

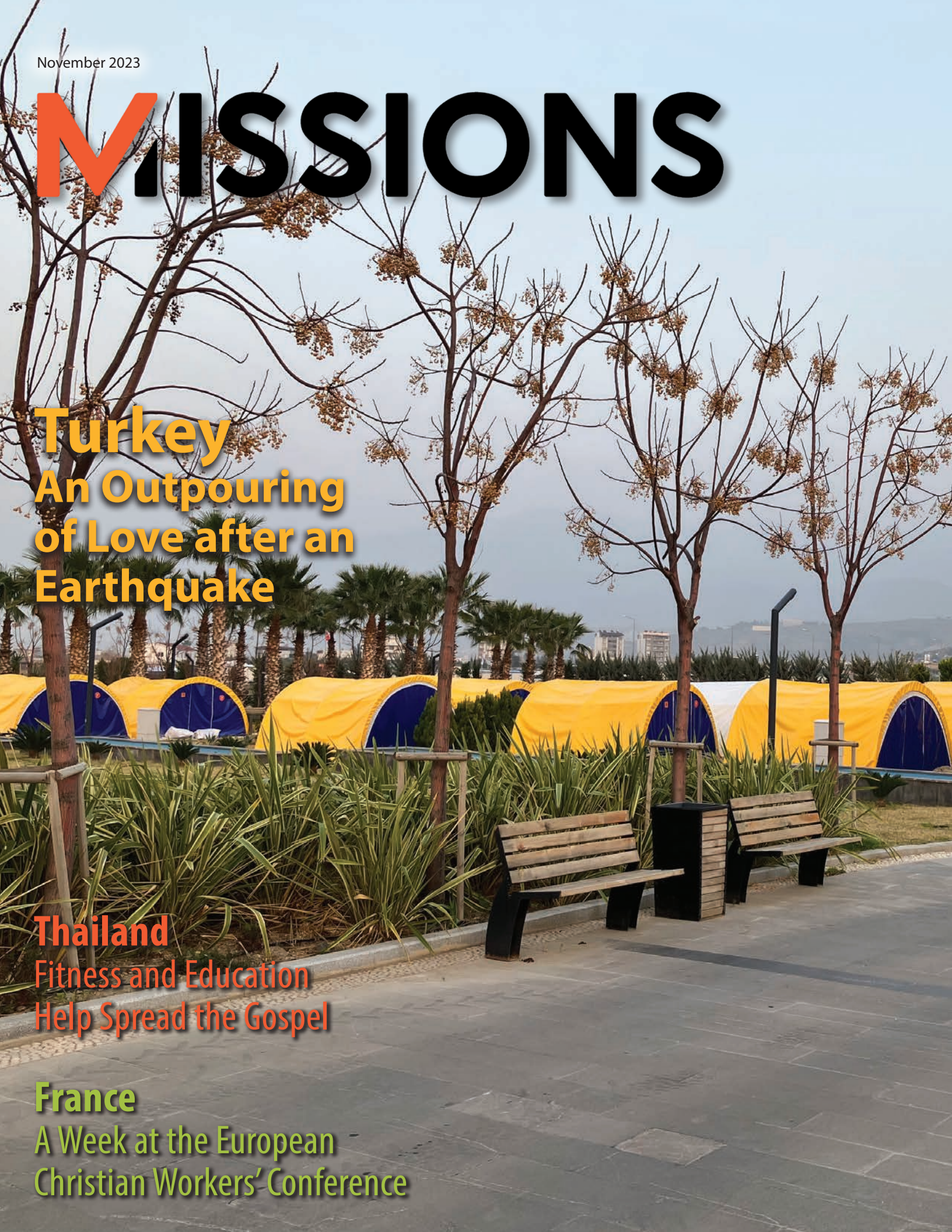
November 2023

# MISSIONS

**Turkey**  
An Outpouring  
of Love after an  
Earthquake

**Thailand**  
Fitness and Education  
Help Spread the Gospel

**France**  
A Week at the European  
Christian Workers' Conference





# THINKING IT THROUGH

BY NATHAN BRAMSEN

## When We Are Weary

**M**ore than 100 years ago, Helen Lemmel began penning the lyrics of a now-familiar hymn, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus,” with two questions: “O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see?” Amid a world of chaos, confusion, calamity, and casualties, we identify with the exhaustion embedded in Lemmel’s questions.

We find great company among those in the Bible who navigated seasons of weariness and discouragement. Feeling overwhelmed, Moses cried out to God, “Kill me here and now—if I have found favor in your sight.” (Numbers 11:15) Elijah experienced God’s great power poured out at Mount Carmel, but when he did not see the results of repentance that he had sought, he declared, “It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!” (1 Kings 19:4) Interestingly, God chose these two characters to meet with His Son on the Mount of Transfiguration, while Peter, James, and John looked on.

Consider a third man, of whom Jesus said, “Among those born of women there has not risen one greater.” (Matthew 11:11) Enter John the Baptist. Having been arrested by Herod Antipas, John awaited his future from within the prison of

Herein, we find the bedrock on which we can rest during life’s storms.

Machaerus. Whether experiencing disillusionment, doubt, or discouragement (or all three), he sent his disciples to Jesus with a question.

John the Baptist didn’t ask if his situation would change, what his imprisonment would lead to, or even for help. Rather, the weary prophet asked about the one truth that mattered: “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” (Matthew 11:3)

This is the right question.

Herein, we find the bedrock on which we can rest during life’s storms. Though we may discredit and consider ourselves discarded in moments of discouragement, God has a purpose in the darkness. We hope not in what will happen amid our circumstances but, rather, in who our God is. John’s question

points to his hope. If Jesus truly is the Coming One, then John could deal with prison, loneliness, and even martyrdom.

Take careful notice of our Savior’s response.

Jesus does not answer with a simple “Yes, I am He!” or “No, I’m not the Coming One.” Rather, after whatever time lapsed, He responds to John’s disciples, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” (Matthew 11:4–6)

In John the Baptist’s moment of questioning, Jesus doesn’t give the prophet the answer he wants but, instead, points him back to God’s Word—the destination of truth. Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah, reminding John that He, Jesus, is doing exactly what was foretold of the Coming One.

Our Savior makes no disparaging comment, nor does He suggest that John erred in questioning Jesus’s identity. To dispel all doubt, the Son of God points His prophet back to God’s Word with the unasked question, “Will you trust My Word even when you don’t understand My ways?”

Dear reader, though you may be walking through an intense time of questions, confusion, and frustration, remember that the answer you want may not be the answer you need. God is glorified by our faith in who He is and what He has accomplished on our behalf, even when we don’t understand the *why* behind our reality.

The problem is not that we have moments of doubt but whether we will linger in our doubt or take our doubt to God’s Word. God may “fail” our flawed human expectations, but He will never fail His Word. The enemy may persist in seeking to discourage, distract, and deter us from our mission to glorify Christ, but rest assured, “He who calls you is faithful.” (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

With confidence, we concur with Helen Lemmel’s conclusion of the matter: “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.” ■

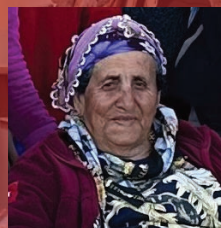
*Nathan Bramsen serves in Special Areas.*

Vol. 52, No. 10. Christian Missions in Many Lands (ISSN 0744-4052) is published 11 times a year by Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc., Belmar, New Jersey. Periodicals postage paid at Belmar, New Jersey, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc., PO Box 13, Spring Lake, NJ 07762. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, AND ALL OTHER CORRESPONDENCE: Write to Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc. (cmml@cmml.us), PO Box 13, Spring Lake, NJ 07762. Copyright © CMML. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.

COVER PHOTO: A tent city for earthquake survivors in Turkey—T. L. & Jerry Mattix



# An Outpouring of Love



## SHORT- AND LONG-TERM EARTHQUAKE RELIEF INITIATIVES IN TURKEY

BY T. L. & JERRY MATTIX

Before dawn on February 6, 2023, a massive 7.6 magnitude earthquake shook southeastern Turkey and northern Syria, followed by another 7.4 magnitude quake just nine hours later. On February 20, two lesser but likewise devastating earthquakes hit the far southern tip of Turkey in the province of Hatay (home of ancient Antioch, also called Antakya today). These disasters severely affected an area that is about the size of the UK and home to at least 15 million people. By official counts, nearly 51,000 people died, and more than 100,000 were injured. The number of persons unaccounted for is many thousands more.

This report covers only work being done in Turkey, because of our ministries' focus area and the limited communication with or access to northern Syria.

From the very first day, the relatively small Turkish church (less than 10,000 believers) has thrown all its resources and energy into relief efforts—an outpouring of love that has attracted the attention of the victims as well as government agencies. We rejoice to see how this effort has given a clear testimony to the Gospel and made the love of Christ felt far and wide.

Over the past months, we, as CMML workers in the region, have had the privilege of overseeing several projects funded by gifts believers have sent through CMML's fund called Disaster Relief—Turkey.

### Antakya Christian Church offers care

This small fellowship in Antioch started more than 20 years ago and has been a faithful public witness for Christ ever since. For many years, Antakya Christian Church met in an overcrowded, rented meeting hall, so the believers purchased a city lot and began constructing a new building in 2022. The 2023 earthquake ruined their old meeting place. However, the new construction project has been

designed to withstand disasters and did not sustain any major damage. Praise the Lord!

Even in its half-finished form, the new building was useful as a depot for many of our relief efforts in the first months. Now, the remaining work has resumed with hopes of having the building at least partially functional by winter. The leaders of the church, Hamdullah and Elmas, chose to stay in the region and help coordinate the ongoing relief work. Each Sunday, they gather in the open air with many believers and visitors at their temporary ministry camp.

Because of our long-standing relationship with this church in Antioch, we have focused much of our effort in that region. From the outset, believers from Diyarbakir, in southeastern Turkey, came to offer aid and quickly set up a makeshift relief center in the church leaders' broken-down home. Because of the wintry conditions, the need for basic food supplies, warm clothing, and shelter became a priority. Makeshift kitchens and a clothing distribution center were organized. Hundreds of large tents were purchased or custom-made and pitched for needy families all around the outlying areas of Antioch. Everywhere we went, people learned that evangelical believers in Turkey were providing this help. For many, it was their first interaction





with Christians, and numerous recipients made it clear that we were the first or only ones to bring them relief.

Just over the northern mountain range in the city of İskenderun, also severely damaged by the earthquake, the Protestant churches of İstanbul set up a whole tent city with a capacity for more than 120 families. Currently, 20 people from that tent city are regularly attending local church meetings at the nearby fellowship, and three have professed faith. When followers of Christ selflessly serve the needy, people notice. And, before long, the nonverbal witness turns into an opportunity to share the hope within us.

### Temporary shelters house the devastated

In the second phase of earthquake relief, providing durable, weather-resistant shelter is of utmost importance. In Antioch alone, a city of more than half a million people, up to 90 percent of the buildings will need to be leveled if they haven't completely collapsed already. This means many years of rebuilding the decimated city. Many of those who initially fled the region have returned, looking for places to stay. As the heat of summer swelled, many who initially sheltered in tents realized that they needed more durable homes for the long haul.

Having foreseen this, we helped pioneer a tiny-home project. These wooden homes are sourced locally and built on-site with volunteer teams. Over the past eight months, we have erected more than 500 such homes with the help of many partners. Each home can be set up in three to five hours and costs roughly \$2,500.

Recognizing the need for additional temporary homes, we approached a believer who runs a metal shop about building collapsible containers.



Above: A team completes a tiny wooden home for a family in need.

Many container homes have been brought to the earthquake zone, but they must be transported on semitrucks and lifted with

cranes. Instead, we produced a modular container home that can be transported in pieces on a pickup truck and then assembled quickly on-site. With funds from CMML, we ordered dozens of these, which have since been set up for needy families. We also bought a pickup truck for transporting materials and teams.

As we provide semipermanent shelter and a secure living space for desperate families, we also find opportunities to share the love of Christ. Over meals in orchards or makeshift tents and many cups of tea, we have heard all manner of harrowing stories about the earthquakes. Everyone lost loved ones, and those who could recover the bodies consider themselves fortunate. Their lives are marred forever. For many, the tiny house we build will be their only home for years to come. However, because they are still on their own land, they may continue working in their orchards and providing for their loved ones.

### A strategy addresses today and tomorrow

At this time, the homes we have built may only be set up on property that an individual or family owns. However, scores of people lived in apartment buildings that the earthquake leveled. So we recently purchased a piece of land on the outskirts of one of Antakya's hardest-hit areas. Incidentally, it is the same seaside town from where Paul and Barnabas set sail on their first missionary journey (Seleucia, Acts 13:4). The local municipality voiced an eagerness to help us implement this project by providing the infrastructure. Lord willing, by the time you read this article, we will have started building many of the 20 small homes we hope to provide on this land.

We have seen much interest in the Gospel from people in this community, and a small group has started meeting in a rental space. We trust that in the coming years, as many of the temporary residents move on to permanent homes, this property will be invaluable to the local church. We envision erecting a church building and even guest quarters so seminars and retreats can be hosted in this historic corner of Turkey.

In this same vein, we have helped believers in the city of Adiyaman, on the other end of the earthquake zone, purchase a small piece of land. Believers from Mardin, Yalova, and Antalya have been working together to offer relief to needy families in Adiyaman, and they have found many a kindred spirit. They



**From left:** Even in its half-finished form, Antakya Christian Church's new building has been a blessing to the relief efforts; Many who lost their homes in Iskenderun, Turkey, now live in this tent city; This modular house is ready to be transported and then set up; Relief workers help an extended family; A family sits inside the tiny home that a team is building for them.

plan to use this plot of land to continue their relief efforts and eventually establish a church with their many contacts.

### Great challenges equal great opportunities

It is hard to comprehend the magnitude of the devastation this earthquake brought. Eleven provinces with several major cities across the region were directly affected, displacing millions. This disaster coupled with the recent re-election of the same party that has governed Turkey for more than two decades and the plummeting Turkish lira give people little reason to be hopeful. The average family in Turkey survives on about \$550–\$750 per month. For those in the earthquake zone who have lost everything, this reality only adds insult to injury.

However, as is often the case, the Gospel of Christ can shine brightest in such dark times. Even as we mourn with those who have lost so much, we are glad for the opportunity to share God's love in practical ways. We are also encouraged to see the fledgling Turkish church rise to this historic challenge. In a time when so many foreign Christian workers have been deported from the country, it is truly inspiring to see local believers lead the way in this relief effort. Of course, by now, many of those who have been working tirelessly are nearing exhaustion. They need continual encouragement and support from their fellow believers abroad.

We want to take this opportunity to thank the many who have expressed loving support for us and the work we are doing in Turkey. We are also grateful to witness the amazing

financial contributions that make it possible for us to support the local churches in their efforts.

Finally, we urge you to keep the people in Turkey and Syria in your prayers. As is the case in most crises, after the initial outpouring of support, people in need are often forgotten and left to fend for themselves. We hope that the long-term initiatives we have started will come to fruition as will the many seeds of the Gospel planted in people's hearts. So keep praying toward this end—that the name of Jesus will be made famous again in this historic land. ■

*T. L. is commended from Stevensville Bible Chapel in Stevensville, Montana.*



*Jerry Mattix is commended from Tieton Drive Bible Chapel in Yakima, Washington.*

If you wish to contribute to the earthquake relief efforts in Turkey, you may do so through the Disaster Relief—Turkey fund, online at [CMML.us](http://CMML.us) or by check (please include a note with your gift suggesting it for "Disaster Relief—Turkey"). If you wish to help with the construction efforts, contact Jerry Mattix at [jsmattix@aol.com](mailto:jsmattix@aol.com).



**Above:** A relief team gathers for prayer before pitching tents for the homeless; A grateful family poses with relief workers in front of their new modular house; In the earthquake zone, new modular homes sit next to ruined buildings awaiting demolition.

# STRONG BODIES, TENDER SPIRITS

**FITNESS** and  
**EDUCATION**  
Help the **GOSPEL**  
Take Root  
in **THAILAND**

BY PHILIP PARSONS



The Royal Kingdom of Thailand is a country of 71 million people nestled in the center of the Indochina Peninsula, or Mainland Southeast Asia. Thailand earned its name, which means “Land of the Free,” for it maintained its national independence while Western influences colonized surrounding nations, around the 19th century onward. Until 1939, it was called Siam.

Around 1870, while Siam was defending its freedom, a Chinese believer named Ong Im moved from Penang, Malaysia, to Phuket Island, Siam. There, Ong Im made his livelihood as a baker and seller of cakes. Brethren missionaries from Penang regularly contacted him, and in 1886, Ong Im purchased a facility in Phuket. He renovated the upstairs room as a meeting place for a small group of Chinese believers and others. The Brethren work in Thailand was born, and it would continue to develop from then until today.

Later, the end of World War II opened the way for many missionaries from England and Scotland to serve in Thailand. They committed to learning the Thai language and evangelized the southern part of the country—starting assemblies as many accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

In 1958, missionaries from New Zealand joined the work and preached the Gospel to the “sea gypsies” who lived and worked along the coastline of southern Thailand. In 1991, the Gospel moved north as South Korean missionaries preached and planted an assembly in the capital, Bangkok. Movement continued

And, throughout the nation, faithful believers work to establish assemblies in new areas.

to the north and the northeast to reach the tribal people in the mountains (hill tribes).

Even with that progress, Thailand today remains bound by Buddhism, traditional culture, spirit worship, and occult practices. Buddhism is the largest religion there, captivating 88 percent of the population. Another 7 percent professes Islam, while only 1.1 percent professes Christianity—with less than 1 percent of the population known as evangelical Christians.

Sixteen assemblies exist in Thailand, comprising both Thai and tribal congregations. Included in that number are sea gypsy assemblies in the islands of Phuket and Phi Phi as well as assemblies among the Karen and Hmong hill tribes in northern Thailand. And, throughout the nation, faithful believers work to establish assemblies in new areas.

Recently, my wife and I witnessed this ongoing assembly work, particularly in northern and central Thailand. Mary and I spent several days with Nick and Vicki Sullivan (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 26) and Abigail and John Harrell (MPH Day 8), encouraging them and learning about reaching Thais for Christ.

**Left:** An energetic instructor leads a workout as part of an evangelistic outreach that combines fitness and the Gospel.

# BANGKOK-BOUND

In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where Mary and I had attended a conference, we boarded a Thai Airways plane for a 90-minute flight to Bangkok. We were met by Nick Sullivan, who drove us first to our accommodations in the heart of the city, and then, we took the family to their favorite restaurant. We spent the next three days with Nick and Vicki, getting to know them and their six children and experiencing their ministry firsthand.

Nick and Vicki grew up in Christian homes. They met while in middle school, dated, and eventually married. Nick is a trained nurse practitioner with ICU experience, while Vicki is an engineer. They and their children eventually joined a new assembly plant, Orchard Bible Church, in Centennial, Colorado. Nick actively served as a youth leader, Vicki served with the Awana program, and together, they taught first-grade Sunday school. Nick's heart for missions grew, in part, while serving on a board for a faith-based, nonprofit gym aimed at discipleship.

Orchard Bible Church's elders encouraged Nick and Vicki to attend CMM's Missions Orientation Program in 2019. They both sensed a growing passion to reach the unreached people groups of the world and, more specifically, for the Lord's call to Myanmar. Nick made an exploratory trip to Myanmar and met with some of the leading Brethren in the work. Orchard Bible Church commended them to that work, but the coup of February 1, 2021, brought a swift change to their plans. After consulting with their elders and partaking in a season of prayer, the Sullivans began language and culture learning in Bangkok, Thailand, where refugees from Myanmar form communities.

Using his medical experience, Nick engaged in community health evangelism among the refugees: he met with leaders in the refugee camps and set up prevention training that focused on proper diet and fitness since heart issues, stroke, and diabetes are the main causes of early death among the refugees. This strategy provided an opportunity to share the Gospel.

Expanding on this initiative, Nick explored elements of high intensity physical exercise as another avenue to integrate and share the Gospel among the Thai people. Several times per week, a group meets to exercise. Nick incorporates a devotional from the Bible into the program, before the "warriors" (participants) enter the "battle" (a 28-minute intensive workout). Nick thought it would be good for me to participate in a workout, but I instead settled in to watch him lead the exercise program and share the Gospel.

After the Sullivans arrived in Thailand, Vicki learned that International Community School, a fully accredited Christian school in Bangkok, needed an upper-level mathematics teacher. Her engineering background and master's in education made her a perfect fit. She has taught there since. The Sullivan children also attend this school, where, by law, half of the 1,200 students must be Thai.

Since Mary and I have a deep interest in missionary kids' education, we wanted to visit. On our way to the airport for our next destination, we stopped for a tour. While no classes were in session due to the summer break, Vicki and the kids enjoyed showing us their school.



**Top (L-R):** On their first day in Bangkok, the Parsons enjoyed a meal at the Sullivans' favorite restaurant; Nick presents a devotional before leading a workout; Nick, Vicki, and the kids showed the Parsons around International Community School. **Bottom (L-R):** Vicki, pictured here in front of her classroom, teaches mathematics; While enjoying an outing at a nearby park, Phil snaps a photo of Mary and the Sullivans.

# NORTH TO CHIANG RAI

Following a delightful visit with the Sullivans, we traveled by air on a one-hour flight to Chiang Rai—the northernmost major city in Thailand—for a three-day visit with John and Abigail Harrell and their three-year old, Micah.

Several years ago, while studying at Columbia International University, the Harrells discovered a heightened desire to serve among the unreached. Like the Sullivans, they attended CMML's Missions Orientation Program in 2019. Soon after, Woodland Hills Community Church in Columbia, South Carolina, commended them to serve among the unreached in Thailand.

Thais place a high value on learning English. When Thailand became a full member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2015, a niche for Thais to master English and effectively interact with other nations emerged. Hilltop English School, started by a Thai believer, offers English-language instruction to children as an after-school option. Sensing the Lord opening a door that would enable him to build relationships among Thais, John earned a certification to teach English as a foreign language. He now teaches at the school each afternoon for three hours, demonstrating the love of God and talking about the Bible.

Observing John in action reminded me just how complex our English language is. It was fun to see the joy his students expressed when they correctly matched a capital letter with the corresponding small letter. During one of John's advanced

English classes, students created fictitious restaurant menus to demonstrate vocabulary comprehension. Some afternoons when John is teaching, Abigail and their son spend time with Thai parents in the school's lobby—building meaningful relationships and, when appropriate, sharing about the Lord.

Since there is no assembly yet in Chiang Rai, John and Abigail attend an evangelical church that meets at a local gym, Project Fit. Services each Wednesday evening begin with dinner followed by a preaching service and classes for elementary children. Thursday mornings are devoted to a time of prayer. During the summer, Abigail plays the keyboard in support of the music ministry.

But Project Fit itself is also a ministry. Some years ago, a missionary and a Thai Christian couple launched this business-missions model to meet a growing demand for physical fitness. They built the concept on Project Fit's mission: "Fitness to grow community and relationships, share the Gospel, and make Thai disciples of Christ." The gym offers daily general physical preparedness classes that begin with a devotional followed by an intense workout. Often, John engages in these workouts to support the ministry and stay in shape.

While we were in Chiang Rai, Nick Sullivan visited Project Fit and met with the personnel to learn more about the ministry and the prospect of taking the outreach to Bangkok.



**Above (L-R):** John helps a student understand the English alphabet; Abigail plays the keyboard for the local church, which meets in a gym; Micah's meal includes fried rice with an egg on top; Phil and Mary enjoy a Thai dinner.

## Pray for Thailand

Buddhism's core values of good citizenship, benevolent works, and reason and enlightenment conflict with the truth of Christianity when coupled with a denial of a personal God. Nearly 90 percent of Thai people are considered unreached with the Gospel. An effective strategy for reaching them begins with building relationships. The Sullivans and Harrells reach into their communities through teaching, hosting events in their homes, and participating in physical fitness

activities. Pray for these families as they work on cultivating and deepening relationships with their Thai friends. Abigail is keen on learning to effectively communicate the Gospel with friends at Project Fit.

Thailand has long been a haven for refugees, including the persecuted minorities who have fled Myanmar seeking refuge and protection. Pray that the love of God will reach these displaced people groups. ■

*Philip Parsons, CMML missionary care and security*

# Interview with Ezra & Joanna Brainard



## Missionaries Share about Daily Life

For Ezra and Joanna Brainard, missions has been a lifelong pursuit. They were raised in missions-minded families and believed the Lord would one day take them to the mission field. They moved to Brazil in November 2018, only a few months after their wedding, and began adapting to a new life and ministry, facing each change through the joy of the Lord. Today, they are parents to three bubbly, inquisitive children, Andrew (4), Philip (3), and Henrietta (1); Emmaus Bible Chapel in Ferguson, Missouri, has commended them, and CMML serves them; they are competent Portuguese speakers; and their ministry is growing. Please pray for the Brainards as they navigate life and ministry along the Amazon River.

### Tell us about the area where you live.

We are based in the jungle city of Benjamin Constant. It's a crowded city (approximately 20,000 people) with small-town infrastructure. Most of our ministry is done in rural villages situated on the rivers or deeper into the jungle.

### What's the weather like?

Here in the Amazon Rainforest, we have a dry season, where it rains only once every week or two, and a rainy season, where it rains every day or two. It's always hot and humid, except once or twice per year when a cool wind blows from the Andes and just barely reaches us. When that happens, the temperatures drop as low as 60 degrees Fahrenheit, and the local people call it a *friagem*.

### What foods do you eat?

At home, we eat pretty much what we would eat in the US. In the villages, we eat what the people can hunt or fish or harvest from the garden. Sometimes, it's açaí and manioc cereal; sometimes, it's grilled armadillo or *paca* soup. *Paca* is a large jungle rodent—it tastes like pork!

### How do you get around?

To get around town, we ride a motorcycle, though, this year, we bought a car that fits our family better. To get to some villages, we go by four-wheeler (when our four-wheeler isn't broken), or Ezra goes in on foot through heavy, sticky clay. On the rivers, we take a johnboat for a quick day trip, or we travel in our houseboat, the *Messenger of Peace*, if we plan to spend a night or more.

### What's the leading religion?

Most people in our city are a kind of cultural Christian, especially some sort of Pentecostal. In the villages farther out, there are more nominal Catholics. But there is an abundance of cults, including local ones like the Israelites (not actually Jewish) or Church of the Red Cross (not the disaster relief group). Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-day Adventist church also have a lot of followers here, and the Mormon church is trying to get established as well.

### Do you work among a particular people group?

Yes, the Ribeirinhos are descendants of early European settlers. While their lifestyle, their educational and medical needs, and the difficulty of accessing them sometimes equal those of the Indigenous, they receive much less government assistance. They speak Portuguese and are, by and large, welcoming to the Gospel being preached in their villages.

### What cultural behavior do you find interesting?

Life is slow and laid-back. If you need some information from someone, you can't just send an email or text most of the time. You go to the person's house, where he or she serves you coffee, and make small talk for several minutes before getting down to business. These visits help build relationships and create lots of opportunities for Ezra to share the Gospel, so they certainly aren't a waste of time. But getting used to them still takes some time.



**Left:** The Brainards hold Sunday meetings on their front porch. **Middle (from top):** Ezra, Joanna, and their three kids often travel on their houseboat, the *Messenger of Peace*; These giant tree roots make a literal jungle gym. **Right:** When the Brainards arrive at a village on the river, all the local kids want to take a good look at the visitors.

### Do you feel settled?

It seems there's constantly a new phase in ministry that changes things up in our lives and helps keep us on our toes. But, even so, we've been blessed with a nice house and many believing friends, both nationals and other American missionaries. We arrived in Brazil not long after we married; that has allowed us to create many family memories here in the Amazon, which have helped make it "home" for us.

### What is a typical week for you?

Monday through Wednesday is usually when we are home: Ezra either studies or runs errands and visits (as mentioned above); I (Joanna) run the house and care for our three little ones, ages four and under. Wednesday mornings, I have a Bible study with a woman in town who is a new believer. Thursday through Sunday morning is usually filled with various forms of travel to villages for preaching and teaching engagements.

### How do you get to know people?

We mostly get to know people by visiting their homes and having them tell us about someone else they want us to meet. The culture here is friendly, hospitable, and built around relationships. Getting to know people is not hard!

### What do you miss the most?

We really miss our family and friends in the US. We are thankful for the friends and even family the Lord has provided in His people here, but our kids miss their grandparents and many aunts, uncles, and cousins.

### How do you relax and create family time?

This question made us both laugh, as Ezra and I have different ideas of relaxation. Ezra is a country boy, and I'm more of a city girl. But I think our family is the most relaxed on the cool(ish) days when it rains nonstop all day, no one leaves home, and we can all stay inside and drink hot chocolate and watch movies or do some baking together.

### What is challenging?

The constant heat and humidity are exhausting, as well as the frequent sicknesses that pass through the family. Also, the dangers, both physical and spiritual, are abundant and require an extra level of watchfulness of our little ones wherever we go.

### What is exciting?

Probably one of the most exciting experiences we've had lately is getting to teach the Word to Christians, sincere yet with little scriptural knowledge, and seeing their joy as the Bible is opened to them. These believers are hungry for the Word, and when the Word is opened to them, they have the excitement of a famished person who was just served a steak.

### How can we pray for you?

Please pray for more open doors for ministry for us. Also, please pray for safety and health for our family. And, above all, please "pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified." (2 Thessalonians 3:1) ■

# (VERY, VERY) WARM GREETINGS FROM *France*



## A Week at the 46th European Christian Workers' Conference



**Top row:** The 88 Christian workers at the conference gather for a group photo. **Second row (L-R):** From the conference center, guests can enjoy stunning views of the French Alps; Mark Stevenson teaches on living a Christ-centered life; Phil and Mary Parsons speak to the group; Paul Rabideau discusses emotional intelligence. **Third row (L-R):** This year, 17 attendees shared a connection to Emmaus Bible College; The toddlers participate in the closing-night program with their leaders, Katie Stevenson and Anastasia Glock. **Fourth row (L-R):** The French workers—including (L-R) Jean-Luc Tabailleux, Janet Johnson, Colin and Maureen Crow, Anne Chalvet, and Matt, Anastasia, and Pascal Glock (all MPH Day 10)—present a song from their country of service; The middlers have fun with Dave and Abby Bensch.



BY T. J. MARINELLO

The 46th annual European Christian Workers' Conference took place next to Lake Annecy, France, from August 19 to 25—a very warm week with daily temperatures averaging 100 degrees Fahrenheit! The nearly 100 people who gathered encompassed missionaries and their children who serve in Europe and have been commended from New Testament assemblies in English-speaking countries; European national workers from various countries; and those who came to serve at the conference. Commending assemblies in Belgium, Canada, England, France, New Zealand, Poland, and the US were represented. Assembly missionary service organizations that had their missionaries at the conference included CMML, Global Connections in Missions (New Zealand), Echoes International (UK), and MSC Canada.

For many, this annual conference is the only break from ministry in a busy calendar year; it's one of the few times the gathered missionaries and national workers take in rather than give out in a public setting. The week of solid Bible teaching, afternoon seminars, seasons of prayer, and physical refreshment enabled the attendees to recharge on many levels.

### Refreshment for spirit, mind, and body

Each day started with a season of prayer. Phil and Mary Parsons (CMML) led the prayer time—Phil, the men's and Mary, the women's. Other times of prayer followed the missionaries' and national workers' ministry reports.

This year's main speaker for the adults was Dr. Mark Stevenson, a professor at Emmaus Bible College and an elder at Arbor Oaks Bible Chapel in Dubuque, Iowa. Mark presented nine well-received messages from the Gospel of Mark entitled "How Do We Keep Christ Central in Our Life?" His practical Bible teaching was apropos for the listeners. An international team—people from Poland and France as well as a missionary working in Austria—led the music.

Afternoon seminars included sessions entitled "Emotional Intelligence," which counselor and assembly elder Dr. Paul Rabideau (New Jersey) presented. His wife, Rita, an area director for Body and Soul Fitness, led exercise classes for the women several afternoons in the air-conditioned main hall. Pascal Glock (France), son of Matt and Sylvie Glock (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 10), led the "Glock Family Singers" in concert one afternoon. He also organized the missionaries and workers by ministry location, and then, each group presented a Christian song from their country of service.

The conference center's pool and Lake Annecy were especially popular pastimes this year, given the uncommon heat,

and two or three generations of missionary families could often be found enjoying the water. Offsite outings included a trip to the nearby town of Annecy, a UNESCO heritage site; a trip to Château de Menthon, the ancestral home of St. Bernard (yes, *that* Bernard, the trainer of the Alpine rescue dogs); and a jaunt to the medieval city of Conflans. The annual four-hour hike along a nearby ridgeline was attempted, but only five hearty souls of the 15 made it to the crest. The incredible heat felled the others, who had to turn back.

### Old and new friends

For the teens and children, this was "camp week" and a time to renew lifelong friendships. This gathering is always a blessing and encouragement for them since they are with children just like themselves: children of missionaries or national workers who often feel as if they don't quite fit in where they live. Anna Gifford-Remans and Jesse Remans (Belgium), daughter and son-in-law of Peter and Joanna Gifford (MPH Day 9), again led the teens; father-and-daughter team Dave and Abby Bensch (Oklahoma) returned to lead the middlers; and Anastasia Glock (France), daughter of Matt and Sylvie Glock, and Katie Stevenson (Iowa), daughter of Mark and Tonya Stevenson, worked with the nursery- and toddler-aged children. The teens and children put on a closing-night program that entertained the parents, grandparents, and other attendees and demonstrated the week's Bible lessons.

This year, 17 of the attendees were associated with Emmaus Bible College in Dubuque, Iowa, in some way: Maureen Crow (MPH Day 10), Matt Glock, Anastasia Glock, Randy and Sherri Hoffman (MSC), Paula Lenaerts (Belgium), Steve Luibrand (MPH Day 14), Mirek and Beata Marczak (MPH Day 13), Mary Parsons, Daniel Pasquale (MPH Day 12), Tom and Anne Stanczak (MPH Day 13), the Stevenson family, and myself. We comprised alumni, office workers, teachers, and one current student—people from as far back as the mid-1960s.

Both CMML and MSC were represented by servants from the main offices, and the conference provided the attendees an opportunity to meet or reacquaint themselves with MSC's new executive director and his wife, Randy and Sherri Hoffman.

All in all, the week was a great blessing. Those of us who attended thank the Lord we could be there. ■



*Dr. Tom Marinello and his wife, Patti, serve in the Netherlands and are commended from Garland Bible Chapel in Garland, Texas.*