

PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY Summer 2017

# mission CROSSROADS

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A photograph of two people planting a tree. On the left, a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a green t-shirt and a brown hat, is holding a young tree. On the right, a woman in a white uniform and white cap is pouring water from an orange bucket onto the base of the tree. In the background, several men in suits are visible. A blue bag with a logo is on the ground.

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CELEBRATING 180 YEARS OF  
PRESBYTERIAN MISSION!**

Pittsburgh-Malawi-South Sudan tripartite | Following God's detour | Four generations of Presbyterian mission

# Mission 180: Transformative Mission

Presbyterian World Mission celebrates 180 years of international mission service this year. In that time, we have done a 180-degree turn in how we understand our role in God's mission.

Our earliest missionaries were sent to teach, preach and heal. Presbyterian mission outposts were known for these three pillars: school, church and hospital. Faithful missionaries took their understanding of what it meant to be disciples of Christ across the globe, laying the foundation for churches we now count as partners in mission. More than 94 million Christians today claim the heritage of these efforts. Two articles in this *Mission Crossroads* issue, on pages 2 and 4, look at the legacy of Presbyterian mission history, how it has evolved and how we will be stretched in the future. Today we engage more intentionally in a ministry of partnership, recognizing that our partners have as much to offer us as we have to offer them. We affirm humbly that the transformation of communities and lives is not a result of our mission effort but the presence of God at work in our midst. The challenge for World Mission, mission co-workers, mid councils and congregations is to find the best ways to coordinate efforts among our global partners so that we are providing a faithful and unified witness of Christ to the world at large.

More than our theology has changed. In this issue of *Mission Crossroads*, you will also read personal stories of our Mission 180. God's mission begins with our own personal transformation. Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, we become aware of our sinful nature and are called to repentance. Through repentance we experience forgiveness and grace in abundance. Similarly, we have been called to model a 180-degree turnabout in the ways we engage in mission partnerships with others. For Ellen Sherby and Elmer Zavala, "mission" evoked negative, paternalistic acts with which they wanted no part. After witnessing a more faithful model of mission, they underwent a 180-degree shift in their understanding and now devote their lives to cross-cultural service (see page 18).

World Mission's anniversary represents much more than years on a calendar. It is a celebration of our shared calling in God's life-changing mission. This issue's Mission Toolkit (page 17) offers guidance on how we might collectively live into this calling more faithfully and effectively. After 180 years, we have some advice to offer from not only our own voice but also from the voices of our global partners. In the spirit of partnership and, indeed, friendship, we

desire to be first partakers in listening and hearing new perspectives that reveal God's mission more deeply.

As we celebrate this anniversary, we give thanks to God for the legacy of faithful Christians who devoted their lives to the vision of God's mission abroad. We give thanks for you who support our collective efforts today.



Mission co-workers Cobbie and Dessa Palm, left, with Gladys Malayang and Dr. Ben S. Malayang III, president of Silliman University, and Tamron Keith, right, at the regional gathering of Presbyterian World Mission in the Philippines last year

*Mission Crossroads is a Presbyterian Mission Agency publication about God's mission around the world through the PC(USA) and our church partners.*

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### On the cover:

In Malawi, a member of the Women's Guild assists partners from South Sudan and Pittsburgh in planting a mango tree to celebrate the opening of Gondwa Prayer House.

*Photo by Sharon Carver*





# Keeping faith in Colombia

**Gospel seeds sown by Presbyterian missionaries develop into a bold witness for peace**

Reflecting an unflinching fidelity to the gospel, the Presbyterian Church of Colombia has helped people find hope and meaning in circumstances where despair could easily reign supreme. For more than 50 years, a civil war gripped Colombia, claiming more than 220,000 lives and leaving millions displaced. In communities that displaced people fled to, the Presbyterian Church of Colombia was there, offering comfort and building community among those whom the war had uprooted. The conflict pitted paramilitary groups supporting the government against guerrilla groups demanding change. Colombian Presbyterians supported the 2016 peace accord that ended the conflict.

At times during the war, church leaders received death threats because they dared to speak up for peace and for the rights of displaced people. In 2004, the Presbyterian Church of Colombia asked the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for help as it confronted this dangerous situation. Presbyterian World Mission, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program responded by sponsoring a ministry of accompaniment. This involved Presbyterian volunteers from the United States making short-term visits to Colombia to stand with church leaders and others facing danger. The death threats eventually subsided, and the accompaniment program shifted its focus to the Colombian church's ministry with displaced people.

The prophetic stance of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia is based on its deeply held belief that Christian faith demands that believers engage in society and work for its betterment. This Reformed conviction has been part of the Presbyterian proclamation in Colombia since missionaries from our church began working there in 1856.

**The task of mission is different than it was in the 19th century, but our Reformed witness, both in word and deed, is needed as much now as it was then.**

As Colombia moves into the post-civil-war era, Colombian Presbyterians are engaging in the challenging work of reconciliation. As ex-combatants return home, victims of violence will be living in communities with former perpetrators of violence. The Presbyterian Church of Colombia is committed to helping communities as well as individuals heal and to contributing to a lasting peace with justice. Mission co-worker Sarah Henken has been invited by the Colombian church to help with this ministry. She will also continue to serve as site coordinator of the Young Adult Volunteer program.

Around the world, churches founded by Presbyterian missionaries are faithfully proclaiming the gospel and diligently working for peace and justice. Their holistic witness embodies the Reformed faith on which these churches were

founded. As our church works with them in partnership, our church's understanding of what it means to be a Reformed church is renewed.

The task of mission is different than it was in the 19th century, but our Reformed witness, both in word and deed, is needed as much now as it was then. Our global partners invite us to walk alongside them as they confront some of the world's most pressing problems. Together we are addressing poverty, hopelessness and violence, and our world and our church are better because of our partnerships and the ministry that results through them.

Your prayers and financial support enable the PC(USA) to work alongside our partners. Without you, we could not create the mission co-worker positions that our partners ask us to create, and we could not appoint the people God has called to fill these positions. Our church would not benefit from the wisdom our partners share with us, and individuals and communities would not experience the transformation that happens through our collaborative work.

*Rosemary Mitchell is senior director of Mission Engagement and Support at the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Contact her at [rosemary.mitchell@pcusa.org](mailto:rosemary.mitchell@pcusa.org).*

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Support mission co-workers in Colombia.  
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# Mission 180

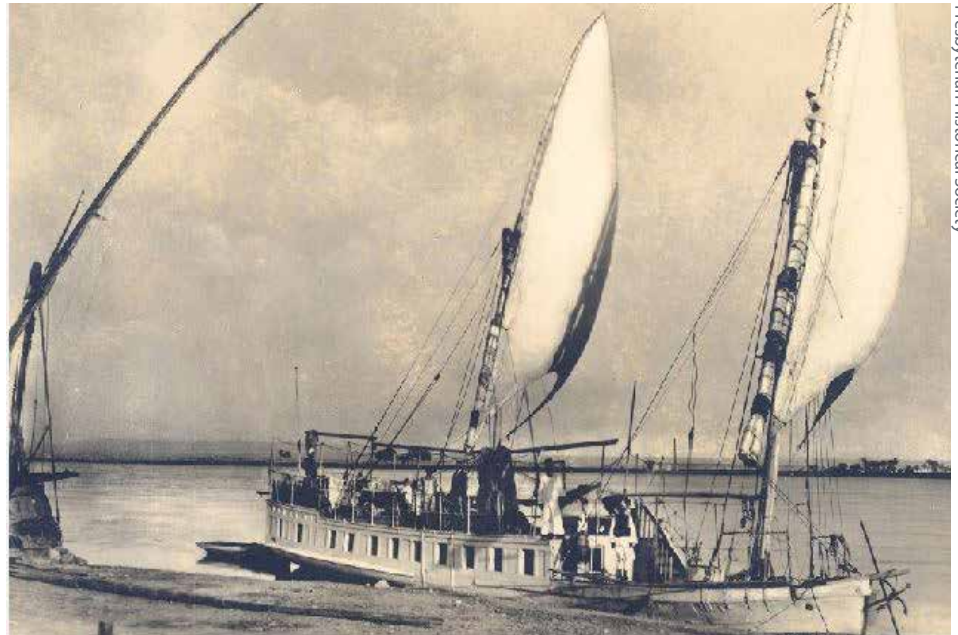
Michael Parker

In this year in which we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, we also mark 180 years of Presbyterian mission abroad. During these years, much of the nature of mission and of how Presbyterians think about mission has changed or, at the very least, been supplemented or clarified by new ideas. Some changes have been so great and startling that we might even imagine a 180-degree turn in missiology.

It is curious that the Protestant reformers of the 16th century, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, did not emphasize mission. Despite having a missional Bible and a missional God, they did not develop a missional theology. To be fair, they were deeply engaged in other matters: translating the Bible into vernacular languages, reforming Christian doctrine and reforming church practices. In effect, they had a mission in Europe.

It was during the Great Awakening of the 18th century, led by George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, that Protestant leaders in America first began to dream of world evangelization. In the 1740s, David Brainerd became the first American Presbyterian missionary. He labored for five years among the Native Americans of New York before succumbing to tuberculosis. Edwards edited and published Brainerd's journal, which inspired generations of missionaries. One of those inspired was William Carey, a British Baptist who in 1793 successfully urged the establishment of the first Protestant mission society.

Mission societies became the Protestant equivalent of the mission orders of the Catholic Church, such as the Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits. Scores of new societies were established in Europe and America during the



Presbyterian Historical Society

The first Presbyterian seminary in Egypt opened on a sailboat, the *Ibis*, because missionaries were not allowed to establish teaching institutions on Egyptian soil. In the morning students studied Scripture, and in the afternoon they demonstrated their learning through service. The boat made stops along the Nile River to distribute Bibles, songbooks and teaching materials.

early decades of the 19th century. The first mission society in the U.S. was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, an interdenominational organization that was largely the creation of the Congregationalists. Under the American Board, Presbyterian missionaries were sent to India, Siam and Africa.

Many Presbyterians, however, were not comfortable with this arrangement. They believed that mission should be at the heart of the church's activities, not something outsourced to parachurch organizations. For Presbyterians, the issue was caught up in the New School-Old School controversy of the 1830s. Consequently, when the church split in 1837, the Old School faction established the Board of Foreign Missions, with headquarters in New York. This is the

origin of the current Presbyterian World Mission, a ministry of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Over the years World Mission has operated under different names, and at various times it served as the mission organization of the Northern, Southern and United (middle states) branches of the Presbyterian Church. Today it serves the nationwide Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Much of the impetus for mission in the 19th and early 20th centuries was the desire to fulfill the Great Commission that Jesus issued before his ascension: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). This approach achieved its clearest expression in 1886 with the famous watchword of the Student



Synod of the Nile

New Presbyterian churches, like this one in Assiut, Egypt, are under construction on plots of land provided by the Egyptian government. This is a turnaround in mission. Since 1863, the Presbyterian Church in Egypt has grown to include nearly 400 churches, including 100 new church plants or “fellowship groups” in eight presbyteries in the Synod of the Nile.

**Volunteer Movement:** “The evangelization of the world in this generation.” Yet missionaries in these years were rarely simply evangelists. They were generally engaged in holistic mission, building schools and hospitals, translating the Bible and seeking social reforms.

Women played a key role from the beginning of Presbyterian mission. It was women who formed the mission support organizations that raised the funds and provided much of the publicity that made foreign missions possible. Women were also missionaries. By 1830 women already constituted half of the missionaries sent by Protestant mission societies in the U.S., and by 1900 this had shot up to two-thirds of all U.S. missionaries. Presbyterian women also established or supported a number of specific mission programs, including the *Mission Yearbook for Prayer and Study*, the Presbyterian Hunger Program and the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program.

Early missionaries are often mistakenly accused of being agents of Western colonialism whose efforts undermined local cultures. Yet it was often missionaries, such as William Sheppard in the Congo, who were the sharpest critics

of colonial practices. Also, missionaries’ attempts to promote education — especially literacy — often resulted in helping to revive indigenous languages as mediums of literature, as the translation of the Bible did for Arabic in the Middle East and for Hindi in India.

Early missionaries are also often harshly criticized for the paternalistic attitude they sometimes assumed toward non-Westerners. Yet, in fairness, it should be pointed out that missionaries had in mind from the beginning that they were attempting to establish indigenous churches. The 1889 edition of the Northern branch of the Presbyterian Church’s mission manual made this clear. The Board of Foreign Missions, it declared, sought “the speedy establishment” of independent indigenous churches. The independent-minded Presbyterian churches in Japan and Brazil became the trendsetters in this movement. At a Board of Foreign Missions conference held at Princeton in 1920, conferees agreed that, following evangelism, the aim of missions should be to establish “self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing” indigenous churches.

With the rise of nationalism

following World War II, the global mission endeavor had to make its peace with a postcolonial world. Until this time, many countries with Presbyterian churches had both mission and church organizations, with most of the real power held by the former. The Northern and Southern Presbyterian churches came to the realization at about the same time (1958 and 1962, respectively) that this had to change. Over the next decade or more, mission organizations abroad were dissolved and their financial and physical assets, historically controlled by missionaries, were transferred to local churches.

Beginning in the 1960s, mission was reconceived as “partnership” between equals in which there was mutuality, each providing something to the relationship. Missionaries were then called “fraternal workers”; today, following this tradition, they are called mission co-workers. In this context, evangelism continued to be important, but it was usually the indigenous church that was expected to take the lead. Also, social justice gained increased prominence. It had always been part of the mission agenda, but now it was seen as an essential aspect of the church’s witness to God’s kingdom in the world.

Perhaps the biggest change was the realization that traditional mission fields no longer existed. As Western Christians came to see the need for social justice in their own nations, they concluded that the whole world was now the mission field.

*The Rev. Dr. Michael Parker, mission co-worker in Egypt, serves as the director of graduate studies at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo.*

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Read letters from PC(USA) mission co-workers.  
[pcusa.org/missionconnections](http://pcusa.org/missionconnections)



# Sharing together in God's mission

Transformative partnership calls us to look at ourselves and the world in new ways

Philip Woods



Philip Woods

The origins of the modern mission movement lay in the idea, as the London Missionary Society put it, “to spread the knowledge of Christ among heathen and other unenlightened nations.”<sup>1</sup> That notion developed the whole enterprise of sending missionaries as the vehicle for spreading the good news of the gospel. It’s a model that has remained largely unchanged despite the massive changes in the context of international mission over the years. Responding to some of the early changes, a movement emerged in the 19th century among mission societies in Britain and the United States that emerging churches should be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.<sup>2</sup> However, when the Edinburgh Missionary Conference was convened in 1910, the event was still dominated by the mission agencies of European and North American churches,

with their global ambitions, leading one of the few participants from the global South, V.S. Azariah, to plead for better relations between foreign missionaries and “native” Christians in his famous “give us friends” speech toward the end of the conference.

By then the church was truly global, but the churches and mission agencies behind this amazing advance of Christianity were slow to recognize that the call to mission, whether influenced by the “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:19) or Apostolic commissioning (Acts 1:8), applied to their new Christian sisters and brothers, who were also called to be witnesses “to the ends of the earth.” In the 20th century the idea emerged of *Missio Dei* — God’s mission, rather than world mission, to which we are all called as partners working together.<sup>3</sup> Mission in this sense is God’s activity in the world,

The Rev. Mofid Karajilli, founder of Space for Hope, a church-initiated program of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL), brings together Muslim and Christian young people and children for sports activities and friendship.

which we are called to share in together, playing our part in God’s purposes.

How we exercise this partnership, though, is challenging. To speak of “world mission” is rather anachronistic when mission is everywhere, and all Christians and churches are called to share in it. As one mission agency puts it, partners “give according to ability, and receive according to need.” From our privileged position the giving may be easy, but what about the receiving? Can we break out of our colonial legacy to recognize that our

partner churches across the world also have a role to play in supporting us as we discern and play a part in God's mission in our context? Through migration, the PC(USA) is a thoroughly global church, and while we have programs to receive the insights of our international partners, we have not created the space for them to be as engaged with us as we are with them. There may have been a 180-degree turn in missiology, and even in our language, as we speak of mission in terms of partnership, but possibly there is more. Rather than giving and receiving, perhaps instead we should be thinking of how we share together in God's mission, and what sharing might look like in practice.

In its latest statement on mission and evangelism, the World Council of Churches speaks of mission as "Together Towards Life," and comments:

Mission has been understood as a movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the privileged to the marginalized of society. Now people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation.<sup>4</sup>

The Council for World Mission (CWM), which was the successor body of the London Missionary Society but is now internationally governed with churches from the global South in the majority, echoes this in its 2010 Theology Statement, *Mission in the Context of Empire*, where it describes partnership as not only CWM's way of working but also as an alternative paradigm to the prevailing forces of empire that oppress so many. Self-critically, the statement notes:

Even though our self-understanding speaks of partnership and mutuality we still struggle to realise it in our life and witness. We must confess ... we have been slow to share that which we still regard as our own ... that we have been slow to address the inequalities and injustices in our midst, let alone the needs of our neighbours in the world ... and that we have failed to hear the Holy Spirit speaking to all through each and so have not received the learning that these contradictions teach us about ourselves and our calling in the world. This must challenge us to re-engage with what it means to be partners in God's mission.<sup>5</sup>

So, our journey does not stop with simply adopting the language of partnership; we need to be rethinking and reshaping our whole approach to mission and partnership. Some agencies now speak of "sharing people in mission" and "everywhere to everywhere," understanding that the crossing of national and cultural boundaries in

mission also can be about equipping people for mission in their home context, so that mission service becomes a capacity-building vehicle where new approaches and ideas can be learned and applied. These agencies think that it should not be limited to just North-South exchange (or even the reverse), but should enable a true cross-fertilization of mission skills and insights across the world — for example, within Asia or from Africa to Latin America to the United States.

In these terms partnership can be truly transforming, calling us into new ways of looking at the world and ourselves, and understanding our mission calling afresh in today's world. In the past 180 years, we have come a long way, but there is still further to go to realize the full potential of being partners in God's mission with churches across the world, and to receive the gifts and challenges our partners have to share with us as we discern our part in God's mission today, both locally and globally.

*The Rev. Philip Woods is Presbyterian World Mission's area coordinator for the Middle East and Europe.*

#### Footnotes

1. *London Missionary Society, 1794, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Archives* (<https://www.soas.ac.uk/library/archives/collections/missionary-collections/#CouncilforWorldMissionincorporatingtheLondonMissionarySociety>)
2. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-Self\\_Patriotic\\_Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-Self_Patriotic_Movement) (accessed on 3/15/2017)
3. *Transforming Mission*, David Bosch, New York, 1991, pp.389ff.
4. *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscape*, Ed. Jooseop Keum, Geneva, 2013, p.5
5. *Mission in the Context of Empire*, Council for World Mission, London, 2010, p.13



As an Orthodox priest looks on, co-moderator Jan Edmiston, right, lights a candle for peace in a Syrian Orthodox church in Homs, Syria.

#### CONTINUE THE LEGACY

Learn more about partnership values in mission. [pcusa.org/missionpartnership](http://pcusa.org/missionpartnership)



# Three-country partnership creates new model for mission

## Pittsburgh-Malawi bilateral relationship celebrates 25 years, expands to welcome South Sudan

Dave Carver

I wish my eyes were bigger!" That's what I prayed when the British Airways jet touched down in the Malawian capital of Lilongwe in 1995. So many sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures — I simply didn't have enough nerve endings to process it all.

The Lord heard my prayer, at least in regard to partnership with our African sisters and brothers. In 1998 we participated in the first pastoral exchange between the Synod of Blantyre and Pittsburgh Presbytery. For six weeks, Abusa Ralph M'nensa and his wife, Sophie, shadowed us as they enjoyed the life of our community. Later, my family and I lived with them and saw a very different side of the pastorate.

One morning we traveled to a Prayer House of the Chinkwezule Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, on top of the Chaone plateau. Because I'm organized and a planner, I asked M'nensa, "How will we get there?" He explained we'd drive to the bottom of the hill and walk to the top, as there are no roads.

Just after daybreak, we arrived at the bottom, where elders and deacons from the Prayer House greeted us. We started off, climbing upward, with a tin of biscuits and some water. "How long will this take?" I asked. "Not long. About 20 minutes" was the answer.

After an hour, we paused and drank water. "Are we close?" "Ah, yes, Abusa. It is *tatsala pango'no kufika* — it is 'just there.'"

An hour later, we arrived on the hilltop. There was no Prayer House in sight. I said, "There don't seem to be any buildings around here. Is it close?"



Ariel Carver

The Rev. Ralph M'nensa (right) presented a chicken to Sharon Carver and the Rev. Dave Carver during their visit to a Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Prayer House in Malawi in July 1998. Live chickens are thoughtful and generous gifts often shared with visiting clergy in the rural areas of Malawi.

An elder pointed: "Do you see that baobab tree? It is *tatsala pang'no kufika* — it is 'just there.'"

We came to the baobab tree. It was hot. The biscuits and water were gone. There was no Prayer House. As I started to ask my question, my escort interrupted. "Do you see those goats playing? It is

*tatsala pango'no kufika* — it is 'just there.'" Yeah, sure, I thought.

After more than two and a half hours of climbing, we came to the Prayer House. By that time, I was not feeling particularly holy. Before worship, I learned the congregation had not seen a pastor for nearly three years. During our daylong



worship, we baptized babies and children, solemnized marriages, ordained officers, consecrated Women's Guild uniforms and had the sacrament of Communion. It was a wonderful, hope-filled celebration of the kingdom of God.

After a delicious meal of nsima, chicken and rice, we left the Prayer House and began our descent. By the time we got down, it was dark. As we said good-bye, I asked the session clerk about two of the young men. He explained that nobody expected my 9-year-old daughter, Ariel, to climb the entire way. These two deacons traveled with us to carry her when she got tired.

For the entire hike, I kept hearing “*Tatsala pango’no kufika* — it is ‘just there.’” To be honest, I wondered if I would ever see the Prayer House. But all along the way, people pointed out signs to me. A tree. Some goats. A stream. Each sign meant something to my guide — that we were getting closer. Finally, we arrived and celebrated in worship with God’s people.

The Pittsburgh-Malawi partnership has existed for more than 25 years. During that time, the kingdom of God has not been realized. We are still on the trail, but for a quarter-century, wonderful

friends have whispered, “*Tatsala pango’no kufika* — it is ‘just there.’”

Recently, our partnership expanded in a delightful way when the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church sought an international partner. Presbyterian Mission Agency leaders suggested that Pittsburgh might take on another, parallel relationship and re-create in South Sudan what had been successful in Malawi. The Holy Spirit had other ideas.

Instead of another bilateral relationship, we explored a tripartite agreement. PC(USA) and Malawi church representatives met our Presbyterian counterparts from the South Sudan church for a time of retreat and reflection, culminating in a trilateral covenant of support, encouragement and partnership.

That made many things more difficult: increased bureaucracy (both civil and ecclesial), more languages and different cultural understandings. Yet, a great joy has emerged as African churches (traditionally regarded as “recipients” of Western mission) recognize they have much to offer one another and their partner in America. Pittsburgh congregations (often thought of as “donors”) have experienced the vibrancy of African brothers or sisters sharing

some of the joy or faith that we lacked. The shift to a tripartite relationship has led to a renewal of missional energy and connectionalism in Pittsburgh congregations.

Have you seen the signs? There’s a clinic . . . a water project . . . and food pantries in Pittsburgh that have been strengthened by African volunteers. Yet the partnership has meant an exchange of gifts far more valuable than any construction project or renovation: hospitality from abroad, new songs, shared prayers.

Each, my friends, is a sign that the realm of God is coming. It is, in fact, “*tatsala pango’no kufika* — it is ‘just there.’” This partnership is the place where thousands of us have seen signs that the kingdom is near.

When I first arrived in Africa, I prayed my eyes might be larger. Well, they’re sure a lot older now. But they are bigger. And the world is a lot smaller. I keep climbing because I have partners on the trip. *Tatsala pango’no kufika*, my friends.

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*The Rev. Dave Carver is pastor at First United Presbyterian Church of Crafton Heights in the Pittsburgh Presbytery.*



Shaaron Carver

The Rev. Dave Carver and his daughter, Ariel, 9 (in pink), join Malawian pastor the Rev. Ralph M’nensa and a delegation of elders and deacons as they pass through a cassava field en route to the Prayer House atop Chaone Mountain near Machinga, Malawi. This was the first visit by any clergy to the Chaone Prayer House in at least three years.

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# Tripartite partnership: a new perspective for mission

## South Sudan partnership strengthens faith and hope

Angelo Wello Agwa

**I**n 2015, the world's youngest nation fought itself, inflicting great human suffering and displacing many people. My country has never been the same economically, socially or politically. However, hope remains for people who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, for all things work for good as Paul wrote in his epistle to Romans. It takes faith and hope to live here.

Also in 2015, I was honored to be part of a Pittsburgh–Malawi–South Sudan tripartite mission trip to Malawi. It was a great blessing by challenging my perspective on mission. As a Presbyterian, I considered the West, especially the U.S., as the only people who can do mission work — not us. That idea changed after those 14 days in Malawi, where I interacted with many believers and church leaders.

The partnership is an eye-opener when it comes to mission work. Our South Sudanese churches must embark on mission to bring the hope of Jesus Christ to unreached people, even in this time.

I learned from our Pittsburgh and Malawi partners a holistic approach to partnership and mission, unlike historical mission work that focused only on one, spiritual aspect and neglected other aspects such as physical

needs for food, health and education.

The partnership resulted from a vision and strong desire for mission work, especially in Africa. That vision has grown with very good fruits of cooperation, love and humility. I thank God, who used this partnership to bless Pittsburgh, Malawi and South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church. It is now possible to achieve more in mission work, be it in America or Africa. We can always learn from each other in how we carry out the Great Commission or mission work.

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*The Rev. Angelo Wello Agwa is pastor of the Presbyterian Evangelical Church in Lologo, South Sudan, near Juba.*

## Malawi synod values new South Sudanese partner

Moyenda Kanjerwa

**W**e thank God for using former leaders of Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Blantyre Synod and Pittsburgh Presbytery. We have “come of age” as one of the oldest existing partnerships of PC(USA). We are true to one another.

When we incorporated South Sudan into our partnership it showed we are equal before God. The greatest obstacle is to welcome South Sudan and treat it as one of us, after many years of partnership with Pittsburgh Presbytery alone. The three-way relations work

through a committee that shares ideas and organizes exchange visits for synods and congregations from these denominations. Moving forward, we need to pray hard for God's intervention to stop the civil war in South Sudan. We need to send Malawians there to observe, learn and contribute positively, but the war limits our meetings. The end of conflicts will be a breakthrough in this partnership.

The war makes our South Sudanese friends lose hope at times. However, we know the One who began the good work “will bring it to completion” (Phil.1:6). We look forward to a day when all of us will meet in South Sudan as partners. We accept that God is in control and one day the war in South Sudan will end and its people will live peacefully for the glory of God. The greatest blessing has been to share the richness of Christianity. We are all unique and can learn from each other. Indeed, we are all one in Christ. We misconceived that South Sudan was dominated by Islam. To have their strong preachers during our partnership rally in Malawi was a miracle. Though Christian, they have deep understanding of Islam. They connected well with participants in the Evangelism Rally.

We hope to have them here as short- and long-term missionaries. Their testimonies and challenges were so moving. We take much for granted in Malawi. We see a lot of grace in their midst.

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*The Rev. Moyenda Kanjerwa is deputy general secretary of the CCAP's Blantyre Synod.*



# Following God's detour

## Teaching future pastors for the growing church in Africa

Dustin Ellington

One day, while taking a break from studying in the Duke Divinity School library, I got into a conversation that would change the course of my family's life. As I talked with a stranger, I learned he was the only person in the world with a Ph.D. in New Testament (my field also) who could speak the particular language of the country where he was training Christians for ministry. This really struck me.

He asked what I hoped to do upon finishing my Ph.D. at Duke. I told him I wanted to advance the gospel, and that I'd love to do that especially through teaching the Bible and working with young people whom God was calling. He replied, "If you really want to teach the Bible and prepare people for Christian ministry, then you should think about doing it outside the United States."

That evening I went home and told my wife, Sherri, what had happened, and that I wondered if the Holy Spirit had spoken to me. She was immediately positive; Sherri had wondered about a call to mission service long before we married, but had come to terms with the reality that marrying me might mean a "normal" life in America.

I had already served as a PC(USA) pastor, so we called Presbyterian World Mission to express interest in applying for mission service, even though I still had years left at Duke. This gave us ample time to consider a possibility put before us — to move our family to Egypt. I could teach future pastors. As a family, we could build bridges of trust for the sake of the gospel and for peace between Muslims and Christians.

We moved to Egypt in 2005 and



Justo Mwale University faculty members Dr. Lukas Soko, Dr. Edwin Zulu, Dr. Wynand Retief and Dr. Dustin Ellington enjoying fellowship with one another

deeply loved our life and work in that country. We thought we would stay many years. However, it all ended abruptly in 2009 for reasons out of our control. That's a long story, but suffice it to say that our hearts were broken. And our life course changed again!

We still believed we were called to serve the gospel overseas. We entered a time of discernment, and PC(USA) World Mission suggested new possibilities. It turns out that around the time Sherri and I left Egypt, Justo Mwale University (JMU) in Zambia had asked World Mission for a New Testament professor. As we learned of the intense need for trained pastors in Zambia and surrounding countries, due to recent massive church growth, it seemed like a call — to go where the need for what we could offer was greatest.

I've taught at JMU since 2010. Zambia is a place where enormous need meets what we have to offer. Many JMU students, upon graduating, become solo pastors of congregations from 1,000 to over 10,000 members. The churches

are vibrant, but many tend to miss the influence of Jesus Christ on the Christian life, and see God and the gospel as means to material success. So it is a setting that is ripe for teaching people how to understand the Bible for themselves and thus to lay hold of the true good news of Jesus Christ.

We may have come to Zambia through a detour, but we feel it's truly been the hand of God guiding our path. Each part of our journey has been marked by God's faithfulness, and we are thankful to be part of God's mission and the gospel's progress.

*The Rev. Dr. Dustin Ellington teaches New Testament at Justo Mwale University, which trains pastors to lead congregations in southern Africa. Sherri Ellington is site coordinator for the PC(USA)'s Young Adult Volunteer program in Zambia.*

### PROVIDE SUPPORT

Support Dustin and Sherri's ministry in Zambia. [pcusa.org/donate/E200478](https://pcusa.org/donate/E200478)

Johanneke Kroesbergen

# Honduras Mission Network helps provide critical funding for a new mission position

Pat Cole

While their formal preparation for ministry is modest, Presbyterian pastors in Honduras possess an abundance of “faith seeking understanding.”

Unfortunately, educational opportunities to help these faithful pastors gain understanding — and fulfill the motto of St. Anselm of Canterbury — have been limited. However, more access to theological training is on the horizon, thanks to the collaborative work of the Presbyterian Church of Honduras, Presbyterian World Mission and the Honduras Mission Network.

A new mission co-worker position has been created to coordinate theological education opportunities and to facilitate partnerships between Honduran and U.S. Presbyterians. The position was developed at the urging of the Presbyterian Church of Honduras and was prioritized because it fits squarely into World Mission’s focus area of evangelism through leadership development. The position will likely be filled this year. The Honduras Mission Network, which stepped forward to help secure critical funding for this position, was a key player in making it a reality.

The network was inspired by the commitment of Honduran pastors and their hunger for theological education, says Leslie Belden, convener of the Honduras Mission Network. “They have a lot of social capital and they work hard,”

she says. “Their commitment to Jesus Christ makes our commitment pale in comparison.”

Leslie is parish associate at First United Presbyterian Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and stated clerk of the Arkansas Presbytery. Arkansas and two other presbyteries, Tampa Bay and Carlisle, anchored the efforts to fund the mission position. Network members raised funds within these presbyteries and identified individuals, congregations and presbyteries across the country that had been involved in mission in Honduras. They worked with the Mission Engagement and Support staff to invite Presbyterians to make a gift in support of the position. They also provided input to World Mission about how this position could make the network’s involvement in Honduras more effective.

“When the co-worker is appointed, he or she will find Honduran Presbyterians are eager to learn more about what it means to be Reformed,” says Tracey King-Ortega, regional liaison for Central America. However, she emphasized in a prayer letter last year that it would be wrong to impose on them a North American perspective on being Reformed. The role of U.S. Presbyterians, she says, is “to walk with them as they wrestle with Scripture and define their Reformed identity for themselves.”

This style of learning was used in a 2016 exploratory workshop for Honduran Presbyterian leaders held by Costa Rica-based Latin American Biblical University (UBL). “They loved how interactive the workshop was,” Tracey says. “They have been accustomed to being given information to memorize instead of



Karla Koll

Virginia Lopez is looking forward to more theological studies.

encouraged to wrestle with Scripture and context. For the first time, I heard them relating the gospel to justice.”

Mission co-worker Karla Koll and her UBL faculty colleague, Nidia Fonseca, led the workshop. Tracey says everyone left the event excited about the possibility of more classes. Karla and Nidia returned in January to lead a three-day session, the first of six learning opportunities scheduled over the next two years.

Leslie says the network is enthusiastic about the role the co-worker will play in facilitating theological education and mission partnerships. She notes she has seen network members grow in their relationships with Honduran Presbyterians and in their understanding of partnership. “You are not just sending money away,” she says. “You are part of the ministry.”

## PROVIDE SUPPORT

Support the new mission co-worker position in Honduras.

[pcusa.org/donate/E200535](https://pcusa.org/donate/E200535)

Pat Cole is a communications specialist with the Presbyterian Mission Agency.





## An invitation

### Sessions and congregations

For your convenience, we are providing a few simple options for you to use in submitting your gifts. Congregations can send contributions through regular receiving channels, usually presbyteries, or send Directed Mission Support (DMS) gifts directly to the address below. Those gifts designated to DMS accounts will be reported to the presbytery. We urge you to report DMS contributions directly to your presbytery in order to keep them informed of your denominational support.

### Individuals

Individuals should use the numbers beginning with E to provide financial support to specific mission workers. If you desire, you can also give online at **presbyterianmission.org/supportwm**. You may also write the name of the mission co-worker on the memo line of the check; mail it to the address below, and we will confirm your designation and intent.

### Give to the sending and support of your mission co-workers:

- Visit **pcusa.org/supportwm**.
- Call 800-728-7228, ext. 5611.

### Please send gifts to:

Presbyterian World Mission  
P.O. Box 643700  
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700  
Please make checks payable to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

### For additional information, please contact:

Nicole Gerkins  
Mission Engagement Associate  
Mission Engagement and Support  
nicole.gerkins@pcusa.org

# The doctor is here

## Lessons of healing and transformation along the U.S.-Mexico border

Mark Adams

Sometimes the places we do not want to be are precisely the places we need to be.

The Center for Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation and Recuperation (CRREDA) was definitely not a place I wanted to be.

On a cold winter day, my colleague pastor Chuy Gallegos sent me to deliver some blankets that some well-meaning person had donated. Our ministry had no apparent need of blankets, but Chuy knew that CRREDA, a grassroots rehab center in which “addicts help addicts,” could use them to help keep 80 men and women struggling to recover from the ravages of drug and alcohol addiction warm on below-freezing nights in their uninsulated and unheated dormitories.

When I finally found the rehab center at the end of a dirt road, I was struck by the large walls and the gate of the compound. I knocked on the door as a stranger and let the portero (gatekeeper) know I had a donation of blankets. I was asked a series of questions, and my answers were shared with Alfredo, the director, who then authorized my entrance. I later learned the walls were there not so much to keep me out, as to keep the folks in recovery in — especially the ones who were placed there by the courts and their families involuntarily.

Walking across the threshold, I unknowingly crossed a bigger border (for me) than when I had initially crossed the U.S.-Mexico international boundary to serve with my sisters and brothers of Frontera de Cristo and the Iglesia Presbiteriana Lirio de los Valles. Being in the rehab center with heavily



Miriam Maldonado Escobar

Mission co-worker Mark Adams leads prayer at a quinceañera, a traditional celebration of a young woman's 15th birthday and transition to adulthood, at the Center for Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation and Recuperation (CRREDA).

tattooed men and women who had lived lives extremely different than mine, I felt enclosed and terribly uncomfortable. I wanted to drop off those blankets as fast as I could and escape the confines that Alfredo called “House of Life,” but to me felt like “House of Death.”

Several weeks later, my colleague sent me there again. As soon as I entered the gates, someone shouted, “Call for ‘Senor Hoyó’ (Mr. Hole); the doctor is here!”

I had never been mistaken for a doctor before, and I definitely did not think I could be a healing presence in this place, where I felt so out of place. But before I could explain, they had brought 22-year-old Jesus to me.

Jesus, who everyone called Mr. Hole, had started using heroin when he was 14. Before being admitted to the center he

had gotten in a knife fight that destroyed much of his digestive tract. He had been released from the hospital with a colostomy and with his addiction fully intact.

He arrived at rehab with excrement coming from the hole in his abdomen, which had become infected. They brought him to me for healing. “I am not a doctor. Why don’t you take him to the hospital?” I urged.

“We have, but they just give him a shot for his pain.”

I called Chuy and nurse Abigail, and we accompanied Jesus and Alfredo to the hospital. While Chuy and Abigail were reading the riot act to the hospital administrators about medical malpractice, I sat awkwardly in the waiting room with Jesus, not knowing what to say or how





Trisha Maldonado

Raul Garcia (center), current director of the Center for Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation and Recuperation (CRREDA), helps put up a peace pole with representatives of Frontera de Cristo and Café Justo at the dedication of the Café Justo y Más coffee shop.

to act. Finally I just kind of blurted out: “Jesus, what do you want?”

“I want to live again. I haven’t lived for eight years and I want to live again. I know that with the help of God and with the help of CRREDA I can live again.”

Tears began forming in my eyes. I felt walls being torn down inside of me, and I prayed earnestly that God would restore and pour out life — abundant and eternal life — into Jesus, that all the holes in his life, whether physical, emotional or spiritual, that prevented him from experiencing the life God desired for him might be filled with God’s grace.

Jesus indeed began living again. We were able to get him treatment for the infection and eventually a surgery that reversed his colostomy, but more importantly he recognized and experienced the love and acceptance that God has for him. He remained clean for several years and eventually moved to another city, where I pray he continues in recovery.



Christy Bergdorf

A mosaic of broken tiles at the Center for Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation and Recuperation (CRREDA)

After 14 years of an unplanned partnership with CRREDA, I cannot imagine ministry without them. The center has become essential to our ministries and has helped us follow Christ more fully into the suffering and joy of the world.

In our Mission Education ministry, staff members at the rehab center interact with and educate thousands of our mission delegation participants about life on the border, faith and addiction, while helping them discover some of their own hidden addictions. Dick, an elder and much-respected pediatrician, shared with his church delegation and us that after a week on the border he had discovered that he himself was an addict. “I am an addict to a lifestyle that separates me from the majority of the world. And like the folks of CRREDA I am afraid to go back home and fall back into the same addiction, because while this week I have encountered a lot of suffering, I have sensed so much more profound joy and hope.”

But even more important than what we have been able to do together is what God is creating us to be: “a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:21), a community of

folks from many sides of the borders that often divide us: rich and poor, Protestant and Catholic, young and old, conservative and progressive, persons who are in recovery from addictions and persons in denial, English-speaking and Spanish-speaking, U.S. and Mexican, celebrating God’s love, God’s forgiveness and God’s peace and the ways in which we can work to make our world a more just place.

CRREDA has become a place I want to be, a place where, as one of our delegation members said, “Jesus walks,” a place of suffering and comfort, of devastation and hope, a place where I have experienced healing and transformation.

Sometimes the places we do not want to be are precisely the places we need to be.

*The Rev. Mark Adams and his wife, Miriam Maldonado Escobar, are mission co-workers with the Presbyterian Border Ministry in Agua Prieta, Mexico.*

## SHARE THE GOOD NEWS

Help transform lives on both sides of the border.

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# Four generations of Presbyterian mission: From potted plant to garden

Cobbie Palm

If there is a revered profession in my family, it is a life given to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church.

In 1884, my great-grandfather J. Vernon Bell began his ministry as pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Dubois, Pennsylvania, almost 100 years to the day that I entered Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

In 1915, my grandfather Ralph Waldo Lloyd boarded a train to travel west to accept a calling to serve in mission at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, Utah, and in 1922 to serve as pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Ossian, Indiana.

In 1956, my father, James E. Palm, sailed on a ship with my mother, Louise, to the Philippines to serve for 18 years in mission through the Presbyterian Church.

In 1989, I boarded an airplane to the Philippines, where my wife, Dessa, and I continue to serve to this day. My family represents four generations and 133 years of mission and ministry with the Presbyterian Church.

I did not have the opportunity to meet my great-grandfather, but I did have the privilege of knowing my grandfather and recall moments around the dinner table at his home in Florida. The Presbyterian Church and mission were always favorite and colorful

topics. We lived in different periods of Presbyterian mission and, with my father in the mix, our perspectives on mission reflected mission in the early 1900s, mid-1900s and late 1900s. We each defended our own perspective and argued with a passion.

Looking back on those conversations, I have come to think of Presbyterian mission as the continuing and evolving story of the “potted plant.” My grandfather saw mission from the perspective of the “empty lands,” places around the world that had not been touched by the gifts of Presbyterian mission. During his time even Salt Lake City was just being introduced to Presbyterian mission. For my grandfather, the role of mission was to be “founder,” and as founder to be “authority” merited by the responsibility of being the carrier and provider of the programs, knowledge and form. From this perspective, he understood the value of decisions over the recipient “mission field” coming from offices in New York, through the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and the “leadership” of the mission in the field to be held by the more “qualified” Presbyterian missionary.

The image that comes to mind is of a Presbyterian missionary carrying a potted plant named “Presbyterian” and placing it in empty places in the mission field determined by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in New York and ruled over by the more qualified Presbyterian missionary to ensure quality control and faithful obedience to Presbyterian norms. There was much success, and the “Presbyterian” plant began to grow in these pots set in empty lands around the

world.

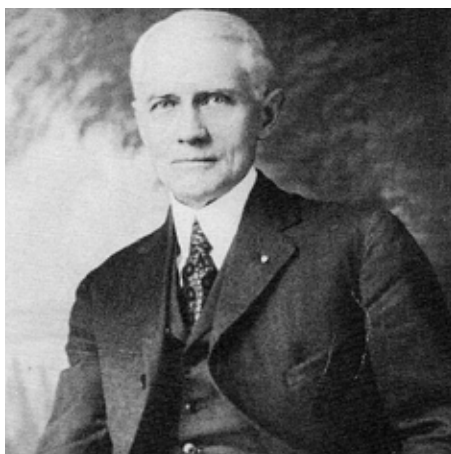
My father, who arrived in the Philippines in the late 1950s, saw a different situation. The “Presbyterian” plant had now been growing in the pot for over 50 years, and it was bearing fruit; but confined to the pot, it could not grow much further. The Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations (COEMAR) had now replaced the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions as the sending body for all international mission work of the Presbyterian Church, and a new paradigm for mission was emerging. This new paradigm used words like “contextual” mission and “fraternal worker,” implying an openness to the possibility that the mission field might have something to contribute to the “Presbyterian” plant. But the plant could not touch the breadth of culture and indigenous music of the mission field because the plant’s roots were bound up by the pot. There were indigenous leaders of the mission field whose voices were not heard and their expertise not used because leadership was understood to be that of the missionary only. This was now all changing.

The image that comes to mind is that of the indigenous leaders and the “fraternal workers” of which my father was part taking a hammer together to break the pot open so that the roots of the “Presbyterian” plant could finally touch and draw nutrients from the soil of the mission field. Finally, the culture, music, symbols and language of the mission field could be drawn into the “Presbyterian” plant, nourishing it, transforming it in a way that enabled it to speak to the heart and soul of the

## PROMOTE RESILIENCE AND RECONCILIATION

Support the work of Cobbie and Dessa Palm in the Philippines.  
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Great-grandfather J. Vernon Bell, pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Dubois, Pennsylvania



Grandfather Ralph Waldo Lloyd (front center) with mission teacher colleagues at Westminster College, Salt Lake City



James E. Palm, missionary in the Philippines, with his son and future missionary, Cobbie



Mission co-worker Carlton "Cobbie" Palm with Bishop Jaime Moriles, a mission partner in Leyte

mission field. This was "contextual" mission. Finally, the missionary would step back and make space for the indigenous leadership to hold responsibility as "fraternal workers."

In 1989 I was sent to the Philippines by the Presbyterian Church through the Worldwide Ministries Division, now World Mission. The paradigms of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and COEMAR were now of the past, and what I saw upon arriving in the Philippines was the image of a beautiful garden of Filipino "Presbyterian"—a plant variety that had rooted in the mission field and drawn nutrients from the colors and contours of Filipino culture and indigenous leaders who were planting, pruning and harvesting. The garden had reached self-reliance and was self-propagating, and a new paradigm of relationship in mission was needed. Filipino Presbyterians did not need a missionary leader, they did not need foreign authority for guidance, they did not need a hammer to break the pot; they needed the respect of being an equal partner in the building of God's reign.

Sitting around the dinner table with my grandfather and father, I realized it is not easy to let go of the paradigms of our own time. We argued with passion for our understanding of mission — my grandfather for missionary authority and quality control, my father for the contextualizing and turning over leadership, and I for partnership relations where equal respect is given to the partner church to determine its own priorities and needs. However, every day that I live in mission here in the Philippines, I am reminded by the evidence all around me that the pot-bearing planter that my grandfather defends and the pot-breaking fraternal worker that my father defends were essential pieces in God's great design that have brought us to where we are in mission today. Potted plants are now gardens, mission fields are now partners, and Presbyterian mission is alive and well.

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*Carlton J. "Cobbie" Palm is a mission co-worker and director of spiritual formation at Silliman University Divinity School. Dessa Palm works as artistic director for Youth Advocates Through Theater Arts.*

# Answering God's call to be a YAV in the Philippines

Akilah Hyrams

For years I have felt one call — to serve abroad. Whether it was to further my education or to volunteer, I sought countless opportunities to travel and learn about cultures different from my own. Before graduating, I spent hours researching different programs that would offer a gap-year experience, knowing this would be my last chance to travel before I spent the next seven years in medical school. Little did I know the opportunity to apply for a Young Adult Volunteer year was about to fall into my lap, just two weeks before final applications were due. As soon as I heard about the YAV program, I knew I had to apply.

Although I interviewed with national and international sites, the Philippines was not on my radar. When I learned the Philippines had open spots in an email from the YAV office, I decided to interview. And I thank the Lord that I did. During my interview with the site coordinators, I saw so much potential to serve in the Philippines. I was given the opportunity to incorporate my love of medicine by accompanying the community near the Silliman University Marina Mission Clinic, which provides low-cost medical care for people in rural areas. Surely I was led to be a YAV in the Philippines by God's will for my life.

I didn't come to the Philippines with many expectations, and I wasn't familiar with the YAV program's core tenet of



Akilah Hyrams

On Christmas day, Akilah Hyrams, a Young Adult Volunteer in the Philippines (right), celebrated the baptism of the youngest member of her host family, 6-month-old Karis.

simple living. As I reflect on my year, I remember being very optimistic about my ability to adapt to life in the Philippines, and yet, it has had its challenges.

Simple living, the practice of living abundantly while spending and consuming less, has been challenging — physically, emotionally and culturally. But these are necessary challenges. They require me to be creative and resourceful. As I continue to challenge myself, I am learning to examine the way I live and how to assess my point of view. This has helped me to define basic human rights and the things that can be categorized as excess.

This has also led me to examine how I see God. I have gained more clarity of how God speaks to me. There is nothing more encouraging to me than strengthening my relationship with God. Seeing God in the work I do and in the people I meet motivates me to seek more opportunities to grow as a person and as a child of God. Knowing that I can rely on that relationship as I go through the ups

and downs of medical school, and life in general, has me excited to see what God has in store for my future.

My fellow YAVs also have been a huge source of motivation during my time in the Philippines. We have seen the best and the worst in each other, yet we encourage one another to push through and live each day to the fullest. We urge each other to think outside the box and leave our comfort zones. No matter how far away from each other we may go, God has blessed us and allowed us to form an amazing family, and that has been incredible.

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*The Young Adult Volunteer program is a year of service for young adults, ages 19–30, in 22 sites around the world and in the United States. The application season for the 2018–19 YAV class opens Oct. 1. Encourage young people you know to consider taking part in an experience like Akilah's that will help them form faith toward a lifetime of change. Follow @yavprogram online and visit [youngadultvolunteers.org](http://youngadultvolunteers.org).*

## EQUIP A YOUNG PERSON

Support the YAV program.  
[pcusa.org/donate/E049075](http://pcusa.org/donate/E049075)



# How does your church do MISSION?

As we celebrate 180 years of international mission service, we recognize the 180-degree change we have made in how we do mission work. The early years of our international mission work relied heavily on establishing indigenous churches with whom we now partner. Early missionaries laid the foundation. Over the years we have recognized how important it is to do mission in partnership, learning from and being transformed by our brothers and sisters in Christ across the globe.

It is in the spirit of partnership with our brothers and sisters in other places that the PC(USA), through an action of the 212th General Assembly (2000), encouraged congregations, presbyteries, synods and other church bodies to “do mission in partnership” internationally. The 215th General Assembly (2003) issued a new partnership policy for the whole PC(USA) to “do mission in partnership” within and outside the United States. Visit [pcusa.org/partnership](http://pcusa.org/partnership) to find a paraphrased version of the policy statement, updated by the new *Book of Order*.

A partnership with another church body (such as a congregation, presbytery or agency) in another country provides opportunities for U.S. Presbyterians to express the unity of the church of Jesus Christ throughout the world, to engage in the global mission of the church and to experience mission alongside

people in other parts of the world. It also provides an opportunity to witness what God is doing in the world and to expand our understanding of God through the insights of others with different worldviews and life experiences. Partnership has at its heart “mutuality” — giving and receiving, teaching and learning, listening and speaking. These relationships can be a blessing for the whole church of Jesus Christ as we all seek to live out the gospel faithfully and to build up the body of Christ around the globe.

Is your group, church body or organization willing and prepared to make a deep and lasting commitment?

Before moving toward a partnership relationship, it is helpful for the mission committee or similar group in your church to consider the following 10 Tough Questions listed in the sidebar. Answering them before beginning to establish a partnership will contribute to a stronger and healthier relationship because you, as a group, will have more clarity about:

- why you want to enter such a relationship;
- your expectations of it;
- your understandings of “partnership” and “mission.”

*Stephanie Caudill is a mission associate for resources and promotion in World Mission.*

## 10 Tough Questions

1. Why have an ongoing relationship with a church or institution in another country?
2. What needs do we have that might be met through global partnership?
3. What gifts (spiritual, personal and material) do we have to share with a partner?
4. In what ways might this partnership help, hinder or be in continuity with our witness in our local community?
5. How do we, as a group, understand “mission in partnership”?
6. Are there any specific characteristics or qualities we are seeking in a partner church? Why?
7. Are there people with cross-cultural experience or language capabilities in our congregation, presbytery or synod who could provide their expertise?
8. For congregations: Is our presbytery or synod already engaged in an international partnership?
9. For congregations: Are there other congregations in the presbytery that might wish to collaborate to build a relationship with an international partner?
10. How might we encourage a reciprocal relationship with a partner when forming and maintaining the partnership?

For more help in establishing or evaluating a partnership that follows a Mission 180 model, see the World Mission Partnership Manual at [pcusa.org/missionresources](http://pcusa.org/missionresources).

# Anything but 'mission'

## God has a way of sending us where we don't think we want to go

Elmer Zavala

I grew up in the church but at one time in my life was skeptical of mission. My childhood experience with missionaries from the U.S. was colored with memories of positive leadership as well as abuse of status, power and privilege. They prohibited church members from many things like playing sports, going to movies and parties, drinking alcohol and being physically or emotionally abusive to their spouses — but in their private lives they often did these things. People would go to them as advisors when it came to interpreting church doctrine, but the missionaries often lived by a different set of rules. I came of age in Honduras during the height of the Contra war, when my country was used as a training ground for the U.S.-backed Contras in Nicaragua. My teenage years were spent with an eye on the sky for U.S. war planes. The tell-tale noise of military trucks rumbling along the two-lane highway that ran through my village would send my brothers and me off the road to hide as they passed by; these trucks

plucked up youth and conscripted them into military service.

With this personal background, I had many questions about the harmful ways the gospel and government policies sometimes have been brought from the U.S. to Honduras. When a Honduran church leader invited me to an interview for the PC(USA) Reconciliation and Mission program, a 10-month mission exchange experience between Central Americans and U.S. citizens, I hesitated. This program would place me with a host family and as a volunteer with a church or nonprofit in the U.S. Would the program let me be open about the questions I had about the U.S.? I went to the interview and learned that the program was about asking the kinds of questions I was asking about church and government.

My wife, Ellen Sherby, also grew up in the church, but the idea of mission didn't sit well with her as a young adult. She understood it as paternalistic and colonial. She thought of mission as a

person from the global north charging into the global south with all the answers. Even though she had participated in service projects through her church, she wasn't comfortable with anything called "mission."

During Ellen's senior year of college, the chaplain approached her with a letter from the Volunteers in Mission office of the then-General Assembly Mission Council. The letter described a mission opportunity at a Presbyterian church in New York City. Although Ellen had spent seven months in Ecuador during college and wanted to return to Latin America after graduation, she decided to consider volunteer mission in the U.S. and applied. "I thought I might have something to learn from serving in the United States," Ellen says. She ended up serving as a mission volunteer with the Reconciliation and Mission program the same year I participated in it, but she was invited to Honduras rather than New York. Despite her concerns about mission, she



Ellen and Elmer even share the same birthday.



The Rev. Elmer Zavala (left) leads house church gatherings three nights a week. Bible study, prayer, fellowship and food are always part of the gatherings.



Bill Grady, Elmer Zavala, Ellen Sherby and Clare Crawford participated in Reconciliation and Mission, a 10-month mission experience that brought Central Americans and U.S. citizens together in fellowship and learning, followed by service in each other's countries.



Ellen Sherby

The Rev. Elmer Zavala leads the Presbyterian Hispanic/Latino Ministry of Preston Highway in Louisville, Kentucky.

decided to go because she was so eager to eventually return to Latin America. God has a way of sending us where we don't think we want to go.

Ellen and I met in 1995, during the orientation and community-building phase of the Reconciliation and Mission program. Following orientation, I served for eight months with the South Albuquerque Cooperative Ministry in New Mexico, while Ellen served during the same time in Honduras with the Christian Commission for Development. This program was one of many experiences for lifelong learning for us.

The program helped me see the difference between U.S. government policies and the individuals and groups in the U.S. who are interested in learning about Central America and are deeply concerned for a more just world. For Ellen, the experience was a starting point to learn about "mission in partnership." Her vision of mission as a one-way street was turned on its head.

We now understand mission as seeking mutual relationships between people who often come with different world views, cultures and levels of privilege — relationships that ultimately lead all involved to learn, to love and to serve one another. Mission is about discovering where God is already present

among the people, and going outside of my comfort zone to serve my neighbor in my community or across the world. In God's mission we must ask ourselves, "Can I be vulnerable enough to let the people I believe I'm serving serve me?" Our participation in the Reconciliation and Mission program ended in the summer of 1996, but it was the beginning of a long-distance courtship that led to our marriage in 1998.

God does indeed have a way of sending us where we don't think we want to go. I am a pastor, and I moved to Nicaragua in 1997 to continue my theological studies. Ellen moved there later that year to serve with a faith-based nonprofit, and for us to get married. We thought we'd be in Nicaragua for a couple of years, but Ellen ended up serving several more years as a PC(USA) mission co-worker with the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua. During the same years, I discovered a call to serve the Evangelical Methodist Church of Nicaragua. In 2008, 11 years after Ellen packed her wedding dress in a carry-on bag and moved to Nicaragua, our family moved to the U.S. to follow Ellen's call to serve Presbyterian World Mission at the national church office in Louisville, Kentucky.

Shortly before leaving Nicaragua, a

Nicaraguan friend and colleague told us, "We now send you as missionaries from Latin America to the United States." How true those words have become! Ellen's work with church mission leaders in the U.S. continues to be her calling. I felt I was more needed in Central America, and reluctantly followed Ellen to the U.S. so she could fulfill that call. Then I discovered my vocation as a pastor of Hispanic/Latino immigrants in a new worshipping community of Mid-Kentucky Presbytery. Both Ellen and I minister to and are ministered by this vibrant community of some 30 families. Together, we all are participants in God's mission, which is much wider and richer than Ellen or I ever dreamed of or imagined when we started on this journey of service.

*The Rev. Elmer Zavala is pastor of the Presbyterian Hispanic/Latino Ministry of Preston Highway, a 1001 New Worshipping Community of the Presbytery of Mid-Kentucky. Ellen Sherby is coordinator of Equipping for Mission Involvement with Presbyterian World Mission.*

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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Presbyterian World Mission brings God's global family together to address poverty, work toward reconciliation and proclaim God's saving love in Jesus Christ.

## God's mission in South Sudan

*Believing lasting peace will come*



**Lynn and Sharon Kandel** walk in God's love and protection as regional liaisons in South Sudan, where they met more than 30 years ago while Lynn was on a short-term mission trip.

Sharon is a third-generation mission worker, following the path of her grandparents, who were long-term Presbyterian missionaries in Egypt, and her parents, who served the church for 42 years in Sudan and Ethiopia, where she was born.

In addition to their primary work as regional liaisons for the Horn of Africa, Lynn and Sharon work alongside the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, assisting with administration and logistics related to the South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Project.

"We pray the educational aspect of our work will improve the rate of women and young girls entering school," they write. "Education leads to more possibilities of jobs, better health and a more positive future."

The Kandels say their role as regional liaisons provides a chance to be a small part of the lives of their brothers and sisters in Sudan, Ethiopia and South Sudan from their home base in Juba, South Sudan.

"We know God will give us the strength we need to do this job," they write, "and be the guiding force in all we do."

**Support Lynn and Sharon in South Sudan.**

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## God's mission in East Asia

*A legacy and promise of cross-cultural mission*

Since 2012, **the Rev. Choon Lim**, a fourth-generation Korean Presbyterian, has served as Presbyterian World Mission's regional liaison for East Asia, which includes Taiwan, China, Japan, South Korea and North Korea.

Choon and his wife, **Yen Hee Lim**, accepted their first assignment as mission co-workers in 1991, serving off the coast of South Korea aboard the medical ship Salvation at the invitation of the Presbyterian Church of Korea. With their medical background, Yen Hee as a nurse and Choon as a respiratory therapist, they helped the island people medically, while also sharing the good news of Jesus Christ for six years.

In 1997, the Lims were presented with a challenging cross-cultural opportunity: to learn the complex Mandarin Chinese language and, at midlife, to start a campus ministry among marginalized Aboriginal college students in Hualien, Taiwan. The ministry would birth a church and become the largest Aboriginal campus ministry in Taiwan. Many of their former students are now clergy and lay leaders in the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan.

Choon, who was born in what is now North Korea, travels there two or three times each year to nurture relationships with the church. He continues to pray for peaceful reunification of the peninsula in God's time.

For more than 25 years Choon and Yen Hee's compassionate work has given hope to suffering people.



**Support Choon and Yen Hee in East Asia.**

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## God's mission in Peru

*Sharing the good news of God's love*

**The Rev. Jed Koball** and his wife, **Jenny Valles Koball**, PC(USA) mission co-workers in Peru, often describe their ministry as addressing root causes of hunger, poverty and injustice.

"While what we do is very much about this important advocacy," Jed says, "we believe our work begins and ends with the good news of

God's love in Jesus Christ that frees us and commands us to participate with God and one another in turning the world around."

Jed accompanies the Joining Hands network in Peru, where Jenny serves as site coordinator of the Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) program. Building on decades of development by

Presbyterians and global partners,

Jed and Jenny work with partners in Peru and the U.S. to address systemic issues, including environmental contamination, land-grabbing, climate change, violence against women and equal access to education. They take on tough challenges, like bringing to light the irresponsible activities of a U.S.-owned metals smelter in La Oroya, Peru, where 99 percent of the children had been shown to have lead poisoning. The advocacy has drawn international attention to the air pollution crisis in La Oroya and has prompted the Peruvian government to enforce its environmental laws.

A significant part of Jed and Jenny's work is devoted to working with Young Adult Volunteers, who come for a year of service, and with Presbyterian mission teams, who come for a week of service. Through their work with Jed and Jenny, the YAVs and mission teams help address the injustices that the Koballs and their ministry seek to overturn.

**Support Jed and Jenny in Peru.**

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## God's mission in Cuba

*Giving people new hope for the future*

**The Rev. David Cortes-Fuentes and Josey Saez Acevedo** are in their second year of a four-year mission co-worker appointment, serving alongside the 15,000-member Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba.

They are the first Presbyterian mission co-workers sent from the United States to live and work in Cuba since the 1959 revolution led by Fidel Castro.

David is professor of New Testament and Greek at the Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Matanzas, Cuba. He is currently teaching Biblical hermeneutics, tutoring and mentoring seminary students, serving on faculty committees for Bible and curriculum and preaching at local churches as invited.

Josey assists the Cuban church's Christian education ministries. She teaches English for theology students, facilitates a women's sharing group at the seminary, and participates in the seminary's student-faculty-staff choir. They both lead devotions in the seminary chapel and speak as invited by Cuban Presbyterian churches and groups visiting the seminary.

The seminary, founded in 1946, offers licensure and master's degree programs in theology for students seeking ordination.

"Our first year has been of much listening, learning and praying," Josey says. "These students and future pastors are amazing! We have come to respect and honor their sacrificial commitment to their faith, church, communities and vocation. It is our hope that we can justly interpret our experience to the wider church while in the U.S. on itineration from June 15 to September 3."

**Support David and Josey in Cuba.**

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## Join us in God's mission around the world

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been sending mission co-workers around the world since 1837.

As we celebrate the 180th anniversary of mission service, we give thanks for the more than 8,000 mission workers who have been sent over the years to share the good news of Jesus Christ with millions of people worldwide.

Our global partners continue to tell us that the best way we can make a difference and meet critical needs in their communities is to send mission co-workers to accompany them. Presbyterian World Mission is able to send as many mission workers as the church will directly support.

Please designate your financial gifts for the area of greatest need (Missionary Support, E132192) to continue the legacy of sending and supporting mission workers in 70 countries.

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### **Questions?**

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