

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.

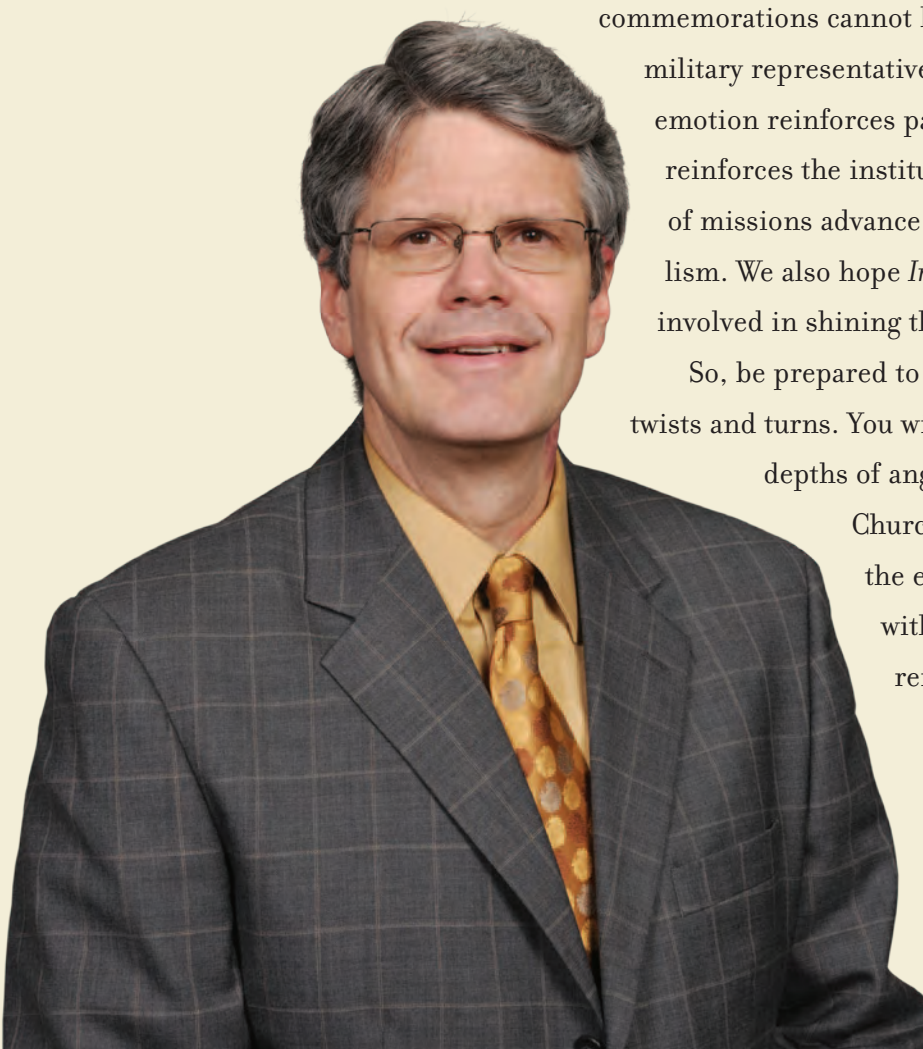
Obedience to God's call led them to tribal peoples in Africa and India. They faced spiritual darkness in the world-class cities of Europe, Asia, and Latin America. With abandon they labored in the midst of civil wars, military invasions, natural disasters, and abject poverty. These intrepid men and women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

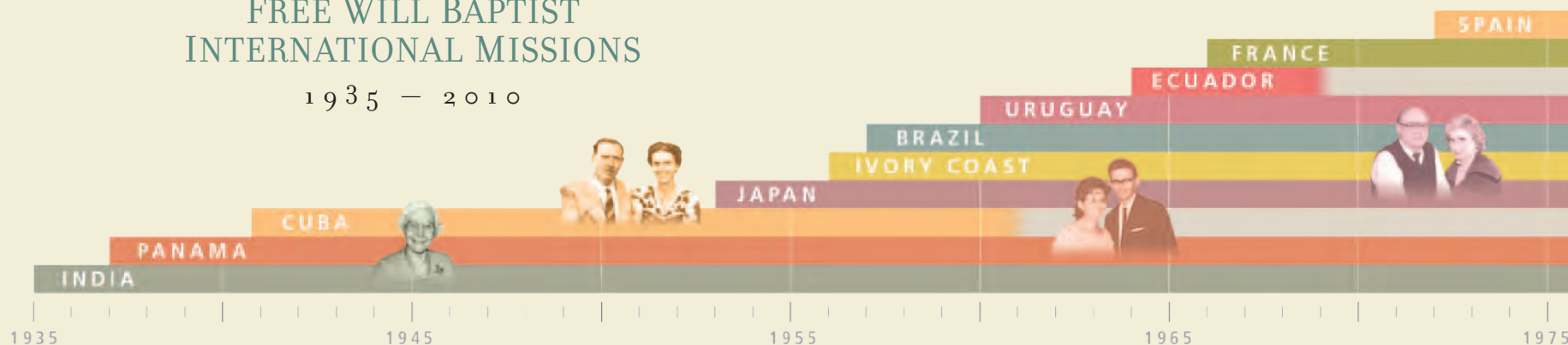
workings of God in Miss Laura Belle’s life, to prick the conscience of an entire denomination, becomes evident even though unusual” (*Touching The Untouchables*, p. 9).

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.

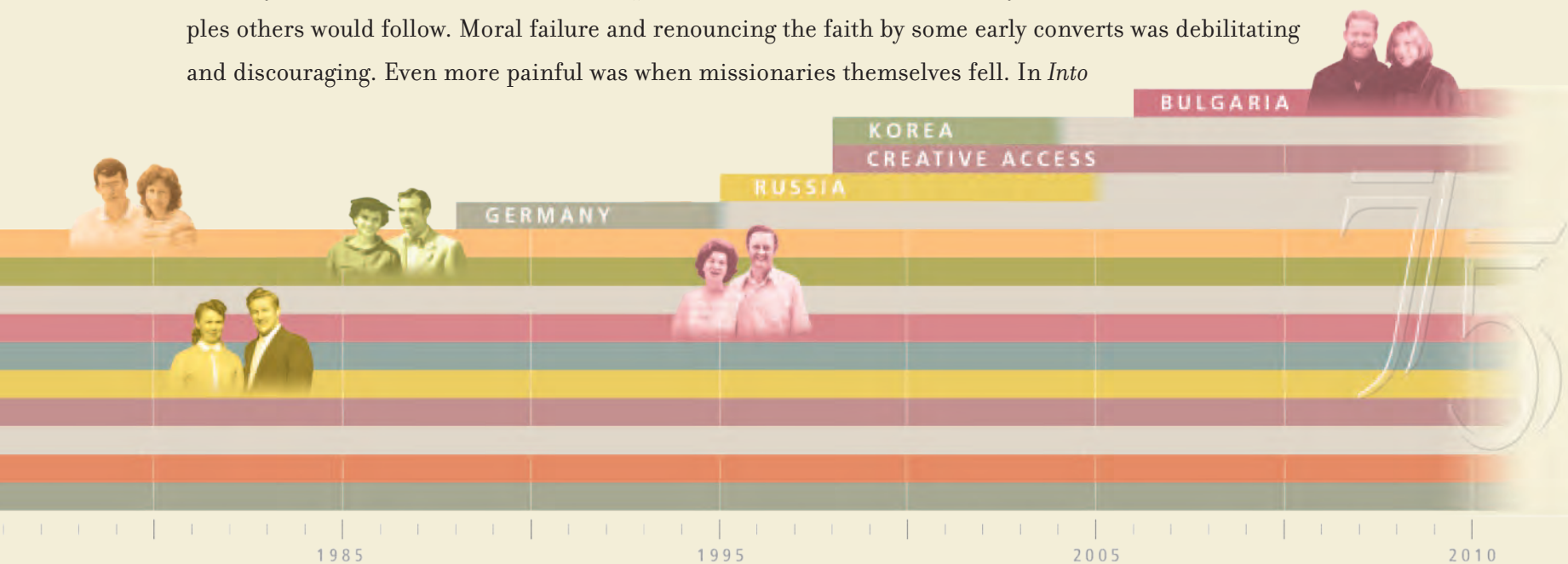
A prime example comes from the experience of Laura Belle Barnard herself. Upon arriving in Kotagiri, South India, Laura Belle learned of an earlier outreach effort to the Harijan (outcaste) people. A Scottish lady, Miss Cockburn, abandoned her outreach in the community. “Apparently, she had become thoroughly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

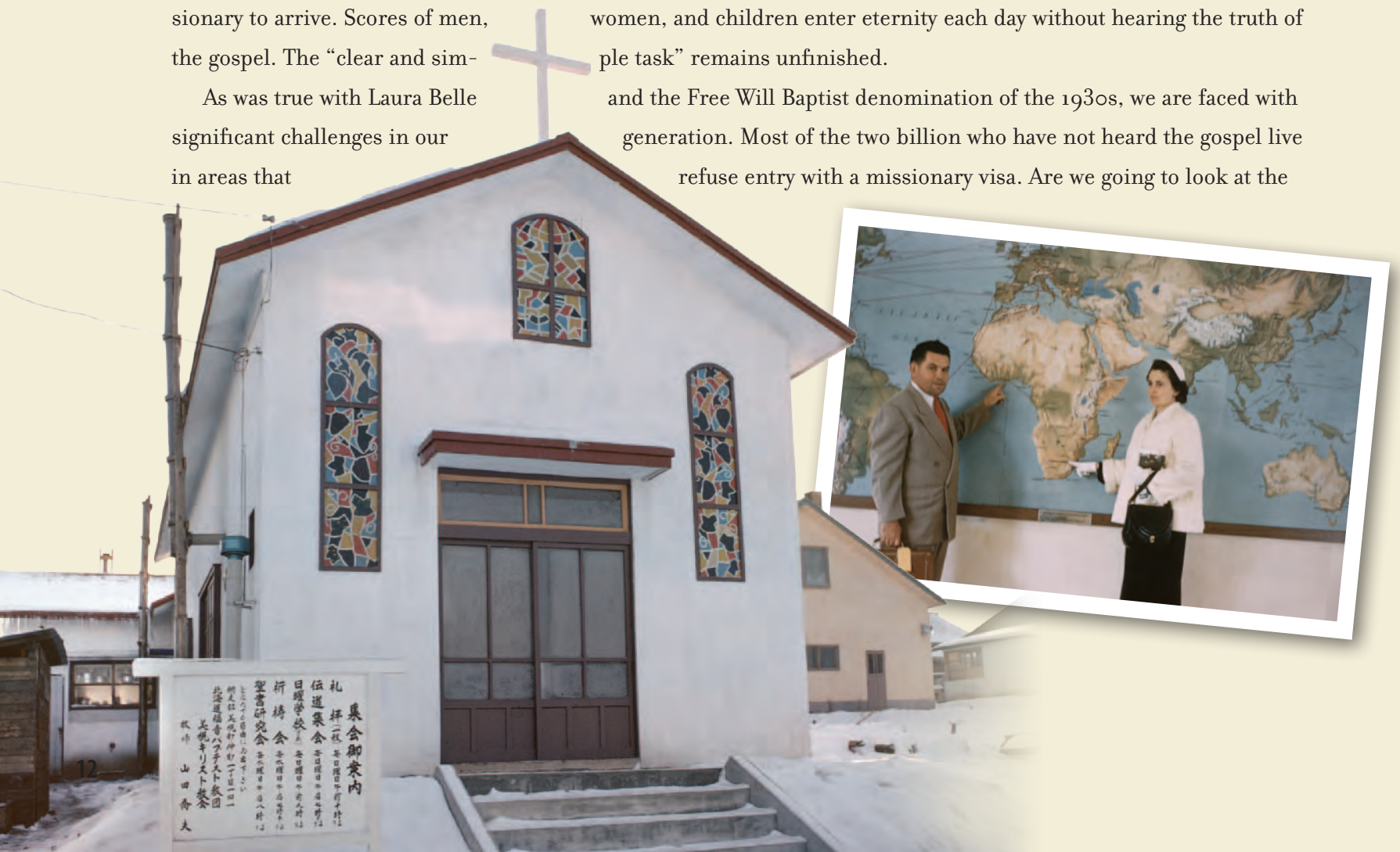
Some of our earliest missionaries served seven-year terms. It was just too expensive to make the long ocean voyages to and from the field more frequently. Visitors to the field were almost non-existent. Phone calls had to be arranged well in advance, or were only made in extreme circumstances because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

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.



STATESIDE

Send the Light

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

ACTS 13:2-3

The first missionary commissioning service, recorded in Acts 13, introduces the concept of sending missionaries to reach the nations. Sending requires both someone to go and someone to stay and support. From the genesis of Free Will Baptist missions, God called both missionaries and supporters.

The story of taking the Light into the dark places of the earth is certainly incomplete without telling of the stateside pioneers who championed the cause at home—men and women who traveled throughout the denomination sharing their burden for multitudes without Christ. Before a zeal for missions spread into Free Will Baptist homes, churches, and schools, it began in the hearts of a few individuals sensitive to God's plan for the nations. God stirred embers in a handful of advocates and their efforts ignited an ardent flame for missions among Free Will Baptists. The denomination owes a great debt to these pioneers on the home front—preachers, laymen, single men and women, and moms and dads who gave of themselves to set the fledgling movement and missions agency on a solid footing. Once again, this chapter of the story clearly demonstrates God's hand at work—raising up leaders, creating connections, nurturing workers, and establishing a foundation to set in motion a 75-year advance into the darkness.

Recognizing the need for an organized approach to sending and sustaining missionaries, denominational visionaries established a stateside plan soon after Laura Belle Barnard was commissioned in 1935.

Over time, God raised up lay-champions in churches, whose zeal led others to see the nations unreached with the gospel of Christ and to act in support of the work. Many missions-minded pastors, often trained in Free Will Baptist colleges, helped create supportive churches. These churches not only funded the movement, but they also supplied the missionary force. God was accomplishing His eternal plan, using ordinary people with an extraordinary commitment as His tools.

As the denomination's missions fervor grew so too did the missionary force. As the missionary force grew, so did the need for staff in the Nashville office. Led by a succession of passionate general directors, the stateside missions office staff has backed and provided for the overseas missionary force—confirming their call. Together, this vast stateside support system—a team that includes every individual participant at every level in the denomination—ensures a foundation for sending “the blessed gospel light” into some of the darkest places on earth.

RIGHT: Foreign Missions staff gather in front of the national offices' sign on Murfreesboro Road, Nashville, TN. From left to right: Rolla Smith, Ruth Ann Hall, Shirley Lauthern, Thelma McNew, Willie Midgett, Joyce Walker, Don Robirds, Harold Critcher, and R. Eugene Waddell.



A VISION FOR HOPE

The I. J. Blackwelder Story

*I*t was time. The offering collected, the newly-formed National Association of Free Will Baptists of 1935 handed I. J. Blackwelder \$28 dollars and declared him to be the national secretary-treasurer for Foreign Missions. Fifty-four years in the ministry later—including 24 different churches in his lifetime—Isaac Joshua Blackwelder had changed his denomination’s perspective on foreign missions forever.

In a day when Free Will Baptists were on the verge of losing their vision for evangelism, Blackwelder saw God’s power. Not limited by money, power, prestige, or even convention, he believed God intended to share His message with the world through His faithful followers. When Laura Belle Barnard volunteered her life for missions, I. J. Blackwelder supported her calling, even against initial opposition. Impassioned for God’s cause, he challenged, “See this young woman under the call of God on her way to the mission field. She has prepared herself and now is having to look to other than her own people to get her to the field.”

Free Will Baptists across the nation responded to his outcry, and Laura Belle set sail in June 1935 as the first missionary under the Eastern General Conference. A union of vision forged by Blackwelder’s influence, the Eastern General and the Cooperative General Association joined to form the National Association of Free Will Baptists in November 1935, adopting Laura Belle Barnard as their first missionary. Thanks to Brother Blackwelder, Free Will Baptists everywhere were challenged to embrace foreign missions as a personal calling, either going themselves or sending others in obedience to God’s command.



HOSTING A MISSIONS HEART

The Winford C. Davis Story

*L*ike a seed in fertile soil, the Free Will Baptist missions program took root in 1935, planted in the home of Winford C. Davis, the newly-formed denomination’s first assistant moderator. Always committed to God’s Great Commission, Winford and his wife Bernice welcomed every opportunity to grow the program and pave new ways for missionaries to reach the world for Christ.

Initially, Reverend Davis served as the second secretary-treasurer, but in 1947 he became the promotional secretary for foreign missions. In this role, he discovered the depth of his love and passion for fellow missionaries and worked diligently to create a missions platform within the Free Will Baptist denomination that perpetuated a missions interest and financial support.

In fact, it was Davis’ labor that led to establishing the mission work and Cedars of Lebanon Institute in Cuba. Winford affectionately recalled days of “precious fellowship” with Cuban pastors and with Thomas H. “Pop” Willey.

In all, Reverend Davis spent more than 16 years working with the foreign missions program while also pastoring in Missouri. God finally took Winford home at the age of 93 after he labored as a Free Will Baptist preacher for more than 70 years, serving in 13 churches, preaching over 9,000 sermons, and leading more than 2,100 people to Christ. His wife, three children, and countless other people he touched will always remember him fondly as God’s faithful servant.



MR. FOREIGN MISSIONS

The Reverend Raymond Riggs Story

*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world,
and preach the gospel to every creature.*

MARK 16:15



Can one man change the course of an entire denomination? Can a single life yield a global impact of such magnitude that its reverberations are felt generation after generation? For anyone who had the pleasure of knowing Raymond Riggs, “Mr. Foreign Missions,” the answer is a resounding “Yes!” As a man of God fully surrendered to his Savior, the Reverend Raymond Riggs will always be known as the man who helped place foreign missions on the Free Will Baptist map.

The oldest of 11 children, Raymond was raised to know the Lord and make Him known. In his hometown of Pocahontas, Arkansas, Raymond first encountered the Lord’s call on his life through a powerful evangelistic meeting held at an old brush arbor. As his relationship with Jesus deepened, so did his desire to reach the lost. His growing burden to help save souls led him to Detroit, Michigan, where he taught in a public school and joined a gospel quartet headed by N. P. Gates.

Through this connection, Raymond became acquainted with Winona, Gates’ daughter. The two were married, both intent on loving the world to Christ. “I can assure you, there were very few dull moments in our home!” laughs Ken Riggs, one of the couple’s six children. “Dad’s full life included not only his family but his ministry. In his early days, he preached in the streets off the back of a truck. Mother would play a pump organ, and Daddy would lead singing. He started his first church in a grocery store. When the church grew too large for the store, Daddy found a Muslim

mosque in Highland Park, Michigan, and the church bought it. He was a radio preacher long before that became popular. And I even remember from my childhood that the old Highland Park Free Will Baptist Church had a band. That was in the early 50s!”



ABOVE: Benito Rodriguez translates for Raymond Riggs as he preaches to students at Cedars of Lebanon Bible Institute in Cuba.

RIGHT: Dr. LaVerne Miley observes as Raymond Riggs demonstrates a “talking record” player designed for use in the bush.





Raymond and Winona found ingenious ways to broaden the scope of the gospel message. The church begun in 1938 quickly grew into what is now Central FWB Church of Royal Oak, Michigan, once the largest church in the denomination. One by one, Raymond and Winona spoke truth and love to the lost around them, and hundreds were saved.

Elected to the Foreign Missions Board in 1944, Riggs began to see the great need for Christ not only in his community, but around the world, as well. He served as chairman of the board from 1945 until 1950, when he was elected promotional secretary.

In 1953, he resigned his first and only pastorate to devote his attention to foreign missions. He inherited a stagnant department, with its seven missionaries three months behind in receiving allowances.

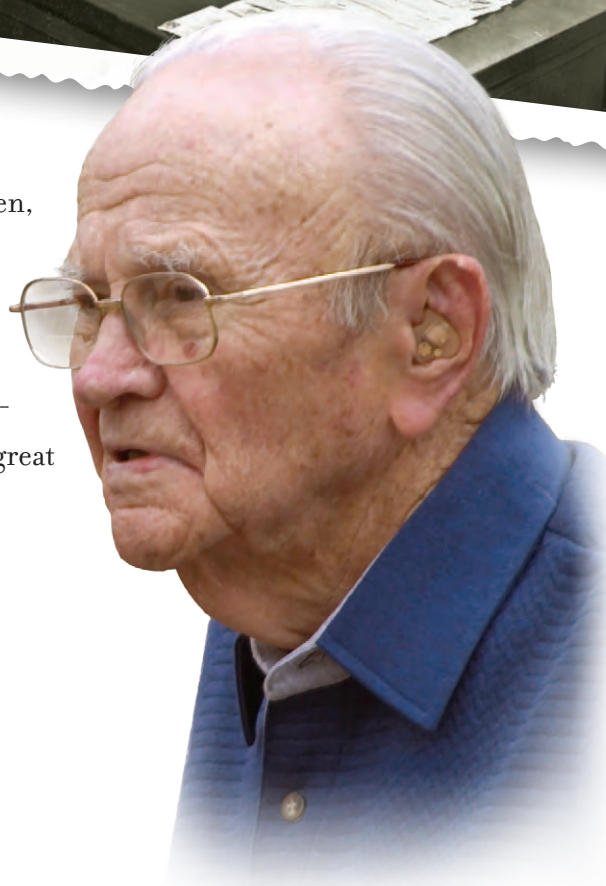
When Raymond resigned in 1959 to return to the pastorate, 30 mission-

aries served in six foreign countries. Receipts climbed from \$70,000 to more than \$170,000 annually. New frontiers, including Brazil, Ivory Coast, and Japan opened to Free Will Baptists under his leadership. Missionaries were trained, equipped, and well supported by church members stateside who were learning under Raymond's tutelage about the importance of foreign missions.

After his role as general director ended, Riggs served on the board for another 20 years. Throughout his service, Winona labored faithfully at his side until the Lord called her home. After her passing, Raymond married Bernice Davis who was a great help and encouragement to him in his closing years of life.

The Lord took His servant home at age 93. As Dr. Charles Thigpen, former president of Free Will Baptist Bible College said, "Few men have made such an outstanding contribution to the work of the Lord. He was an excellent preacher, pastor, evangelist, and promotional director, as well as husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather. I will always be in debt to this great man of God."

So will all the family of God.



TOP: Raymond preaches a message during a missionary commissioning service.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Riggs signs receipt letters during the early days of the Mission.

RIGHT: Riggs' quest to spread the gospel was undiminished in his later years.

A MAN OF VISION

The J. Reford Wilson Story

The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous.

PSALM 146:8

I saw the Guaymi Indians with their colorful beads in the marketplace. I saw the girls dressed in San Blas costumes. I saw the Japanese gardener irrigating his garden with river water. I saw young people parading in the streets in carnival attire. I saw the poor living in crowded tenement buildings, and I saw the fine-looking university students. I saw the farmer winnowing his rice, and I saw the boy coming from the river with an iguana in his hand,” Reford Wilson said, remembering his many travels to distant lands across the years. “These are souls to whom we are responsible for preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

J. Reford Wilson possessed vision—divine sight for seeing needs around him, and a heart impassioned to meet them. As a teenager, this thin, lanky Oklahomian gave his life to Christ during an evangelistic service at his home church in Lexington. Shortly after, a missions drama further challenged him. Exposure to missions through his time at Free Will Baptist Bible College sharpened his sights on the mission field. Elected to the Board of Foreign Missions in 1951, he served for 11 years, visiting missionary families and fully comprehending their struggles and triumphs. “The greatest reward for services came from receiving reports of souls saved through the ministries of our missionaries and in hearing of pastors across the country experiencing missionary awakening in their churches,” Reford said.

God opened his eyes to the need right before him—not in a foreign field, but serving all foreign fields as the general director of Foreign Missions. “I accepted this position in 1962 firmly convicted that God would have me expend my energies for this worthy cause,” he explained. Reford served as liaison between the board and missionaries, helping both see issues from the others’ perspective and building a unified spirit among them all. “Numerous speaking engagements, weighty problems on the field, and directives from the board must be balanced and executed with wisdom,” a board member explained. But with God at the helm and his wife Jean (Lane) at his side, Reford welcomed the challenge.

What compelled this man of God to cross countless borders, counseling missionaries and tackling the toughest obstacles to their work? It was his vision for the lost and God’s loving heart poured out through his soul to those who needed to know the truth. After serving for more than 13 years, God called Reford to serve as a professor of missions and Bible at Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College, where he inspired many more to see the world through God’s eyes, and render their lives in service to save the lost. He also served another six years (1978–84) on the board. Reford died in 1995 at the age of 70.



LEFT: General Director J. Reford Wilson preaches in Rennes, France, as Joe Haas translates.

OBEYING THE CALL

The Rolla D. Smith Story

*Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to hearken than the fat of rams.*

I S A M U E L 15 : 2 2 B

It was on a farm in southern Missouri where Rolla D. Smith first heard God's voice. He surrendered his life to the Lord and began a life trusting His lead. After high school, Rolla attended Southwest Missouri State Teacher's College and taught for four years in rural public schools. Then he heard that familiar voice—the same one that called him out of a life of sin and into a relationship with Christ. This time, the call was to preach. In obedience, Rolla enrolled in Free Will Baptist Bible College, later married Agnes Scott, and eventually began the first of several pastorates in Missouri.

The voice came again. With Raymond Riggs' resignation as general director of the Foreign Missions department, someone was needed to lead the more than 30 missionaries under his care. Having served on the mission board from 1952-59, Rolla knew Riggs' shoes were rather large to fill. Yet he also knew that when God calls a servant to a task, God completes the work. In 1959, Smith assumed the helm as general director of the Board of Foreign Missions, beginning his tenure with only the help of Mrs. Gladys Sloan. Jerry Ballard joined the team in 1960, but it was a massive venture for so few laborers. Two years later Rolla returned to the pastorate with 43 missionaries enrolled on the team.

Rolla spent the next several years pastoring in Tennessee, Georgia, and Missouri, as well as serving on the mission board (1962-1975). God spoke to his heart again and he served a second term as general director of Foreign Missions. Rolla explained his rationale, "My family responsibilities had decreased, and I had gained knowledge and experience I believed would benefit the program." Along with a larger staff, his responsibilities included heading a larger group, with 89 missionaries in place and seven more approved for missionary internship. "Time was running out," he said. "I wanted my life to count most in the years that were left."

Passionate for God and for helping missionary families, with a particular focus on loving missionary kids, Rolla was welcomed into the foreign missions community. His jovial spirit and light-hearted personality put everyone at ease, even during difficult transitions and trying times. Known as "Uncle Smith" or "Uncle Rolla" to MKs around the world, he bolstered the faith and families administering the gospel in difficult regions.

Rolla's life and work did count, forming a strong foundation for future missionaries as well as serving the ones already in place. In 1986, after running an 11-year leg of the race, he passed on the baton. Rolla said, "My sincere desire is that the foreign missions enterprise of Free Will Baptists will be advanced and blessed of God as never before under the direction of my successor."



ABOVE: Rolla Smith looks over the globe, considering strategic places of ministry for Free Will Baptists.

A LEGACY OF LOVE

The R. Eugene Waddell Story

The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

L A M E N T A T I O N S 3 : 2 4

Robert and Rena Waddell knew that God's Word never returned void. It always accomplished the work God intended. In their son, R. Eugene Waddell, the Scriptures took deep root. "My parents exerted a profound influence on my coming to Christ," Eugene said. "They encouraged respect for character, placed a premium on integrity and honesty, plus instilled the value of hard work and diligence in trusting God."

In his senior year of high school, Gene answered the call to preach. He wanted those around him to know the hope each person has in Christ. While attending Free Will Baptist Bible College, God exposed Gene to mission-hearted greats like Dr. J. P. Barrow, Raymond Riggs, and the Thomas Willeys. After graduation, he married Leah Nichols, his childhood sweetheart, and together they travelled to Cuba for a missions trip. A firm conviction solidified: God wants His people to go into the entire world to preach the gospel to every nation.

In 1954, Waddell enrolled in Columbia Bible College's graduate school while pastoring in South Carolina. He earned his M.A. in missions in 1956 and continued to pastor. Then God put his faith to the test. Lifelong companion and mother of their four children, Leah was diagnosed with cancer. Fifteen months later, God took her home and Gene was left to raise four children under the age of six.

God, who works all things for the good of those who love Him, had prosperous plans yet in store. Gene met Genevieve Johnson, whom he later married and with whom he added two more children to their dynamic family. Gene continued to pastor and served 19 years on the Board of Foreign Missions. God led him to serve as associate director of Foreign Missions under General Director Rolla Smith. Making the most of the opportunity, Gene said, "I tried to listen without bias to be able to feel what missionaries were feeling. I tried to understand their needs."

With his own faith refined by trial and a heart that always sought to encourage, Gene was the perfect fit for the general director position when Rolla Smith retired.

During his 12-year tenure (1986-1998), Gene witnessed the annual budget almost double, the appointment of 56 new missionaries, and the opening of new frontiers in Russia, Mongolia, China, and Central Asia. "I believe in team leadership," Gene said. "Someone has to be responsible, like the captain or quarterback, but you don't win without a strong support team. The Lord has given us such a team." Though Eugene Waddell went to be with Jesus in 2007, his encouragement, passion, and love for the lost continues to thrive in the lives and legacy he left behind.



LEFT: R. Eugene Waddell shakes hands with a church leader on one of his last visits to Côte d'Ivoire.

GOD'S TEAM PLAYER

The James Forlines Story

*And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him;
and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

ECCLESIASTES 4:12

No other kids accompanied him. James Forlines simply wanted to go. Even as a 10-year-old boy, he was mesmerized by Miss Laura Belle Barnard's incredible missionary stories. "I remember just visiting her apartment, sitting down, and listening to her share a strong vision for those who had never heard the gospel," he said. Her experience sharpened his vision, and began shaping the future course of his life.

Born to Leroy and Fay Forlines in 1958, James grew up surrounded by family and friends who loved the Lord and sought to serve Him. Since Leroy served as a professor at Free Will Baptist Bible College, James spent much of his formative years on campus feasting from the exposure to missionary heroes who often taught there. After he graduated from high school, he himself attended FWBBC where he earned his B.A. He also enrolled at Anderson School of Theology in Indiana and in the graduate program at FWBBC. During his studies, he met and married Anita Ganey. James served as a youth pastor in North Carolina, then as a pastor in Indiana and Arkansas.

In 1994, James was elected to the Board of Foreign Missions. Using his experience and training, God equipped James to lead the Department of Foreign Missions in 1999 as general director. During his tenure, James led the department in the development of a non-governmental organization. Designed to minister to humanitarian as well as spiritual needs, the NGO is able to gain access to countries closed to the gospel message. He also spearheaded the movement to restructure the funding system, returning it to a non-designated system of support. As overseas converts sought an outlet for mission service, James encouraged the International Fellowship of Free Will Baptists to come up with a plan for North Americans to partner with Free Will Baptists in other parts of the world to take the gospel to unreached peoples. "I could not give my attention to Kingdom work in the way that I do without Anita's willingness to sacrifice," James declares warmly, "or her ability to manage the home and family while I travel extensively and work long hours in the office."

James' mission strategy revolves around a team approach, requiring assistance from everyone on the field and off. "We need one another," he asserts. "I think it's time for our denomination to join hands and determine there is a cause—the cause of Jesus Christ as set forth in Acts 1:8—reaching Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth."



TOP RIGHT: James Forlines preaches in a Russian Baptist church as a board member.

RIGHT: Clint Morgan (left), James Forlines, and Mike Corley (far right) stand with church leaders during a research trip to Central Asia.

RIGHT: This seven-member mission board included three men who also served as general director. From left to right, Gene Rogers, Guy Owens, J. Reford Wilson (general director), Rolla Smith, Joe Ange (chairman), Raymond Riggs, R. Eugene Waddell, and James Murray.



LEFT: Gene Waddell joins missionaries Sandra and Dale Bishop and Nathan Snow in song during a service in Hokkaido, Japan.

BELOW: Four of the five men who have served as general director of the Mission—James Forlines, R. Eugene Waddell, Rolla Smith, and Raymond Riggs— together in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2000.



REVEREND LOUIS MOULTON

joined the stateside staff in March of 1958 as the first promotional secretary of Foreign Missions. He continued in that capacity, traveling and raising funds, until October 1960.

TELLING THE TRUTH

The Don Robirds Story

When the position for director of communications fell vacant, General Director Reford Wilson did not worry. He and the Board of Foreign Missions knew just the man to fill the spot. But, was Don Robirds willing to accept it?

A journalism major with a contagious smile and delightful wife and family, Don Robirds followed God's call through a variety of publishing-related positions. Following graduation from Free Will Baptist Bible College while also working as a professional printer, God led the Robirds south—all the way to Brazil. Immersed in foreign culture, Don translated the Free Will Baptist Treatise, soul-winning books and other evangelistic materials. He also participated in an inter-mission effort to translate and publish the Gospel Light Sunday school curriculum.

It was Don's marriage of mission-mindset and strong communications skills that led Reford Wilson to approach him about the director of communications position. Don admits, "Our first response was 'no,' but after prayer we felt compelled by the Lord to come to Nashville that we might challenge others to commit their lives to the program of world evangelism."

Thirty-two years later, Don retired as editor of *Heartbeat* magazine, where he produced 262 issues totaling over 2,850 pages during his tenure. He served as an excellent writer, editor, photographer, and graphic designer, perhaps known best of all for his strong prayer life and commitment to following God's lead. As James Forlines said, "Very few men I know have faced more personal obstacles, but Don has remained undeterred and faithful."



THE PERSONAL TOUCH

The Gladys P. Sloan Story

Just how does the dollar in the offering plate translate to more Bibles on the mission field? Who ensures that missionaries are paid while the missions office stays in the black? For more than 22 years, one feisty, energetic woman kept the foreign missions bookkeeping afloat. Gladys P. Sloan, with an eye for detail and a heart for missions, labored diligently to make Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions finances resolve. For years, she drove over 100 miles a day to work and back, handling correspondence for language school candidates, along with their transportation, visa, and passport requirements—all this in addition to bookkeeping.

Mrs. Sloan first came on board when Reverend Raymond Riggs took the role of promotional secretary for the department. Over her 22 years of service, Gladys witnessed the annual income increase from around \$28,000 to over one million dollars. As the office and budget grew, so did her organizational skills. She developed all the records and receipting systems used by the department, managing multiple accounts and keeping everyone on track. Best of all, she managed the details with a beautiful smile that made visitors to the office feel welcomed and important.

Foreign Missions is indebted to Mrs. Sloan for the diligence, expertise, and loving care she extended through her years of service. Even in an age of fast-paced computer programs and data-processing, nothing can replace the love and personal touch of Gladys Sloan.



A BLEND OF BLESSINGS

The Shirley Lauthern Story

*S*urt and Mary Holland hit the nail on the head. “Who is Shirley Lauthern? She is the perfect blend of Mary and Martha—always willing to listen and yet busy serving others.” It was a refrain of praise hailed by seemingly every missionary who came to know Shirley in her 35 years in the missions office. Always professional, dependable, and submissive to authority, Shirley served as executive secretary and special assistant to four of the five general directors of Free Will Baptist International Missions. But to the hundreds of missionaries and MKs she served, she was known simply as “mom” or “Aunt Shirley.”



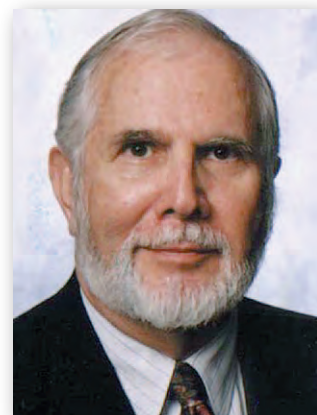
It is sometimes said that behind every good man is a great woman. Shirley Lauthern certainly stood behind the scenes, graciously serving as hostess for visitors, meeting missionaries’ needs, busily working to balance multiple schedules while always making time to listen to those who expressed a need. No matter where the general directors went or how long they were gone, each knew the mission rested securely in Shirley’s capable hands.

Darren and Dana Portell said to Shirley, “One of our most precious memories of the office will always be your smiles and greetings as we came through your door. We will never forget how you loved our children and us.” Jaimie Lancaster in Uruguay agreed, “I truly believe that each missionary is special to Shirley, and that is the reason everyone loves her.”

CREATIVE COMMISSION

The Jerry Ballard Story

*“I*f we had not increased our readers’ conviction that missions giving was both the biblical and responsible thing to do, we would have failed,” Dr. Jerry Ballard stated matter-of-factly. By God’s grace, *Heartbeat* magazine—just one of Ballard’s successful achievements—accomplished his mission.



Jerry Ballard served the communications department of Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions for more than a decade, pouring his talents, energies, and passions into his unique brand of evangelism. In the end, Ballard developed a media-oriented information program—including the award-winning magazine, as well as two motion pictures, 11 sound/color filmstrips, three major works on mission philosophy and policy, and the written biography of the late missionary Thomas H. Willey Sr.

Ballard’s intense efforts stemmed from his fundamental belief that mass media should play an integral role in disseminating the gospel. Dr. Joe Ange, one of the board members during his tenure, commented, “Do you realize you preach to more people about missions every month than I do in six?” Encouraged by his insight, Ballard witnessed a surge of financial and prayer support for missions commensurate with the media’s success.

In God’s time, Jerry accepted the director of communications position with World Vision International. Though his ministry focus shifted faces, his passion for spreading God’s truth remained. “I thank God for placing me here during the most exciting 10 years in the history of the foreign ministry of our denomination...and I thank Him for the caliber of men He has given me to work with on the board, in the home office, and on the fields.”

MAN WITH A MISSION (CONFERENCE)

The Rufus Coffey Story

“Without an evangelistic vision that embraces the world, a church fails to function properly in its spiritual responsibility,” said Reverend Rufus Coffey, Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions director of conferences and itineraries. As a pastor with a heavy burden for the lost, Rufus understood the importance of motivating local congregations to active participation in missions. “There is no greater need among Free will Baptist churches than a great missionary revival that will enlarge our vision, inspire giving, enlist laborers, and challenge people to pray,” Rufus asserted. “A world missions conference in every local church will enable us to see such an awakening.”



Coffey’s vision for missions began during his time in the Navy following high school. Seeing the great need for evangelism, he followed the call to preach and attended Bob Jones University where he became active in the missionary prayer band. His passion for Christ’s cause led him to rally his home church to quadruple their giving toward missions. Even during a local recession, the church still responded to his persuasion.

From 1962-1967, Rufus was employed by the board as director of conferences and itineraries. Rufus channeled his energies toward organizing conferences to help inspire and motivate Free Will Baptist churches across the United States to become more missions-minded. His work during those five years, followed by his service as executive secretary of the National Association, helped mold today’s missions focus of the Free Will Baptist denomination. Unfortunately, personal choices ended his national ministry.

UNITED WE STAND

The Henry VanKluyve Story

Director of Conference Ministries Rufus Coffey felt the strain. He longed to work exclusively in the field assisting pastors and local churches in missions education programs, but the administrative demands inherent in his job description split his affections. The board, however, resolved the problem by calling Henry VanKluyve from his pastorate in Savannah, Georgia, to a newly created position of deputational director for the Foreign Missions Department.



In short, the position was created to help meet demands for greater coordination of an expanding missions-conference program, and itineraries of an increasing number of furloughing missionaries as well as new appointees.

It was a difficult task, with seemingly endless intricacies and obstacles as each missionary family brought its own unique challenges. Henry VanKluyve embraced the work wholeheartedly, firmly believing that church support for missions was essential to fulfilling the Great Commission. He led in one of the greatest efforts to gain missionary funding in the history of the Mission.

VanKluyve’s heart for missions began at his conversion in 1950 while serving in the U.S. Navy. He later attended and graduated from Free Will Baptist Bible College, where he met his future wife, Virginia Hales. He began pastoring churches while in school, and continued in that ministry for 12 years until his calling as deputational director. “The local congregation must learn of their coworkers’ activities on the foreign field,” Henry asserted. “In this way ‘those who have planted’ and ‘those who have watered’ may rejoice together in the harvest.” Henry VanKluyve united congregations with their missionaries for 14 years.

UNSUNG HERO

The Charles Hingst Story

Some people want to travel. Others tend to their gardens. For retirement, Charlie Hingst thought working suited him best. When Rolla Smith and Don Robirds propositioned Charles about working for the Foreign Missions department, he did not think twice. “I don’t remember hesitating at all,” Charlie said. “I was looking for something to do.”



However, the task ahead was a large one. Willie Midgett, secretary to the director of deputation at that time, warned him that his job description was boundless. Charlie, eager to serve, accepted the challenge. As a former WWII Merchant Marine radio officer with a B.S. and M.S. from Georgia Tech, the transition from manager to missions ministry was not too difficult.

Charlie discovered a niche God uniquely created him to fill. “His kindness, helpfulness, and smiles make checking the mail a joy,” said missionaries Bobby and Geneva Poole of Brazil. “He always makes us feel special when we see him,” assert Ledgel and Sharon Ferguson from France. Determined to serve God wholeheartedly, Charlie even turned down the part-time pay offered for his services. “The people I worked with were such a delight, and I saw this as my service for the Lord,” Charlie said.

After 23 years, Charles continues to give of his heart, soul, time, and energy to support the international missions work of Free Will Baptists.

A PICTURE OF HOPE

The Ken Turner Story

Ken Turner tilted the angle of his lens. The shutter snapped. “A perfect shot,” he said to himself as he raised his head above his camera. “How can anyone deny the need?” Ken took his still and movie cameras with him on his first mission trip to the island of Cuba. In addition to helping Thomas Willey Sr. decide on a location for the first Free Will Baptist mission on the island, Ken had high hopes of capturing the heart and soul of the local Cubans he met. Visions of church-wide involvement danced in his head as he dreamed of showing his movies and photos to Free Will Baptist churches across the States. It was his irrefutable



proof that the beautiful people of Cuba needed to know the Savior, too. “Surely Americans will join the Mission’s cause in prayer and financial support.”

Little did Ken know that God’s plan included using his photos and his heart for Cuba to change Free Will Baptist sentiment for their Latin brothers and sisters. Many churches received Ken and his message. Ken’s pictures were worth more than a thousand words. They were used to save countless souls.

LEFT: Ken travels via modern bus transportation in Cuba.

THE WRITE TOUCH

The Eunice Edwards Story

The redhead from Desloge, Missouri, was the perfect fit. Never mind that the positions required three persons to fulfill its demands. Eunice Edwards was up for the task, and in 1956 she assumed responsibility for promotional and literature chairman and executive secretary-treasurer of Woman's National Auxiliary Convention.

The oldest of four children, Eunice experienced a strong desire for salvation, despite the lack of spiritual leadership at home. In 1937, God explained the urge to Eunice through the pastor and wife of Park View Free Will Baptist Church in Desloge. She was elated to accept Christ and began a new life in Him, standing firm even when her husband walked away from the faith and their family a few years later.

During her years of ministry, Eunice served as local, district, and state president of the woman's auxiliary. She also volunteered at a youth camp and wrote manuscripts. When called to served as executive secretary of WNAC, she represented the organization at the Cuban FWB Convention. Utilizing her gifts to the fullest, she brought out the first issue of the quarterly magazine *Co-Laborer* in 1961. She also introduced the concept of a Provision Closet supplying household needs for missionaries, led women to raise \$10,000 in 1957 for work in Ivory Coast, and raised funds to build a missionary residence in Japan.

Concerning her work and achievements, Eunice always reminded, "I am only an ordinary person, but my God is extraordinary."



GOD'S LITTLE PISTOL

The Fannie Polston Story

She was the "strongest and most consistent force used by the Lord in bringing women to realize their vast opportunities of service to God in the church and causing them to rally around her," Stated Mrs. Mary Ann Welch. Intelligent, courageous, and armed with a firm grasp of business politics, Fannie spurred her fellow female members at Cofer's Chapel, in 1907, to expand its expectations. In time, Fannie formed the National Woman's Auxiliary Convention, encouraging women of every gift mix to courageously offer their services to the Lord despite stereotypes.

Fannie's resumé ran as long as her energy and enthusiasm. She served as vice-president to the Cumberland District in Tennessee, as well as field worker, president, treasurer, superintendent, and vice-president of stewardship. Even when she held no office, she supported the work of the Cumberland District and aggressively promoted its causes, including the Tennessee Free Will Baptist Home for Children and raising money for missions. In the last stages of her life, she gave all that she owned to Free Will Baptist Bible College. Her life and legacy spoke of tenacious courage, sacrifice, and total surrender to God's call. As Mrs. Welch said, "She was indeed a strong force used and blessed of God to encourage, inspire, and unite Free Will Baptist women in WNAC and in God's Work." Free Will Baptist mission efforts owe her a great debt of gratitude.



PREACH IT, SISTER!

The Lizzie McAdams Story

Lizzie McAdams listened. She just did not listen to the skepticism around her. Instead, she focused on God's voice alone, and lived out a remarkable leadership and faith that united thousands of Free Will Baptists.

Warm, aggressive, and in love with Jesus, Elizabeth Lawliss McAdams was no ordinary woman. In 1918, Sister Lizzie enjoyed a short-term mission trip to Barbados with her husband Hiram and six-year-old daughter Naomi. Once back stateside, she devoted her efforts to uniting Free Will Baptists from the west and east. When the National Association of Free Will Baptists became a reality, Lizzie led the group in praise and rejoicing over the work God was doing among His people.

Lizzie remained active, contributing service wherever needed. She served as field secretary for the Woman's National Auxiliary Convention, where she conceived the "Jehoida Chest" concept for offering collections. Her vision and creativity collected funds for several important works. Later, she and her husband Hiram began a Free Will Baptist church in Desloge, Missouri. Jesus called Lizzie home at age 80, after 54 years in ministry. Damon Dodd, one of her many converts, said, "She was a trailblazer, a missionary, a prayer warrior, an angel of mercy. She used every method she could to win the lost. She preached from the pulpit, exhorted crowds under a tent, went from house to house, business to business, and changed the lives of thousands."



TENACIOUS GENEROSITY

The Lucille Steward Story

"She makes no apologies," said Don Robirds. "Missions and missionaries are her heart-cry." Ever since she became a Christian at the age of 12, Lucille Steward felt particularly burdened for those whom God called into active missions work. Though she remained stateside her entire life, she devoted her passion and energy to providing for missionaries' needs.

Lucille Steward did not take "no" for an answer. Traveling to churches and charity groups, she challenged thousands of people to give money and other necessities toward missions. In 1982 alone, she gathered more than \$20,000 worth of supplies to stock the Missionary Provision Closet held in Nashville, Tennessee. Her husband Wendell fully supported her efforts, driving a large trailer across their state to gather donations and deliver them to Nashville. Whenever missionary interns stayed in Farmington, Michigan, the Stewards took them under their wings.

Fueled by her passion to reach the lost, Lucille's fervor continued despite a cancer diagnosis received in 1980 and ongoing health problems from then. Though in tremendous pain, she made place mats, house shoes, spice ropes, and canned food for elderly neighbors. She visited the sick and shipped medical supplies to the Ivory Coast medical clinic.

Lucille's tenacious generosity and heart for missions challenged, convicted, and spurred many others on to action. She said, "Mission work is just like eating. It's an everyday thing—don't ever back off."

Lucille Steward never did.



VOICE FOR MISSIONS

The Fred Warner Story

North Carolina born and bred, Fred Warner was serving as an Arkansas state missionary in Siloam Springs when he received the call to come to work for Foreign Missions. His pastor's heart challenged to expand his "congregation," Fred moved his family to Nashville in 1987. Although his title changed from director of church ministries to director of missionary-church relations to director of stateside development over the course of his 13-year tenure, Fred's commitment never wavered.

Already well known as an evangelist and pastor, Warner tackled the task of serving as a liaison between missionaries and stateside churches with zeal. He assisted missionaries with deputational ministries, coordinated countless mission conferences, worked to establish financial and prayer support for missionaries, promoted missions education, networked with state leaders, and advocated planned and deferred giving programs. Prior to his position with the Mission, Fred pastored churches in Tennessee, Georgia, and Arkansas. From 1961-1965 he labored as a full-time evangelist, and by 1987 had held over 250 revivals. He served Arkansas Free Will Baptists as promotional director for five years. Fred also completed 12 years (1974-1986) on the Board of Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions.

A favorite saying of Fred's, "Never mind the mule, just load the wagon," summarizes his diligent work ethic. In August 2000, he resigned from the Mission to respond to an appeal to return to the pastorate in Arkansas.



ACCOUNTING FOR EXCELLENCE

The Robert Conley Story

Robert Conley joined Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions as treasurer in 1995. The 1990 graduate of Lake Forest College grew up in New Castle, Indiana, and married his high school sweetheart, Jennifer Foster.

An avid sportsman, Rob enjoys basketball, cycling, hunting, and racquetball. The tenaciousness with which he pursues sports carries into his job performance. Rob seeks to balance budgets, supervise financial and business activities, and handle financial details for missionaries with resolute attention to detail and untiring excellence.

For over 15 years, Rob has provided financial guidance for the Mission. He was named Director of Financial Operations in 1999 and has helped guide the organization through rough financial waters. He and his team were instrumental in directing the Mission through financial reorganization and the restructure of the way the Mission is funded—moving the denomination from a account-based donation system to a general fund system that supports all missionaries.



BOARD CHAIRMEN

The Board of Free Will Baptist International Missions (formerly Foreign Missions) is integral to the Mission. Although the general director and other personnel guide the day-to-day operations, they do so under the directives set in place by the board. Missionaries are sent out after board approval. Projects are given legitimacy by the board. Policies are defined and mandated by the board. Over the years, the board has grown from five to nine members elected by the National Association to govern the operations of the Mission.

Sacrifice, a passion for global missions, and wisdom characterize the faithful men and one woman who have served since 1938. Space does not allow listing all their names, but the chairmen are recognized below.

I. J. Blackwelder
1935-1941

Winford Davis
1942-1950

Raymond Riggs
1951-1953
1976-1978

Mark Lewis
1954-1963

Joseph Ange
1963-1976

James Murray
1978-1982

Bill Jones
1982-1992
1998-2000

Norwood Gibson
1992-1993

Bob Trimble
1993-1994

Joe Grizzle
1994-1998

Douglas Little
2000-2003

Milton Worthington
2003-2006

Danny Williams
2006-2010

ABOVE: 2009 board members listen to a report. Clockwise: Rob Morgan, Paul Creech, Rob Conley, Jeff Manning, Nelson Henderson, and Jerry Norris.



ABOVE: Board members carefully review General Director Waddell's report. Clockwise: Bill Reagan, Milton Worthington, Bill Vanwinkle, Joe Grizzle, David Shores, Gene Waddell, and David Williford.

LEFT: Board members were gifted with African robes in 1998. Left to right: Bill Vanwinkle, Bill Jones, Milton Worthington, David Shores, incoming Director James Forlines, Doug Little, Bill Reagan, retiring Director Gene Waddell, David Williford, Terry Eagleton, and Sherwood Lee.

INTO THE DARKNESS

AFTERWORD



This riverboat carried passengers through the night on an Indian river during the early years of Free Will Baptist mission work. Much as the dusk blurs the line between sky and river, so sin shrouds the line between truth and deception. Like the riverboat, those early torchbearers penetrated the darkness taking the Light of the World into sin-darkened areas. They held the torch high, shining the Light, revealing deceit and illuminating truth. Today, unknown thousands of men, women, and children have joined the throngs about the throne of God because faithful servants carried the Light.

*“Go ye into all the world and
preach the gospel to every creature.”*

M A R K 1 6 : 1 5

TORCHBEARERS

With every movement, people of vision pave the way for others to follow. This book has highlighted many of those. It has been impossible to tell all the stories or show all the wonderful photos. In this section, a little more of the story of Free Will Baptist men and women who have dared the darkness, holding high the Light of the World, is revealed. These photos of the valiant torchbearers of the past serve as reminders of God's goodness and encouragement to those who carry the Light today.

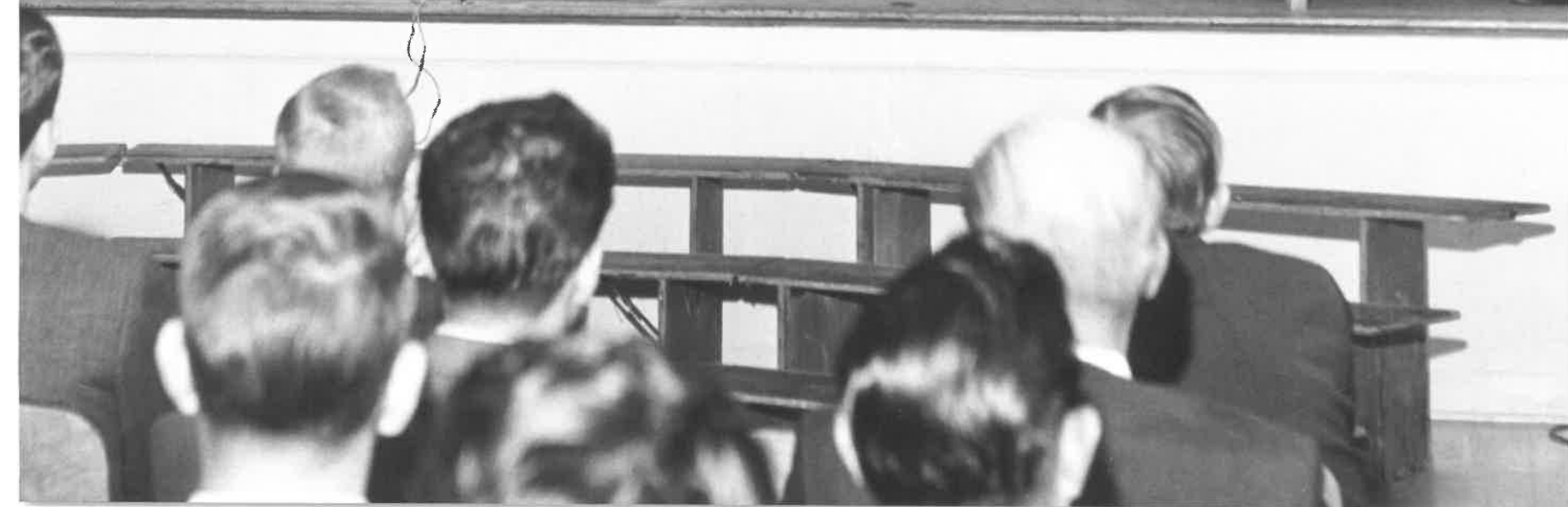


ABOVE: Tom "Pop" Willey (far left) and missionary-aviator Bill Phipps (third from left) visit with villagers in Jenene, Panama, in 1964.

RIGHT: Missions conferences on the campus of Free Will Baptist Bible College in Nashville, Tennessee, gave students the opportunity to rub shoulders with missionaries and hear firsthand accounts of God's work around the globe.



st's command...our concern"





1935 75 2010



ABOVE: Lizzie McAdams and her husband Hiram made mission trips before the denomination had a missions vision. She, and many women like her, promoted missionary efforts throughout the denomination.

LEFT: A Lobi man converses with General Director Raymond Riggs (left) and Christian and Missionary Alliance missionary Gordon Timyan while setting rice. Timyan facilitated Free Will Baptists' efforts to establish work in Ivory Coast.

1938 75 2010

Freewill Baptist Mission

REV. PAUL WOOLSEY
SONAPURHAT, PURNEA DIST.
BIHAR, NO. INDIA

MISS L. B. BARNARD, DIRECTOR
"SHAMROCK" KOTAGIRI
NILGIRIS, S. INDIA

REV. D. R. CRONK
KISHANGANJ, PURNEA DIST.
BIHAR, NO. INDIA

Glenville, Ga,
Jan 2, 1951

Dear Mary Beek,

I'm so sorry about your accident and I do hope you are getting over it now. Be careful!

I'm writing this after going to bed, so please try to decipher it. I had a letter from Trula which reminded me of a prayer need for our young Sikh, Singh Gill, and I felt I must dash it off to you for Prayer Band. This is the man with beard and turban shown in picture with Dan, remember? The whole story seems a bit complicated, but it has to do with some money which he lost (stolen from him, I understand) of Mr. Woolsey's. Woolsey had sent him to Calcutta and the money was lost - a thing that has happened to several of the missionaries as well as to Singh. Woolsey was kind to let Singh Gill wish in order to do it. something. Anyhoo decided to leave him somewhere, a house for them (a said he was leave Dan & Trula return in the letter, but I don't know).



ABOVE: Pioneer missionaries' letters to friends in the States were the only way to keep people informed of the needs and victories on the field for many years.

RIGHT: Dan Cronk visits an Indian village in 1972.

...a word from him, and it is

DIOS
ES
AMOR

BUSCAD A DIOS
MIENTRAS PUEDA
SER HALLADO.

DIOS
ES
LUZ



ABOVE: Pastor Cigoni of Spain prepares to dispense communion.

1935 75 2010



RIGHT: The Free Will Baptist and The Free Will Baptist Missionary Review preceded *Heartbeat*, helping inform the denomination concerning missionary endeavors. Prayer cards continue to remind people to pray for missionaries.



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Permit No. 79

THE FREE WILL BAPTIST
MISSIONARY REVIEW
JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH - 1950
VOL. 4

YOUNG INDIA
We are told the fathers in India delight in taking care of the children and such as the scene above is a common sight.
The hope of building the church in India depends largely upon reaching the lives of children such as this. The older ones are deeply grounded in their traditional religion and superstition. The majority of them by far will die in their present hopelessness, but if the children can be reached, taught and rescued then there is hope for the future spiritual welfare of India. This child is one among millions for whom the Lord expects us to do something.

THE FREE WILL BAPTIST
A National Weekly Religious Magazine

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 1949

Jesus Himself

...and not for our sake only, but for the sake of the world...

Grace - Free Salvation

IN IVORY COAST
ARCHIE AND SARAH MAYHEW

Pray
FOR YOUR
MISSIONARIES

- DAILY PRAYER NEEDS**
- Spiritual victory in personal lives
 - Good physical and mental health
 - Effective witness that will lead men to Christ
 - Development of believers into strong indigenous church
 - Faithfulness of prayer and financial supporters
- "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8).
- Fold Back for Table-Top Reminder*

WILL YOU SHARE IN THEIR MINISTRY?

To return to Ivory Coast, Archie and Sarah need
\$1,062 in monthly faith promise commitments
to provide basic salary allowances, mission
travel expenses, medical and dental allowances,
maintenance of mission station, and other costs
of the Mayhew's ministry.

and
\$8,500 cash in their missionary account at departure
to cover costs of transportation back to the field
and other essential equipment.

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (ROMANS 10:14-15)

USE REVERSE SIDE TO MAKE YOUR FAITH PROMISE COMMITMENT



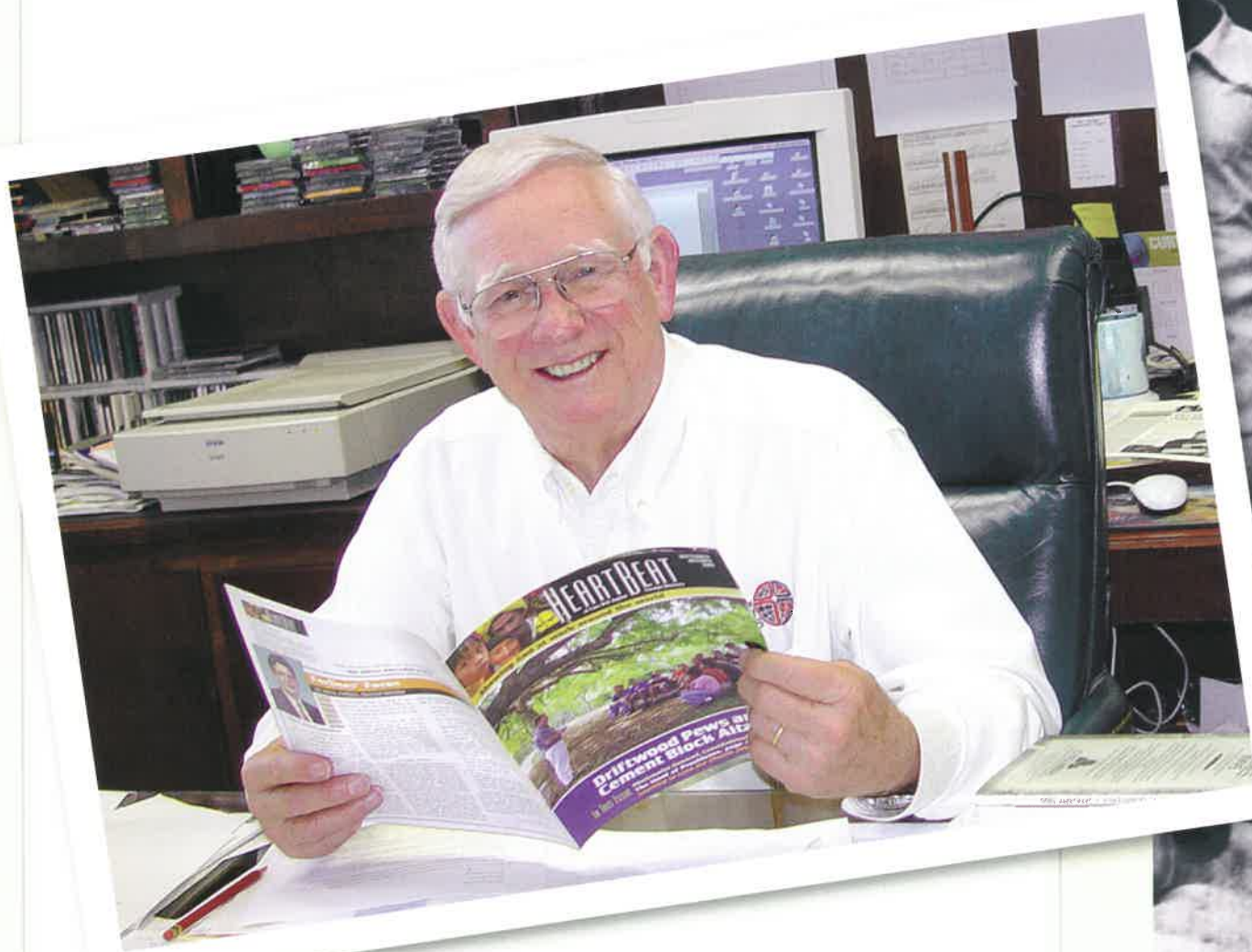
ABOVE: Sunday school was often held outdoors in the early days of missions. This afternoon class is outside an old factory converted to apartments in Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil.



TOP: Dan and Margaret Merkh with their oldest children: Daniel, Elizabeth, and Timothy. The Merkhs served in Côte d'Ivoire and France.

BOTTOM: Rolla Smith and Mabel "Mom" Willey stand with a church group in Cuba prior to the Cuban Revolution.

*H*earbeat magazine played an integral role in promoting missions awareness among Free Will Baptists for 44 years. Begun in 1961 by Jerry Ballard, the magazine's premier issue received an award from the Evangelical Press Association. Ballard served as editor for 10 years before relinquishing the task to Bill Jones. After a year, Jones accepted the presidency of Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College in Oklahoma and the board asked journalism major and missionary to Brazil Don Robirds to take the helm. Robirds guided Heartbeat through 32 years of change, four general directors, three magazine redesigns, and a variety of significant crises, world events, and Mission transitions. Retiring in 2003, Robirds passed the torch to his assistant, Deborah St. Lawrence. She served as editor for one year, before national convention delegates voted to unite various denominational publications under the banner of *ONE Magazine*.

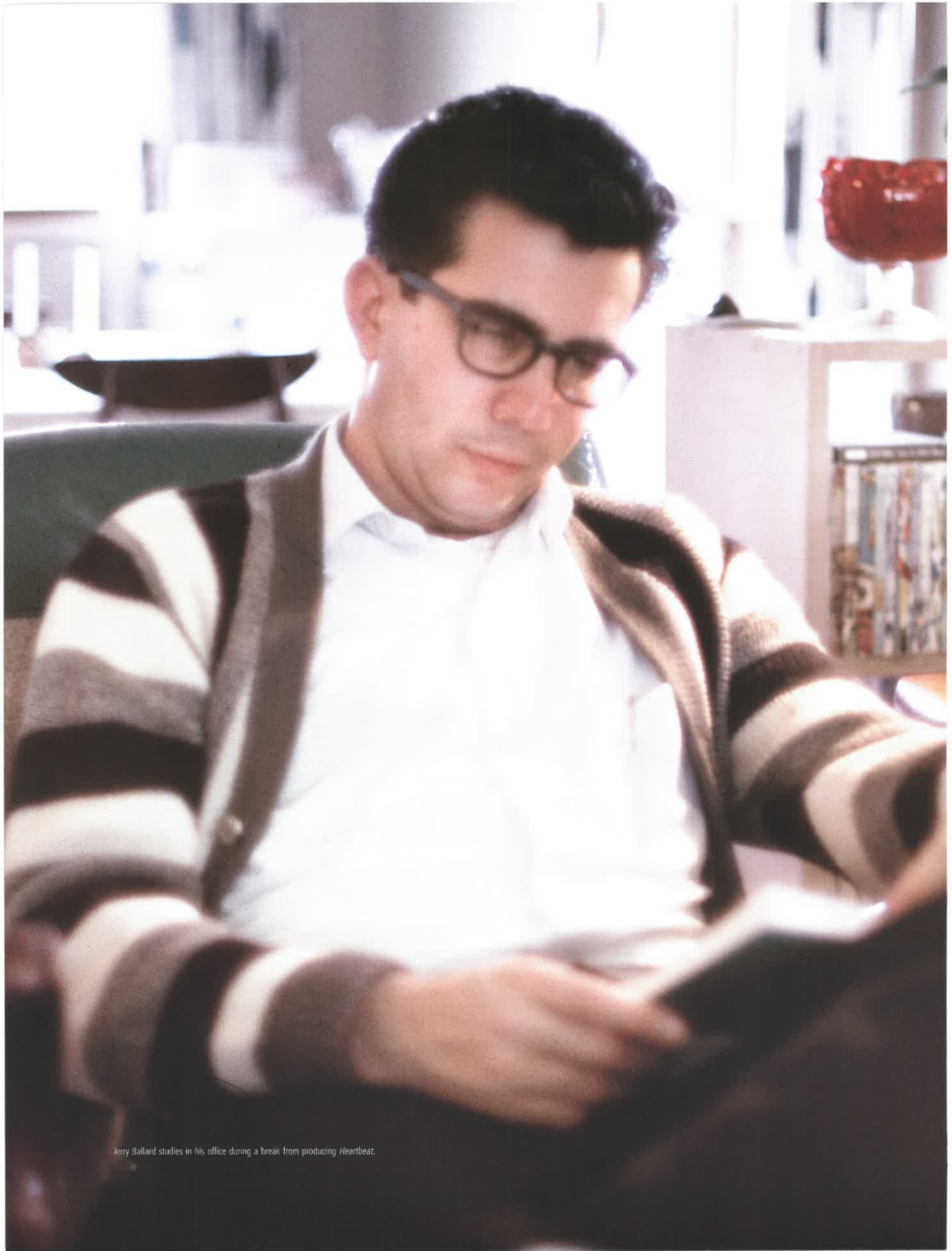


ABOVE: Robirds reviews the September/October 2003 issue of *HeartBeat*, the next to last issue he edited.

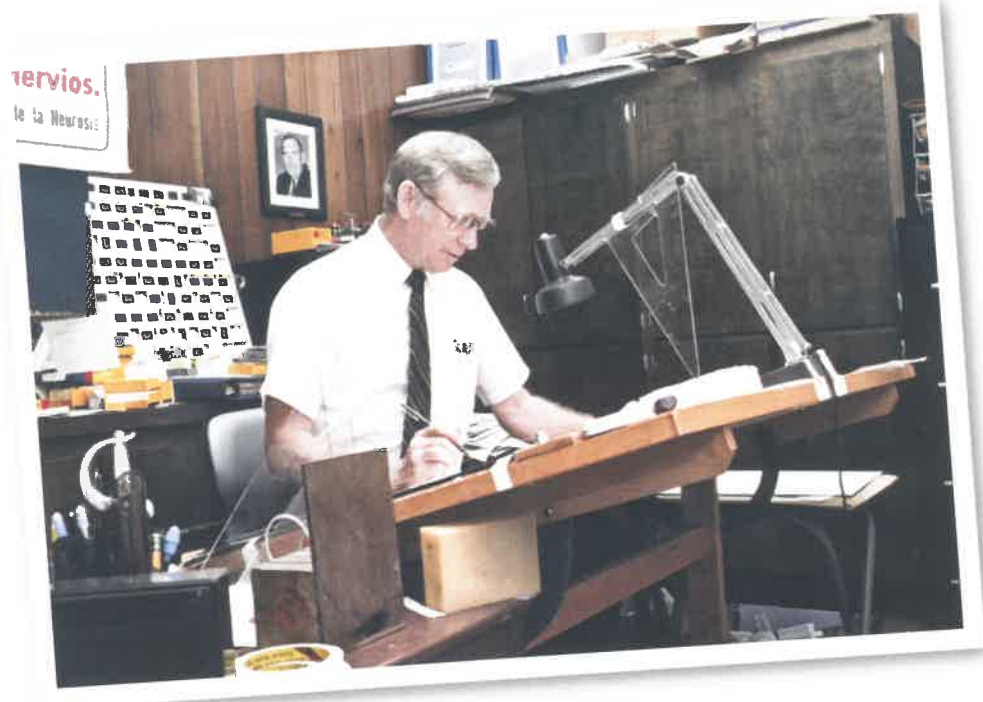
RIGHT: Robirds perches precariously, with Allan Crowson standing nearby, to capture footage for *The Good Chief* filmstrip during a trip to Côte d'Ivoire in 1978.







Jerry Ballard studies in his office during a break from producing *Heartbeat*.



ABOVE: Don Robirds works on the magazine layout, before desktop publishing made the job much easier.

FORMER EDITORS OF HEARTBEAT MAGAZINE



JERRY BALLARD

1961-1970



BILL JONES

1970-1972



DON ROBIRDS

1972-2003



DEBORAH ST. LAWRENCE

2004-2005



LEFT: Carol Robirds served as her husband's assistant for several years.



RIGHT: Jerry Ballard, the Mission's first director of communications, types sermon notes with his Bible close by.



RIGHT PAGE: These covers highlight some of the changes in design over the 44-year history of *Heartbeat*.

LEFT Don Robirds served 32 years as director of communications and editor of *Heartbeat* magazine.



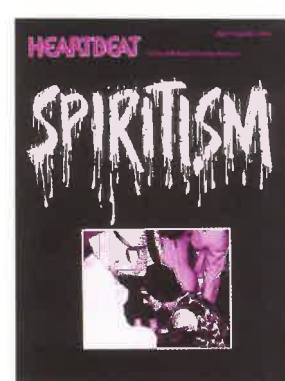
January/February 1978



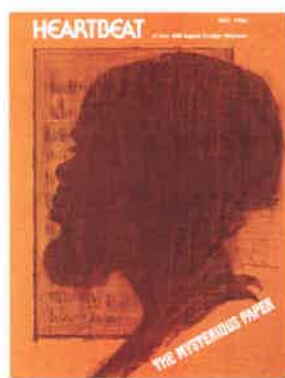
March/April 1978



November 1981



July/August 1982



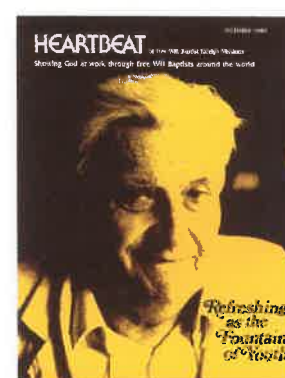
May 1984



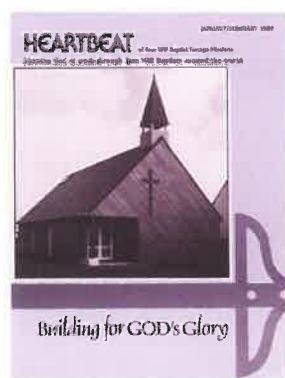
December 1985



July/August 1986



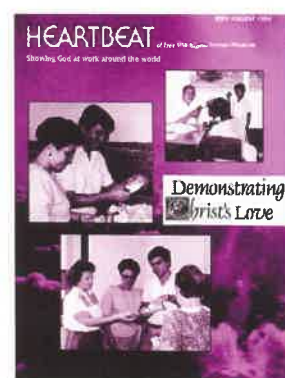
October 1987



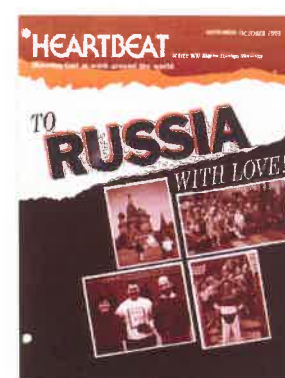
January/February 1989



July/August 1990



July/August 1991



September/October 1993



November/December 1995



July/August 1998



July/August 2000



September/October 2002

MAKE DISCIPLES

When a person responds to the call of the Great Commission—“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19)—he knows his commitment to take the Light to dark places will entail a great deal of time and effort. Building a congregation one person at a time is no easy task. One-on-one relationship building, evangelism, and discipleship are required. Pouring himself into individual lives and families necessitates diligence and perseverance.

Teaching the Bible to a new Christian or baptizing a convert celebrates not only new life in Christ, but also the multitude of hours poured into countless other lives and the innumerable seeds planted in limitless evangelistic encounters.



ABOVE: Jeff Turnbough studies Scripture with a Spanish man.

RIGHT: Tom Willey Jr. baptizes a young convert in Panama.







ABOVE: Missionaries Eddie Bowerman and Steve Torrison (far left) join Panamanian leaders in an intercessory prayer for Pastor Daniel Dorati as he and his family dealt with his young daughter's battle with cancer.



ABOVE: An Indian pastor baptizes a convert during the annual convention. It is not unusual for Christians to be ostracized or persecuted by their families or villages.

1935 75 2010

BELOW: Steve Lytle baptized Dorotea Hernandez, a rare older convert, March 6, 1983, in a borrowed baptistery.

BOTTOM: Archie Mayhew shares the gospel with an Ivorian man. Capturing impromptu moments for witnessing are important to spreading the Light.

RIGHT: A witch doctor's initiation mask from Côte d'Ivoire.

FAR RIGHT: Dr. Miley speaks with a village chief, seeking opportunities to meet both physical and spiritual needs.





PLANTING CHURCHES

Shining the light of the gospel in darkened corners of the globe more often than not illuminates the understanding of one or two people at a time. Yet, the mission is to plant a church and facilitate a church planting movement among the targeted people group. These churches seldom resemble the North American idea of church. The buildings themselves are different from the idyllic building with a white spire stretching into a blue sky.

A myriad of languages may be heard praising and worshipping God. These voices emanate from people boasting a kaleidoscope of skin tones. Sometimes the only instrument is the voice itself; other times, native instruments supplement worship. Occasionally, photos might convince us we are witnessing a service in our home church. Regardless, an indigenous church is founded, strengthened in the Word, and God is glorified.



RIGHT: A Brazilian nut with holes carved in it, revealing twelve smaller nuts inside.

ABOVE: Gary Fry of Missouri (left) and General Director James Forlines (right) stand with the congregation of a church in Nepal. Saifal (next to Mr. Forlines) is the Indian pastor who took the gospel across the border into the Hindu country of Nepal.

FAR RIGHT: Several leaders stand in front of the First Free Will Baptist Church of Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil. Although still under construction, members gathered to worship. Begun by Dave Franks, this was the first FWB church in Brazil.



IGREJA BATISTA LIVRE
DE CAMPINAS
ESCOLA DOMINICAL AS 030 HORAS
LICENÇADE AOS DOMINGOS AS 1800
CULTO 2000
CULTO AS VENTAS FÉRIAS 1930
ENTRADA LIVRE



JEEVAN-JYOTI FREEWILL BAPTIST CHURCH BURIBALASON - BHUJIAPANI BAGDOGRA DARJEELING JUNE 2002

This church, built in June 2002, in India is representative of many of the buildings erected throughout North India.





ABOVE: Leadership retreats, like the one pictured, help church members to grow and expand their understanding. This retreat was held on the Chame Seminary property in Panama and conducted by Dr. Doug Earls.

BELOW: Students at the Cedars of Lebanon Bible Institute in Pinar del Rio, Cuba, take a test. Most of these young men are preparing to be pastors and evangelists.



SHORT TERMERS

The cause of fulfilling the Great Commission has been greatly enhanced by the enthusiasm, expertise, willingness to learn, and servant spirit of those who have committed to serve overseas for short periods of time—usually a minimum of two years. Short-term missionary efforts have proven effective for support of field initiatives and missionary efforts.

In Japan, short-termers have taught conversational English to children, teens, and adults. Many people who might otherwise never hear of Jesus have heard the gospel through these classes. In Côte d'Ivoire, short-term workers filled the academic needs of International Christian Academy in Bouaké. Workers often served as surrogate parents or older siblings to missionary kids swelling the ranks of the boarding school. Professors, skilled in imparting theological tenets to seminary students, have accepted assignments ranging from two weeks to nine months in places as diverse as Cuba, Panama, and Russia. Others have served well in an assortment of roles and places.



ABOVE: Howard and Joan Filkins served two years at Ivory Coast Academy in Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire.

RIGHT: After her retirement, Mrs. Juanita Thompson used her 35 years' experience teaching school to teach missionary kids at the Hokkaido Christian Learning Center in Japan.





Friends in Christ group members join short-term English teachers Hollie Hubbard (left) and Bethany Crowson (right) for a group photo opportunity.

RIGHT: Shirley Williams plays creative games with English students to help them learn. Shirley served two years in Tokyo, Japan.

BELOW: Missionary kid Benjamin Bailey returned to Japan to teach English for two years. In 2010 he was pursuing his Master's degree in TESL (teaching English as a second language).



ABOVE: Howard and Willie Gage pause for a moment for a photo with Dona and Nathalie Allen. The Allen's volunteered to help build the boy's dormitory at ICA in Bouaké. Howard was in his mid-50s when the couple responded to the need for missionary builders in Ivory Coast. They served from 1966-1973.

LEFT: Jon and Cindy McNay worked with the Bailey's in Tokyo, Japan, while Jon was stationed at Yokota Air Base in Fussa. When the Bailey's were on stateside assignment Jon, with the aid of an interpreter, filled the pulpit once a month.

FAR LEFT: Handmade drum from Côte d'Ivoire.



LEFT: Lloyd and Betty Plunkett (shown with their son Daniel) served in Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire, as dorm parents at International Christian Academy from 1993-1995. After a year at home they returned for another two-year assignment (1997-1999).



ABOVE: Tim and Deanna Thompson served a nine-month assignment in France with Lynn and Ramona Miley, working primarily with university students.

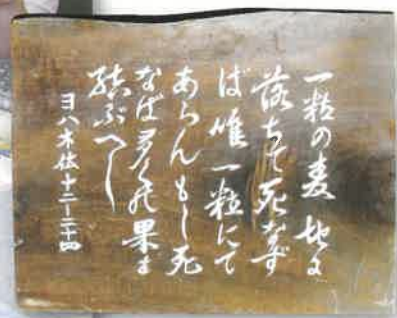


MIDDLE: Vivian Waller served as an associate missionary teaching elementary school at the Hokkaido International School in Sapporo, Japan. She also participated in the Kita Hiroshima church.



LEFT: Short-term English teachers in Japan work with a variety of age groups. Shirley Williams taught children and high school students. Each English lesson ends with a Bible study.

BELOW: A wood plaque carving of John 12:24 in Japanese.



Postscript

Although this is the last page of the book, the story is not ended. Miss Barnard, the Willeys, the Mileys, the Hannas, and scores of others marched valiantly into the darkness, carrying the light of the gospel into lands full of poverty, superstition, false religion, and fear. Humanism, materialism, affluence, and, ultimately, hedonism obscure the understanding of men and women around the world. God is still calling courageous men and women to take the Light to dark corners of the world. The mission is not complete. God's story of love and redemption continues. So, too, must the story of Light-bearers who plunge into the darkness with the Light of the World.

*My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me,
and to finish His work.*

LAURA BELLE BARNARD,
quoting John 4:34 in her resignation letter (below).

