize the stronghold Roman Catholicism held over the people. They seemed completely indifferent to the gospel, leaving the Lytles on their knees before God asking for guidance in such a difficult culture.

On October 2, 1977, they began church services in Betania with only eight people in attendance. It was a small beginning, but it was a beginning. The Lytles began teaching leadership classes on evangelism, as well as starting Bible clubs. Children began coming to Christ, and their hearts were encouraged. As the Lytles continued to pray and teach, more and more people responded to the gospel and joined their services. Attendance increased, and so did the hope.

Steve Lytle found his weeks filled with speaking engagements. To combat the confusion caused by local Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'i, and fringe charismatics, Steve initiated a Bible institute program in Panama City, where he taught classes several nights a week. The Lytles saw their first converts in the more rural areas of Betania, Agua Buena, and Las Tablas. Evangelism coupled with Bible training allowed these new believers to apply their faith to their lives, leading them to tithe and volunteer for service in the church.

As months passed, church attendance grew. More groups were sent out in creative and practical ways to reach the lost, including medical missions, Bible clubs, music, film, and radio. Women leaders from the church hosted the

first annual women's retreat. On May 18, 1985, with 73 charter members, the Betania Free Will Baptist Church was officially organized, with over 200 people on hand for special meetings, despite the fact that the building was designed to hold only 80. Eventually, money raised by the congregation was used for remodeling, expanding the church building's capacity to 125. The Lytle's motto, "little by little," paid off in large dividends.



LEFT: Steve prepares to baptize a convert in a local swimming pool.

UPPER RIGHT: Steve and Judy stand on the porch of a rural home with their son Michael and two local children.

LOWER RIGHT: Judy plays for the small choir at the Betania church.

With a growing church and well-grounded teaching, the Betania community was spiritually prepared for the hard times that came with the political upheaval Panama's government experienced. Banks closed, and independent vendors were forced to shut down. Cash was difficult to obtain, and food became scarce. But the Free Will Baptist churches banded together and helped the members of their congregations weather the storm.

Through the oppression and suffering, God softened Panamanian hearts like never before. The Lytles and other Free Will Baptist missionaries experienced an incredible outpouring of grace and repentance among the nationals, and watched as God brought large numbers of new believers into His kingdom and the Betania church. In time, so many new converts joined the congregation that an addition to the building was needed.

By the time the Lytles began their fourth term, the Betania church was under national leadership with Pastor Daniel Dorati. Steve continued working with the Bible institute program, preaching in the churches, and working with national leaders in training and mentoring. Judy continued her work with the women and with the Betania Sunday school.

The Lytles finished their final term in 1999. Steve's work included serving as administrator and professor at the Panama Bible Institute, promoting leadership development for pastors and leaders, and serving on the general board of the Panama Association. Judy worked with the women's leadership in planning annual retreats and serving as Sunday school superintendent. The Lytles ministered in Cuba and Columbia, as well.

The Lytles returned to the States where Steve served as director of field operations for Free Will Baptist International Missions. Judy served as candidate coordinator, guiding many career and short-term workers through the process to board approval. Though they left the mission field, God's call to missions never left their hearts. After eight years in the office, they returned to service in Latin America with a special assignment with the International Fellowship of FWB Churches missions committee. Panama serves as their base of operations, but the valiant couple

assists in Uruguay and Cuba as well. They continue to faithfully serve the One who yielded so much fruit through their efforts, little by little.

*And he shall be like a tree planted
by the rivers of water, that bringeth
forth his fruit in his season; his leaf
also shall not wither; and
whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

P S A L M 1 : 3



BLESSINGS IN BUNCHES

The Stan and Brenda Bunch Story

What does it mean to be called? To Brenda, it meant hearing the still, small voice of God's Spirit when she was only nine years old. Only a year into her new faith in Christ, she felt certain she was created to spread the Good News to a world that desperately needed to hear it.

Stan heard that same voice, only a little later in his life. During his senior year of high school, he gave his life to Jesus Christ. While a student at Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College in Oklahoma, God beckoned him to a life of missions. He understood his gift of teaching was meant for foreign arenas.

After they married, Stan and Brenda were appointed to missionary service in May of 1983, with a focus in

Spanish-speaking countries. After completing a two-year course in Spanish, the couple departed for Panama in April of 1986.

What was objective number one? To establish a church in Parita, where they could begin to offer the education, medicine, and training the community needed. What were the obstacles? A deeply entrenched belief in Catholic doctrine, where the villagers believed that salvation was earned through works, not through Christ alone. Facility rental was costly, and the Bunches believed they needed to be better stewards of God's money entrusted to them.

So God gave them a bold new idea. At first, they were a little nervous about it. Can we really hold church in a tent? they wondered. Will the people come? Can we worship in such an unusual environment for an urban setting? The Bunches believed God gave them the idea, and the mission board approved the purchase. A church member's cousin provided land for setup, and Stan and Brenda erected

Parita's first canvas church. Brenda decorated it with live banana trees, and soon curious onlookers ventured inside for more information.

It was a modest beginning, but the Parita church grew larger. In July of 1991, they were able to purchase land and build a church with money they saved from not paying rent. In April of 1998, a national pastor took over the preaching duties.

Meanwhile, Stan continued to lead the Bible institute classes and home discipleship studies he developed over the years.



LEFT: Stan baptizes a convert in local waters.

BOTTOM: Parita FWB Church began in a canvas tent.

Brenda also stayed busy home schooling their three children, teaching English classes, teaching in a Christian school, and organizing women's ministries. Together, they started an exciting new ministry to local hospitals using clowns, drama, and mimes to communicate the gospel message in ways parents and children could understand.

In 1999 the Bunches began a new work in the town of Chitré, just east of Parita. They initiated English classes, a hospital ministry, and a ministry to university students to start a new church. Stan continued leadership development through retreats and conferences, serving as mentor to several local pastors and their families. He also served as the Regional Director for Central and South America, overseeing the work in Panama, Brazil, Cuba, and Uruguay.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.

LUKE 16:10A



GO AND TELL

The Raul Sanes Story

Raul looked around the room, waiting for someone to volunteer. Only one hand went up—only one other person was willing to accompany the missionary to tell others about Jesus. “I found it hard to believe,” Raul said, dumbfounded. “Every Christian should jump at the chance to spread the gospel!”

Once Raul accepted Christ into his life at age 17, he was not able to keep the Good News to himself. He accompanied Tom Willey Jr., Free Will Baptist missionary in Panama, on numerous trips to reach the rural areas of Canitas and Jenene. During one of these ventures, God led him to a man who led Raul to the Buenos Aires community. For the next four years, Raul preached and ministered to the community of 200 people, resulting in more than 40 new baptized believers in the church.

God eventually led Raul to seek a formal degree from the Rio Grande Bible Institute in Edinburg, Texas. Upon graduation, he accepted the pastorate at his home church in Panama

City where he originally accepted Christ as his Savior. He later married Damaris Gonzalez, who shared his passion for growing the Kingdom. The couple returned to Buenos Aires for several years, where Raul currently pastors the Las Tablas FWB Church.



TOP: Brenda leads a women's Bible study.

MIDDLE: Stan and a leader in the Parita church review music for worship services.

BOTTOM: Glenda Fulcher talks with Raul Sanes and another Panamanian leader.



LEFT: Children await a Bible story.

BELOW: Women of the Betania church prepare supplies for a medical ministry outreach.

BOTTOM: The Kuna Indians, indigenous to Panama, were recipients of evangelization through the Bowermans.





LEFT: The First FWB Church in Panama City used busses to reach children throughout the area.

MIDDLE: Typical woven baskets are often purchased by tourists and locals alike.

BELOW: Arrivals for a service in Parita are captured.

LOWER RIGHT: Tom Willey Jr. and his pilot pose with a group of villagers near the plane used to help him reach the village with the gospel.



LEFT: The first four students to attend the centralized Chame Bible Institute commemorate the completion of their first year with family and staff. Steve Torrison and Steve Lytle are in the back row on the right.

ON A WING AND A PRAYER

The Larry and Priscilla Inscoe Story

What does a missionary working with remote people groups need even more than an ordination certificate? A plane! And a pilot's license, of course. Larry Inscoe had both, and he knew God wanted to use them to help him reach the people of Panama with the gospel.

Larry graduated with a B.A. from Free Will Baptist Bible College in 1971, just five years after marrying Priscilla Rhodes in 1966. Priscilla also attended FWBBC and obtained a nursing degree, hoping to use her medical skills to help in missions work. By 1973, they were ready to take their two young sons in tow and begin a new work in Panama.

Initially, the Inscoes spent three years in Panama City assisting other missionaries in developing that church and other ministry outreaches. Eventually, God called the Inscoes to start a brand new work in Las Tablas, while also ministering on the Isla de Cañas. The Inscoes immediately began having Bible studies and training classes on the island, in addition to regular services. They also made many contacts, using “friend-to-friend” visitation. As people heard about the Inscoes, they brought their friends to hear more. The Inscoes gladly welcomed all to their home, providing a warm and inviting atmosphere for friendships and discussion.

Within a relatively short time, they began to see fruit from their labors. Men and women from all walks of life responded to the gospel. And many children attended the daily vacation Bible school. New converts requested baptism—and were even willing to brave the rough ocean surf to do it! John and Mark, the Inscoes' children, also led several of their friends to Christ. In turn, their friends' families became believers.

Through friendships, preaching, medical assistance, radio, and gospel films, the Inscoes labored for 20 years among the people of Panama.



PAUL & CHRISY COLLINS

were appointed as career missionaries to Panama in April 2008 and began language studies in Costa Rica in 2009.



JUNE ARNOLD

was appointed to missionary service in 1980. She held a discipleship program for youth in her home and assisted in the Betania work in Panama City. June resigned from missionary service in 1983. She married national worker Bienvenido Perez, and they continue to help in Betania.

JUSTIN & LESLIE BANKS

were appointed as career missionaries in 1998. The Banks were preparing to begin a ministry to the Kuna Indians. In 2000 they had to return to the States due to Justin's escalating health problems and regretfully submitted their resignation in 2001.





DARREL & LILA NICHOLS

served 16 years in Côte d'Ivoire before requesting to be reassigned to Panama in 2003. The Nichols resigned in 2008 and continue to minister in Oklahoma.



BILL & BARBARA PHIPPS

received final approval for missionary aviation service in 1962. They ministered in Las Tablas and flew to unreachable areas throughout Panama to minister. The Phipps returned to the States in 1967 on medical leave and in 1969 resigned from the Mission.



STEVE & LORI TORRISON

were appointed as career missionaries in July 2004. The Torrison's help

Stan and Brenda Bunch with the rapidly growing church in Chitré, and also assist at the Bible seminary. Steve and Lori are seeking to determine areas with the most need for future churches.



EDDIE & LARHONDA BOWERMAN

were appointed to missionary service in 1995. The couple began their ministry working among the Kuna Indians. After two years, their ministry transitioned into a facilitating role, working in youth and children's ministries throughout Panama. Eddie was director of the Bible seminary in Chame. The couple returned to the States in 2009 due to Eddie's severe health problems and sadly resigned at the end of the year.



JOHN & BARBARA MOEHLMAN

were appointed as career missionaries and began language school in 1961. They helped pioneer the work

in Panama. In 1965 they transferred to Ecuador to pioneer a work there. The Moehlman's were released from active status in 1966.



BILL & GLENDA FULCHER

began their missionary service in Uruguay in 1960. They relocated to Panama in 1970. The Fulchers resigned in 1979 and returned to the pastorate in the States.



TOM & MABEL WILLEY SR.

were sent to Panama in 1936 as the second missionaries sent under the newly formed missions board. They were ordered out of Panama in 1938 due to an Indian revolt and pioneered work in Cuba. Mabel returned to work with her son and daughter-in-law following Tom Sr.'s death.