



MISSIONS CONFERENCE 2021 | *EUROPE*

# STORIES OF FAITHFULNESS

WILL YOU JOIN THE STORY?



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## LETTER FROM PASTOR

Welcome to Missions Conference 2021! Our focus this year is on the continent of Europe. It is incredible to contemplate that this area of the world, Europe, would have such a need for the gospel. Once a vibrant, thriving part of our world with the truth, is now in need of the gospel. This sounds much like a study in the Bible of God's chosen people, the Jews. The book of Romans tells us their rejection of truth opened up the window of the gospel to the Gentiles.

May we heed the examples we have from the past and present of our commitment to the gospel. We must never turn our back on the truth, or one day we will be people in need because of our rejection.

As we head into Missions Conference 2021, I pray the Lord will convict, challenge, and encourage us to be faithful, stay faithful, or become faithful to Him and His Word. We desire to know God and make Him known. We must remain focused on our assignment, or we will become focused on ourselves. Thank you for your faithful giving this past year for Faith Promise. May each of us commit to giving another year at or above our present level of commitment. Our present and future missionaries need us to be faithful. Ask God what He would have you do for Him in the upcoming year.

In His work together,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Duttry".

Pastor Duttry

*"FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS,  
THERE WILL YOUR HEART BE ALSO."*

*MATTHEW 6:21*



Each year, our Pastor challenges us to increase our faith in the area of Faith Promise Missions giving. Would you begin praying now about what the Lord would have you to give this year towards missions?



LUDOVICO MAGNO LXXII ANNOS REGNANTE  
DISSOCIATIS REPRESSIS CONCILIATIS GENTIBUS  
QUATUOR DECENNALI BELLO CONJURATIS  
PAX TERRA MARIQUE PARTA 1715

# MISSIONS CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Sunday – Thursday, September 19 – 23, 2021

## SUNDAY

<b>9:00 am</b>	Combined Sunday School <b>Speaker: Nathan Sears</b>	<b>6:00 pm</b>	Evening Service <b>Speaker: B.J. Stagner</b>
<b>10:05 am</b>	Morning Service <b>Speaker: Don Stertz</b>	<b>7:15 pm</b>	European Dessert Market

## MONDAY

<b>10:00 am</b>	MCA Elementary Session <b>Speaker: Nathan Sears</b>	<b>7:00 pm</b>	Evening Service <b>Speaker: Nathan Sears</b> <i>Kids start in auditorium</i>
<b>10:55 am</b>	Morning Service <b>Speaker: Don Stertz</b>	<b>7:35 pm</b>	Kids Missions
<b>6:00 pm</b>	Cross-Cultural Family Hour		

## TUESDAY

<b>10:00 am</b>	MCA Elementary Session <b>Speaker: B.J. Stagner</b>	<b>7:00 pm</b>	Evening Service <b>Speaker: B.J. Stagner</b> <i>Kids start in auditorium</i>
<b>10:55 am</b>	Morning Service <b>Speaker: Nathan Sears</b>	<b>7:35 pm</b>	Kids Missions
<b>6:00 pm</b>	Cross-Cultural Family Hour		

## WEDNESDAY

<b>10:00 am</b>	MCA Elementary Session <b>Speaker: Don Stertz</b>	<b>7:00 pm</b>	Evening Service <b>Speaker: Don Stertz</b> <i>Kids start in auditorium</i>
<b>10:55 am</b>	Morning Service <b>Speaker: B.J. Stagner</b>	<b>7:35 pm</b>	Kids Missions
<b>6:00 pm</b>	Cross-Cultural Family Hour		

## THURSDAY

<b>6:00 pm</b>	Cross-Cultural Family Hour		
<b>7:00 pm</b>	Evening Service <b>Speaker: Pastor Bill Duttry</b>		

# ABOUT OUR GUEST SPEAKERS

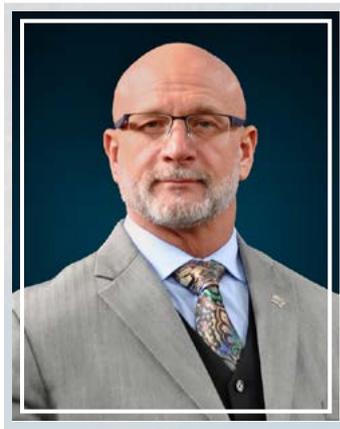


**NATHAN SEARS**

*Iceland*

Nathan and Megumi Sears both graduated from Golden State Baptist College, and come from families deeply involved in the

ministry. They have been around missions their whole lives. This impacted both of them to have a burden for bringing the gospel to a lost country. During an internship in Iceland, alongside missionary Patrick Weimer, Nathan prayed and asked that God reveal where He would have him and Megumi to serve. Through Scripture, the Lord made it clear that Iceland was where they were to go. They are currently on deputation with that goal in mind.

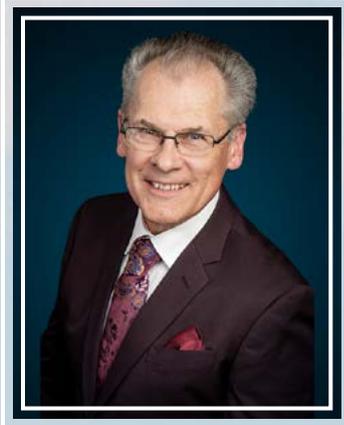


**B.J. STAGNER**

*United Kingdom*

B.J. and Denise Stagner have been married for 23 years and have four children: David, Darius, Daniel, and Bailey. They have planted three

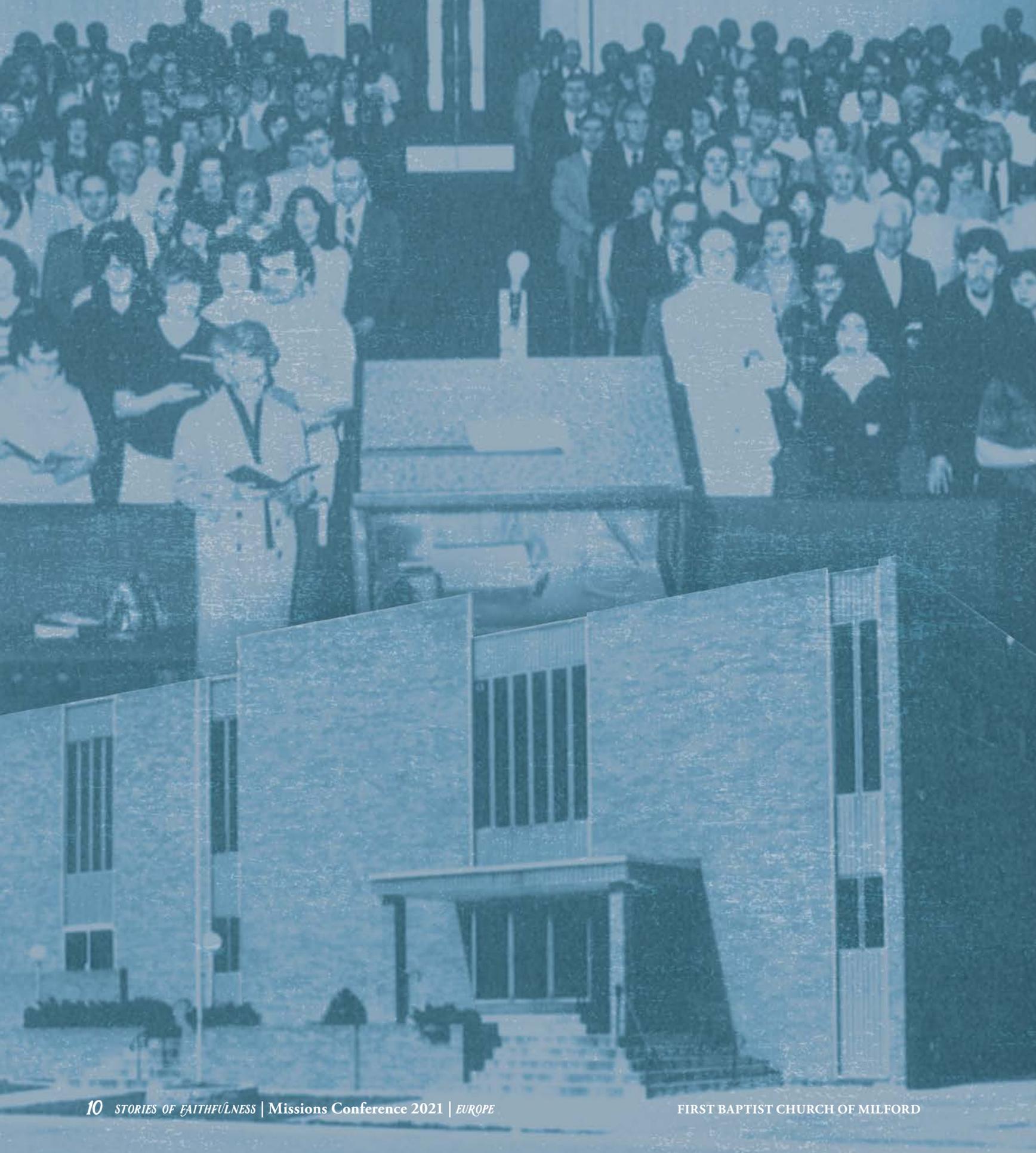
churches over the last 20 years—one in Tennessee, where B.J. pastored for 12 years, and two in Wales, where they are currently serving and have been for the last 7 years as of November 2021. They have a multifaceted ministry in the United Kingdom which includes multiple children's, school, and fitness ministries. B.J. even serves as a local volunteer chaplain at a Crossfit gym where he is able to help people dealing with several mental, emotional, and spiritual problems. At the present moment, they have filed for their UK citizenship and look forward to continuing to serve the Lord in any capacity He calls.



***DON STERTZ***  
*Couriers for Christ*

Don and Laura Stertz have been married for 47 years and founded the ministry Couriers for Christ in 1979, a ministry that assists church planters in Europe through Scripture distribution. Since 1990, over 100 containers filled with Bibles, New Testaments, John/Romans, hymnals, tracts, and Christian literature have been delivered to Europe, Russia, and beyond. Representatives from Couriers for Christ enable volunteers from local churches in America to go with them to these mission fields where Scripture has been delivered. While on the foreign field, they work alongside the missionaries and national pastors and distribute thousands of John and Romans. Evangelistic campaigns are designed to assist these missionaries and national pastors in establishing new churches as well as strengthen existing churches.





# FIFTY YEARS OF FAITH PROMISE

1971–2021

*Edward Barclay III*

**I**t was 1971. First Baptist Church of Milford was a little more than a decade old. At the time, no one knew how God would use this young church for the cause of missions; but God had led Pastor Charles Keen to hold the first-ever faith promise missions conference at First Baptist. The idea of churches supporting missionaries by faith was a radical concept at the time. However, by faith, the church responded incredibly.

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*THE IDEA OF CHURCHES SUPPORTING MISSIONARIES BY FAITH WAS A RADICAL CONCEPT AT THE TIME. HOWEVER, BY FAITH, THE CHURCH RESPONDED INCREDIBLY.*

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Speakers with a heart for missions were invited to preach this inaugural missions conference. Bob Lemmon preached; he founded the Bible and Literature Missionary Foundation. Bob Hayes preached; he was an imposing missionary presence in Africa. Don Fraser preached; he is singularly responsible for directing attention to Scripture publication as a local church assignment. God was about to ignite a passion for missions at First Baptist.

The faith promise goal for those first faith promise commitments was \$12,000—an ambitious goal for that era. Dr. Keen recounted, “We thought that goal would knock it out of the park.” But God worked in such a marvelous way in the church. When the faith promises were made, the people of First Baptist Church had committed \$37,225.74. Dr. Keen continued, “That meeting started a fire for missions in our church.”

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*“THAT MEETING STARTED A FIRE FOR MISSIONS IN OUR CHURCH.”*

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Recently, I asked Dr. Keen about that first faith promise missions conference. His first reaction was, “Whoever thought that it would grow from that to what it is today?” He went on to say, “I didn’t have a vision for what it would become. I just knew I needed to obey what God was showing me then.” From our vantage point fifty years later, it is easy to perceive that Bearing Precious Seed was conceived in this first missions conference. First Baptist began printing Scripture two years later, in 1973.

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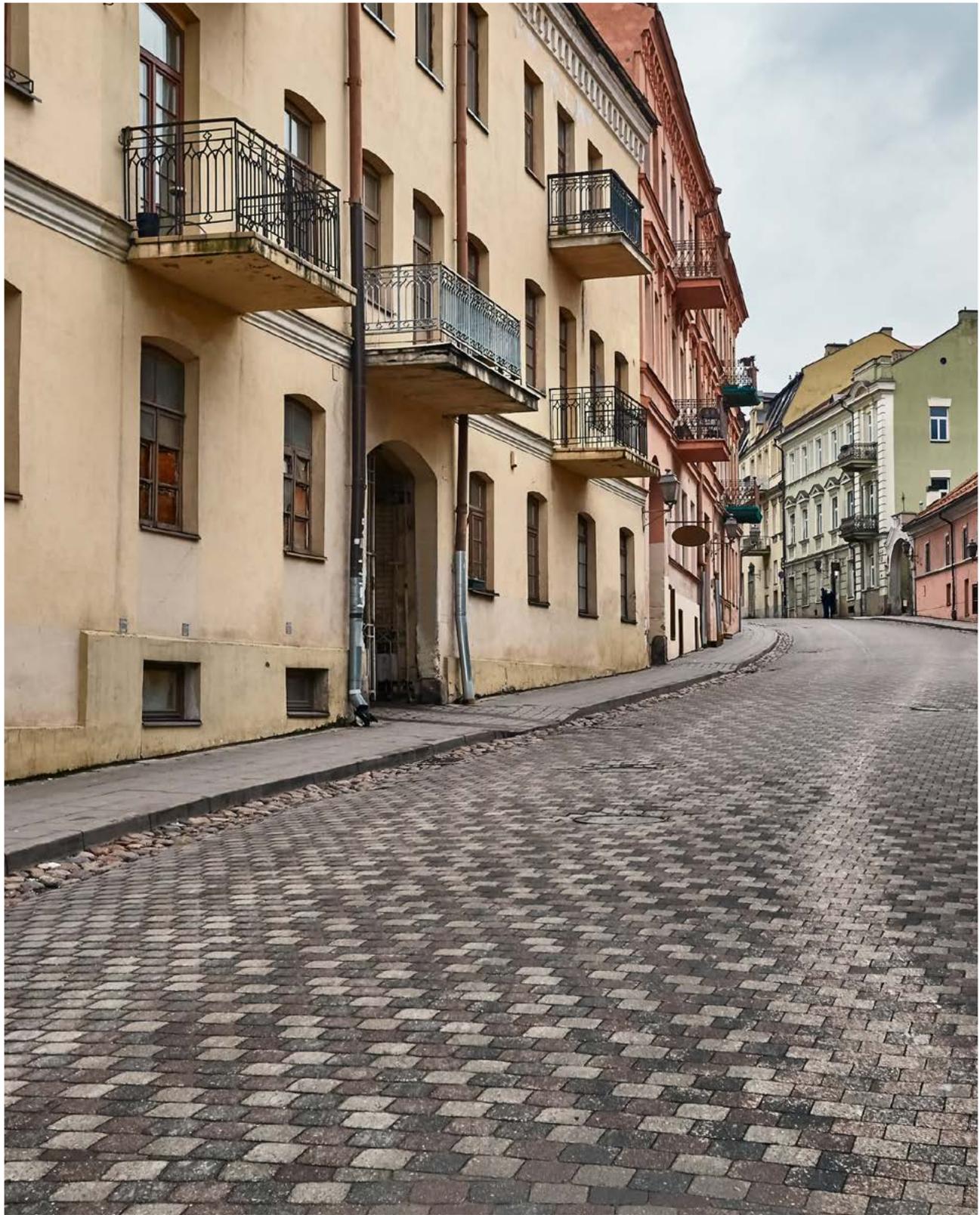
*“I DIDN’T HAVE A VISION FOR WHAT IT WOULD BECOME. I JUST KNEW I NEEDED TO OBEY WHAT GOD WAS SHOWING ME THEN.”*

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It is exciting to me to think that our 2021 missions conference marks fifty years of faithfulness in the area of faith promise missions at First Baptist Church of Milford. This is truly a story of faithfulness.

*First faith promise Missions Conference at FBCM in 1971*





# DISCARDED THEN FOUND

*By Don Stertz*

**J**ust how important is it to sow the seed? “Is the seed yet in the barn?” (Haggai 2:19) As we distribute Scriptures during our campaigns, it does not take long to discover that not everyone wants one. Sometimes a person will take a John/Romans, and once they see what it is, they may set it down on a park bench or window sill as they walk. They may even just discard it on the sidewalk or street. The following is a story of one such discarded John/Romans that took place in the country of Lithuania, and how it affected one who found it. We will call her ‘Janina.’

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## *ABOUT HALFWAY HOME, SHE NOTICED A DUST-COVERED BOOKLET LYING IN THE GUTTER OF THE STREET.*

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It was in September, and the day was just as mundane as any previous day that Janina had experienced as she trudged home from work. For months now, she was experiencing great periods of depression and was just so discouraged with her life. As she lifted one foot at a time, heading home, she stared at the sidewalk, averting her eyes so as not to make eye contact with anyone passing by her. About halfway home, she noticed a dust-covered booklet lying in the gutter of the street. She thought, “I wonder what that is?” So she stopped, picked it up, and wiped off the dust. As she did so, she read the words on the front to herself, “The Gospel according to John and Romans.” This booklet seemed to just draw her in, so she placed it in her purse and hurried home, because she was curious about the booklet.

*Continued on page 18*

# MEMBER AND NON-MEMBER



# ER MISSIONARIES TO EUROPE



*DON & LAURA STERTZ*  
*(COURIERS FOR CHRIST)*  
*Eastern Europe and Russia*

*FIRST BIBLE PROJECTS*  
*Armenia*

**The Need:**

- 10,000 Armenian Bibles  
We can provide one hardback Armenian Bible for \$8 per Bible.

**Other Prayer Requests:**

- National Training Coordinator
- Funds and Land  
For a Church Plant, Bible College, and Bible Translation Hub in Armenia

## ARMENIA

**Total Population**

2,927,000

**People Groups Unreached**

4 of 18

**Largest Religion**

Christianity (92.5%)

## RUSSIA

**Total Population**

144,666,000

**People Groups Unreached**

119 of 185

**Largest Religion**

Christianity (57.6%)

## UKRAINE

**Total Population**

43,395,000

**People Groups Unreached**

28 of 78

**Largest Religion**

Christianity (73.0%)

## GERMANY

**Total Population**

83,726,000

**People Groups Unreached**

26 of 92

**Largest Religion**

Christianity (65.5%)

## SPAIN

**Total Population**

46,665,000

**People Groups Unreached**

16 of 105

**Largest Religion**

Christianity (77.5%)

## UNITED KINGDOM

**Total Population**

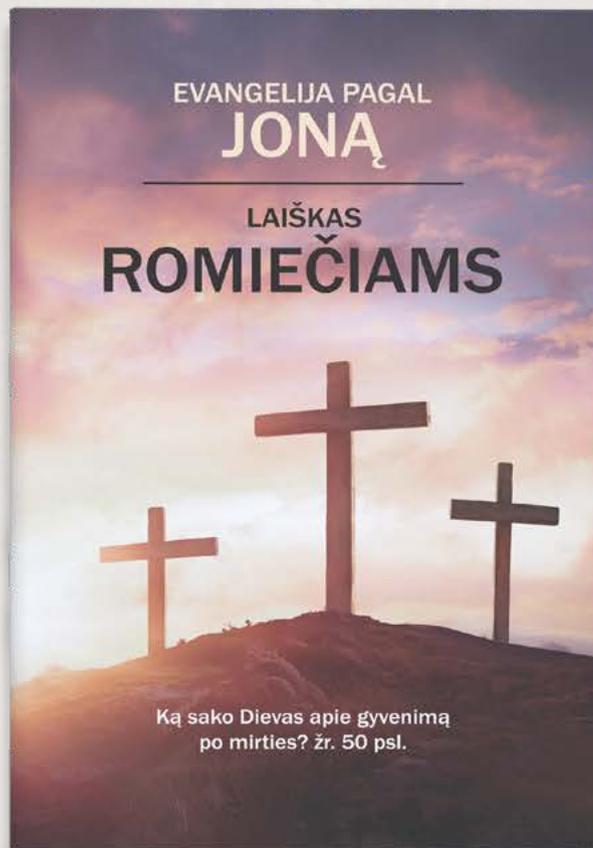
68,131,000

**People Groups Unreached**

33 of 113

**Largest Religion**

Christianity (56.3%)



*Continued from page 15*

Once home, Janina prepared herself a little something to eat and then sat down with the booklet to read. She first read in sequence the marked verses. Once completed, she read all fifteen questions placed in the back of the booklet, looking up the related verses in the John/Romans. At that point, she began reading, starting in the first chapter of John, right on through to the last page of Romans. She read into the wee hours of the morning to finish the whole booklet and said to herself, "I need this!" Janina then bowed her head and

asked the Lord to save her. She fell asleep with a feeling of great peace in her heart.

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*SHE BEGAN READING, STARTING IN THE FIRST CHAPTER OF JOHN, RIGHT ON THROUGH TO THE LAST PAGE OF ROMANS.*

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The next day, while she was at work, she kept thinking, "I want to know more! Where did this come from?" Something kept impressing upon her heart and mind to go to the train station. She said to herself, "I don't want

to go to the train station, because I am not going out of town! Besides that, it is crowded there, and pickpockets abound." She wrestled with the notion all day at work. Upon completion of her workday, she finally gave in and made her way quickly to the train station, wondering if she was daft to go somewhere that she did not need to be.

Low and behold, when Janina got to the main outside entrance to the station, two blonde ladies were handing out the very same booklet that she

had found discarded (the ladies were my wife Laura and my sister-in-law, Tricia). She raced up to them and rapidly began to tell them in Lithuanian what happened to her. They calmed her down and got a translator there to interpret for Janina. After Janina told them about finding the John/Romans in the street and her salvation experience, her question was, "Where can I go to learn more?" It just so happened that this was Wednesday, and the interpreter, who was a member of the Lithuanian Baptist Church, had

a tract with the address and invited her to the service that night.

That evening Janina came to the mid-week service and brought a neighbor with her. They seated themselves and listened very intently to the singing and the message. At the close of the service, announcements were made; and then the missionary opened it up for anything he missed, announcement-wise. At that point, the missionary noticed a lady he did not know, with her hand high in the air. It was Janina, and the missionary asks

how he can help her. She replies, "I need to be baptized!" The missionary asked her how she knew she needed to be baptized and her response as she pulled the John/Romans out of her purse and held it up was, "It says right in here!"

Yes, it was discarded, yet found—by a seeking soul! "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11)

#### JONO

į Jį: "Rabi, mes žinome, kad esi mokytojas, atėjęs nuo Dievo, nes niekas negalėtų daryti tokių ženklų, kokius Tu darai, jeigu Dievas nebūtų su juo."

3 Jėzus jam atsakė: "Iš tiesų, iš tiesų sakau tau: jei kas negims iš naujo, negalės regėti Dievo karalystės."

4 Nikodemas paklausė: "Bet kaip gali gimti žmogus, būdamas senas? Argi jis gali antrą kartą įeiti į savo motinos įsčias ir gimti?"

5 Jėzus atsakė: "Iš tiesų, iš tiesų sakau tau: jei kas negims iš vandens ir Dvasios, negalės įeiti į Dievo karalystę."

6 Kas gimė iš kūno, yra kūnas, o kas gimė iš Dvasios, yra dvasia.

7 Nesistebėk, jog pasakiau tau: jums būtina gimti iš naujo.

8 Vėjas pučia, kur nori: jo ošimą girdi, bet nežinai, iš kur ateina ir kur link nučina. Taip yra su kiekvienu, kuris gimė iš Dvasios."

9 Nikodemas atsiliepė: "Kaip tai gali būti?"

10 Jėzus jam atsakė: "Tu esi Izraelio mokytojas ir šito nesupranti?"

11 Iš tiesų, iš tiesų sakau tau: mes kalbame, ką žinome, ir liudijame, ką matėme, o jūs nepriimate mūsų liudijimo.

12 Jei netikite man kalbant apie žemiškuosius dalykus, tai kaipgi tikėsite, jei kalbėsiu jums apie dangiškuosius?"

13 Niekas nėra pakilęs į dangų, kaip tik Tas, kuris nužengė iš dangaus.— Žmogaus Sūnus, esantis danguje.

14 Kaip Mozė dykumoje iškėlė gyvatę, taip turi būti iškeltas Žmogaus Sūnus,

15 kad kiekvienas, kuris Jį tiki, nepažūtų, bet turėtų amžinąjį gyvenimą."

16 Nes Dievas taip pamilo pasaulį, jog atidavė savo viengimį Sūnų, kad kiekvienas, kuris Jį tiki, nepažūtų, bet turėtų amžinąjį gyvenimą.

17 Dievas gi nesuimtė savo Sūnaus į pasaulį, kad jis pasaulį pasmerktų, bet kad pasaulis per Jį būtų išgelbėtas.

18 Kas Jį tiki, tas neteisiamas, o kas netiki, jau yra pasmerktas už tai, kad netiki viengimio Dievo Sūnaus vardu.

19 O teismo nuosprendis yra toks: šviesa atėjo į pasaulį, bet žmonės labiau pamilo tamsą nei šviesą, nes jų darbai buvo pikti.

20 Kiekvienas, kuris daro bloga, nepakenčia šviesos ir neina į šviesą, kad jo darbai nebūtų atskleisti.

21 O kas vykdo tiesą, tas eina į šviesą, kad pasirodytų, jog jo darbai atlikti Dieve.

22 Paskui Jėzus su savo mokiniais atėjo į Judėjos kraštą ir, ten su jais būdamas, krikštijo.

23 Taip pat ir Jonas krikštijo Enone, netoli Salimo, nes ten buvo daug vandens ir žmonės ten ateidavo ir buvo krikštijami.

24 Tada Jonas dar nebuvo įmestas į kalėjimą.

25 Tarp Jono mokinių ir vieno žydo kilo ginčas dėl apšvalymo.

26 Tad jie atėjo pas Joną ir pranešė: "Rabi, Tas kuris buvo su tavimi anapus Jordano, apie kurį tu paliudijai,—štai jis krikštija, ir visi eina pas Jį."

27 Jonas atsakė: "Žmogus nieko negali pasiimti, jeigu jam neduota iš dangaus.

16 ▶ "Prašau atsiverskite '20' puslapi"

#### JONO

28 Jūs patys galite man paliudyti, jog sakiau: aš ne Kristus! Aš siūstas būti tik Jo pirmtaku.

29 Kas turi sužadėtinę, tas sužadėtinis, o sužadėtinio bičiulis, kuris šalia stovi ir jį girdi, džiaugte džiaugiasi jaunikio balsu. Todėl šiam mano džiaugsmui jau nieko netrūksta.

30 Jis turi augti, o aš—mažėti."

31 Kas iš aukštybių ateina, Tas už visus viršesnis, o kas iš žemės,— žemiškas yra ir žemiškai kalba. Kas iš dangaus ateina, Tas už visus viršesnis.

32 Jis liudija, ką matė ir girdėjo, tik niekas Jo liudijimo nepriima.

33 O kas Jo liudijimą priima, tas pripažįsta, jog Dievas teisus.

34 Juk ką Dievas yra siuntęs, Tas kalba Dievo žodžius, nes Dievas telkia Dvasią be sąikos.

35 Tevas myli Sūnų ir visa yra atidavęs į Jo rankas.

36 Kas tiki Sūnų, turi amžinąjį gyvenimą, o kas netiki Sūnui—gyvenimo nematys: ant jo pasilieka Dievo rūstybė.

4 Viešpats, sužinojęs, kad farizėjai išgirdo, jog Jo mokinių skaičius labiau auga negu Jono ir jis gausiau krikštija

2 (nors pats Jėzus nekrikštydavo, tik Jo mokiniai),

3 paliko Judėją ir vėl išėjo į Galilėją.

4 Jam reikėjo eiti per Samariją.

5 Taigi jis užsuko į Samarijos miestą, vadinamą Sicharu, netoli nuo lauko, kurį Jokūbas buvo davęs savo sūnui Juozapui.

6 Tenai buvo Jokūbo šuliny.

Nuvargęs iš keltonės, Jėzus atsisėdo prie šulinio. Buvo apie šeštą valandą.

7 Viena samarietė moteris atėjo semtis vandens. Jėzus ją paprašė: "Duok man gerti."

8 (Tuo tarpu Jo mokiniai buvo nuėję į miestą nusipirkti maisto.)

9 Samarietė atsakė: "Kaip Tu, būdamas žydas, prašai mane, samarietę, gerti?" (Mat žydai nebendrauja su samariečiais.)

10 Jėzus jai tarė: "Jei tu pažintum Dievo dovaną ir kas yra Tas, kuris tave prašo: 'Duok man gerti', pati būtum jį prašiusi, ir Jis tau būtų davęs gyvojo vandens!"

11 Moteris atsiliepė: "Viešpatie, bet Tu neturi kuo pasiimti, o šulimis gilus. Iš kur Tu imsi gyvojo vandens?"

12 Argi Tu didesnis už mūsų tėvą Jokūbą, kuris tą šulinį mums paliko ir pats iš jo gėrė, ir jo vaikai, ir gyvuliai?"

13 Jėzus atsakė: "Kiekvienas, kas geria šitą vandenį, ir vėl trokš."

14 O kas gers vandenį, kurį Aš jam duosiu, tas nebetroks per amžius, ir vanduo, kurį jam duosiu, taps jame versme vandens, trykštančio į amžinąjį gyvenimą."

15 Tada moteris jam tarė: "Viešpatie, duok man to vandens, kad aš nebetrokščiau ir nebevaikeičiočiau jo semtis čionai!"

16 Jėzus atsiliepė: "Eik, pakviesk savo vyrą ir sugrįžk čia."

17 Moteris atsakė: "Aš neturiu vyro". Jėzus jai tarė: "Gerai pasakei: 'Neturiu vyro'."

18 nes esi turėjusi penkis vyrus, ir tas, kurį dabar turi, nėra tavo vyras. Čia tu tiesą pasakei!"

17





# JESUS LED ME ALL THE WAY

*Nathan Sears*

One of the most inspiring stories of faithfulness is a story many have never heard. This account demonstrates true and whole faith in God. It reveals the character of this individual who followed through with what she said she would do. And it displays the compliance to do whatever God called her to do, as well as the calling this person could rely on when times were difficult. All three of these traits are crucial if a Christian wants to see God use their life to do the incredible. This account motivates me and challenges me to be the best I can be for Christ. It encourages me that my life is wholly His, and something miraculous will become of my life if I will yield every decision to God's will.

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*ALL THREE OF THESE TRAITS ARE CRUCIAL IF A CHRISTIAN WANTS TO SEE GOD USE THEIR LIFE TO DO THE INCREDIBLE.*

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Margaret Stringer was a single woman, saved at the young age of eleven and surrendered her life to missions at twelve. She had a strong desire to serve God and a heavy burden for missions work. One day, as a young girl at church, the preacher was challenging the congregation for missions. In his sermon, he asked questions such as, “Who will go? Who will go to India? Who will go to Germany? Who will go to the millions in China?” But the question that struck her heart the most was, “Who will go to the headhunters of Papua New Guinea?” At this moment, she felt God speak to her, saying, “That is where



I want you to go.” I can only imagine the fear that struck her in this exact instant. So many questions filled her head, “Why me? Am I even qualified? Lord, are you sure?”

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*HOW INSPIRING AND MOTIVATING THAT IF WE TRUST CHRIST, HE HAS A PLAN FOR OUR LIVES THAT WILL SUPERSEDE ALL THAT WE COULD EVER IMAGINE!*

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She surrendered her life to follow God’s calling. As she raised funds and prepared to go to the field, her family and friends repeatedly told her things like, “You can’t go. This is crazy. God didn’t call you. You are going to die.

They WILL kill you; that is literally what they do.” These seemed to be mostly convincing arguments, and much of what they said was true. However, Margaret knew God had called her, and anything else would be disobedience. During this time, God strengthened her and prepared her for the difficult times ahead. Being faced with opposition, she knew what was right, but everything else told her not to go. No doubt she was afraid to some extent. She had to make an important decision. Would she allow her fear to take control and prevent her from following what she knew to be the Lord’s will for her life? Or would she trust God’s ultimate wisdom that even if the headhunters

killed her, that He had called her for that purpose? If that is what God wanted from her life, He must have a reason. So, as a 32-year-old woman, she went.

Margaret’s mission was so dangerous that her helicopter pilot wouldn’t even land to allow her to get out. He “strung her down” (an easy way to remember Margaret STRINGer) and tossed her luggage down to the ground. There they were. The headhunters were staring right at her. They didn’t kill her right away; in fact, they didn’t kill her at all. This particular tribe of headhunters had a superstition that a white woman would come from the sky with a new



Margaret Stringer

God. Even more astonishing, their superstition did not simply tell them that this would happen, but that they were to believe and trust and follow that God. The entire tribe accepted Jesus as their personal Savior.

Not long after, she told the tribe that she wanted to go to another tribe to share the gospel with them. The headhunters told her this was not an option, for the tribe she spoke of was so dangerous, vicious, and cannibalistic that they did not even venture over to where they were in fear of being killed. However, Margaret knew God had called her to do this. So, she had the faith to follow, the character to go through with it, and

the compliance to do whatever God had asked her to do. After arriving at the new tribe, she discovered that they too had a superstition that a white woman would come from another tribe with a God and that they were to believe in that God.

She then spent over 40 years on the field serving God, producing a written form of their language, and then translating much of the Bible into that language. After coming off the field, she now travels the country telling others about what God did through her and how He can do it in them. She has also written two books (*From Cannibalism to Christianity* and *Jesus Led Me All the Way*) about

her adventures with the headhunters there in Papua New Guinea.

How inspiring and motivating that if we trust Christ, He has a plan for our lives that will supersede all that we could ever imagine! It is our job to be the willing vessel that allows the Spirit of God to fill us and show us exactly what to do. Suppose if we each purposed to trust and obey as Margaret Stringer did? We too would have a story of faithfulness that others could read and be encouraged by. What a wonderful life God will create and manifest in and through us if we simply obey! What is holding you back from trusting God as Margaret did?

# WILD WALES

*B.J. Stagner*

Wales is a beautiful country made of green hills, gorgeous coastlines, and a vast landscape rivaling any country in the world. Despite its physical appeal, there is spiritual darkness resting over the land, especially in south Wales, which has resulted in years of governmental reliance, distrust of outsiders, and an overall indifference toward religion as a whole. Sadly, the despondent nature present in our society began long before people gave way to their lustful desires. For nearly one hundred years, religious leaders have misrepresented Biblical doctrine, serving as ‘church’ leaders without a conviction of the need for eternal salvation or any form of personal security in what lies beyond this life.

Having said all this, Wales also has a rich history of church planting, revivals, and evangelization. Within the very valley we live and serve, the Cynon (pronounced: 'kənən) Valley, famous Welsh preachers proclaimed the gospel truth, seeing thousands saved. The 18th century saw men such as Howell Harris, Daniel Rolands, David Davis, and one of my personal favorites, the old Baptist preacher Christmas Evans, who was born on Christmas Day 1766.

Christmas Evans preached the glorious gospel with what the Welsh referred to as with *hwy!*. Not easily translated into English, but the best definition would be with fire, fun, or exuberance. This man was soon known as the one-eyed Bunyan of Wales, and wherever he went, and what was then known as ‘wild







Wales' souls were saved, lives were changed, and Holy Ghost conviction set in like no other. Many years later, a revival would break loose under the mighty preaching through the lineage of Evans' converts, which gave way to the 1859 Cynon Valley revival; but it was more than a revival—it was an explosion of evangelism. Many church historians claim the entire valley, (40,000+) were saved. Most local churches were seeing 50-100 converts a month all the way through the 1890s as a result of this great moving of the Gospel. It truly was a movement unrivaled to this day.

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*MANY YEARS LATER, A REVIVAL WOULD BREAK LOOSE... WHICH GAVE WAY TO THE 1859 CYNON VALLEY REVIVAL, BUT IT WAS MORE THAN A REVIVAL—IT WAS AN EXPLOSION OF EVANGELISM.*

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In the early 1900s, a Baptist preacher by the name of Thomas Price would settle in our district (Aberdare). He took a church as pastor and would plant over thirty churches through the Cynon Valley over the next several decades, having a combined membership of 7,242 members, mostly made up of migrant coal miners, who would

meet together for open-air baptisms in the River Taff. Once the mines shut, the people moved on looking for work and survival; and sad to say, the churches began to close. One by one, each church would lose its pastor, then members, and finally close the doors. As of today, there is not one church planted by Thomas Price in existence. At one time throughout Wales, there was one church closing every week. Even today, many churches are only held together by a few ladies and the occasional pulpit supply. Doctrine has been lost, sound Biblical teaching and the desire to reach the lost seemed to go the way of the dinosaurs...and the community took notice.

Therefore, at the center of reaching any soul in the land will not be the latest church growth 101 methodologies, nor the food pantry programs and big day extravaganzas. Social programs have run amuck here; many are without employment and happy to live off the backs of those who are working. The overwhelming majority of people are atheistic in their beliefs and lifestyle. Less than 1.5% of the population attend any church on any given Sunday. Relationships are the key; we have all heard of the cliché, “no one will care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” This could not be more true than

in Wales, the land known as the defeated nation whose bloodline dates back to the original Britons and whose Baptist heritage can be traced back to 63 A.D.

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*RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE KEY; WE HAVE ALL HEARD OF THE CLICHÉ, “NO ONE WILL CARE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW, UNTIL THEY KNOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE.” THIS COULD NOT BE MORE TRUE THAN IN WALES...*

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The test to reach the Welsh with the gospel has little, if anything, to do with history; most are not even privy to the enormity of Christian influence that powered through their streets, homes, and church houses at one time. This test, this proving ground, is about the precise moment wherein we stand and the future which lies before. It is rooted and grounded in a relationship built upon esteeming them better than ourselves, laying aside cultural, grammatical, and citizenship differences, and making a home alongside those the Lord has called us to reach with the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a long game played in Wales; nothing will be done quickly, but rather as a result of interjecting yourself into the lives of the people around you. Joining hand in hand, learning to live as they do, and acclimating to the very village in which we reside, all the while raising the standard of Christ-like living based upon the never-changing Word of Truth, by which we stand and trust. This was proven within the first few days and weeks of our arrival to the field. The neighbor, whose house is attached to our church building, absolutely despised the structure and anyone associated with it. This was

the result of the poor maintenance of the building and how it directly affected her property, as well as the vile attitude she received from the ‘Christians’ connected to it. Without going into grave detail, I met her on the third day of landing in the county and received an ‘ear full’ about how she felt toward the church and Americans. To make a long story short, we showed her kindness, giving her a family Christmas card a few weeks later and loving her as our own. Months would go by, and she would pop in during workdays, and later would make us lunch, and bring us tea and treats. In May of 2015, she became our first convert, six months after having our first conversation. By all means, relationships have been the key to witnessing the gospel of Jesus Christ, allowing people to see us for exactly who we are by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

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*WALES IS STILL A ‘WILD’ LAND, ALTHOUGH MODERN IN APPEARANCE, DARK IN ITS SPIRITUAL NATURE.*

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Wales is still a ‘wild’ land, although modern in appearance, dark in its spiritual nature. Leonard Ravenhill held a prayer meeting in Saron Chapel, the location of our first church plant, during the 1950s, where they prayed from Friday evening to daybreak on Saturday, asking God for a mighty awakening in our village and valley. This prayer has yet to be answered, so I long to say the words of Christmas Evans one day, who after preaching the gospel throughout a harsh and hardened country, proclaimed: “The wilderness now blossomed as a rose and in the desolate places was heard the voice of song.”



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