

July 2022

MISSIONS

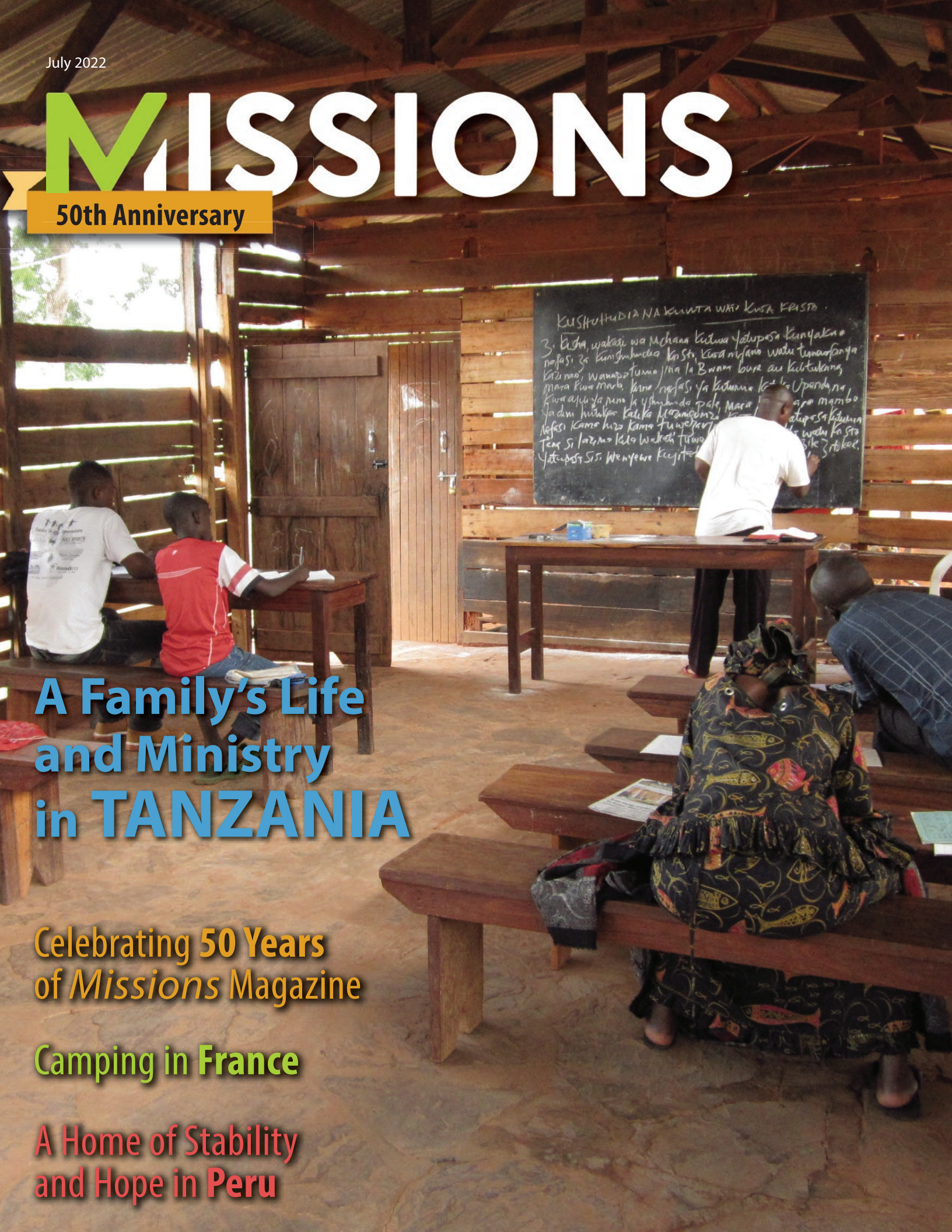
50th Anniversary

A Family's Life and Ministry in TANZANIA

Celebrating 50 Years
of *Missions* Magazine

Camping in France

A Home of Stability
and Hope in Peru





THINKING IT THROUGH

BY ALAN PARKS

Battles Within, Battles Without, and the Ultimate Victory

I write this on a beautiful day: blue skies, warm weather, and a peaceful atmosphere. However, for many, life at this moment is anything but easy and peaceful. The world's attention has been riveted on a war in Eastern Europe, termed by many as a "David versus Goliath" conflict. Throughout history, all wars have been horrible for those involved. Human suffering tugs at our heartstrings.

At least 220 verses in our Bible contain the word *war*. Anyone familiar with Israel's history can name numerous wars involving that nation. Students study wars in school, some of which defined a nation's history.

Several New Testament verses describe the spiritual warfare that all believers know. While the battles aren't marked by physical weaponry or armies in uniforms, they're no less real. We cannot see our ultimate enemy, yet we feel his attacks. We often remember Peter's words: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." (1 Peter 5:8–9)

Christians have long taken comfort in verses of promise, such as: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds [and] casting down arguments." (2 Corinthians 10:3–4) We also read of the power contained within us: "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

Many wars and battles pit a powerful army against a much weaker party. The war in which we're engaged is no different. In and of ourselves, we're no match for our enemy. If not for that last clause above—"because He who is in you is greater"—we would possess no hope in this fight.

What comfort this brings. We belong to a God who arms us, fights alongside of us, and is assured the ultimate victory.

Moses tells us this in Deuteronomy 3:22: "You must not fear them, for the Lord your God Himself fights for you."

As the war in Europe rages, we all have seen the horrific images and heard refugees' heart-wrenching stories. Many nights, I've gone to sleep with a heavy heart—grateful to sleep in peace yet deeply saddened about the suffering of others.

At the same time, I have been equally thrilled and filled with awe as I've read reports on social media from missionaries and national believers directly in harm's way. I've read no desperation, sensed no fear, nor have I seen any despair. From their example, I've learned about living when danger surrounds me, peace amid explosions, living well above circumstances, and the sense of true victory regardless of personal outcome. I've watched the church respond in the best of ways: in fervent prayer and through tangible support, flooding needed supplies to the region. Indeed, you and I are watching true Christianity in action.

The war in Eastern Europe is revealing timeless truths with lessons for all of us, all of the time, whether our battles are physical or spiritual. Because the God of peace came near, we have "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding [and] will guard [our] hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

No matter what battles we face today—spiritual, physical, economic, health—take heart, dear saint, for we are not in them alone. Above us is a Father who pities His children, alongside us is the Friend who sticks closer than any earthly brother, underneath us are everlasting arms, and indwelling us is the Holy Spirit Himself (Psalm 103:13; Proverbs 18:24; Deuteronomy 33:27; 1 Corinthians 3:16).

Best of all, God has foretold us that, in the end, we win because of Him: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57) ■

Alan Parks is a commended worker based in South Carolina.

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FRONT COVER: Bible school in Tanzania—Luke Johnson

BACK COVER: ©AdobeStock



A Life and Ministry in TANZANIA

Striving to Present Every Person Complete in Christ

BY LUKE JOHNSON



The apostle Paul has been a great inspiration to me as I seek to fulfill God's calling for my life. In the pages of the New Testament, I read of his zeal in spreading the Gospel and establishing assemblies of believers wherever he went; I sense his genuine concern for the spiritual growth of each individual; I see his perseverance amid overwhelming trials.

I seek to emulate all these characteristics, but much of the time, I find myself falling short in many ways. I am often reminded of Paul's words: "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God." (2 Corinthians 3:5, NASB 1995)

In January 2009, my wife, Gina, and I, along with our two-year-old daughter, Esther, arrived in Tanzania. We planned to serve alongside my parents, Harry and Ruth Johnson (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 3), in the town of Kigoma, located on the western side of the country. Now, 13 years later and with our five children, we continue to serve the body of Christ here. The ministry the Lord has committed to us is varied and sometimes changing, but we praise Him for all He is doing in Kigoma, Tanzania.

Teaching, encouraging, and training

Our first commitment is to Christ's blood-bought church. There are now 32 assemblies in our area of service. Besides the one church in Kigoma, the others are in villages spread across three regions in western Tanzania. We feel the two greatest needs are solid Bible teaching and qualified shepherds to oversee the flock.

The saying that Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa is "a mile wide but only an inch deep" often applies to our context. Many

profess the name of Christ but know little of what the Bible teaches. Therefore, our greatest work involves teaching the Bible and encouraging and training leaders. How do we do this? We visit the village assemblies, where we preach, exhort, and encourage the congregations and their leaders. We should not underestimate the impact of meeting with believers face to face. As Paul wrote, "But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face." (1 Thessalonians 2:17, NASB 1995)

From time to time, we hold seminars, which allow for concentrated biblical teaching on specific topics. Please pray that God will cause the believers to abound in love for one another and for all people and to stand firm in the Lord. And pray for the shepherds to be Christlike examples to their flocks.

Increasing in the knowledge of God

In 2014, I helped start a small discipleship school alongside two faithful Tanzanian believers, Japhet and Peter. We are currently in our seventh year and have nine students, and Japhet, Peter, and I are the full-time teachers. The Disciples of Jesus School is comparable to a one-year Bible certificate program. It entails 15 classes, which provide a survey of the Bible and the major doctrines and cover other topics pertaining to the Christian life. We emphasize the importance of daily Bible reading, Scripture memorization, and Christian service by incorporating these into the students' lives and routines.

Above (L–R): At the school, the teachers, like Japhet, focus on a survey of the Bible and the major doctrines; Visiting people, and helping with their needs, is a big part of the Johnsons' ministry; Luke and his four younger children visit the new school property.

We have seen church elders, women, and young people grow spiritually as a result of participating in our program. Many become more engaged in ministry and begin using their spiritual gifts after gaining a good foundation of Bible knowledge.

Recently, the Lord provided a piece of land on which we plan to build classrooms, a dormitory, offices, an auditorium, a library, and a workshop. This project would enable us to receive more students from the village churches and expand our program, offering higher levels of teaching, such as a diploma and a degree.

Please pray that the discipleship students will increase in their knowledge of God and be equipped for every good work. Pray also that the development of the land will be according to God's perfect will and timing.

Promoting reading in an oral culture

As another aspect of our ministry, we provide believers with Bibles and other Christian books at discounted prices. With no Christian bookstores in the villages, believers cannot easily get Bibles and sound literature. In fact, the majority of village believers do not even own a Bible. One big challenge we face is promoting reading in a primarily oral culture. There is little interest, even among believers, in investing in good Christian books. Please pray that believers will gain a hunger for God's Word and develop the habit of reading their Bibles every day.

Alleviating poverty

Numerous and sometimes overwhelming physical needs surround us, so our work to help alleviate poverty is not simply by choice but by necessity. Poverty becomes a mindset that drains motivation and initiative out of those who grow up in it. It pervades their daily thinking. Experience has taught them that they cannot escape the dreadful cycle. Many believe that their only hope involves attaching themselves to someone who is rich and, then, depending on that person to lift them out of the dark hole.

This dependency mindset profoundly affects ministry and all the more for those of us who claim to have come to help and show Christ's love and are rich in comparison. We face an almost daily crisis: how to respond to the many requests and needs around us. Please do not cease to pray for us, asking that God may fill us "with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." (Colossians 1:9, NASB 1995)

Reaching the Wataturu tribe

For the past couple of years, we've felt privileged to play a supportive role in evangelism and missionary outreach among the Wataturu tribe, who are mostly unreached by the Gospel. These seminomadic, pastoral people live in the middle of the country. In 2016, our Tanzanian coworker Peter made his first visit to the tribe and was met with much fear and skepticism.

Since then, he has continued to make three or four visits per year and has developed friendships with several men in two of their villages.

After hearing the good news through Peter's preaching and through audio Bibles in their language, a few Wataturu have trusted in Christ and formed a small church in one of the villages. In 2021, our commending assembly paid for a well to be dug in that same village. The well meets a felt need and shows Christ's love to the community in a practical way.

Please pray that the Lord will provide Peter with an open door for the Gospel as he makes frequent visits to the Wataturu villages. Pray that the Tanzanian assemblies will support and pray for national missionaries like Peter. Giving to missions and commending missionaries are new concepts for most Tanzanian believers. Practicing them requires a major paradigm shift because, until now, these believers have only been on the receiving end of missions.

Raising kids on the mission field

We count it an honor to raise our five children on the mission field, despite the challenges. Gina dedicates herself to the difficult task of home-schooling our three middle children: Emily, Aaron, and Michael. Esther, our oldest, attends Rift Valley Academy, a Christian boarding school in Kenya. Our youngest, William, has not started school yet. Our children especially enjoy Saturdays, when we usually go swimming, snorkeling, and sometimes fishing in Lake Tanganyika. They face the challenge of forming genuine friendships with Tanzanian children due to the differences in culture and language.

Please pray that our children will make some friends and that they will honor the name of Christ in all they do and say. Pray for wisdom and grace for Gina and me as we teach, discipline, and train up our children in the fear of the Lord.

Serving according to His power

Two verses motivate and guide me in this ministry every time I read them: "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." (Colossians 1:28–29, NASB 1995) May each one of us labor to accomplish this great goal: to present every person complete in Christ. ■



Luke and Gina Johnson are commended from Tieton Drive Bible Chapel in Yakima, Washington.



Top (L-R, from top): Luke preaches at a village assembly; Luke, Peter, and Japhet—the founders of Disciples of Jesus School—also serve as the school's full-time teachers; At a seminar, participants listen to the Bible teaching.

Middle (L-R): A discipleship student teaches Sunday school at a village church; Luke helps a woman select a Bible.

Bottom (L-R): Peter (third from left) visits a family in the Wataturu tribe; A group of Wataturu celebrate the blessing of a water well for their community; Michael, Emily, and Aaron work on school assignments.



“A few Wataturu have trusted in Christ and formed a small church in one of the villages.”

Miles Crossed and Stories Shared

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF MISSIONS MAGAZINE

BY SARAH DUNLAP

When you retrieve the latest issue of *Missions* magazine from your mailbox, you may not think of its potential for a life far beyond your own two hands. But, as its editor, I can assure you it has a rich one with a history, a job to do, a journey to make over thousands of miles, and a network of people to serve and interact with. Recently, one reader's story reminded me of this life:

Following the death of her mother, a former CMML missionary, our reader wrote a "Home with the Lord" memorial article for *Missions* and, later, placed a copy of the published issue on her table. One day, her neighbor popped over to return a misdelivered package. An avid gardener herself, that neighbor noticed the magazine's back cover, designed with freshly cut flowers surrounding a poem the missionary had written. Our reader then shared the Gospel and her mother's testimony. Her neighbor appreciated it so much that, using her phone, she snapped photos of the memorial article and the poem so she could read them to her 16-year-old granddaughter.

Through this one interaction, the magazine affected our reader, her neighbor, the granddaughter, and myself. And I believe the missionary now home in heaven is rejoicing that the Lord used the words and pictures printed on a page.

Since July 1972, stories like these have illustrated *Missions'* life, and this month, we are thrilled to celebrate its 50th anniversary, reflecting on its unique history and purpose.

The organizations that made *Missions*

To understand *Missions'* history, we must begin long before 1972—instead, traveling back to the founding of four Brethren

missionary service organizations and their two publications. Without them, *Missions* wouldn't exist.

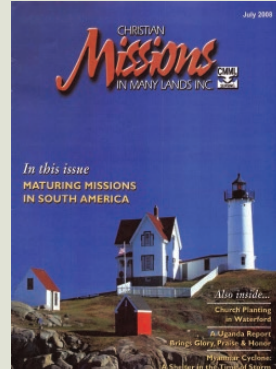
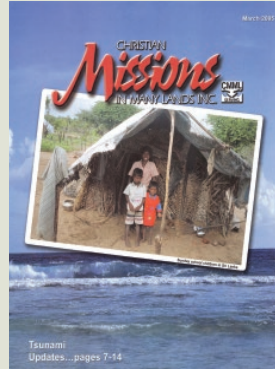
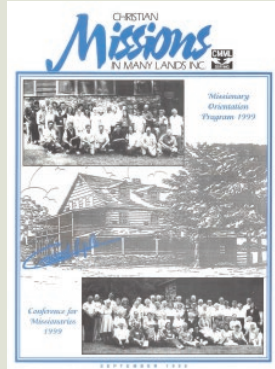
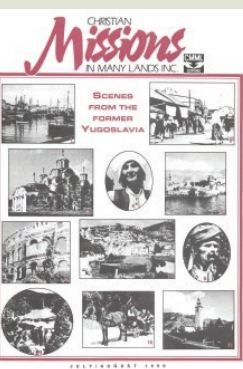
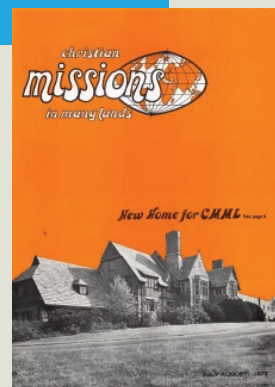
In 1904, while a new century was dawning, a believer in New York City began publishing a two-page pamphlet of missionaries' letters to distribute news from the foreign field. At a time when foreign news traveled slowly, the pamphlet took off among the Brethren assemblies. It became known as *Voices from the Vineyard* and, at its height, had a circulation of 14,000. As awareness of global missions increased, believers formed the organization Voices from the Vineyard to transmit donations to missionaries worldwide.

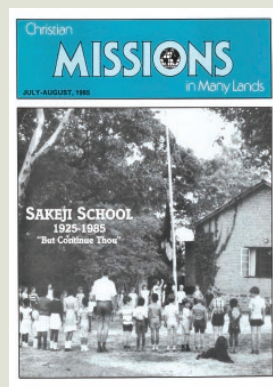
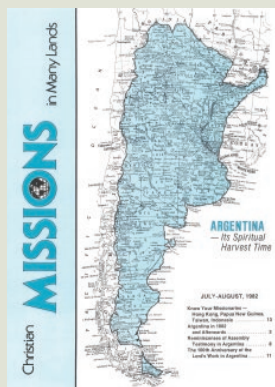
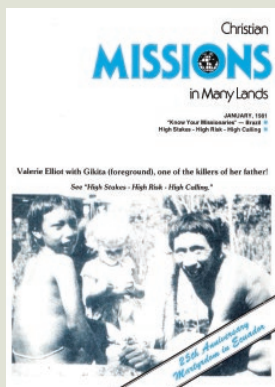
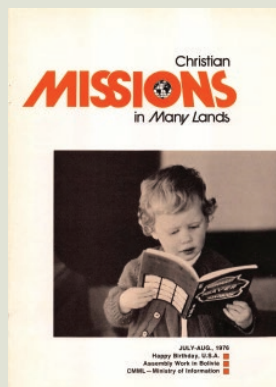
In May 1921, while the *Voices* publication and organization thrived, another group created Christian Missions in Many Lands, Ltd., also in New York City. It purposed to represent missionaries at foreign consulates or in matters involving the US State Department. Without its own publication, this organization relied on *Voices* to distribute missions news.

Then, in 1938, the *Fields* sprang up in New York City and also began transmitting funds to workers and publishing a monthly subscription magazine. Besides missionaries' letters, *The Fields* featured articles and reports.

For the next 32 years, the two publications and three organizations, along with a fourth known as the Julia Hasse Memorial Missionary Home, functioned as separate entities but worked in unison. By 1970, their leaders realized that they could be more effective stewards if they united. So, in 1971, they merged under the name Christian Missions in Many Lands, Inc. (CMML).

Voices from the Vineyard ceased publication with its January 1971 issue, and *The Fields* continued until the leadership could





finalize the organizational merger and form a new magazine. In July 1972, the first issue of *Missions* circulated, reaching thousands of believers in the US and Canada.

The purpose motivating *Missions*

Today, *Missions* serves more than 6,300 readers and represents missionaries sent out with CMML and MSC Canada. In its 50 years, *Missions* has published 547 issues, 12,732 pages, and approximately 2,000 feature articles about missionaries and their ministries.

Recently, *Missions* garnered recognition from the Evangelical Press Association, the world's largest professional organization for the evangelical periodical publishing industry: In 2020 and 2021, it earned an Award of Merit in the category of missions magazines. Then, this year, *Missions* received the Award of Excellence—the top award in its category.

But the goal of *Missions* has never been to publish as many pages as possible or win awards. Rather, *Missions* disseminates news from the mission field for three reasons: to keep believers informed about the worldwide outreach of assembly missions, to encourage effective prayer for the needs of the Lord's servants, and to engage readers in missions through short-term trips or full-time service.

Each feature article or department serves these goals. When you open an issue of *Missions*, the "Thinking It Through" devotional greets you with a biblical challenge or spiritual encouragement; then, about three feature articles offer a firsthand look at ministries in countries as distant as Cambodia and as nearby as the US or Canada. Next, the departments like "May

We Introduce" and "MK Corner" acquaint you with the people behind those ministries, and "Connections" briefs you on current news and activities on the field. Finally, "Keeping in Touch" announces changes to the *Missionary Prayer Handbook*, including furloughs, marriages, births, and new workers.

The people behind *Missions*

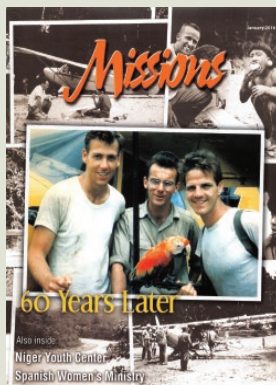
As seen in the opening story, *Missions* connects people across the globe—all for God's glory and the advancement of the Gospel. We praise the Lord for each person involved in that spiritual impact: the subscriber who eagerly awaits each new

Missions connects people across the globe.

issue and prays for the people and needs reported within, the conference attendee who picks up a copy and is moved to support a ministry, the prospective missionary who reads about a family on the field and visits them to explore God's call, the eighth-grader who reads *Missions* to learn more about global cultures and gains an interest in the world's spiritual needs, the neighbor who notices it on your coffee table and asks about cross-cultural missions.

We're grateful for each missionary who contributes an article or update letter; for each supporter who prays for the magazine and contributes financially; for the long line of *Missions* editors who have paved the way forward; and for each person involved in its monthly production, from planning to design to proofreading.

However you interact with *Missions*, we thank you. But, most of all, we thank the Lord for His 50 years of working in and through *Missions*, and we pray for many more to come.



MISSIONS BY THE NUMBERS

50
years

547
issues

12,732
pages

25
unique countries
per issue on average

52
missionaries per
issue on average

6,300
monthly readers



IN YOUR OWN WORDS

We enjoy hearing from readers! Below, a few readers share what *Missions* means to them:

"We appreciate receiving *Missions* magazine very much. Learning about the lives of missionaries and the Lord's work is so helpful and encouraging."

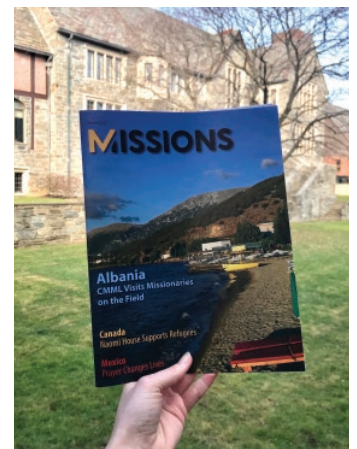
"Before my husband or I can read *Missions*, our two-year-old excitedly sits down to "read" it. She loves seeing the photos from around the world and the missionaries' friendly faces. *Missions* is a vital part of our Christian family life. By having *Missions* sit prominently on our coffee table, it displays to our children what we value. As they grow, our children become familiar with missionaries' names and ministries and develop their own appreciation for the Lord's work in assembly missions."

"When [*Missions*] comes in the mail, I love to grab a cup of coffee and quietly enjoy reading it. It's a beautiful work and uplifting."

"This is about the only magazine I read cover to cover most every month! Even when all my other reading is slacking, I can't help but read *Missions* magazine all the way through. It is an excellent and encouraging resource."

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING MISSIONS

Published 11 times per year, *Missions* is sent free of charge to subscribers in the US. Gifts that individual believers and assemblies send to help with magazine-production expenses, including printing and mailing, make it possible. We thank the Lord when He places this important part of the ministry on the hearts of believers throughout North America, and we appreciate those who have helped with this need. ■



Sarah Dunlap, Missions editor



Camping in France

Three Events Address Specific Needs

BY BRAD & CATHERINE DICKSON

In recent years, the assembly camp Teen Ranch Hermon, located in a beautiful region of central France, has reinvented its programming. Besides running traditional children's, youth, and family camps, this western-style ranch also offers three unique opportunities for older teens and adults—camps that have made a significant difference in the assemblies in France.

Mini Bible school camp

About 15 years ago, the French assemblies began offering biblical training to the staff who counsel at camp. We organized a one-week camp along the model of a mini Bible school and recruited several Bible teachers. In the first year, about 10 young people (ages 17 to 25) registered.

The camp included about 35 hours of classes during the week, which didn't leave much time for sports or other camp activities. We covered topics such as Bible study methods, systematic theology, baptism, communion, church government, evangelism, apologetics, missions, relationships, and Christian marriage.

We wondered how young people would react to such an intense week of study, but they loved it and asked if they could come back the next summer for a second level of classes. We put that in place, and they returned, even bringing their friends. Young people from outside camp circles started flocking to the sessions too.

The program is still running and growing and has spread to three other camps in France and Belgium. Now, close to 170 young people participate each summer, and registration fills up within a few days of being open online. Some of the youth we trained 10 years ago now serve as leaders in their home assemblies, and a few have pursued additional biblical studies and full-time Christian work.

What we have learned: Christian young people respond positively when properly challenged by well-prepared, and even intensive, systematic Bible training.

Elders in Training camp


The success of the mini Bible school for youth led us to consider meeting needs at another level. We noticed many assemblies crying out for well-trained elders yet few proactively selecting, encouraging, and training people for leadership roles. This situation led us to establish the Elders in Training week.

We faced a few constraints: Most of these prospective leaders were married and had young children. They were also busy with demanding jobs and time-consuming ministry commitments in their local churches. Most didn't have the time to take regular classes or do homework.

We also wanted both the husband and wife to participate fully in the training because some marriages are not equipped for the pressures of ministry. This requirement meant we would need to provide full child care. The camp setting would be perfect.

To participate, couples had to be recommended by their local assembly. We wrote to all the assemblies in France, outlining the program and asking them to discern whom in their congregation they saw as future leaders. We also asked them to encourage these people to sign up for a week of training and, if necessary, to help with the financial commitment. Each couple also needed to regularly meet with a local elder throughout the year to discuss issues, pray, and receive encouragement.

People and assemblies have responded well. About 30 adults gather each summer for the program, which now runs over a two-year cycle. Participants commit to one week of training each summer plus three weekends per year. They bring about 50 children with them—from babies to teens—so we do a lot of work to coordinate the staff who cares for them.



From top: In the early morning, small groups gather for discussions; Young people appreciate a Q&A time with the mini Bible school trainers; Youth enjoy the mini Bible school at Teen Ranch Hermon.



Courses include leadership, ecclesiology, preaching and teaching, spiritual disciplines, discernment of spiritual gifts, biblical counseling, and constructing a global vision for the local church with a mission statement and values.

The program has been running for about 10 years now, which means that we've trained close to 200 people. One benefit we particularly enjoy seeing is the relationships that develop between participants from different churches, which produce fruitful collaboration among the assemblies.

What we have learned: Some assemblies and potential leaders need help to launch into intentional eldership training. Camp provides that spark!

Marriage enrichment camp

It's no scoop to state that Christian families struggle, just like everyone else. But, too often, they feel uneasy talking about marriage and family problems in the setting of their home assembly. We also realized that the traditional family-camp setting, while good for general encouragement and edification, didn't meet specific needs related to marriage and family issues.

So besides the traditional family camp at Teen Ranch Hermon, we also set up a new style of family camp that is divided into two programs, which we call Him and Her and Our Children and Us. Couples choose one of the programs: to work on either their marriage or their parenting. (And they often return the next year for the other program.)

A typical day begins with all participants gathering for 30 minutes of praise. Then, the children, from babies to teens, leave for their respective classes. The parents enjoy one hour of Bible teaching on specific themes related to marriage and parenting. Afterward, instructors give each couple a worksheet and encourage them to go into the forest, sit on a log, and talk through the issues raised.

Clockwise from top: While adults participate in training classes, children and youth have fun on the camp's grounds; Kids even enjoy "rodeos" at camp; At Him and Her camp, couples hear teaching on marriage while volunteers care for their children, such as with this family.



Clockwise from top left: Brad teaches a session for the Elders in Training camp; Participants in the Elders in Training camp dive deeply into the Bible; Besides teaching, the Elders in Training camp includes small group prayer time.



The afternoons are free for family time. Some families take short trips around the local area while others enjoy the camp facilities, including sports fields, horseback riding, archery, paintball, miniature golf, and even a rodeo.

The relaxed afternoons allow families with special questions or needs to seek counseling. Catherine, with her degree in family counseling, is a great help.

Some evenings are just fun times. On other evenings, we offer workshops that attendees can choose from.

On the final morning, we invite participants to share their testimonies of what God has done during the week. Tears of joy often accompany this session. Two years ago, a senior couple whose children had invited them confessed faith in Christ for the first time. Another year, a Christian couple asked forgiveness of one another for the first time in decades. We have seen separated couples reunite after this camp. Many couples who were "just doing OK" have been revitalized. To God be the glory!

What we have learned: Within a safe, comfortable environment, Christian couples benefit from time and help devoted to addressing the challenges of family life.

A worthwhile investment

Camp can serve as a diverse tool, well worth the investment for God's kingdom. Please pray that the Lord will continue to work through these three camps, to be held in August, and the kids' and youth camps, which are happening this month. ■

Brad and Catherine Dickson are commended from Fairhaven Bible Chapel in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and Assiniboia Charleswood Community Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



Morning Star Children's Home in Peru

Exchanging Desperate Situations for Stability and Hope

BY CAROL CLARK

The mission of Morning Star Children's Home began with a question: how can we be recipients of God's love—a love so great that He calls us His children—and not be compelled to share it with children who lack healthy, loving homes? They desperately need God the Father's loving embrace.

Morning Star opened in 2006 after the Lord provided a piece of property in the agricultural province of Ferreñafe, Peru. Morning Star cares for children found living either in danger (such as victims of abuse) or without a viable family. We only receive children the Peruvian government sends to us; we cannot take in children we see on the streets who are in peril or need since this could lead to accusations of abduction. Morning Star has accepted minors of all ages but recently started focusing on children ages 4–12, although they may stay with us as long as they need.

In Peru, few children's homes will take in boys and girls, which can cause siblings to be separated. So Morning Star also focuses on reuniting siblings, sometimes earmarking spaces for the siblings of children already in our care. However, the boys and girls lodge separately.

In 2008, Morning Star built a new duplex that enabled us to care for more children. Then, at the beginning of this year, a third home opened on the Morning Star property, with eight beds for girls. This addition brings Morning Star's total available spaces to 31—8 for boys and 23 for girls, for whom there is a larger need.

Individual children, individual needs

Children arrive at Morning Star for a variety of reasons: some have allegedly suffered abuse or neglect, some were living in dysfunctional families with one or more parents in jail or with serious mental health issues, others need temporary housing until relatives can pick them up, and a few are orphaned. While the authorities investigate each case to decide if the children can return to any family members, we at Morning Star feel blessed to care for them.

That care is all-encompassing. Children usually arrive with only the clothes on their backs. So our first stop is our store-room, where we collect everything the child needs, from toothbrushes and hairbrushes to pajamas, a daily wardrobe, a doll or plush toy, and a Bible.

Next, they meet their new family. Many times, children do not want to be here. They've been ripped away from everything

and everyone familiar and don't always understand why. The Morning Star staff makes every effort to help them feel at home, loved, and safe.

Soon, the children adapt to their new environment and circumstances: chores and breakfast at home, school on weekday mornings, lunch in the Morning Star dining hall followed by a siesta or reading, and time on the playground most afternoons. Morning Star functions much like any Christian home, with daily family devotions and Bible readings, chores, board games, goofing around, and lots of fun and laughter. Our large Morning Star family attends the church that meets on the same property.

A school for Morning Star

From 2006 to 2017, Strong Tower Christian School operated on the Morning Star property, serving our children and many from the community. But following its closure, our children attended the local schools.

Then, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Peru's schools began operating exclusively online, and the Morning Star staff who are certified teachers began helping our children with their schoolwork. The state's educational expectations became very frustrating and sometimes impossible for the students and their guardians. Additionally, the work they provided seemed weak in math and language, so we began supplementing it with Strong Tower's curricula.

This year (Peru's school year runs from March to November or December), the government announced that students will attend classes in person three days per week and do virtual work the other three days—in rotating groups with teachers leading both simultaneously. So, without advance notice or a pay increase for the teachers, the school week expanded from five days to six.

The Lord showed Tom, my husband, a way to reopen Strong Tower Christian School under the umbrella of another private school, which provides the principal and handles the administrative needs. The curriculum is regularly updated, and our students can study in small, in-person groups with lots of attention from their teachers.

Most of the children who arrive at Morning Star are behind in their studies, and some have special learning challenges. The Peruvian school system does not offer remedial assistance, and placing the students who are behind in a classroom with their peers will not help them catch up. Children with special needs

must either enroll in a classroom of regular study, where they would feel lost and overwhelmed, or in Peru's one school that takes in all special needs: blindness, hearing impairment, autism, low IQ, and more. As much as that school would like to help the children, the large mix of different needs results, unfortunately, in little more than day care. At Morning Star's school, each of our children can receive the personalized education they need.

More than 100 children later

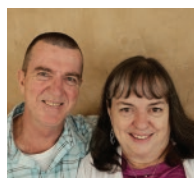
Many times, the children seem forgotten after the government "finds a place to park them." So Tom spends much time doing paperwork and serving as a liaison between judges, adoption officials, relatives, and law enforcement officers to ensure the cases do not get stuck in legal quagmires.

To date, Morning Star has cared for 103 children, 33 of whom were adopted. Most of the others who have left Morning Star have returned to their relatives, and a few have aged out.

Currently, 27 children live in our three homes. Many, many times the authorities ask us to take in a child or children, we have to say, "No, we have no room." Morning Star does have some empty beds, but there's more involved than simply available mattresses. Staffing and administrative duties grow along with an expanding population, and for that reason, we carefully consider our resources so we do not compromise our quality of care.



Please pray for wisdom and for the Lord's provision for the day-to-day needs and challenges Morning Star faces. Pray that each child's spiritual development will continue to be our paramount goal and that we will not become so busy that we jeopardize the personal attention each one of these precious children deserves. ■



Carol and Tom Clark are commended from Hiawassa Bible Chapel in Orlando, Florida.



Top: The Morning Star brood has grown too large to make a human pyramid. **Bottom (L-R):** The Morning Star kids enjoy plenty of fresh air, playing together outside every afternoon; Morning Star houses eight boys and young men; The preschool class simply walks across the sidewalk to their classroom, where they learn with their loving teachers; One boy is king for a day—his birthday!



NATIONWIDE ^{CMML} 26 BELOW

Connecting Youth Groups across North America

BY CRAIG FRITCHEY

Earlier this year, following the disappointment of canceling our in-person 26 Below Retreats due to the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing challenges, CMML began planning its first Nationwide 26 Below event for April 23, 2022, from 2:00 to 7:00 p.m. (EDT). We hoped that this hybrid event would meet a ministry need for youth in North America.

The format was simple: CMML would provide music and messages virtually, and the youth groups would gather in person to engage with the content, play games (including our signature Psycho Dodgeball), and enjoy the fellowship. Scott DeGroff, Micah Tuttle, and Micah Williams (*Missionary Prayer Handbook* Day 29–30) agreed to speak on the theme “Forward with Christ,” and Cullen Tuttle (Micah’s son) gathered musicians to prerecord the corporate singing. We at CMML planned to send each group that would register a “26 Below Box” filled with activities, instructions, supplies, goodies, and 26 Below T-shirts.

We wondered if an event like this would attract young people. But host sites, or certain locations that volunteered to receive the youth groups in their region, quickly popped up around the US and Canada. Their youth leaders expressed how helpful it was that CMML preplanned the event and sent them the necessary materials. One said, “The poster, links, games, discussion questions, schedule, T-shirts—everything was thought of and well executed.”

On the conference day, about 1,000 youth in 40 locations across North America simultaneously gathered for the event. After the participants watched the first session, we invited them to join us on Zoom for a selfie. More than 30 groups (host sites and individuals) logged on, and we saw faces from Albuquerque to Ontario to South Florida. Some groups, like the North Carolina Youth Rally and Emmaus Bible College, had 50–100 people; others had two or three gathered in a home. We were humbled to see this diversity in the groups and each one’s enthusiasm. “Many were challenged,” said Bert Mast (MPH Day 28), who led a group in Lincoln, Nebraska. “I think this event will make a difference in eternity.”

While we plan to relaunch our in-person 26 Below Retreats in 2023, the value of this nationwide event is evident. Please pray that the Lord will raise up a new generation of workers devoted to moving forward with Christ. Visit [CMML.us/26belownation2022](https://www.CMML.us/26belownation2022) to listen to the messages and watch a recap video. ■

Craig Fritchey, CMML conference coordinator

Photos courtesy of the participating youth groups.