

June 2026

MISSIONS

Oregon
Helping Kids
Thrive in Christ

Senegal
A Team Overhauls
a Mission Compound

France
Creativity Colors a
Missionary's Outreach





THINKING IT THROUGH

BY ALLAN WILKS

Hanging on His Words

In the 19th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we read that Jesus spent the last week before His death in Jerusalem. The week began when He entered the city riding on a donkey. He would have been one of many people arriving in Jerusalem on donkeys that day, but unlike the others, His entrance was notable and people lined the street. Some threw their cloaks down in front of Him and shouted, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” (v. 38). Others were appalled and asked Him to rebuke His disciples, who were loudly praising God (v. 39).

Jesus made His way to the temple, the magnificent spiritual heart of Jerusalem, and with unexpected authority, threw out those conducting commerce there (vv. 45–48). During the next few days, He went to the temple every day and taught there.

Once again, this evoked two quite different reactions. To those in authority, namely “the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people” (v. 47), it was doubly offensive—both because He assumed an authority not granted by them and because His actions implicitly condemned the temple commerce they had approved.

But the second reaction was the most striking: “All the people were hanging on his words” (v. 48, ESV). We can assume that these were some of the same people who had recently welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem in such a public and unorthodox manner. Literally, this verse says that the people were hanging on the Lord, hearing Him.

Some English translations say the people were *attentive* to His words. But this doesn’t seem strong enough. The sense is not the attentiveness of a good student but rather the longing thirst of those who cannot get enough. The English idiom *hanging on His words* pictures people who made a point of arriving at the temple early so they didn’t miss anything Jesus said, who listened to each of His words in eager silence, who went out discussing with their friends and family what they had heard, and whose lives were changed by the encounters.

Here were the words of the Creator Himself, honey to those who would hear and bitterness to those who would not.

Many times in the Gospels, we read of the crowds that gathered around the Lord. Certainly, His ability and willingness to heal the infirm was a huge draw. But so also was His teaching. He taught with unexpected authority, and everywhere He went, some scoffed and feared and burned with anger, but others hung on His every word.

At the outset of his Gospel, John identifies Jesus as the holy logos—the Word of God. No wonder His teachings evoked such strong reactions. Here were the words of the Creator Himself, honey to those who would hear and bitterness to those who would not.

Today, many millions around the world hang on Christ’s words. They have heard and responded to the Gospel and now eagerly read the Bible, feeding on the words of their Savior. However, Christians can hear those words so many times that they become merely attentive or, even worse, indifferent. The words of the

Word Himself can become familiar, comfortable phrases that warm us, like soup on a cold winter’s day. But this is not as it should be.

We live in an age when words abound, when the chaos of so many voices leaves us longing for authority and truth. Oh, that we all might once again hang on Christ’s words—that each word the gospel writers have left us

would excite us, that we would long to hear those words again and again, and that they would shape our very lives.

As Michael W. Smith sang in “Ancient Words”:

Holy words long preserved
For our walk in this world.
They resound with God’s own heart;
Oh, let the ancient words impart.
(Lynn DeShazo, 2002, Reunion Records)

Father, pierce us daily with the words of your Son. Excite in us breathless anticipation each time we hear them. May they light our path and be used by your Spirit as He changes us from one degree of glory to another, for your glory. ■

Allan Wilks is a CMML director.

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COVER PHOTO: Youth training camp in Oregon—Courtesy of Monica Sernatinger



A Great, Undeserved Joy in Oregon

Reaching Kids and Helping Youth Thrive in Serving Christ

BY MONICA SERNATINGER

I was born and raised in Celaya, Guanajuato, Mexico, in a culturally religious family. At age 17, I placed my faith in Christ and was saved. Shortly after, I left home to attend college. Not having a solid foundation, I was soon pulled by the world. It wasn't until I began attending postgraduate school in Ashland, Oregon, that I, sick of my sin, searched for the Lord with all my heart. During that time, I found a Bible-believing church and was lovingly disciplined in the context of a college ministry. Being so blessed by what I had received, I felt the Lord calling me to serve Him, and He provided all that I needed to attend Bible school for one year.

Years later, while home in Celaya working for a local corporation in finance and international business, I met my husband, Jamie Sernatinger, from Texas. We fellowshipped in Texas for about five years before we were commended to the Lord's work in Mexico. With our son, Frederick, we labored for 12 years in church planting in Puruándiro, Michoacán.

After my husband's home call in 2011, Frederick and I helped other precious missionaries carry on the ministry for three more years. Then, the Lord graciously called the Tuohy family (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 16) to join the work in Puruándiro just as He was opening doors for us in the US: we were invited to Eugene, Oregon, to help with a new Hispanic church plant, Iglesia Bíblica de Eugene, alongside the Chavez family (*MPH* Day 29), also from Mexico.

Early-release programs for children

While serving with my husband in Mexico, part of my ministry had been to teach the children in our small assembly. Honestly, I never considered working with children to be a strength in my life. I did enjoy it and wanted to communicate spiritual truths to them, but I felt quite inadequate and just tried to do my best.

When Frederick and I moved to Eugene, however, we and the Chavez family participated in an after-school, early-release children's program called Kidspace, sponsored by a nearby church. About 45 children were registered, and 40 percent of them were Hispanic. Our part involved teaching them Bible lessons and



From top: A teen explains the way of salvation to two kids; Kids enjoy games at summer camp; Monica teaches a lesson during Kidspace; The Cañada family—(L-R) Xiomara, Valeria, Nancy, Abel, and Josie—serves the Lord through children's outreaches.

memory verses in Spanish during the school year and reaching out to their families with the Gospel. By God's grace, we planted gospel seeds in the hearts of the children and in several families, and some even began fellowshiping with us on Sundays.

After we spent four years helping in Kidspace, the school district changed the early-release day, and the program ended due to a lack of volunteers. However, one faithful Hispanic family from our assembly, Abel and Xiomara Cañada—including their older daughter, Josie—desired to continue serving the children. Together, we prayed for an opportunity.

In the US, a government-approved Released Time Bible Class (RTBC) program permits public school students to be released during the school day for voluntary religious education, with their parents' permission. Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) operates under this program at the local elementary school where the Cañadas' other daughter, Valeria, was attending kindergarten. So the family and I decided to volunteer with the local chapter of CEF and began helping at the elementary school's RTBC.

New avenues for outreach

Our journey began by helping in two or three different RTBC clubs, as we call the individual classes, during the week. This work introduced us to summer day camps sponsored by CEF, and soon, we began taking Hispanic children to them. Since we, as Spanish-speakers who had built relationships with the kids and parents, were involved at camp, the mothers felt comfortable letting their children attend.

We soon learned of another opportunity offered by CEF: great training for adults called Teaching Children Effectively. Josie Cañada, then age 15, and I registered for these 31 hours of college-level training. Since the course focused on evangelism, it was a tremendous help to both of us, serving as a handy tool not only for working with children but also for sharing the Gospel with adults.

We learned how to prepare a Bible lesson and make it applicable to the children. Other topics included creative classroom discipline, memory verses, and review games. We gained more confidence to serve our Lord Jesus Christ by reaching out to children, and we were able to start running an RTBC club during the school year. The entire Cañada family could be involved every week because both Josie and Valeria decided to be home-schooled and God has given their mom a love to serve and to help her children thrive in serving Christ too.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, our RTBC grew from 8 children to about 25! And, for the next three years, we had more than 35 children register. The Lord graciously provided a big classroom at a nearby church building, three vans and a car, drivers, and an incredible team of joyful teachers and helpers. We were encouraged to see children return every year and invite their friends.

Our greatest joy is seeing children respond to the Gospel by placing their faith in Christ for salvation during a one-on-one counseling session—even with songs and games happening at the same time! We also love seeing those who know Christ choose to put Him first in their lives. We praise the Lord for His goodness as He includes us in this great and undeserved joy.

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The 2025–2026 school year, however, came with some challenges: only 12 children registered for our RTBC, and several chose not to come every week. This phenomenon not only affected our RTBC but also others in our county. Honestly, at the beginning, it was difficult, but it gave us the opportunity to disciple the children more closely and even have them each read Bible verses aloud as we taught the lessons. It was encouraging to see several students not only joyfully attend but also continuously influence their peers to not miss Bible class!

Please pray for the salvation of the schools' leadership, for the unsaved children to be saved, and for the saved to be a light at school and at home.

Investment in youth and young women

In 2020, Josie Cañada and I participated in a summer CEF training program for teenagers called Christian Youth in Action. For seven days, about 80 to 100 Christian teens are trained in evangelism and to run clubs and day camps. They commit to three more weeks of service during the summer, and in four summers, they graduate from this training. It is a great way for teens to invest their youth in serving Christ.

In 2022, we began inviting youth from other Hispanic assemblies in Oregon to join the training. So far, five Hispanic teens from our assemblies have participated. Please pray that parents and elders will encourage their Christian teenagers to invest their time in serving Christ.

Years earlier, as a single Christian woman, my joy had been to reach out to young ladies. I wanted to communicate that there is a beautiful life in falling in love with the Savior and serving Him as a single person—a life I discovered in my mid-20s after years of sinful living.



While serving with my husband in Puruándiro in 2003, I was asked by Ted and Priscilla Clark (MPH Day 15) to help direct the girls' summer camp, for ages 13–17, at Camp Berea in Morelia. Later on, I began helping with the teaching and serving as a "camp chaplain." I love spending time one on one with the girls, counseling and mentoring them.

Shortly after Frederick and I moved to Oregon, the Lord opened the opportunity for me to start discipling young Christian women from Hispanic assemblies in Grants Pass and Medford. After about six months of intense discipleship, some seeds were watered, and over time, God nurtured spiritual growth in several of these young ladies. A core group of maturing believers who desire to serve the Lord developed. I challenged them to invigorate younger girls, and it has been beautiful to see God reproducing Christ in others by using them.

The launch of Girls' Mini-Camp

In 2019, while listening to a series of teachings that Arlene Norris (MPH Day 30) gave at Camp Berea in Morelia, the Lord impressed on my heart that these challenging, edifying teachings needed to be heard by our girls in Oregon. Soon, in collaboration with the Norrises and the Chavezes, the Girls' Mini-Camp was born: a weekend-long camp packed with five to six Bible teachings, singing, passage memorization, crafts, sports, games, and fun fellowship. The core group of young Christian women became the counselors, and now, some are even teaching and directing it.

Two years ago, I sensed from the Lord that it was time to pass the directing baton to a younger generation of faithful believers and dedicate myself to the ministry of prayer, teaching, and mentoring. Two godly young ladies, Jazmin and Pamela, planned and coordinated last year's Mini-Camp and are planning our eighth one, which will take place this month. We praise the Lord for the fruit He has allowed us to see over the years: some girls have come to faith in Christ; others have been convicted to leave secret, sinful lives; some have been baptized; and others have gone to Bible school. Sadly, some have chosen to leave Christ and go back to the world, usually falling into the temptation of being "unequally yoked" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Please pray that God will continue to conform each of us—counselors, coordinators, teachers, attendees, and helpers—to the image of Christ and to be a light to the world. Pray that God will strengthen our faith to wait on the Lord to be equally yoked and, meanwhile, to help us enjoy the privilege of serving the Lord faithfully, with our eyes on Jesus.

Left: Monica attends a Christian Youth in Action week with several teens. **Right (from top):** After the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of RTBC attendees skyrocketed; During the first year of RTBC, in 2019, Xiomara, Josie, and Monica formed part of the team; The RTBC leaders celebrate with the kids who memorized Bible verses and earned a special T-shirt; Teens teach a memory verse at a Christian Youth in Action event called Five-Day Club.



Three encouraging stories

In 2015, Josie started helping with Kidspace at age 13 and continued being a faithful co-teacher and helper at our RTBC until last year. By the grace of God, she has graduated from the summer Christian Youth in Action (CYIA) and now promotes it for our local CEF chapter. She also helps lead a group of girls at our assembly bimonthly, teaches Sunday school for one month every quarter, and is one of our faithful counselors during the Girls' Mini-Camp—all on top of getting her college degree. Even amid challenges, her love for Jesus is transparent and evident, and God has given her several opportunities to share her faith in Christ at the community college.

Josie's sister, Valeria, started attending Kidspace at age four, accompanying her mom, a faithful helper. Valeria continued attending our RTBC all throughout her elementary school years, being a great blessing to our class. Last summer, at age 12, she attended her first CYIA, and this school year, she continued to bless us as she taught and helped at our RTBC. She just began teaching Sunday school at our assembly.

Another young woman, Evelyn, began attending Kidspace when she was in first grade, and during the summers, she would attend day camps. She was in fifth grade when Kidspace ended and she outgrew day camp. For about three years, I did not hear from Evelyn. One day, her mom, Alondra, called me asking for prayer as one of her sons was going through very difficult struggles. I invited her to the women's Bible study at our assembly, and both Evelyn and her mom started attending.

About a year later, during a one-on-one study, Alondra believed in Christ as her Lord and Savior and began attending our assembly. Her challenges with her two sons continue, and her health is delicate, but she is growing spiritually and experiences Christ's peace in her heart and mind. Evelyn is considering attending CYIA.

Please pray for these women as the Lord places them on your heart. And please continue to pray for me—that I hold fast to Jesus and His loving leading, that I daily and humbly seek Him, and that the ministry He calls me to do would flow from experiencing His delight in us through Christ, our delight in His Word, and our love for Him. ■



Monica Sernatinger is commended from Iglesia Creyentes en Cristo in Medford, Oregon.

From top (L–R): At a conference, Monica invests in youth from various Oregon assemblies; Valeria teaches an RTBC club; Monica helped launch the Girls' Mini-Camp in 2019; Josie (center), pictured here in 2025, helped with the kids' Bible classes for 10 years; Monica and helpers transport kids to summer camp; Today, primarily young women lead the Girls' Mini-Camp.





BLESSINGS UPON BLESSINGS IN SENEGAL

TeamWorkers Abroad Helps
Renovate a Mission Compound

BY ALAN COBURN



Since 1987, the Wolof people, Senegal's largest ethnic group, have had the New Testament and Proverbs in their language—but not the complete Bible. That is about to change. The Wolof Bible has been translated and printed; by the middle of June, it will be in the hands of Wolof believers across the country and world.

In Malika, Senegal, Herma Bode (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 2) operates a mission compound focused on trade training, discipleship, and outreach, and she and her son Daniel have planned a big Wolof-Bible dedication for June 13. Herma and Daniel asked if TeamWorkers Abroad, a ministry that organizes work teams to help assembly missionaries accomplish building projects, could come to Senegal to help with renovations to their compound—ones required so they can better host guests. While contractors completed a kitchen and bathroom addition, our team added the finishing touches and prepared the rest of the site.

Hands-on missionary labor

The Lord provided a great group of seven men and two women, who gave of their time and money to go on this mission-project trip. Most of us coordinated our flights to meet at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. Then, we proceeded on to Senegal together—all of us except Lee and Cathy Griffen (Colorado), who missed their connecting flight but met us a day later.

On Sunday, February 15, at 8:30 a.m., six of us arrived safely in Malika: John Bradshaw (Kansas), Adam Greenhow (North Carolina), Bryce Jones (Georgia), Caleb Sterling (Colorado), and my wife, Chris, and I (New Jersey). At the compound, we were met by Herma and Daniel, as well as their invaluable coworkers Saliou, Alfred, and Jibby.

We got settled into our rooms and then went to the assembly on the compound, where we fellowshiped with the believers. Around 1:00 p.m., Jonathan Peck (North Carolina) joined us.

After a little R&R, we viewed the compound and assessed the jobs we would be working on over the next two weeks.

The initial phase of projects consisted of helping with house chores and site cleanup, including removing tree branches and debris, cutting away unneeded rebar, and chipping away lumps of concrete all over the new construction to provide for smooth, flat surfaces. We stacked blocks and wood forms and removed more debris while the contractors finished their work. We continued these tasks on and off during the week to keep the site neat and clean.

Then, we were on to other projects: We installed a new washing machine hookup in the bathroom, replaced the stove in the kitchen, and attached a new railing for one stairway. After removing some nonfunctioning heavy equipment from the shop area, we evaluated and worked on tiling, electricity, and plumbing in the old and new buildings.

By the end of our trip, we had also designed and made two new tables for the translation celebration and renovated the garage, workshop, and technology house. We installed new lighting, two AC units, and four new bathroom doors. Other items we repaired ranged from damaged lighting to broken furniture and leaning clothesline posts.

Spiritual and cultural interactions

Besides working, we enjoyed fellowshiping as a team, conversing with Herma's team and friends, and experiencing the culture—from morning till evening, Sunday to Saturday. Senegal is a Muslim country, so every morning around 5 a.m., the day would start with a horn call to prayer. (These calls would continue periodically all day and louder on Fridays.) Rather than praying to Allah as the community did, we worshipped God. Each team member and local staff took turns giving their testimony and sharing what a particular verse of Scripture meant to them.

Our lunches were served in typical Senegalese style: everyone received a spoon, and we ate together out of one large dish. One meal consisted of *yassa guinar* (chicken) served with hot *kaani* pepper, bell pepper, and rice. Most foods are typically spicy or hot, but they were kept on the mild side for us. We added more heat as we wanted.

In the evenings, we listened to the mission workers' and other travelers' stories of adventures. At the end of every meal, we would sing or just listen to several Wolof songs (the words are phonetic, so if you were good at it, you could sing along). We would also sing our translation of the songs. We would finish the night with conversation and games with the locals.

We enjoyed fellowshiping with the believers and the many visitors and staff on the grounds for the two Sundays we were

there. On Wednesday, the children came for at least two hours to play games and hear a gospel story, which we helped with.

Yes, we did have some free time with the staff, who showed us around the town and took us to key places in Malika: the beach, the House of Slaves at Gorée Island, and the Bandia Wildlife Reserve.

Unending blessings

Throughout the trip, God's Spirit was clearly at work in each of us unto unity, wonderful Christian fellowship, camaraderie, and safety. He gave us blessings on top of blessings. Truly, as 1 Corinthians 3:9 (KJV) says, "We are laborers together with God."

However, more work remains. Please pray for Herma, Daniel, and their team as they finish preparing for the international Wolof-Bible dedication. Pray that the event will glorify God. And pray that the new Bible translation will bless Wolof believers and reach countless Wolof nonbelievers.

While we were in Senegal, we experienced the beginning of Ramadan (a time of fasting and clean living to please Allah). As the Senegalese Muslims prayed to Allah for forgiveness and blessings, we prayed for them to seek and find Jesus. Please continue praying for these people. Pray, too, that God will strengthen and equip Herma's team as they share Christ's love and the Gospel. ■

Alan Coburn, CMML facilities manager and TeamWorkers Abroad board member



Page 8: (top row) A busy town surrounds the compound (Photo by Cathy Griffen); The team engages in renovations and smaller projects at this worksite (Photo by Cathy Griffen); (middle row) Daniel and Herma Bode welcome TeamWorkers Abroad to Senegal; In Herma's trade school, Senegalese workers make everything by hand—from clothing and jewelry to furniture and instruments; (bottom row) Chris Coburn seals a new table; Teammates lay piping (Photo by John Isaac Bradshaw); Children gather around Herma for games and a Bible lesson; Chris and Herma enjoy lunch with other women. **Above:** The TeamWorkers Abroad group, the Bodes, and their team enjoyed two weeks together (Alan and Chris Coburn at far left).

A Little Creativity Goes a Long Way

PRAYING FOR SPECIAL-AREAS MISSIONARIES REQUIRES **OUTSIDE-THE-BOX** THINKING

BY SARAH DUNLAP, MISSIONS EDITOR

Some countries are open to the Gospel. Some offer religious freedom but discourage or prohibit evangelization. Others are closed to missionaries altogether. Yet God is “not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9), so He calls His children to serve in countries all over the world—even “special areas.”

Many of the believers whom He calls to special areas must exercise caution, primarily for the safety of themselves and their contacts and to remain in the country. On the field, those precautions take forms supporters may never be aware of. But flip to the “Special Areas” section of the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*, and you’ll notice that no locations are listed, some workers abbreviate their names, and others withhold their contact information or photos. Read their newsletters, and you may observe the care with which they write—leaving out names, dates, and locations and even avoiding words such as *God* and *Bible*. Some may be unable to distribute newsletters.

Due to these precautions, knowing how to pray for special-areas missionaries can be difficult. Creativity is essential. As the missionaries themselves seek creative methods for sharing the Gospel, you can find additional ways to pray for them if you think outside the box of seemingly limited information. Ask God to help you find those creative ways. Below, we list three categories of “tips” to help you get started.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

One of the best ways to learn more about the missionaries you pray for is to consult good resources regularly:



- Find trusted news outlets so you can stay up to date on current events. An awareness of international situations and politics can help you understand the climate many special-areas missionaries live in—even if you don’t know their country or region.

- Rely on the information provided in the *Missionary Prayer Handbook* (MPH). Each missionary’s entry includes a ministry description, which gives you an idea of the work he or she is involved in. While you might not know the specifics of, say, the worker’s home Bible study, you can pray that God will grant the missionary special insight and strength while preparing.
- Read *Missions* magazine monthly. Missionaries, including some who serve in special areas, share updates in the “Connections” section (which, for security, appears only in the printed magazine, never online). Some even write articles on their ministries. *Missions* also publishes “May We Introduce” articles so you can get to know new missionaries.

START TALKING

Next, look for ways to interact with the missionaries digitally and in person:



- Communicate with them if possible. Some missionaries offer contact information, such as email addresses or WhatsApp numbers, in the MPH. Send them a note of encouragement; they may provide an update in response if they can share the information. Remember to choose your words carefully until you know what the missionaries are comfortable with; avoid words like *pray*, *Bible*, and *God* or find creative alternatives.
- Talk with them in person. If you learn of missionaries coming to the US or Canada on furlough, ask your assembly leadership to invite them to share a report at your church. Often, special-areas missionaries can discuss their ministries more openly in person—and you can ask them questions.



PUT YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES

Finally, use the knowledge you've gleaned alongside your personal understanding of everyday matters—family, health, the Christian walk—to consider aspects of life on the mission field:



- Pray for the missionaries' protection as they build relationships and share the Gospel, as they worship in their local churches and invite people to join them, and as they go about daily life—all of which present risks.
- Ask the Lord to give special-areas missionaries opportunities for physical, mental, and spiritual rest. Besides the usual factors that cause burnout, special-areas workers may face environmental stressors, such as extreme political tension, hostility and aggression toward Christians, isolation, and wars and fighting.
- Affordable, comfortable housing may be difficult for missionaries to find and keep. Ask the Lord to provide, or preserve, housing in a safe community.
- Pray for strong marriages and healthy families.
- Pray for the missionaries' children on their birthdays. In the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*, many of the entries list the kids' names and ages alongside their parents' information. You can look up the children's birthdays (when shared) in an index at the back of the MPH and pray for the kids on those days. As they age, remember their practical needs, such as education.
- Many parents have shared that missionary kids struggle with identity, so pray that their children will root themselves in Christ. Pray, too, for healthy, encouraging friendships on the field.
- Often, special-areas missionaries are far from their families, and some may fellowship with only one or two believers. They may crave the encouragement that comes from being with family and fellow believers. Pray that the Lord will give them a deep sense of fellowship with Him.

- Poverty surrounds some missionaries. They need discernment when helping their neighbors and community.
- Missionaries in areas affected by natural disasters often show Christ's love through relief work. These workers need wisdom to help others rebuild their lives while navigating the trauma themselves. Pray for opportunities to meet needs and present the Gospel.
- Workers devote much time and care to learning languages and cultures, especially when serving among unreached people groups in the 10/40 Window. Pray that the Lord will guide the missionaries and provide nationals who can help.
- Special-areas missionaries may find the line between ministry and local restrictions difficult to navigate. Pray for wisdom.
- Many of them are thrust into helping converts face marginalization and persecution from their own families and the society around them. Pray for wisdom to disciple new believers in grace, faithfulness, and boldness.
- In certain special-areas countries, the conditions and cultural expectations may limit women's movement and interactions. Such an environment can make ministry challenging for them and create feelings of isolation. Yet friendship evangelism can become a powerful tool when connections are forged. Pray for opportunities to build relationships.
- In a world of restrictions and security risks, special-areas missionaries need to approach their ministry with creativity. But, when they experience stress and concern, their creativity may plummet. Ask the Lord to supply new ideas, new perspectives, and strength to explore new opportunities.

Go before the throne

All missionaries need your prayers and support—for many of the reasons listed above. But prayers for special-areas missionaries may require more creativity. Don't let limited information stop you. God knows the details. He hears your prayers, and even when you think they're too general, He fills in the gaps. God knows what His children are facing, He knows their needs, and He loves your prayers. ■

This article first appeared in the February 2024 *Missions* issue.

Creativity for God's Glory

A Missionary's Passion Colors Her Outreach

BY SARAH DUNLAP, MISSIONS EDITOR, & SYLVIE GLOCK



We all have unique skills, but not all of us have discovered why God gave them to us. Sylvie Glock, a native of France now serving there as a missionary, believes that someday, God will not only show us but also use those talents for His glory.

Sylvie's own discovery took time. After honing her artistic skills from childhood and earning an art degree at the Sorbonne, her engagement with art waxed and then waned. About 10 years ago, however, the Lord revealed His plan for her as an artist. Read our conversation below to learn where Sylvie's passion and ministry meet.

Sarah: *What is your earliest memory of painting?*

Sylvie: I remember the first time I saw and used paint: I was in preschool. Our teacher had a piece of wood with holes that held the pots of colors. She put them between two chairs, and all the



little kids dipped their brushes in. We had easels, and we would paint often. I learned then that there's nothing I love more than putting colors on paper.

I grew up in a dysfunctional family, and as I grew older, art became my refuge. Before my conversion, at age 16, I would draw only cemeteries. The Lord then took me out of darkness to bring me into His light, His love. In one moment, I was saved, and my paintings found their colors!

Sarah: *From your perspective, how does creativity reflect God and His glory?*

Sylvie: I always think that if God, Jesus, is light and light is color in motion, then really color is in the essence of God. I think the Lord really loves color. When we see creation, it's crazy—crazy!—how colorful it is. And the design of everything is so impressive. When we say God created us in His image, then everyone has creativity. It's not that everyone can draw, but they use their creativity for different things, for good or for bad.

Sarah: *How did you begin using art in your ministry?*

Sylvie: I was an art teacher for 10 years. Then, I met Matthew, and we started to work as missionaries together. But I had already been a missionary before we met: I served with Wycliffe, and I taught art to children and young people in Senegal—at the Dakar Academy.

After that, I married Matthew, and I stopped teaching. I focused on being a missionary, and then, we had our three kids very fast. I had no time to do creative things; for a long time, I stopped drawing. The only creative thing I would do was changing diapers!

Then, we arrived in Paris 10 years ago. There were six Brethren churches, I think. We met with a very small storefront church. The believers had been praying for help. So we arrived as missionaries to help revitalize it. At first, though, it took time to understand their needs and gain their confidence.

The only thing I could do was make friends and talk to them about God. I thought maybe I could join a club of some kind and make friends. On the internet, I saw that there was a center just five minutes away with different clubs. So I did choir and a gymnastics class, and then, I said maybe I could take a drawing

Above (from top): A decade ago, Sylvie returned to art as a way to meet Parisians; As a young person, Sylvie (back row, center) taught at the Dakar Academy.



class. I used to like to draw, but I was so far away from art. It was gone for 15 years. I wasn't even sure if I still knew how to draw. But art is like biking: you don't forget. The first class was three hours long, and by the end, I was back on track.



Sarah: *Could you use your regained skills in the assembly?*

Sylvie: Back at the church, the elder's wife asked me to help with the storefront's window display. It was covered with cardboard, and between the cardboard and the glass, they had slid in a few posters—old-fashioned posters with Christian phrases or verses. When the woman left, I said to Matthew, "So what are we going to do?" Then, I put my finger between the glass and cardboard, and suddenly, all the cardboard fell away. And the church was "opened" that day. The light came in!



Now, we had this big window, and I needed to put something there. Whenever I would walk down the street, I knew which shop was a florist because there were flowers in the window. Next, there was a bookstore with books in the window. Then, there was our church. It was empty.

At first, Matthew hung a wood panel in the window, and I would create and then hang big pastel drawings. Later, Matthew hung frames for me, and I started to put art in them. Our assembly is located in a very busy neighborhood with a lot of luxury stores. They change their window displays every month. You can't put something and leave it for years. Suddenly, I was so busy thinking of ideas and creating. What do you draw for a church? I realized that you have to put beautiful things just as the Lord created beautiful things, like flowers, trees, humans, and color.

I have created new art every month for the last 10 years. I have so many pieces now. Every two months, I send nine of them to another church for their display.

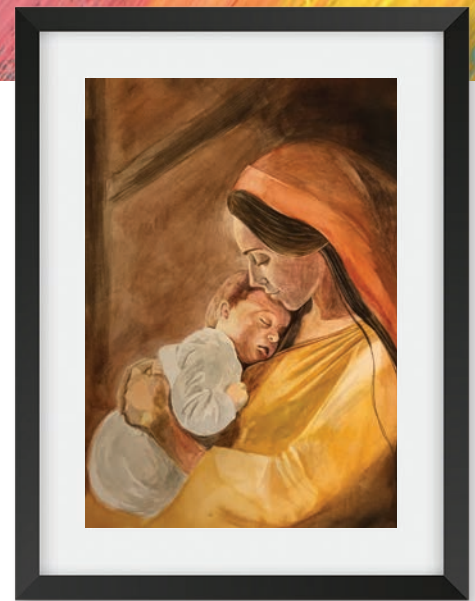
Sarah: *Do the displays help you interact with the community?*

Sylvie: All of those pieces, I have done in a watercolor class at the center five minutes away. My teacher, who is really, really nice, is a practicing Catholic. She understood very fast that I was going to put my watercolors in our church's window display.

She sets the subject every week for our entire class—one week, we'll focus on, say, transparency. So I think, *How can I use her subject for my own purpose?* I try to follow her themes, but sometimes, I stretch them a little. (And she knows this. She doesn't get mad.) Like, at Christmastime two years ago, she asked us to draw Santa Claus. I thought, *Oh dear, what am I going to do? This time, I'll have to disobey.* I found a photo of a woman carrying a baby—I was going to draw Mary and Jesus.

Above (from top, L-R): Sylvie captures everything from nature to scenes of Paris; For her teacher's theme of transparency, Sylvie created stunning perfume bottles; In class, Sylvie works on a picture for a window display; Every month, Sylvie decorates her assembly's storefront window with new watercolors.

“IN ONE MOMENT, I WAS SAVED, AND MY PAINTINGS FOUND THEIR COLORS.”



Later, some of the ladies looked around, and when they saw my drawing, they said, “Oh! That’s Jesus.” Some of them started crying. They were touched—even the teacher. That moment changed the heart of the people in class. To get to class, they must walk past our church. I don’t have to think of ways to start spiritual conversations; they ask me questions all the time.

Sarah: *Have the displays sparked conversations with other residents of the neighborhood?*

Sylvie: Yes, they have. I don’t sign my drawings or paintings. A lot of people stop in and say, “So who is drawing?” You see, Paris is the city of art. The city was built on it. Here, art is very important to people. I didn’t know why the Lord gave me this gift, but now, I realize it was for this city.

Sarah: *Tell us about the art exhibitions you’ve participated in.*

Sylvie: With the branch of Cru in Paris focused on the arts, I have done quite a lot. Then, all the Christian associations of France host a big event every four years. Last June was the first time they had an exhibition for Christian artists. They asked me to contribute.

But one exhibition in particular stands out. Back in 2018, the year the world remembered the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.’s death, Cru France prepared an exhibition honoring King’s battle against segregation and prejudice. I agreed to do some portraits.

As the deadline for turning in my work approached, I still had not started. I wondered what was keeping me from working on a subject that was so important to me. I asked the Lord for help. I did some research and learned new techniques. Suddenly, it worked! I started drawing and created portraits of Martin Luther King Jr. and others involved in the Civil Rights Movement (that US movement of the 1950s and ’60s significantly influenced France). We have a lot of Black believers in our assembly, so I offered to draw their portraits too.

A group of churches in Paris’s 15th arrondissement also presented the exhibition in our town hall. We held a conference at the town hall with three pastors who spoke about the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. In the back, we had a space for the exhibition; I hung all the portraits there. People from the neighborhood, as well as the church, attended—maybe 200 people. I was thankful. It wasn’t an easy subject; I didn’t know how to handle it. I prayed, and the Lord knew. He helped me.

Sarah: *How can we pray for your endeavors to reach Paris for Christ through art?*

Sylvie: Besides my art classes, I also participate in the choir. I have friends who are my age, in their 60s. With so many of them, I speak about God. With some, I pray for a subject they’ve asked me to. But, still, I have not seen a conversion.

Parisians are very bright, very rich. All the ladies I know have done more education than I have. They have beautiful apartments looking at the Eiffel Tower. The only thing that made these ladies think was the COVID-19 pandemic. One woman in the choir passed away. She was only 52.

I was not in Paris at the time, but the other choir ladies went to her funeral. The organizers just dug a hole, placed the coffin in, and that was the end. The ladies were shocked. They considered that when they get older and die, there will be nothing.

These are my close friends. Please pray for them. Only the Lord can break through the barriers and touch their hearts.

Sarah: *So had you always hoped to use art in your ministry, or did God’s opportunities surprise you?*

Sylvie: No, I had no idea. It was really a surprise. We all have different skills, but He knows exactly why He gave them to us. At some point in our lives, He’s going to use each of them. ■

Sylvie Glock is commended from Plano Bible Chapel in Texas. For more art, follow Sylvie on Instagram: @sylviegart.

Above (L-R): Sylvie shows her pictures at exhibitions, which draw believers and nonbelievers alike; In her watercolor class, Sylvie painted this picture of Mary and Jesus.