

SIM **now**



God's power at work in the rugged mountains

Supporting Bible college students with scholarships

Trusting the LORD even when the pandemic changes our plans

"Bridges and doors" of ministry

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From the Director

Dear friends of SIM SA,

We are honoured to present to you the happenings in SIM South Africa. We are continuing ministry through the COVID-19 pandemic in the midst of travel restrictions and limitations that curtail our field activities.

Thanks be to God, four missionaries were able to go back to their home countries, and another missionary family was able to get back to the field of their ministry in Paraguay.

We give thanks to the Lord for His love that compels us to move forward in His grace. Many of us lost dear ones, friends or extended family during this pandemic.

There were also, however, many happy moments with celebrations of achievements and milestones in ministry. We believe the Lord has given His healing grace to all our missionaries to survive and build resilience through the conquering grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are encouraged to let you know that we have found our new director-elect, who (pending his resource development) will start in the job from 1st April and take over the reins fully from July 2021. We thank the Lord for this appointment and ask you to pray with us as we plan to introduce him to each one of you in the coming months.

SIM Southern Africa Regional Director Dr Siegfried Ngubane and I had the privilege to revisit Limpopo, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West provinces in November. We were able to reconnect with our current ambassadors and missionaries on the ground as we continue with our search to find new ambassadors and mobilisers in all our provinces. Please continue to pray for these efforts as we look to the Lord for his provision.

As you open the pages of this issue of *SIMnow*, it is our prayer that they will encourage you in what God is doing in and through SIM. Our feature story is an insight into what it is like to minister in the remote villages of Peru. Closer to home, we share of the work being done to reach the amaZioni with sound, Biblical teaching.

We are also pleased to share two of our ongoing project initiatives. The first is our leadership development programme, where we support students in Biblical and Theological training to prepare them

for ministry in South Africa or wherever the Lord calls them. As you move through the pages, you will also see our second featured project, the eternal investment in today’s children for tomorrow’s leaders. May these pages challenge you to get involved—to PRAY, GIVE and GO.

Please continue to pray for our missionaries, that they will be fruitful where God has placed them. Many have faced various struggles with visa renewals or been affected by crime. Our world is filled with perversions, predations and hopelessness. In the midst of all these negatives, we can and we do offer the message of hope (Romans 5:5).

May our Lord of mercy and grace fill our hearts with encouragement and inoculations of hope and peace in our lives. Let us join in prayer for an effective vaccine so that we can resume our full efforts and revitalise our mission with a living hope. We look forward to pursuing a heightened focus on strategic ministries to create more opportunities for more people to serve Christ in more places throughout South Africa, helping more communities become maturing followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

SIM is part of a global community with multi-ethnic teams focused on gospel outreach. Serving with intentional discipling of all nations, tribes and language groups, we are committed to take the gospel across the globe.

May we partner together to reach the many who are living and dying without Jesus Christ, the only living hope for the hopeless and forgotten communities within the borders of South Africa and beyond.



Photo by Brian Heffron

Serving together,

Rev Dr Pookkattu Paul

Rev Dr Pookkattu Paul,
SIM Southern Africa Interim Director

Pray



A people of prayer

“Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.” (Jeremiah 29:12, NIV)

“By prayer” has long been SIM’s motto worldwide, and we continue to rely on prayer and our prayer supporters to pursue the work entrusted to us by the Lord. Joining us in prayer is a vital way to be part of His will for the world.

As you read this issue, please pray for each person and ministry being highlighted and for the general work of missions throughout South Africa and around the world.

Sign up for our monthly prayer letter, “Pray Today,” by emailing sim.sa@sim.org and consider joining or forming a local prayer group. As always, thank you for your prayers.

Helping kids today for a better tomorrow

By Brian Heffron, SIM Southern Africa Service Centre Media Coordinator

More than 20,000 children across Southern Africa are being given a better chance of a healthy future, thanks to a SIM programme.

“The best thing is seeing children being reached for Christ and having a relationship with the Lord, seeing churches integrating children as part of their members,” said Rev. Chris Maphosa, one of the programme’s co-founders.

The programme, called Today for Tomorrow (T4T), was started in 2003 in Zimbabwe by SIM South Africa missionaries. Chris and Nancy Maphosa and Graham and Jessie Haddad realised that children were not being given a good foundation for avoiding HIV before facing more risk factors as they grew up.

“We found that children are a vulnerable group. We also saw that all HIV/AIDS programmes were dealing only with adults and youth, not children,” Chris recalled. “We wanted children to be reached for Christ, for them to have a relationship with the Lord. We wanted to do HIV/AIDS prevention, so that we could contribute significantly to an HIV/AIDS-free generation.”

Together, they wrote a three-year curriculum that could be implemented in churches, schools and community centres. The curriculum emphasizes six pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship. Doing so includes sharing the gospel,



discipling the children, caring for children with disabilities, playing games and sports and teaching them general health practices, life skills and HIV/AIDS prevention.

“Our ministry is to reach children holistically,” Chris said, “to love the children and introduce them to the Lord Jesus Christ It seeks to reach out to the whole child spiritually, physically, socially, mentally and in their emotional development.”

Over the years, the curriculum has been expanded to six years and additional topics, such as training materials for human trafficking prevention, healing of emotional trauma and orality (using techniques related to oral tradition cultures). Much of the material has been translated into major spoken languages for the region, including Shona, Xhosa, Zulu, Eswatini, Setswana, Chichewa, Luchazi and Portuguese.

SIM makes the programme available to its partner churches and organisations, providing training for people in teaching and implementing the curriculum. Support visits allow teachers and volunteers to ask questions and share their challenges and successes.

Chris and Nancy manage the project overall and coordinate the programme for Botswana, eSwatini, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa. They and their partners are prayerfully seeking opportunities to expand the programme

into Angola, Madagascar, Mauritius, Lesotho and Zambia. Malawi and Zimbabwe also use the programme, running it independently but consulting with the Maphosas when they desire advice.

Overall, Today for Tomorrow currently has over 20,000 students and 1,000 teachers in 108 locations, including many local churches. Chris anchors the programme in Isaiah 55:11, which says, “so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (NIV).

“Therefore,” he said, “in T4T we are ‘planting seeds for the future’ as based in Isaiah. Children are given opportunity to respond to the gospel for salvation, behaviour is changed, and parents are happy to have children with [character traits] such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship.”

Please pray:

† For the children to be equipped with the life skills they need and to accept Jesus as their Saviour.

† For Chris and Nancy Maphosa in all their travelling and training—that God will give

them safety, strength and wisdom.

† For the missionaries and churches associated with the programme to have the prayer and financial support they need to continue and expand this work.

† For their safety, protection and good health, and for that of the children and workers.

† For the missionaries’ own children at school and university.

Give:

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Go:

To discuss volunteering with Today for Tomorrow or bringing the programme to your community, church or school, email chris.maphosa@sim.org.

“And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.’”
— Mark 9:36-37 (ESV)



Trusting the LORD even when the pandemic changes our plans

By Naomi Jones, SIM South Africa Missionary



Submitted photo

I am a planner, someone who enjoys sitting at the start of the calendar year and setting goals and a vision for the year.

However, I also know that God is sovereign over everything—including plans and pandemics.

In January 2020, I booked an Airbnb for a few nights' getaway: a chance to retreat, think and pray. I had some big decisions looming, so I knew I wanted to make time to think these through.

It helped, but I still needed more time to think things through, so I decided to plan another retreat. This time, I would go a bit further and stay a bit longer, visiting friends who serve in Zambia. I cleared three weeks in my calendar and booked flights for 14th March into Ndola on the Copperbelt. I did not think much more about it until I needed to pack for the trip.

Coronavirus was already on people's lips but not much. It was something in Asia and Europe, and at the stage I was to fly, no one saw it really

impacting Southern Africa. Off I set for my "three-week" retreat. I was excited about having the time and space to think through my decision.

It will probably not surprise anyone that some things about my plans changed. I was scheduled to return to South Africa on the 4th April; my actual return date was the 4th October—a six-month delay beyond my scheduled three-week visit!

I won't lie and say that this time was easy, but I will testify to God's grace and provision in everything. I will testify to being hugely blessed by the Lord in these six months. I will testify to God knowing better than I how much time and space I needed to make my decisions.

My biggest lesson from this year has been to trust in the LORD, especially when we do not understand what is going on. Once I got there—to that point of trusting God instead of trying to fix things with my resources—I saw just how God can use us wherever we are.



Submitted photo

Facing page: Me with the family I stayed with and another friend on our way to church.

Above: Me with the students at Proclamation Institute Zambia at the farewell party they planned for me on my last night on the Copperbelt.

Primarily, I stayed at Proclamation Institute Zambia, a college training Zambians how to handle and teach God's word (check out www.proclamationzambia.org). God opened up many ways for me to be involved at the college through teaching, engaging with the students and organising some social evenings for staff and students. With most things going online in South Africa, I was also able to continue my usual Cape Town ministries of lecturing at George Whitefield College and serving at St Marks Church remotely from Zambia.

My friends whom I had come to visit truly opened their home to me, and I was thoroughly blessed by being part of their family and by being able to serve them in many ways. As a single woman, I learnt so much from this family

My biggest lesson from this year has been to trust in the LORD, especially when we do not understand what is going on. Once I got there—to that point of trusting God instead of trying to fix things with my resources—I saw just how God can use us wherever we are.



Submitted photo

Above: SIM Zambia missionary Sandy Roberts (striped shirt) and I visit African Christian University and some of its staff.

Right: Me with the three children of a REACH church planter in Lusaka.

experience. Through including me in this family, I believe God was reminding me again how much He loves me.

SIM Zambia was such a support during my extended visit and included me in their team. My original plans had not included any time in Lusaka, but God blessed me with two stays in the guest house there. He gave me lots of new friends in the SIM team, and I was able to visit various ministries in Lusaka and other parts of Zambia. I know God widened my vision for ministry and deepened His call on my life.

We all have our 2020 stories, and my six-month delay in Zambia is a big chunk of mine. In reflecting on it, I do not consider any of this time wasted. God did much in my life and through me in the lives of others while I was in Zambia. I could never have anticipated any of this as I planned my 2020, but I passionately believe it was God's best plan for me. Praise Him!



Submitted photo

Give

Serving together

“Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.” (2 Corinthians 8:7, NLT)

As do most missions, SIM depends on the faithful support of other believers coming alongside them in order to provide help to those in need and to share Christ's love and truth.

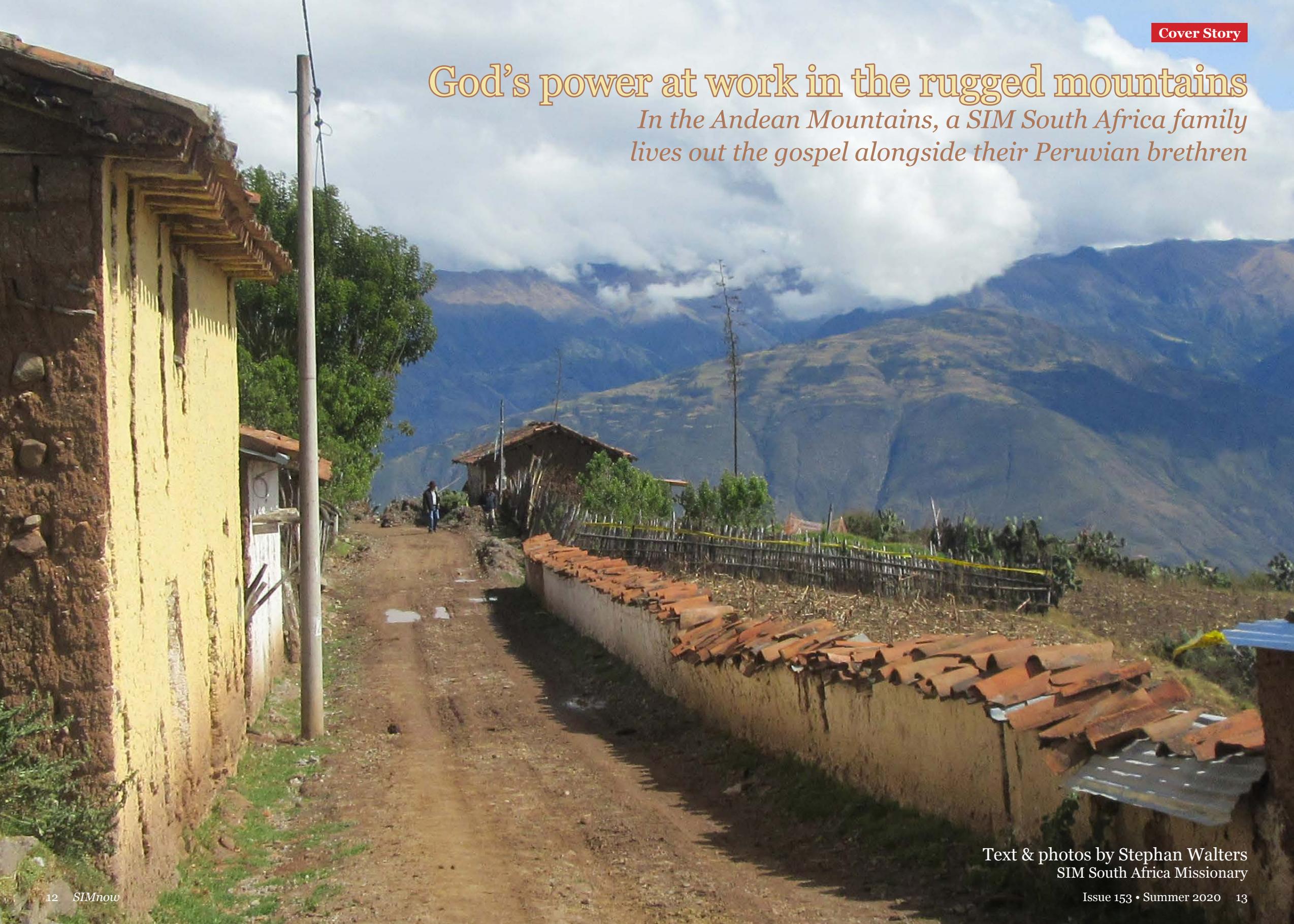
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God's power at work in the rugged mountains

In the Andean Mountains, a SIM South Africa family lives out the gospel alongside their Peruvian brethren



Text & photos by Stephan Walters
SIM South Africa Missionary



Previous page: Main street of Huirahuacho village (elevation 4000 meters) on a day when we first stopped to evangelise in Vilcabamba and then drove up to Huirahuacho evangelising and inviting non-believers.

Above: Me (bottom left of photo) and fellow believers after a meeting for worship and teaching in Vilcabamba. The building is very cold and can squeeze in some 15 believers.

God's splendour is visible throughout the majestic Peruvian Andean Mountains. When one moves about this very rugged terrain of southern Peru, it quickly becomes obvious that there are thousands of villages scattered all over this vast and picturesque landscape.

We often go out as a team of believers to witness and share the Gospel in many of these villages. The believers are often a very small minority within their communities, and they suffer at the hands of those villagers who insult them, belittle them and often exploit them. They require constant encouragement in their faith, and their understanding of God's Word is often very rudimentary.

It is heart-warming to experience these precious believers inviting us into their homes. As a show of thanks for our coming so far to their isolated village and teaching them God's Word, they provide us with the best food that they have available in their homes. People here are very generous and often invite us to share whatever they have available to eat, be it hydrated corn,

soup, or even quickly made cheese using rennet to instantly coagulate it.

Many believers come from other villages, walking hours to get to the meetings. This is a humbling experience, especially because we have seen this dedication over and over again throughout the mountains: a man of 80 years old walking up a mountain for four hours to get to the Bible-study meeting; another man in his 70s walking in the rain for three hours to the meeting and three hours back to his village; yet another man of 70 walking four hours back and forth, arriving in his village after midnight.

The work of cross-cultural ministry inherently involves the whole family, so Corné and our two children have also on occasion accompanied me to Vilcabamba. During one of these visits, my children both shared in more than just a meal and a cooking lesson. It was nearly time for our evening service to start when one of the believers arrived at home and caught one of her handful of chickens to turn it into an Andean soup to feed all the believers who came to the meeting. Looking at



Above: Two believers work together to prepare a chicken for soup for the gathering of believers in Vilcabamba.

Next page: Believers worship behind a building on the main street of Huirahuacho.

our kids' facial expressions and gazing eyes, it was clear that the killing of the chicken was very unexpected. Our daughter silently passed her portion on to us, but her younger brother declared it the "best-ever-chicken" he had ever had—and ended up eating three portions of it with his soup.

Many cultural differences have captured our imagination over the years. In Vilcabamba, many houses are without electricity, so the only way we can have some light in the room where we meet is to run a 70-meter extension cable from another house and connect it to a pre-installed socket, where a globe is frantically searched for and installed. This always takes around half an hour to do as it is near-dark when this becomes a

priority and there is always a part of the extension cable that is worn.

We have seen how God works in people's hearts, transforming them into His image. On one occasion, because of a misunderstanding, we had arrived about two hours late for a Bible study in a different village. Here, a handful of village believers were waiting for our arrival and absolutely no one had left, having sung every hymn they knew and prayed every prayer they could think of. This just shows the hunger in their hearts for God's Word and how God moves in these Andean villages.

During one of the visits in Vilcabamba, we walked around in the village as always, trying to

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"
— Isaiah 52:7 (NIV)



“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
— 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (ESV)

find as many people as possible to invite to the evening service. Few believers were at home, as most work in their fields from 4 a.m. until around 7 p.m. At one house, we found the daughter of one of the believers, and she invited us into the patio area of her property. As she is not a believer, we were excited that we would be sharing the Gospel with her. Instead, she seated the four of us, served us dehydrated corn—and then disappeared, leaving us all by ourselves in her property as she left to tend to her animals!

On another occasion, three believers and I had visited the area surrounding Vilcabamba to encourage the believers with an unexpected visit. Because the area is 4000 meters above sea level, it has no cell phone reception, so no one could get a hold of them to tell them we would be coming up. The believers were all working in their fields at that moment, and it would be an impossible task to get them all together at a moment's notice. We exchanged apologies and were invited to a supper at a believer's house before we would return home. Sitting outside under the stars at a somewhat wonky bench, we were joined halfway through our meal by three males whom we had never met. They were not believers and just came for supper. We shared the Gospel with them and tried to engage them in some conversation about God, but they remained totally silent and unresponsive. Sometimes, we simply have to be witnesses, and unfortunately, it seemed like our words were not being well-received on this occasion. Was this perhaps how Jesus felt in Matthew 13:58 when He was rejected in Nazareth, His hometown?

We returned about a month later, and as usual, the light bulb had to be connected, and the believer in charge of that didn't seem to be bothered if that didn't happen soon. The service was scheduled for 7 p.m., but nobody had come yet, and a believer was still running around in the dark trying to connect a piece of wire between the two buildings to have at least a dimly lit service. Sometime near 7:30 p.m., the light bulb was connected, and everyone miraculously appeared

out of nowhere.

What a beautiful sight to see these faithful believers worship the Lord! Some of them had their torch/flashlight as they read God's Word in the half-dark. Some were on their knees as they prayed. By 8 o'clock, the small mud-brick building was filled up to capacity with some 15 believers. We give God the glory for these get-togethers.

About halfway through the worship, a young man walked into the service and quietly sat on a chair as we sang to the Lord. I was puzzled—was this not the same young man who had not responded to a single question as we ate together, barely a month ago? Nobody said anything, however. We continued praising the Lord, and I shared a message of encouragement until around 10 p.m.

Then, one of the women believers announced that the young man was there for a special reason—he wanted to make right with God. As he knelt on the cracked cement floor, all the believers circled around him, and we prayed over him. The Lord had done something in his heart, and this young man accepted the Lord as His Saviour that night. God is gracious and merciful, and He will go out and look for His lost sheep until He finds them. The Lord reminded me of Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (ESV).

God's ways are often different from ours. Cultures are often different from ours. But God's love for us is always the same, and He will reach His purpose through His children, no matter where they live or how they connect a light bulb.

Please pray:

- † Please pray for good health for us all, for safety and protection as we often travel on the dangerous mountain passes and for opportunities to share Jesus in more villages.
- † Pray also for all the believers in the Quechua villages, where they often face daily hardships and struggles, that the seeds planted in those communities would yield fruits.



Above: In Vilcabamba and Huirahuacho, all the believers worship together after lunch. This was in a house of a believer in Huirahuacho. The young man in front is the son of the older man with the violin and is also a believer.

Below: Here, the five of us who evangelise and drive from Abancay stop to share with a believer and their family members (non-believers). The people we share with are always out in the fields during the day, busy tending to their animals or busy with harvesting. Normally, both the women and the men do the hard labour in the fields.



Supporting Bible college students with scholarships

By Brian Heffron, SIM Southern Africa Service Centre Media Coordinator

Committed to helping the country attain the qualified pastors it needs, SIM South Africa is helping Bible students pursue their education.

“This project’s aim is to provide partial scholarships to students at Bible college who are studying to develop leadership skills for their continuing ministry in churches within South Africa through Biblically based theological teaching,” said Project Coordinator Zimkhitha Fobo.

“SIM SA has a hope that after they provide this kind of initiative, the Gospel will reach the unreached places and people,” she added.

Many of the recipients have attended Union Bible Institute, near Pietermaritzburg. UBI is an interdenominational college that serves students primarily from South Africa but also some from surrounding countries. SIM’s relationship with the college dates back to its earliest days, as Africa Evangelical Fellowship (which merged with SIM) helped found UBI in 1942. SIM has continued to provide operational support over the years, including such funds as these scholarships.

This year, eleven students received scholarships, and the total was over R125, 000. Recipients are nominated by their schools and selected by a committee that includes representatives of the mission and the Africa Evangelical Church.

“God is doing a wonderful work through this project by using us to help those who are in need of studying the Gospel but cannot afford to,” Zimkhitha said. “I enjoy a lot by coordinating and managing this project, because I know how to be poor and have nothing, so to help those who are in need is in my heart.”

Among this year’s recipients at UBI were Busisiwe and Ntombikhona, both of whom are finishing their second year of studying for a theology diploma.

“It helps a lot because sometimes we struggle to reach the amount that is needed for school. It’s added to the amount from my church, so it makes it easier for them to pay for me,” Ntombikhona said. “I’m so grateful about it. I hope God will help them to grow and help more people who are struggling with their studies payments.”

“I’m very pleased by this bursary, because it



helps me very much,” Busisiwe said. “It shows me that God cares [and] that there are people who care about others and not just themselves.”

Affording school has been difficult for Busisiwe, an orphan whose husband passed away three years ago. Her elder daughter is married, and her younger daughter stays with Busisiwe’s sister. SIM’s bursary covers one term per year, and her church in Durban also pays for her schooling. She helps with the garden at UBI to help with her fees.

“It makes you feel so special,” Busisiwe said. “What I can say is I am very, very, very happy, and I praise God for that, and to whoever helps me get this bursary, I say thank you very, very, very much. I can say God is there. Sometimes when you are in the difficulties, it easy to lose sight of that.”

Busisiwe has a great desire to continue her education so that she can serve wherever the Lord

leads her. She already speaks English, Zulu and Sesotho but feels she needs to improve her fluency in English, and she would also like to learn Shona.

“I don’t need to be limited to sharing the gospel only here in South Africa, so that it can be easy for me to connect with them. They are our own brothers and sisters, but it is very difficult for us to communicate with them,” she said.

Wanting to communicate well also motivates Busisiwe to continue learning technology.

“In our days, technology is the first thing that is used so that it can be easier to connect to other people,” Busisiwe said, noting that this is especially important in teaching teenagers and youth. “I cannot go to them with less knowledge; I must go with more knowledge so that they can trust God having sent me as their leader.”

Like Busisiwe, Ntombikhona is a mother struggling to afford Bible college without a husband’s support. She has three sons and a daughter, from 9 years old to 22. Ntombikhona said she left her husband in April due to his insulting words, threats and beatings. She said they had received strong support from their church, who prayed for her and provided counselling but that the help didn’t change his behaviour.

“Because of my children, I decided to leave

Ntombikhona



him, because even the children were suffering... He used to say I’m nothing, I’m useless, I can’t survive without him. He used to say I’m stupid, idiot. Now, he is disappointed to see me get passed my studies. I got fifth position; I was a top student last year—it got worse,” she said.

In such circumstances, balancing studies and family is very difficult, but she is grateful for God’s help through His divine work in her life, through His church and through UBI and SIM.

“By the grace of God, I manage it,” she said. “The children are happy now; they are ok, and they say they don’t want to go back to their father. They stay at the mission house at our church.”

After she completes her studies, she will return to her church and a well-suited ministry.

“I know that I must preach and that I’m called to preach, to speak to people—especially abused women,” she said. “In our church, I am the first one who will be a female leader. I am the first one who came to UBI from my church, so there’s a change in my church, so I think I will do some change, too, especially to women’s ministry.”

SIM is grateful to be able to help these and other students through this project. Those wishing to help should email Zimkhitha Fobo at za.projects@sim.org.

Please pray:

† For all of South Africa’s Bible colleges and students to remain strong academically, biblically and financially.

† For SIM South Africa to be able to continue supporting students with scholarships and for those students to invigorate the churches and ministries they engage with.

† For these women and their families to have all they need each day, including rest, clear minds and peace in their hearts.

† For women in difficult situations to have courage, peace, health, and safety and for their men to treat them well, as the Lord commands.

“Bridges and doors” of ministry

By Mark Hugo, SIM South Africa Missionary

During our first term on the field, my wife, Barbara, and I soon realized that we were placed amongst a very spiritual people who had a far clearer concept of a creator God who oversees all of life than those we had grown up with.

It was, therefore, not hard for us to engage in areas of Christian ministry in almost all areas of life. After a number of years, we had established ministries with local governments and schools through a thriving local pastors’ fraternal organisation. I had even managed to connect others in our community who enjoyed road running, and we were able to form a club.

One of our members was a man named Oupa, with whom I had a great relationship—but on matters of spirituality, we were far apart. He belonged to a church group called the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), and they wore a uniform and badge and seemed to hold very different beliefs and practices from those our fraternal pastors held. In all our time engaging with the larger body of Christ on this particular field, we would never move to include the ZCC in anything we were promoting as Christian, but God had placed them in our hearts.

Our next calling would lead us to partner with a mission organization called ZEMA, Zion Evangelical Ministries of Africa (ZEMA), whose primary focus was to provide biblical teaching to a group identified as “African Zionists” or amaZioni. They grew out of a movement that began in Zion, Illinois, USA, at the beginning of the 1900s. The teaching came to South Africa through their publications, and in 1905, a group of pastors who had subscribed to their teachings of Salvation, Healing and Holy Living were visited by a church representative from Illinois. These African Zionists—though largely fragmented—now number around 20 million followers.

Upon our departure from our first field placement, I mentioned to our local pastors our intentions of joining ZEMA, they responded that if these African Zionists were to come to God, then truly Africa would be changed.

Those of us who partner with ZEMA in their biblical teaching are asked to “please cross the

bridges” they have spent years putting in place. African Zionism stretches across the religious landscape from a form of cultist worship to true Christian worship, and there is nothing more thrilling than to witness the work of God’s Spirit and His words transforming hearts and minds.

There is sometimes a strong spiritual desire to save them out of their Zionism, but we choose rather to come alongside them as their teachers and mentors. As we have partnered with our African Zionist friends over the past 30 years, we have grown to nearly 80 independent schools teaching approximately 3000 at present.

By now, there are many African Zionists who are teachers and principals of their own schools; however, ZEMA has been asked to remain in partnership, as the work is far from complete. On the Christian landscape, the ZCC tends to lean away from true Godly worship, and I am now beginning to understand the divide that stood between Oupa and me and between ZCC leadership and the rest of the Christian faith.

Over the years, several ZCC students have attended our Bible schools, but more recently, prominent leaders close to ZCC headquarters have expressed an interest in Bible schools amongst them. ZEMA is knocking on the door and is seeing it begin to open. This year, ZCC leaders invited missionaries and pastors to attend the annual ZCC Easter conference, which can attract over a million worshippers. Unfortunately, COVID-19 and a strict government lockdown cancelled all church gatherings, and the contact with ZCC headquarters seems to have faded.

However, we remain prayerfully dependent upon the Lord, knowing that this delay does not prevent Him from opening a new door. Some of us have even gone in person to the headquarters gates to request an interview. As I write this article, we are relying on prayer and patience, as we look forward to the door opening once more.

Please pray with us as we attempt to keep our wicks trimmed so that when the invitation comes, we will be ready to enter in with the light of Christ, Who alone can transform this continent into a glorious beacon of His Kingdom.



Above: ZEMA teachers at our annual conference in KwaZulu-Natal.

Below: Teachers of the Western Cape—two pastors, a school principal and me.



Why I wrote *I Would Rather Have Jesus*

By Alan Proffitt, SIM South Africa Missionary

As 2020 began, I was in the process of writing a book on what makes a cult and how to present Christian answers. A number of my college students felt the subject matter was very helpful, because they (and I) had seen many people searching for spiritual answers without finding the hope of Christ.

Then COVID-19 hit our nations.

As I listened to the world reports about the fast spread of this dreaded virus and as I listened to the secular scientists, it became clear that self-protection was all that mattered in the moment. As more and more people died and as the virus and fear spread, people became very cautious, and the difficulty of adjusting to lockdowns and of meeting basic daily needs pushed most other thoughts aside for many people.

Yet eternal questions cannot long be silenced, and some started looking for spiritual answers. As before, some were looking elsewhere than Christ. An article in the 16 May 2020 *Weekend Argus* asked, “Will Coronavirus Kill Astrology?” The article claimed that despite the failure of their favourite psychics to predict the pandemic, many people were still looking for celestial guidance.

It seemed my book mattered even in such a time as this.

“Astrology is the single most predominant form of divination in the world,” wrote Ron Rhodes in his useful book, *Find It Quick Handbook on Cults & New Religions* published in 2005 by Harvest House. As my college students read about astrology, they discovered that at least 20 million people carry horoscope material, and at least ten percent of Americans who claimed to be Christian also turned to astrology for “guidance.”

When one thinks about people’s desire to know the future, for a Christian the answer should always be anchored in the one true God. He is eternal and the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, and He alone knows the future. As Christians, we need to have a worldview that has God at its centre.

Why, then, do so many Christians struggle to have a Biblical worldview? Is it because we doubt God’s promises about heaven and His statements found in the Bible? Is John 14:3 so hard to read?

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” He has prepared a place for each of us so that we can be with Him forever in our Father’s house, *viz.* heaven.

Perhaps some Christians want to know more about what heaven is like; perhaps others don’t just want to be in heaven but instead desire to become like God. “Knowing good and evil” was the first temptation (Genesis 3:5), and it remains common in the self-actualisation of the New Age Movement and Mormonism. Whilst Animism and African traditional religions seem to have one thing in common, they are just giving answers by gurus and significant others (like ancestors) saying that this is how life operates and that these traditions make “the most sense.” So many operate on rational thought, which in some cases becomes the “god we create in our image.” Unfortunately, as the Bible teaches, the broad way or the popular path are not the way to God; instead, we enter through the narrow way, or the door of the sheep (John 10:7,9; John 14:6).

I also reflected on local Muslims in South Africa. For 15 years, I had been invited to sit with the men on the carpet, and we discussed the prophets of Christianity and Islam.

Has anyone found the best Prophet in Islam? The One whom we call Jesus Christ? Yes! One example is Nabeel Qureshi, who examined the truth claims of Islam, realised the Gospel was the only answer and chose to leave the religion of his birth. To help my book’s readers, I quote Nabeel directly, as I didn’t want to “put words” into his mouth. I did the same with Nelson Mandela and his perspective on ancestors.

All world religions and cults give very natural, man-made answers, but they will never be enough to convince people that in coming to a Holy God, one needs more than one’s own good works or “good ideas/philosophy.” The New Testament warns against false teachers in several places in Scripture, including Mark 13:22 and 1 John 4:1.

The unique divinity of Christ is rejected in all the world religions and therefore Jesus’ own testimony about himself is a crucial factor to understand.

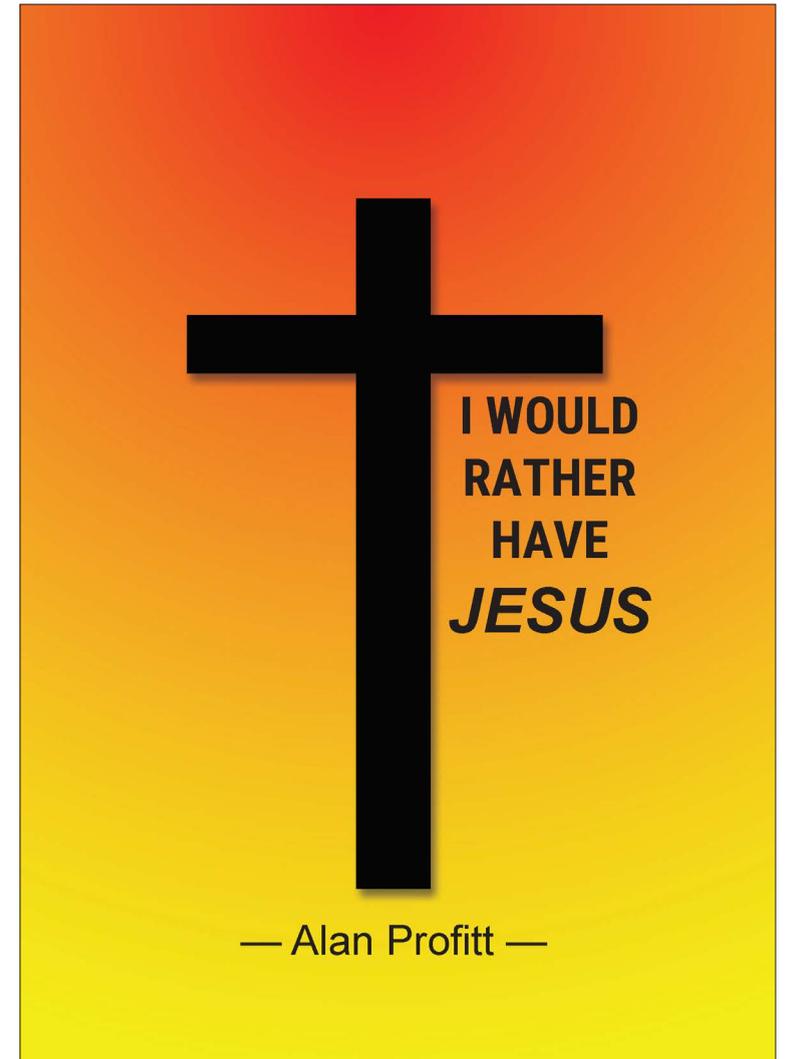
“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12, NIV).

We again see people rejecting Christ’s unique divinity in the Gospel of Mark. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’” (Mark 2:5, NIV). Instead of acknowledging the Lord Jesus to be God, the scribes accused Him in their hearts of speaking blasphemies, because they recognised correctly, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7b, NIV). However, understanding that was not enough, for they rejected the truth that Jesus was God incarnate, standing before them.

“Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, ‘Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralysed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.’ So he said to the man, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’ He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’” (Mark 2:8-12).

The challenge of false cultists is that they withstand the truth of God by presenting a cheap perversion. They have their own “bible,” their own way of salvation—in short, they have a substitute for everything in Christianity. But substitutes cannot take the place of Christ or His truth.

I Would Rather Have Jesus seeks to answer



why Christians see and believe the Deity of Christ, who is the Son of God, our Messiah and Redeemer and returning King. It highlights the need for a Biblical world-view and shows how Christianity—as revealed in the Bible and believed by faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross and the ministry of the Holy Spirit—is all a person needs for eternal life.

As people read my book, it is my prayer and hope that they would find Jesus. My theme is very similar to the Apostle John’s: “but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31, ESV).

I Would Rather Have Jesus is available from Alan Proffitt for R50 plus R15 postage. Request a copy by emailing Alan.Proffitt@sim.org.

Sweet Eats for Sweet Meets

By Molly Paul, SIM South Africa Missionary



Photo by Molly Paul

Not only is it important to willingly try the local foods of the culture you are now living in, but it is also important to be willing to share something from your home culture.

One of the most defining characteristics of Indian culture is hospitality. People in India have the highest regard for guests and value hospitality.

I was privileged to be born in Kerala, India and brought up in that rich culture. I grew up seeing and experiencing my mom's hospitality and serving people joyfully with her God-given talent. It was embossed in my heart from a young age.

Since leaving my parent's home, I have had opportunities to travel around the world and have lived in Lusaka, Zambia, six different states in the USA and now for the last 26 years working in different locations within South Africa. These experiences have given me lots of cross-cultural opportunities.

Over the years, I have found everywhere that snacks, sweets and desserts bring an air of joy to time shared around the table, helping build lasting friendships. Everyone looks forward to a bite to eat and a cup of tea or other drink. Sharing food with someone brings about a connection that surpasses culture. Not only is it important to willingly try the local foods of the culture you are now living in, but it is also important to be willing to share something from your home culture.

One of the snacks I loved while growing up in Kerala is Sweet Rice Cake. It is a scrumptious, mouth-watering, steamed cake. Many times, I have invited others for a cup of tea and have served this snack—and they all love it.

God has used the sweet fellowship to give opportunities to share gospel living with struggling believers and to open gospel opportunities with non-believers. It has provided many opportunities to delve into deeper communication and to mentor many who have come to sit at our table, discussing more heart matters rather than the weather or current events.

Even more, when missionaries join us at the table and we share the burdens of ministry and family life, my husband often jokes, "There is no meeting without eating" or "No fellowship without swallowship".

Our prayer is that those who come to our home always leave with smiles on their faces because they've enjoyed a sweet meet over a sweet eat.

Sweet Rice Cake

Ingredients:

1. Rice flour (1 cup)
2. Grated Coconut (1/2 cup)
3. Salt to taste
4. Sugar (1/2 cup)
5. Instant Yeast (1 tsp)
6. Cooked Rice (1/4 cup)
7. Water (1 1/2 cup)
8. Raisins (optional)
9. Oil

Preparation:

You need a blender, round cake tin and a food steamer.

1. Grind ingredients 1 – 7 together in a blender.
2. Pour the batter into a large bowl and leave the batter to rise for 3-4 hours.
3. Grease inside of the cake tin with oil so that the Sweet Rice Cake will come out easily.
4. Gently stir the risen batter and fill half of the cake tin with the batter so that it gives space for rising while steaming.
5. Place the tin into the steamer and cover with the lid. Steam it for 20 to 30 minutes.
6. After the first 5 minutes, you can add the optional raisins into the partially steamed cake. This keeps them from sinking to the bottom. Replace the lid and continue steaming.
7. The Sweet Rice Cake is cooked when an inserted skewer comes out clean. Take it out from the steam pot and allow to cool for few minutes. Then gently lift or turn out the cake from the tin.



Photo by Brian Beatty

Until all people have heard the gospel

By Nicoline Zwikker, SIM South Africa Chief Operating Officer

When I started to visit churches to share the call of God on my life, I was challenged. One of the main questions I often faced was, “Why do you want to go there when we have so many people closer to home who need to be reached for the Lord?”

I needed to pray through this question. It is true that we don’t have to look far and wide to find people in need of salvation. Below are some of the conclusions I came to.

There is no doubt that God cares deeply about the souls of all people. After all, He sent His son, our Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to save sinners.

We know also that the message of the cross is the only way that people can come into a right relationship with God and attain eternal life. As Jesus proclaimed, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6, NIV).

That knowledge convicts us of the importance of faithfully obeying Christ’s Great Commission to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20a, NIV).

So, the mandate on the church to proclaim Christ is clear. The need, too, is clear, as Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:38, NIV).

Church history is full of wonderful testimonies of Christians who have heeded this call and taken the gospel to the ends of the earth: Andrew Murray, CT Studd, Hudson Taylor, William Carey, Elizabeth Elliot, to name a few. Is that age of

As long as there are still people who have never heard the gospel, there is a need for going.

missions over?

What would have happened if the church in the first century had stayed in Jerusalem only? Could they have claimed that there was enough opportunity in Jerusalem to forego the call to take the gospel further afield?

As long as there are still people who have never heard the gospel, there is a need for going.

Yes, the method of how we reach people may need to adapt. Many doors that may be closed to people may be open to digital outreach. Closed borders may mean the need to find creative ways to have a presence in countries. Alternatively, we are blessed with opportunities to reach those people in our own country or others, as many people are displaced from their homelands through choice, war or economic necessity.

Faced with so many challenges, we remember that “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7, ESV). We are to do this not in our own strength but in His, connecting to Him in prayer and relying on Him to be faithful. As Jesus said in the remainder of Matthew 28:20, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

SIM International director Joshua Bogunjoko said, “As a people called by the Lord Jesus Christ, we want to cross whatever barrier might exist, that either prevents people from hearing the good news or prevents them from understanding that news when they hear it.”

That is the eternal call of missions. The local church has an important role in reaching their communities, in discipling people and in raising up Christian leaders, but there is still a special place for sending people out to cross barriers with the aim of seeing a witness for Jesus and a church of Christ in all nations.

We invite you to join us.



Honouring God as we reflect on 2020

By Chantal Lengeveldt, SIM South Africa Staff

Undoubtedly, 2020 has been the most unforgettable year for many.

I am sure that none of us expected a global pandemic to consume most of our year. We entered the year expectant that 2020 would be a better year than the last.

However, this year, the world stopped, and most of normal life stopped as well. While in this waiting period, most of us depended on the media, filled with sadness and negative reports of thousands dying, millions sick, unemployment, protests, corruption and so much more.

Finally, we are approaching 2021, and all of us will find ourselves reflecting on the past year. As believers, we need to make sure that God’s Word will guide our reflection, so how do we make sure that we reflect on 2020 biblically and in a God-honouring way?

Paul gives us the perfect guidelines in Philippians 4:8-9: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or

praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (NIV).

Positive thinking is not what Paul is referring to; he is describing to us what the thought pattern of every believer should be. He is telling us to allow these things to shape our attitudes towards life.

Paul had a full understanding of how our thought patterns could affect our worship unto God. We are encouraged to fill our minds with those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. These attitudes will draw us into worship to God and service to others.

He concludes this thought in verse 9 with the encouragement to take this teaching and “put it into practice” and the promise “And the God of peace will be with you.”

May the God of peace be with you as you biblically reflect on 2020 and, as we move into 2021, may you be reminded of the words of Apostle Paul in Romans 12:12: “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (NIV).



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New friends are waiting wherever God is calling you

“Jesus came and told his disciples, ‘I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:19-20, NLT)

The Lord calls every believer to serve Him, and He is calling new believers from every tongue, tribe and nation; what a joyful blessing when those callings introduce new friends for eternity! Explore the many opportunities to serve the Lord in global missions in South Africa and around the world. Call +27 (0) 21-715-3200 or email za.sendingenquiries@sim.org to begin a conversation with us.

Photo by Brian Heffron

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