

July 2026

# MISSIONS

## FISH Academy Helping Curb Traumas in South Sudan

**The BCC**  
A Pioneer Ministry  
Evangelizes Türkiye

**Camiri Christian  
School**  
70 Years of Shaping  
Lives in Bolivia

**Interview**  
Parenting in Peru





# THINKING IT THROUGH

BY TOM STANCZAK

## The Lord Is My Banner!

*Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses's hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. (Exodus 17:11–13 ESV)*

What do hands raised in prayer have in common with hands holding a “sword” on the front lines in Poland?

As the Israelites journeyed through the desert, they encountered numerous obstacles and sometimes needed to fight, but the Lord was their banner. One early attack came from the Amalekites at Rephidim. The enemy surprised the Israelites by attacking the exhausted group, especially those struggling at the rear (Deuteronomy 25:18). Moses instructed Joshua to “choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek” (Exodus 17:9 ESV). This reminds me of missionaries, especially those of us involved in church planting and evangelism, who often face obstacles on the mission field.

Joshua and his men fought bravely, but thankfully, they were not alone. Moses positioned himself on the hill, holding up God's staff and calling upon the Lord God for strength (vv. 8–16). The battle's outcome depended on that staff being up. That is, as long as Moses entreated God on behalf of the fighting men, they would win, but if he tired in his intercession, the enemy would overtake them. Aaron and Hur's support, holding Moses's arms steady, was crucial.

In this great struggle, God was working, and He gave victorious power to Joshua and the fighting men of Israel. So both those who raised hands in prayer and those who fought with swords relied on God, and He got the whole credit: in worship, Moses built an altar named the Lord Is My Banner (v. 15).

What is the spiritual significance of this victory for future Bible readers (v.14)? How is this centuries-old story an encouragement for us serving on the front lines with the Gospel? It shows how God can use intercession and support to empower His warriors to defend and advance the Gospel.

Over a year ago, our assembly in Poland underwent a massive spiritual attack. Satan used this occasion in a powerful way.

At this time, I experienced one of the most vicious Satanic attacks in my 40-plus years as a follower of Jesus. During a Breaking of Bread meeting, an invisible “person” slipped in beside my chair. I felt his powerful, dark presence immediately and heard him whisper in my ear, “You live passionately, but God is not protecting you; if He were, you wouldn't be attacked like this.”

As soon as I understood who was speaking and what he wanted me to do, I responded in my weakness, “Oh, no! If I turn away from the Lord, I have nobody in my life.” The oppressor immediately fled.

Not knowing what we were going through, two believers from Iowa called me, saying they felt the Lord wanted them to fly to Poland to encourage us. These two dear believers came for a week and wonderfully “lifted up our hands,” encouraging

not only us but our entire assembly! People wept when they realized why the two men had come. Similar to Aaron and Hur's account, this is a beautiful story of people coming alongside and supporting their fellow believers when weariness strikes.

When we visit with believers during our furloughs, we are amazed to hear how specifically they are praying for us. In this way, too, we are reminded and encouraged that we, like Moses and Joshua, are not alone in the battle.

Yes, attacks are to be expected when we serve the Lord on the front lines. But, for decades, believers have been a huge encouragement to my wife and me. Assemblies, CMML, and other organizations, each in their unique ways, have cared for us as well.

Dear reader, by your hands raised in prayer on behalf of those on the mission field, you “hold up our hands” to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth. I thank the Lord, my Banner, for you! ■

*Tom Stanczak serves in Poland.*

**God can use intercession and support to empower His warriors to defend and advance the Gospel.**

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COVER PHOTO: Woman in South Sudan—©AdobeStock





# More Than a School

## FISH Academy Helps Curb Childhood Traumas in South Sudan

BY VASILE GIULEA

**M**y travels to South Sudan began in 2010 when a Christian organization that ministers to victims of war, violence, and extreme poverty invited me to teach and hold Bible studies for its chaplains' ministries. When I first arrived, South Sudan was still part of Sudan and would not gain independence until 2011.

I was taken aback by the immense poverty I witnessed. Although I had been to extremely impoverished countries before, this was different: No water, no electricity, no homes. Malnourished children. And, on top of all that, an ongoing civil war.

After I returned home from my second ministry trip to the area, my mind stayed on the people and all I had witnessed. But, during my third ministry trip to South Sudan, in the 2010s, I felt God directing me to help. I extended my stay, and with a translator, I went from village to village asking questions. My first goal was to understand how much the people knew about God and the Bible. My second goal was to get a better understanding of their culture and living conditions.

### Finding a twofold calling

I quickly discovered that the people's Bible knowledge was low or nonexistent. Due to their lack of money and the means to travel, villagers find it difficult to attend a church. Without electricity, they cannot even listen to God's Word on a radio.

I also discovered that, due to the civil wars in Sudan and now South Sudan, the villages contained many widows, some even left with more than six children to feed and clothe with little means of support. As I spoke to many of the widows and their children, I learned more regarding the education system



**From top:** Students engage in a lively morning assembly; The academy's computer lab is popular; Students participate in end-of-year testing in preparation for graduation; The academy also offers a debate class.

of South Sudan. Every family must pay for each child to attend school. If the family doesn't have enough money for the tuition, the children remain at home. Some children are just kept in the villages to help with the daily duties needed for survival. But many of the boys, some as young as eight, are sent to fight in the civil war.

Although these facts were troubling, the most disturbing find was the selling of female children as brides, some as young as seven. Within South Sudan, women are viewed as commodi-

## HUNDREDS HAVE FLED THEIR VILLAGES AND HAVE COME TO FISH ACADEMY FOR HELP.

ties. Most families would rather use the money they have to send their sons to school and keep their daughters at home to help take care of it and get ready for marriage. Each young woman might then be negotiated and sold to another family as a young bride.

Since I have four daughters of my own, this reality touched me deeply. I felt I had found the calling God had for me in South Sudan: to not only spread the gospel message but also help change the custom of the selling of young brides.

### Laying a biblical foundation

In 2013, after much prayer and discussion with local Christian leaders, I decided to first start Bible Education clubs, Giving Women a Voice clubs, and HIV and Health clubs for high-school-aged children—under the umbrella of Reaching Mankind for Christ (RMC) Ministries, an organization I had started in 1991. Since I did not have the funds to begin a school at the time, I negotiated with and gained permission from the South Sudanese government to implement these clubs within their public school system. Each club would be either an after-school program or part of the curriculum, added as an extra school period. The idea was to begin building a biblical, educational foundation at a young age.

Through the Bible Education clubs, we taught the Bible and highlighted biblical leaders and the importance of love, forgiveness, and a true relationship with our Lord and Savior. Through the Giving Women a Voice clubs, we provided a platform for young women to openly discuss their struggles of living in South Sudan, while the young males in these schools learned to respect women. Lastly, through the HIV and Health clubs, we taught personal care and hygiene.

After three years, I began to see a change in how the students treated one another; God was working. I observed young men from different tribes eating and praying together, while those tribes, outside of school, were at war with one another. I noticed young men treating young women with respect and protecting them. And I saw a drop in sick children in schools. It was truly amazing; praise be to God.

### Opening a refuge for girls and boys

After witnessing the clubs' success, I began praying earnestly for the opportunity to expand my ministry in South Sudan. The current education provided in its public schools was not up to par with the standards of even the neighboring countries. So I decided it was time to open an academy that would be tuition free for struggling families and would offer an educational level above that of the current standard in South Sudan. Most importantly, it would be a faith-based school that would teach Christian values and education.

God opened the doors for me to start FISH Academy, the first RMC Ministries high school in South Sudan. My vision is that through *faith*, *independence*, and *salvation*, one can *hope* and achieve a better future—that vision forms the acronym in the school's name.

FISH Academy is more than just a school; it provides a safe haven for girls so they will not be sold as young brides. Hundreds have fled their villages and have come to FISH Academy for help. Because of the difficulty and trauma these girls have experienced, the school provides various programs, including counseling and healthcare education, in addition to biblical and general curriculum studies. The school has also accepted hundreds of young men who have put down their guns and fled to FISH Academy, looking for escape and refuge from the war.

The school currently has male and female dormitories, classrooms, a cafeteria, a kitchen, and an athletic field. Due to the high demand, I am currently adding more classrooms, dormitories, a larger kitchen, and a dining hall that can also be used for worship on Sundays. These additions will enable the school to hold 500 students.



have graduated from FISH Academy since its inauguration—the most ever from one school within South Sudan.



God's work is truly being done. Some students who have graduated from FISH Academy and gone on to become doctors, lawyers, educators, engineers, and pastors—among other professions—have come back to FISH Academy to help and teach the current students. This past graduating class brought the total to over 250 young ladies who

## Moving into the community and beyond

After the academy had been established and was running smoothly, I wanted to expand the education to include the local community, so I created trade schools to take place in the evenings. There, we teach various trades to the widowed so they can provide for their families. The most popular class has been textile education, which teaches how to make clothes and then sell them in the local market. The second most popular has been farming and agriculture. This class has over 500 chickens that the students learn to care for, raise, and eventually sell in the markets. The students also help grow potatoes, rice, grain, and various fruits and vegetables—gaining invaluable knowledge needed to replicate the farming in their villages.

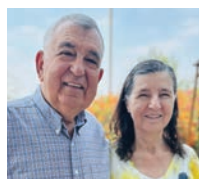
Most recently, I created a theology and Bible program that teaches and mentors future church leaders. These students have started street evangelism and prison ministries that have brought thousands of individuals to the Lord. As part of FISH Academy, we created a modern computer lab, among the first of its kind in South Sudan. Students can now learn basic computer skills to even become Microsoft certified, allowing them to work right out of school.

The school currently staffs just over 40 employees—nationals from both South Sudan and Uganda. They include teachers, cooks, administrators, and maintenance and security members, with a requirement that all are Christians. This stipulation, at first, was challenging. However, with the mandatory Bible education courses, we have seen a transformation in our staff and within their families and villages.

Donor support undergirds the growth of FISH Academy, staff members' salaries, materials, books, tuition, and students' living and food expenses. The doors and opportunities God has provided in South Sudan for the students and the local community are nothing short of a miracle. God has truly blessed this work.

A lot more work must be done here, and I ask that you keep us in your prayers. Young women are still being sold into child marriages. Please pray for them. Given the civil war that resumed in 2025, I ask that you pray for the people of South Sudan, especially the widows, the young men forced to fight, and the kids experiencing trauma. Please pray for the students' street-evangelism team; the members risk their lives going into the streets and prisons to spread God's Word.

And, lastly, I ask you to pray that there may be a spiritual awakening in South Sudan—that the people may love one another as Christ has loved each and every one of us. Amen. ■



*Vasile Giulea and his wife, Dori, are commended from the Romanian Brethren Communities in Fullerton, California.*



**Opposite page (from top):** These young women are starting their first year at FISH Academy; Once a fighter in the civil war, Barnaba has graduated and is now in college. **Above (from top, L-R):** Vasile (at right) speaks to people from the village behind FISH Academy; Vasile and his wife, Dori, encourage the academy's staff; The school reaches the community too, including these widows in a textile trade course; Students in the theology and Bible program engage in street evangelism; These students represent FISH Academy's soccer club.

# PARENTING ON THE MISSION FIELD

## A Conversation with the Ramirez Family

Peru, *Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 22



Life on the mission field involves more than just ministry. Many of the missionaries listed in the *Missionary Prayer Handbook* are simultaneously raising families. While some aspects of parenting are universal, others are unique to each family's country and situation. The families need our prayers as they address the challenges, embrace the joys, and walk in step with the Holy Spirit.

The Lord used a short-term mission trip and an orphanage to unite Javier and Mindy Ramirez. Back in 2018, Javier, a Peruvian national, was serving as the administrator of the orphanage when Mindy arrived, searching for a new mission field after six years in Kenya. A month later, Mindy knew Peru was the right fit.

After bonding over their hearts for orphaned and vulnerable children, Mindy and Javier married in August 2019. The couple welcomed their daughter, Lilia, in 2022, and their son, Mateo, followed about two years later.

Today, Javier and Mindy focus their ministry on orphan care, discipleship, home Bible studies, and preaching. The family resides in Trujillo—four out of one million people who call the coastal desert city home. As you read the following interview, take note of the family's daily life, opportunities, and challenges. Your prayers for them are priceless.

### **Since the home is the center of family life, tell us about where you live.**

We live in a small two-story house about a half hour from the city center. There are about 100 houses and 100 apartments in the community, and we appreciate that it is fenced off, as safety is a big concern here. All the houses are touching, which was new for me, Mindy! We enjoy a tiny backyard, which is uncommon in the city, and a park right across the street.

### **What language do you prefer to speak at home?**

Our kids are completely bilingual! I speak to them in English, and Javier talks to them in Spanish. I want to keep up the kids' English since our lives outside home are all in Spanish. Javier is working on his English. When he and I speak to each other, we normally use Spanish (I picked up the language while living in the Dominican Republic years ago).

### **Were your children born in Peru or the US? Have they spent much time in the States?**

Lilia, who is three years old, was born in the US. She spent the first four months of her life there and then three more months when she was a year old—plus two shorter trips. Mateo is one and a half and has spent a month total in the States. He was born in Peru. They both are dual citizens.

### **In Peru, is parenting a group effort or private?**

Definitely a group effort. Many times, the extended family helps a lot with child rearing. People are not afraid to give you advice, even strangers!

### **What's something that has helped you parent in a new country and culture?**

We remember that our God is in control in all countries and gives us strength to parent wherever He has placed us. I, Mindy,

Left: The family marvels over a rainbow, a rare sight in Trujillo due to low rainfall.

love seeing that kids are kids in any country: throwing rocks, playing in the dirt, making friends.

**Mindy, as an American, do you intentionally incorporate any of your culture into everyday life?**

I intentionally speak English with Lilia and Mateo so they can communicate in the United States. We also read a lot of books, which is not super common in Peru. Lilia and Mateo are often barefoot, which people here think is strange!

**What do babies and toddlers eat in your culture? What are your kids' favorite foods?**

The big meal here is lunch, and it almost always contains rice. Our kids both love rice! Peruvians give babies a lot of soups, and both our kids love soup still. Lilia also loves the smoked salmon that arrives in her grandma's suitcase—one of the many joys about Grandma's visits!



**How do you help your kids connect with their grandparents, including those living overseas?**

We are so thankful we can use FaceTime to talk to Mindy's parents in the States, and we are thankful that Javier's mom lives close by. Lilia loves having Grandma and Grandpa read her books over FaceTime, and Mateo starts saying "Hi!" whenever

he hears the FaceTime ringtone! We are also thankful that Mindy's parents have been able to visit at least once a year.

**Does your family prefer outdoor adventure, city exploration, or indoor activity? Do you have opportunities to enjoy it?**

We love outdoor adventure! There isn't a lot of greenery where we live, since Trujillo receives less than an inch of rain per year—imagine lots of sand and dust. But we love getting up into the mountains or going to the beach.



**Some missionaries say weekends are the busiest time of the week. What are yours like, and how do you find balance?**

Weekends are often busy, especially when we travel to encourage small churches far away. If our weekends are full, we try to take a day or half day during that following week to spend time as a family.



**As missionaries, you likely travel often. How do you manage frequent or long trips with your children?**

I bring a bag full of toys, books, and snacks for the long car trips. We also sing a lot and are learning some hymns and old children's songs. We all take turns picking a song to listen to.

Staying in places other than home can be challenging, especially when they come with cockroaches or other insects! The kids bring something with them for familiarity and comfort. For Lilia, it is her pink, fuzzy blanket. We can't leave home without it! Mateo, on the other hand, is happy with at least one pair of shoes.

**Has becoming parents opened up new ministry opportunities?**

I, Mindy, have had a lot of opportunities to reach out to other moms with young kids in our neighborhood. I have shared my faith by example and sometimes with words.

**What's something the culture has taught you about parenting?**

One thing we really appreciate about the Peruvian culture is the understanding that kids are kids and, many times, they act like children—Peruvians don't expect perfection! Often, when I feel embarrassed by the way my kids are acting or don't know what to do, people tell me, "They're just kids!" This helps me remember that my children don't have to be perfect and that they are learning, just as we are.

**How can we pray for your family?**

Please pray that we can guide and lead our children in the way God wants us to. Please pray for balance between ministry and family life and for wisdom in how to include our kids in our ministry. We would appreciate prayers for safety generally and as we travel. ■

Above, left (from top): Lilia and Mateo savor bowls of rice-based soup; Mindy's mom teaches Lilia to bake cookies; The beach offers the Ramirezes a fun reprieve. Above right: Sometimes, visiting assemblies means joining forces with fellow missionaries, such as the Cacho-Hansen family (MPH Day 21) pictured at left.

# SHAPING LIVES IN *Bolivia*

70 Years of Camiri Christian School

BY ANDRES SEGOVIA



Seven decades ago, a missionary couple founded the first and only Christian school in the small city of Camiri, in southern Bolivia's Santa Cruz department. Eugene and Loraine Train planted a seed that has grown into a flourishing tree, whose branches now reach across generations despite obstacles and challenges. With God's help, we can say that Camiri Christian School has shaped thousands of lives and left an indelible mark on the community—providing excellent education and sharing the Gospel with students ranging from kindergartners to high schoolers.

## Uncovering a curious beginning

Very few people know why the school observes its anniversary on March 6—an odd start date when the school year in this part of the world starts in February and ends in November. I heard the story from Eugene Train himself: By December 1955—summertime in the Southern Hemisphere—the Lord had provided property, but classrooms had yet to be built. As opening day approached, rain delayed the construction even further. Seldom in Bolivia has the first day of classes been postponed all the way to March, but 1956 was one of those years. It just so happened that the Lord was graciously giving Camiri Christian School more time to finish the project.

Parts of the school have been rebuilt since March 6, 1956. We now have a two-story building with classrooms of clay bricks and nice floor tiles. But an old section of the infrastructure, made of adobe-brick walls, concrete flooring, and ceramic roof tiles, is still there. Perhaps one day that part of the school will

also be renovated, but for now, it stands as a lasting monument, preserving its modest origins.

## Rejoicing all year long

We are planning events to honor the school's anniversary throughout the entire year. However, we held five major activities in March.



We began with a thanksgiving service in which Phil Train, son of the founders, emphasized three points: 1) God's plan, 2) God's provision, and 3) God's purpose. In point number one, he recounted how his parents were obedient to God's call to Camiri. In point number two, he stirred us to praise God for His faithfulness. Phil was a witness to his parents' prayers for the school, which helped many children from the rural areas obtain an education. And, in point number three, Phil reaffirmed for the audience that the school's purpose will remain the same:

**Top (L-R):** Elementary students carry the school's insignia; Gene and Loraine Train (center, front and back rows) pose with teachers in the old days; Folk dancers entertain everyone. **Above right:** Phil Train (center), with Andres to the right, enjoys a special barbecue dinner with the faculty.

to serve the community—or as the school's motto says: *Sembador de conocimiento y vidas para Cristo* ("Sower of knowledge and lives for Christ").

The second activity was a special barbecued-rib dinner at a nice restaurant. Phil invited all teachers and staff to attend and participate with short dialogues: new teachers introduced themselves, others mentioned the impact the school has had on them, alumni recollected anecdotes, and still others expressed goals for the coming year or satisfaction for fulfilled objectives. Each one had an opportunity to share something.

Activity number three was the official ceremony, which began with a formal procession of the principal, teachers, and staff, led by Phil. Then, the six top students made their entrance: three from elementary carried the school's insignia, and three from high school carried a banner with the Bolivian emblem. The master of ceremonies welcomed our guests of honor: authorities from the mayor's office and the department of education, elders from the church, former teachers, alumni, the student body, parents, and the public.



I prayed to give thanks for having a senior class again after six years since we had closed the high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. A student from this graduating class presented the Scripture reading: Psalm 103. And Phil gave an address. Different attendees presented plaques and gifts. Folk dances and special numbers from our choir made the evening more enjoyable, and we finished with a toast and refreshments.

### Celebrating with competition

Our fourth activity featured a morning devotional time and sports. The school's former music teacher played the accordion, and alumni had the chance to sing the old, traditional choruses they had sung during the Friday chapel times. Missionary Mark Mattix (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 18), the former Bible teacher, led the singing and gave the meditation just as in years past. Different graduating classes then competed against each other in a volleyball tournament.

For the last activity in March, we held our traditional family marathon, divided into three categories: kindergarten, elementary, and high school. The purpose was not competition but camaraderie. One parent or a parental figure chosen by the student had to run with him or her. It was not about crossing the finish line first but about participating, bonding, and having fun.



Throughout the remainder of the school year, we will continue celebrating through events designed to engage everyone: a fundraiser banquet, a virtual choir comprising the school's former choir members, and sports tournaments involving parents and other private schools in town. We eagerly anticipate our first graduation since the pandemic, a fitting conclusion to the anniversary year. Please pray for it and the other end-of-year programs.

### Remembering God's goodness

I am grateful to have been part of Camiri Christian School for 30 years. The Lord has sustained the ministry, but He has also carried me in His arms all these years. I have spent most of my days at the school or in a school-related activity; even church meetings were held on the basketball court when I first arrived. And I thank God that quite a number of our students attend the church's meetings and activities.



I don't think I exaggerate if I say that the school is my home and the teachers and students are my family. I like celebrations and have much to celebrate, so I shout out: "To God be the glory, great things He has done!" These busy, joyful days will remain in my memory and heart. God's goodness, faithfulness, provision, and protection have been celebrated and will be celebrated in eternity. Lord willing, the work and the celebrations are not yet finished, so I conclude with: to be continued. . . ■



*Andres Segovia is commended from Anchor Community Church in Dubuque, Iowa.*

**Left (from top):** Phil Train (center) gathers with the faculty during one ceremony; The kindergarten choir performs during the anniversary ceremony. **Right (from top):** After enjoying volleyball, alumni gather for a reunion photo; Andres (back row, third from left) joined Camiri Christian School as a teacher 30 years ago.