

13 DEVOTIONS

YOU ARE THE  
**SALT**  
OF THE EARTH

MATTHEW 5:13

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OF THE EARTH

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01

**YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS**

**Sarah Nash, AAS, RDA**, is an endorsed missionary who will serve through the House of Hope in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. As an educator and dental assistant, Sarah is passionate about serving women and children through ministries of discipleship, education and health.

02

**TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING**

**Sue Hegarty, MAR**, seeks to strengthen church and pastoral ministries in Costa Rica by teaching classes, Bible studies and workshops and working with Pastoral Care for Women. Sue also serves as a liaison with American Baptist mission teams that visit Costa Rica to develop fraternal relationships and assist with ministry projects.

03

**PEACE & JUSTICE**

**Ricardo Mayol-Bracero MDiv, MCP**, is a regional consultant who accompanies the members of the Continental Christian Network for Peace in theological-pastoral formation. Based in Guatemala and working closely with the Ecumenical Christian Council of Guatemala, he promotes peace throughout the continent.

04

**EVANGELISM**

**Gordon Hwang** and his wife, Lee Ann, serve in Yokohama, Japan. Gordon exercises gifts of service and hospitality by hosting a weekly fellowship meeting in their home. Lee Ann serves as an English conversation teacher at the Soshin Girls' School.

05

**ABOLISHING GLOBAL SLAVERY**

**Karen Smith** is the program consultant to the New Life Center Foundation. Based in northern Thailand, this ministry serves ethnic minority women who are at risk for labor exploitation. The foundation also provides protection and rehabilitation services to young women who are survivors of human trafficking, forced labor and sexual abuse.

06

**DISCIPLESHIP**

**Jeanine White** and her husband, Walt, serve as global consultants, training teams that are working with historically underserved religious groups including pastors, global servants, development workers and church and nonprofit organizations, teaching them to be more effective communicators of the good news of Jesus Christ.

07

**IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES**

**Ray Schellinger** serves as part of a denominational task force on immigration to help churches embrace the possibilities of mission to and partnership with immigrant individuals and communities. As a global consultant, he works with IM partners and colleagues around the world to help them strengthen their witness to families struggling with domestic violence.

08

**EVERYWHERE TO EVERYONE**

**Marlene Po** is a U.S.-based missionary serving in association with Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Shawnee, Kansas, as director of the FOUNDATIONS Judson Communities program. The program provides training for pastors and leaders of churches serving recently resettled communities of people who have immigrated to the U.S. from Myanmar.

09

**THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

**Stan Slade, MA, PhD**, serves as a global consultant for theological education. He supports the training of future and current pastors, church leaders, global servants and others interested in Christian ministry as a writer, visiting seminary professor, teacher in non-formal education programs and guest speaker.

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**HEALTH & WELLNESS**

**Katherine Niles, PA-C**, serves with her husband, Wayne, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Katherine works with Congolese Christian health professionals and grassroots community leaders to reduce the Congo's maternal and child mortality rates by developing solutions to common health problems.

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**SHORT-TERM MISSION**

**Pieter Kalkman, PA**, and his wife, Nora, are regional consultants serving as coordinators of short-term mission with the European Baptist Federation. They facilitate life-changing mission experiences by matching the interests of volunteers with the needs of the over 50 Baptist conventions in Europe and the Middle East.

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**EDUCATION**

**Carmella Jones, MDiv, MA, BSN, RN**, serves in Hungary though IM partner Hungarian Baptist Aid. She teaches English, acts as a listening presence and offers pastoral care to children and families with special needs. Her experience in theological and nursing education equips her to teach and support spiritual and physical well-being.

13

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Miriam Noyes** and her husband, Ed, serve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They work with the Baptist Community of Congo and IMA World Health, encouraging and supporting church-based programs that contribute to basic food security, improved family livelihoods, the creation of new opportunities through literacy and the strengthening of rural churches.



**START** children  
**OFF THE WAY THEY**  
**SHOULD GO, AND**  
even when  
they are old  
**THEY WILL NOT**  
turn **FROM IT.**  
**PROVERBS 22:6 (NIV)**

## YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

Growing up in the church, I constantly heard the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.” There is something beautiful about this proverb when it gets put into action. A community is essential to discipling youth into adulthood, and I think that is one of the reasons that God has called us into community. This leads me to the words of Solomon, “Train children in the right way, and when they grow old, they will not stray.” (Proverbs 22:6, paraphrase)

Children are impacted by the examples they experience through the adults around them, but they also make a huge impact on the adults. As the church, we need each other. We are called to be one family, one village, one people.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to walk alongside youth and young adults to teach, mentor and encourage them to live out their faith and to walk closer to God. As a young adult, my faith grew through learning from children. I learned how to pray differently as I heard an eight-year-old Bolivian girl pour out her heart in her prayer over a meal. I learned how to live generously as I saw an eight-year-old give all his money in the offering plate.

I was fortunate to grow up in a Christian home that instilled in me the values of loving God and loving others. I have had people who have loved me and have walked alongside me in my faith journey. They have encouraged and empowered me to live out my calling to missionary service. In their actions, I saw a living example of love, forgiveness, justice and grace.

### **HOW HAVE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS HELPED GROW YOUR FAITH?**

How have youth and young adults helped grow your faith? What did childhood mentors or teachers say or do that made a lasting difference in your life?

Is the Holy Spirit nudging you to share the blessing that you received by walking alongside a child or youth, mentoring and teaching her or him how to come to a deeper faith in Christ?

I encourage you to pray for the youth and young adults in your community and around the globe, that they will be surrounded by adults who love them and who share the love of God with them.



Sarah Nash, AAS, RDA

## TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

When I met Flora for the first time in 2014, she had just accepted her aging pastor's request to serve as a pastoral assistant-in-training. She was active in her church and had a heart for ministry, but worried that without theological or leadership training or even a high school diploma, she would be unable to provide the guidance and care that the congregation needed.

Flora's situation is quite common, especially in small churches that rely on volunteers to fill key ministry roles. As these servant leaders try to work without the tools they need, they often seem to hit a wall and wear themselves out trying to push past it.

Recognizing these risks, Flora enrolled in three courses with Pastoral Care for Women. This program is a ministry of the Baptist Federation of Costa Rica, where I serve as an IM missionary. It offers classes that help women, especially those in abusive situations, find hope and personal growth from a liberating Christian perspective.

**NOW I LIVE  
AND SPEAK  
IN A MORE  
DARING WAY.  
I DON'T ALLOW  
MY FEARS  
TO KEEP ME  
FROM DOING  
THINGS.**

At first, Flora was accompanied by her pastor's wife for moral support, but she quickly gained confidence in this unfamiliar classroom setting. As she learned the relationship skills and theological truths that would strengthen her ministry, she began to grow as a person and in her faith, and even saw her marriage improve. By the end of the courses, she had come much further than she had imagined.

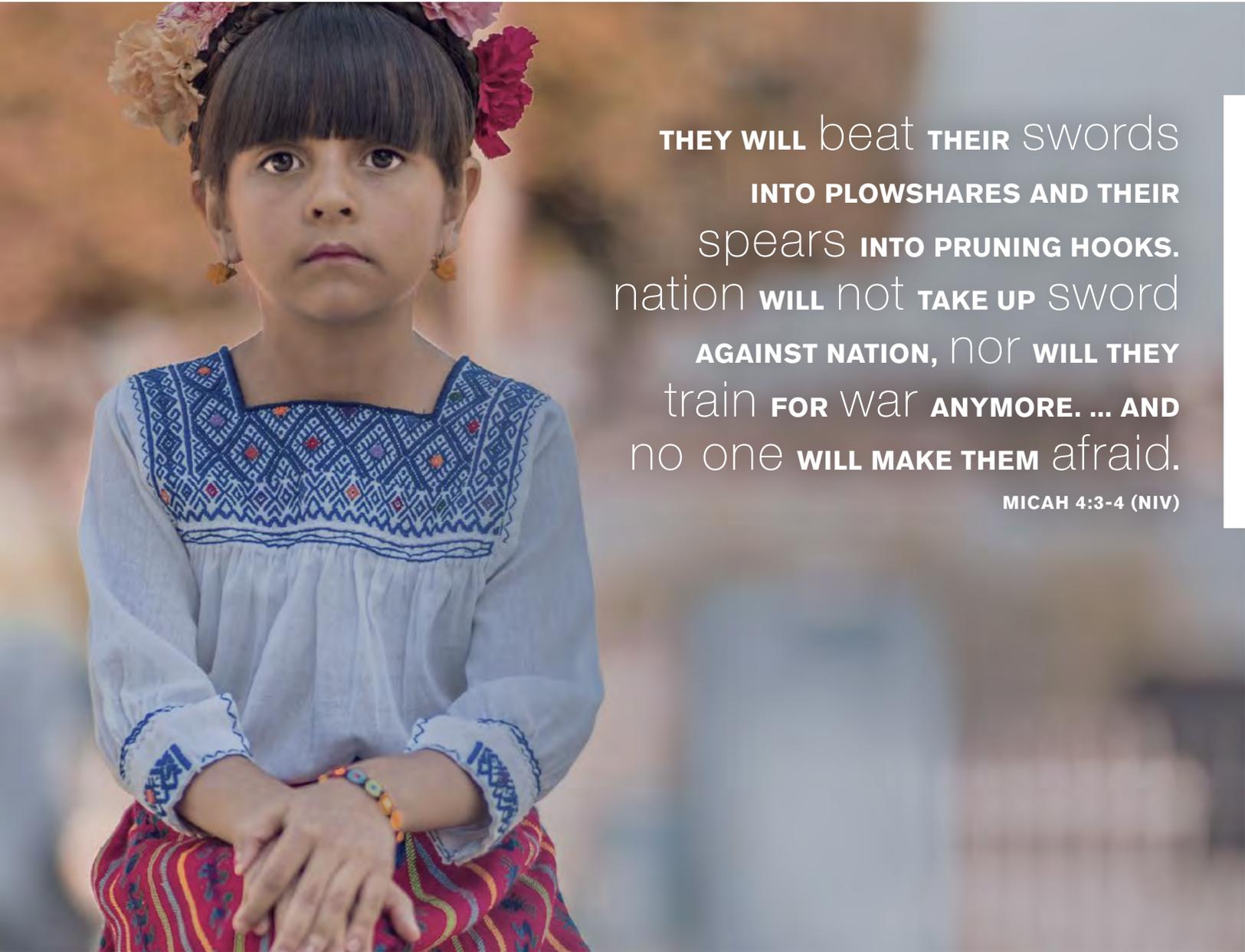
On a Sunday not long ago, a group of visitors and I ran into Flora at her church. This was the first time I had seen her in action. As the children and youth ministries leader, she introduced a children's song and helped to lead the service. Afterward, she greeted the visitors warmly and confidently, speaking effusively about her church and the Pastoral Studies for Women program.

In the beginning, Flora told us, she had been a fearful person. But she had discovered that she is capable of fighting for and achieving her dreams. Smiling, Flora said, "Now I live and speak in a more daring way. I don't allow my fears to keep me from doing things."

**FOR THE spirit  
GOD GAVE US  
does not  
MAKE US timid,  
BUT GIVES US  
power, love &  
self-discipline.  
2 TIMOTHY 1:7 (NIV)**



Sue Hegarty, MAR



**THEY WILL** beat **THEIR** swords  
**INTO PLOWSHARES AND THEIR**  
spears **INTO PRUNING HOOKS.**  
nation **WILL** not **TAKE UP** sword  
**AGAINST NATION,** nor **WILL THEY**  
train **FOR** war **ANYMORE. ... AND**  
no one **WILL MAKE THEM** afraid.

MICAH 4:3-4 (NIV)

# 03

## PEACE & JUSTICE

From 1960–1996, a civil war raged in Guatemala. The battles were fought between the Guatemalan government and rebel forces, but it was the civilians who paid the greatest price. Over the course of the conflict, in an attempt to snuff out support for the rebellion, the U.S.-supported national military increasingly engaged in the wholesale slaughter of indigenous and rural peoples, often torturing and executing entire villages. As many as 200,000 women, men and children were killed. This atrocity left a deep scar on the country, and although the civil war has ended, Guatemala has not yet found peace.

In June 2018, the Ecumenical Council of Guatemala held a public prayer of denunciation of the brutality of the war. The gathering brought together Baptists, Catholics, Episcopalians, Mennonites, Pentecostals and those who practice Mayan spirituality, members of these diverse faiths standing united in mourning, remembrance and a passionate commitment to peace.

**THEY THOUGHT  
THEY COULD  
EXTERMINATE US,  
BUT OUT OF EVERY  
HUNDRED  
TORN DOWN,  
ONE HUNDRED  
THOUSAND RISE.**

I spoke briefly at the event, seeking to give voice to the victims and sound a call of hope to those who remain: “They thought they could exterminate us, but out of every hundred torn down, one hundred thousand rise.”

It is time for us to acknowledge our part in this violence. All too often, we profess faith in Christ, the Prince of Peace, while justifying the demon of war. God continues calling us to the active search for peace. Until we make the weapons of death become instruments of life, we will live in fear.

Please join in the efforts to establish a culture of peace that dismantles the culture of war. Pray that the global church will rise as salt that heals the world by facing down militarization and the arms race, advancing God’s reign of peace. Pray that God, through our actions, would be the salt of life that cleanses the earth.



Ricardo Mayol-Bracero, MDiv, MCP



come, **SEE A MAN**  
**WHO TOLD ME**  
everything  
**I EVER DID.**  
**COULD THIS BE THE**  
messiah?  
**JOHN 4:29 (NIV)**

# 04

## EVANGELISM

The Japanese traditionally use few seasonings in their cooking so as not to overpower the subtle flavors of the food. When one can taste the richness of the ingredients, some of which have very delicate flavors, we say that the dish is “well-seasoned.”

To be salt in Japan is to be an enhancer, subtle and delicate. This is counter-cultural to most Westerners. Sometimes it feels like we aren’t saying enough, and the temptation is to add more “salt.” But if we do, we risk overpowering the natural flavor of the interaction.

Jesus knew how to make a conversation “well-seasoned” with the gospel. In his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, he didn’t immediately start preaching to her. Instead he asked deeper and deeper questions until she was convinced that what Jesus said to her was the truth. It was only at the very end that he revealed his identity as the Messiah (the Christ) for whom her people had been waiting. An encounter with the living Christ transformed the woman into one of the first evangelists.

This woman was probably using the well in the middle of the day, rather than in the morning when most other women would have been there, due to shame. She did not want to show her face among her neighbors because everyone knew that she had been with many men, both within and outside of marriage. Yet, because of the joy of her encounter with Jesus, she overcame her shame and told her entire community of what had happened: “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” John 4:29 (NIV)

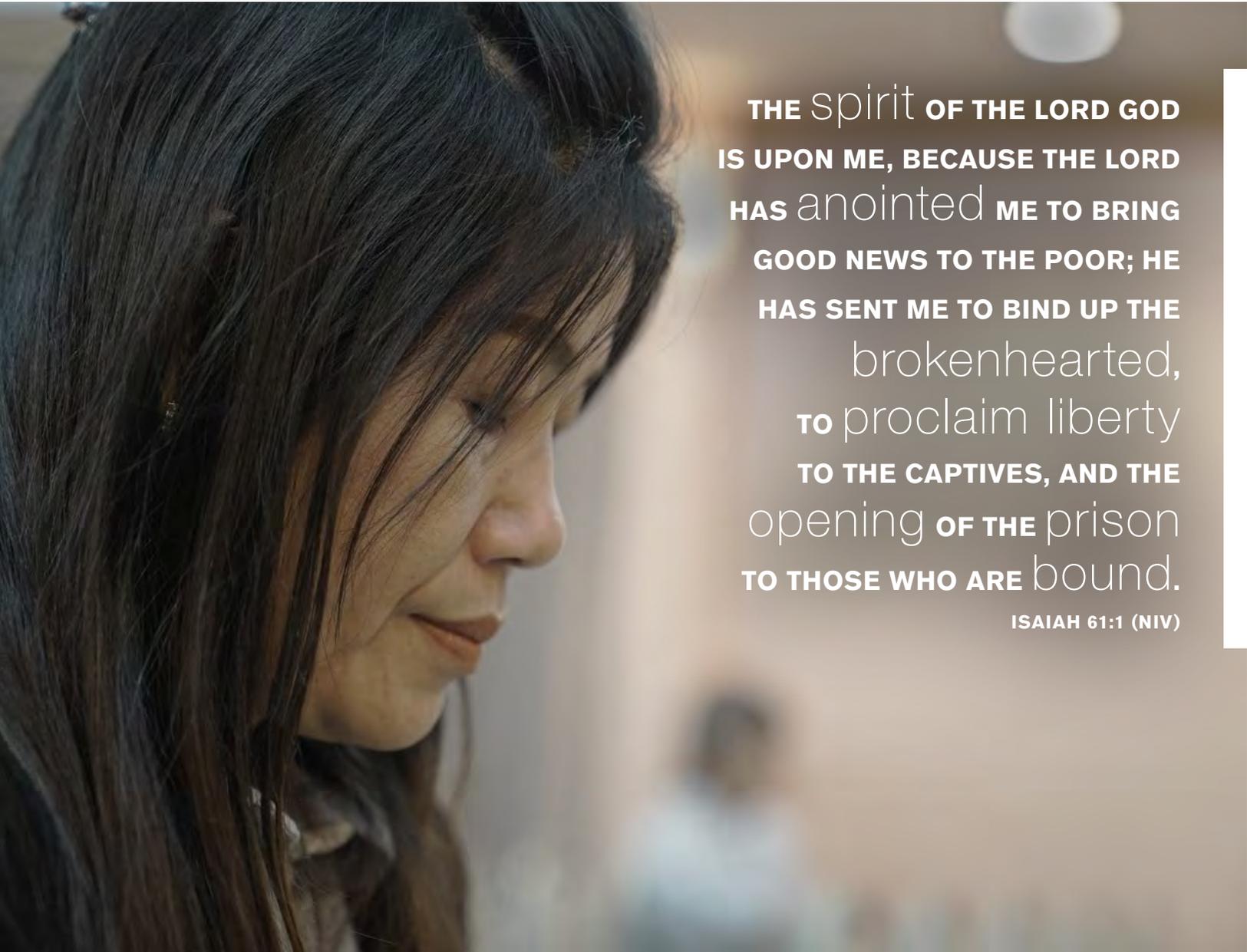
**TO BE SALT  
IN JAPAN IS  
TO BE AN  
ENHANCER,  
SUBTLE AND  
DELICATE.**

Sometimes sharing our faith requires a step outside our comfort zone. Many Japanese people enjoy going to the public bath, or sento, for health and relaxation. As I age, I have discovered that using the sento reduces my aches and pains. I am not entirely comfortable being naked in front of other men; however, God is working through my trips to the sento. I sometimes meet with a Japanese friend there and we have some interesting conversations. For instance, I have been able to share what I learned at a marriage seminar. His wife was very thankful! I am learning to be salt and light for my friend.

Will you pray for more workers to be salt for the Japanese people and others around the world?



Gordon Hwang



**THE spirit OF THE LORD GOD  
IS UPON ME, BECAUSE THE LORD  
HAS anointed ME TO BRING  
GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR; HE  
HAS SENT ME TO BIND UP THE  
brokenhearted,  
TO proclaim liberty  
TO THE CAPTIVES, AND THE  
opening OF THE prison  
TO THOSE WHO ARE bound.**

ISAIAH 61:1 (NIV)

## ABOLISHING GLOBAL SLAVERY

Manao was born in a village in Burma. When she was five years old, she moved with two older brothers to China, and four years later they migrated to Thailand. There, she was sold into slavery. One of her brothers turned her over to a factory in exchange for an advance against her wages—he took the payment, left the area and never contacted her again.

Just 10 years old, Manao began working 17 hours per day. Although she received food and shelter, she was never paid for her labor. Manao pleaded with her employer to let her leave, but she was told that if she left, the police would arrest her for working in Thailand without legal documents. This continued for three years.

A glimmer of hope appeared in early 2016, when relatives of the factory owner gave Manao about \$50 USD as a gift for the Chinese New Year. With this money in her pocket, Manao gathered her courage and decided to run away. She reached a market near the Thai-Burma border, where she struck up a conversation with a local vendor. This kind person was concerned for Manao's safety and helped her get connected to Thai government social services, which referred her to the New Life Center Foundation, an IM partner dedicated to serving young women in situations much like Manao's.

Now age 15, Manao is becoming literate in Thai. With legal counsel secured through the New Life Center in partnership with the Thai government, she is also bravely insisting on receiving compensation for her three years of unpaid labor.

**WE HAVE  
BEEN CALLED  
TO PURSUE  
JUSTICE FOR  
THE MOST  
VULNERABLE.**

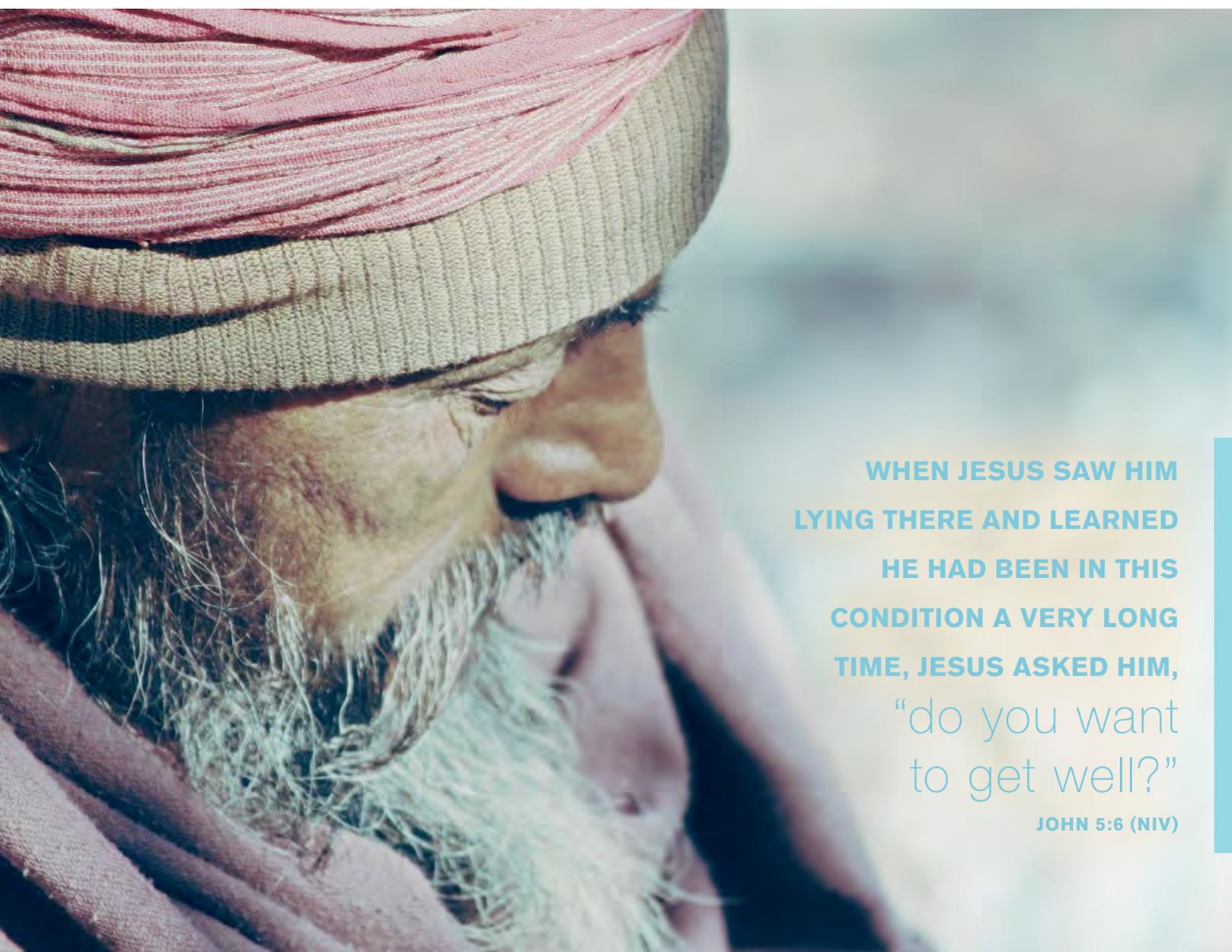
Tragically, Manao's story is just one of many. During 2012 to 2016, an estimated 89 million people were held in debt bondage, human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery.\*

How should the church respond? We have been called to uphold each person's human dignity as we pursue justice for the most vulnerable. Will you join us in building God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven?

\*Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labor and forced marriage (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2017), [http://www.alliance87.org/global\\_estimates\\_of\\_modern\\_slaveryforced\\_labour\\_and\\_forced\\_marriage.pdf](http://www.alliance87.org/global_estimates_of_modern_slaveryforced_labour_and_forced_marriage.pdf).



Karen Smith



**WHEN JESUS SAW HIM LYING THERE AND LEARNED HE HAD BEEN IN THIS CONDITION A VERY LONG TIME, JESUS ASKED HIM, “do you want to get well?”**

**JOHN 5:6 (NIV)**

# 06

## DISCIPLESHIP

Once, Jesus came upon a man who had been an invalid for most of his life and asked a peculiar question: “Do you want to get well?” John 5:6 (NIV) Surely the man did want to get better, but instead of answering, he evaded the question with an excuse!

Many people offer excuses to explain what is keeping them down—health, socioeconomic disadvantage, lack of job opportunities and so on—but Jesus asks, “Do you want to continue like this?”

Women in Bangladesh have many reasons for being impoverished—limited opportunities for education, arranged marriages at an early age and teen pregnancy, to name just a few. But through a partner development agency supported by International Ministries, many women have been able to accomplish more than they ever thought possible. They are given the opportunity to learn basic literacy and math and to study subjects that directly affect their lives, such as child care, nutrition, kitchen gardens, their legal rights and the health benefits of sanitary latrines.

Meanwhile, in groups of 20, they work together to save money. Little by little, the fund grows, until one woman is able to take out a loan to start a small business. When she can, she repays the loan, and over time, all of the group members are helped in this way. With their new sources of income, they are able to feed and clothe their children, and even send them to school.

**JESUS ASKS, “DO YOU WANT TO CONTINUE LIKE THIS?”**

Before this program, if you had asked any one of these women, “Do you want to get out of poverty?” she would likely have replied that such a thing was impossible—but through education and collaboration with other women in situations just like hers, she was able to rise up and walk into a new life.

The man in John 5 made his excuses, but when Jesus called him to stand up and walk, he obeyed—and just like that, he was healed! There are times when God calls each one of us to do something that seems impossible, that we are sure we can't do. But when we set aside our excuses and obey, we may find that he will heal us of whatever was holding us back.

Jeanine White





**COMFORT,**  
comfort  
my people,  
**SAYS YOUR GOD.**  
ISAIAH 40:1 (NIV)

## IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES

Today, there are more refugees and internally displaced peoples than at any time since World War II. More than 90 million people are displaced from their homes because of conflicts. Few of them will be able to return to their home countries. They come from Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other countries. Their desperation is compounded by the reality that less than 1% of refugees will be resettled into a new country in any given year, as fewer and fewer countries are willing to accept them. Economic immigrants are also finding it harder to reach safe havens, as prejudice toward outsiders is rising globally. Millions of people dream to simply find home again.

Our faith tradition was born out of such stories. The Old Testament, at its very core, is the narrative of God leading God's people home again. Again and again, our story reflects God's work of salvation for a people trapped in slavery or sent into exile, and whose hope for finding home seems a desperate and impossible dream. They cry out, "How can we worship God in a foreign land?"

**OUR GOD IS  
A GOD WHO  
PROVIDES  
SANCTUARY  
AND BRINGS  
GOD'S PEOPLE  
HOME.**

The call of Isaiah 40:1-5 to "comfort, comfort my people" is God's reply. It speaks of the immense journey from Babylon through the deserts and across mountains back to Judea, commanding that every mountain should be made low and every valley be lifted high, the rough places be made a smooth plain and a highway be constructed for God's deliverance of the people back home once again. Our God is a God who provides sanctuary and brings God's people home.

We, as Christians, are called to care for the hungry, the sick and the stranger. Jesus commands us to be "the salt of the earth," (Matthew 5:13, NIV) that which preserves life. How do we interpret this for our time? How do we preserve human life and dignity when they are being challenged by conflict and exile? Perhaps we should look for ways to provide home for those who seem to have lost it forever. The commands in Isaiah 5—comfort my people, prepare the way, make straight a highway for our God—are not a description of what God will do, but rather are spoken in the imperative. They are God's commands telling us what we must do . . . to help the stranger feel at home here among us.



Ray Schellinger



**KNOW THEREFORE THAT  
THE LORD YOUR GOD IS GOD;  
HE IS THE faithful GOD, KEEPING  
HIS covenant of love  
TO 1,000 GENERATIONS.**  
**DEUTERONOMY 7:9 (NIV)**

## EVERYWHERE TO EVERYONE

Adoniram Judson (1788–1850) was the first missionary to be sent abroad by Baptists in America. He served for 40 years in Burma (now Myanmar) as an evangelist, Bible translator, lexicographer, diplomat and even prisoner. He is known throughout the Baptist world and beyond as a pioneer in the global mission movement.

The spiritual seed he planted in Burma two centuries ago took a firm hold and spread over time to many ethnic groups in Burma, including Bamar, Karen, Kachin, Chin, Karenni, Mon and others. Today, the Myanmar Baptist Convention is comprised of 18 conventions, 117 associations, more than 5,000 churches, nearly two million members and 50 seminaries.

The astounding growth of Christianity in Burma is only one of the surprises that began with Judson's service. In an amazing turn of events that only God could have orchestrated, the very people who received Judson in Myanmar two centuries ago are now doing mission in Judson's homeland, the U.S. It's a wonderful and surprising "mission in reverse." As people representing the Karen, Chin and Kachin ethnic groups have migrated to the U.S. in recent years, they have brought with them their Burmese Baptist heritage, establishing the Karen Baptist Churches USA, Chin Baptist Churches USA and Kachin Baptist Churches USA. Some are associate ministry organizations of American Baptist Churches USA.

**IT'S A  
WONDERFUL  
AND  
SURPRISING  
"MISSION IN  
REVERSE."**

This "mission in reverse" is just one example of IM's Ministry Priority From Everywhere to Everyone, of which I am a part. Today, Christian missionaries are just as likely to come from Brazil, Tanzania, Thailand or Korea as from the U.S. These contemporary missionaries can be found preaching the gospel all over the world, including in the U.S.!

Mission now moves in all directions, but it still involves sacrifice. Some of those who come to faith in Jesus in today's world pay a high price, wherever they may be. They may be neglected, disowned, persecuted and, in some places, even killed by their own families or communities of origin. But God is faithful. Their faith may be tried or even shaken, but God strengthens Jesus' followers. God is with us wherever we are and he loves each and every one unconditionally.



Marlene Po

## THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

“So, why are you here?” When Pastor Jesús Gómez asked this question, we were deep in conversation with the Baptist pastors of Ensenada, Mexico. Everybody knew the obvious answer: I had been invited!

We were at First Baptist Church, attending its time of fellowship, education and encouragement. For over 20 years, my fellow missionary Tim Long had been nurturing such gatherings of pastors throughout Baja. When Jesús asked his question, Tim and I understood immediately that it was about something much deeper than the invitation to the meeting.

So, why were we there? How did we understand our missionary presence and role among our Mexican sisters and brothers?

God has given us life and love in Jesus. This gift was also a call—a call to let the Spirit of God reshape us to better reflect who God is. That reshaping happens as we walk with others. Sharing God’s grace with one another, we encourage each other to grow as followers of Jesus and as witnesses to God’s redeeming love for all creation. Together, we participate in God’s all-encompassing, long-term work to redeem creation in and through Jesus Christ. Responding to God’s call is why we are here—wherever “here” happens to be.

Sometimes people who are deeply dedicated and well-intentioned can give themselves to mission service without much awareness of their place in the human story. We can respond to the call eagerly, but without sensitivity to the history of colonialism and neocolonialism that has shaped our world—and even ourselves!

Further, people who have received advanced education, especially those who come from a “can-do” culture (in other words, people like Tim and me!), sometimes speak and act from an unconscious assumption of superiority.

**GOD HAS  
GIVEN US  
LIFE AND  
LOVE IN  
JESUS.**

That is not who we want to be. We ask the Lord—and the friends we serve—to open our eyes and hearts to those tendencies within us and to help us live differently. We seek to come to others not from “above,” but from alongside or below. We have something to give, but also much to learn. Gracias, Pastor Jesús, for the question! Thank you, Jesus, for the chance to learn, grow and serve alongside Jesús, José Carlos, Carolina, Blanca, Juanita and all of the sisters and brothers you give us!



Stan Slade, MA, PhD

**I'M longing TO SEE YOU!  
I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU  
SOME spiritual blessing  
TO GIVE YOU STRENGTH;  
THAT IS, I WANT TO encourage YOU,  
AND BE ENCOURAGED BY YOU,  
IN THE faith YOU AND I SHARE.**

ROMANS 1:11 (NTE)

## HEALTH &amp; WELLNESS

Pastor Bavuidinsi held up a plastic spoon and sandwich bag half full of salt. “You are the salt of the earth,” he declared to the congregation, quoting Matthew 5:13. He spooned grains of salt into outstretched hands. He’d brought it from the World Mission Conference, where salt had been shared with everyone. “The good news of Jesus came here, to the Congo, through missionaries like those sent by International Ministries. Now we are the Congo’s salt. And salt without savor is worthless.”

Salt is a seasoning, a nutrient, a preservative, a requirement for life. And Jesus has told us that we are the salt of the earth.

Here in the Congo, I savored saltiness just this Sunday. Our congregation gathered around Mrs. Marie’s children as they mourned their mother’s passing. Mrs. Marie had been an example to us all. She had believed fervently in Jesus, and though she had lived in the street, she had served the church as a faithful and beloved member. Her children were nearly strangers among us, but we welcomed them and comforted them in their grief. Even in death, God had given their mother new life, free from suffering!

I savored saltiness during a visit to a troubled team at a rural hospital. The staff had dissolved into silly conflict and finger pointing, resisting collaboration. I watched my colleague comb through records, listen, ask good questions and admonish that wholesome talk is blessed and that Jesus is a work partner.

I savored saltiness in a photo from a nurse friend. It showed her sitting beside an adolescent diabetic patient in a wheelchair as he cradled a radio. A recent foot amputation had sapped every last bit of joy from his life. With this radio, bought with my friend’s meager salary, he listened to music and soccer games, which made him smile.

I savored saltiness in the teamwork and talents shared between distant hospitals as they pushed forward to make the dream of ultrasound training for a doctor colleague come true. That savor spilled over his staff and patients in his joy at being able to provide better care. Salt savor stretched across oceans, from the generous donors who had made the gift of an ultrasound machine to serve patients in the Congo’s heartland.

**SALT WITHOUT  
SAVOR IS  
WORTHLESS.**

1 Peter 3:15 says, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.” (NIV)  
For you are the salt of the earth.



Katherine Niles, PA-C



**SALT IS GOOD, BUT IF IT  
LOSES ITS SALTINESS,  
how can it be  
made salty again?**

**LUKE 14:34 (NIV)**

## SHORT-TERM MISSION

As I write, I am sitting in First Baptist Church in Sarajevo, Bosnia. I recall my first time here, during the season of Advent in 2000, just after the Balkan wars ceased. From the church window, I saw the winter haze covering downtown while plumes of smoke pierced upward through the mist. Pinpricks of light shone out from windowless buildings and war-damaged apartments where Roma people, stateless and lost in their home country, huddled around open fires.

After the news cameras finished their coverage of the Balkan wars and left, the territory was largely forgotten by mission organizations, but the need for the message and love of Christ was as great as ever. I was told that there were only two evangelical believers living in Montenegro, and none to the east of the river Drina, where a million people lived. Thousands of displaced people remained in camps, denied citizenship in their own country.

First Baptist Church identified a need and embarked on a brave plan. As the houses were cleared of explosives, the congregation renovated one room at a time so that refugees who had fled the sniper siege could return home.

In the years since, we have hosted volunteers assisting the church in various capacities. Marcia, a volunteer from the U.S., met Roma refugees in the camps to listen to their stories and let them know that they were not forgotten; that they were loved by Jesus. Last summer, a team joined us in reaching out to a new wave of refugees.

Where is the Prince of Peace, if not working through us, his servants?

**WHERE IS  
THE PRINCE  
OF PEACE, IF  
NOT WORKING  
THROUGH US,  
HIS SERVANTS?**

Today, Sarajevo looks much different than it did 20 years ago. The number of Baptist churches in Bosnia has tripled. With the help of volunteers, Christian love is gradually suffusing through the neighborhoods.

We invite you to take part in our ongoing work in Bosnia or to serve in other places around the world through IM, and encourage you to advance God's kingdom by volunteering in your local community. I also ask you to join me in praying for Europe, particularly the Balkans.



Pieter Kalkman, PA

**IF YOU SPEND YOURSELVES  
IN BEHALF OF THE hungry  
AND satisfy THE NEEDS  
OF THE oppressed,  
THEN YOUR light WILL  
rise in the darkness.**

ISAIAH 58:10 (NIV)

**LET YOUR WORK APPEAR  
TO YOUR SERVANTS,  
AND YOUR glory TO THEIR CHILDREN.  
AND LET THE beauty OF THE LORD  
OUR GOD BE UPON US,  
AND establish THE WORK  
OF OUR HANDS FOR US,  
YES, establish THE WORK  
OF OUR HANDS.**

**PSALM 90:16-17 (NKJV)**

Being a parent is a big responsibility. Most parents will tell you that the rewards well outweigh the costs, but that doesn't mean the job is easy. And on top of the difficulties that every parent faces, raising a child with special needs has its own stresses.

Recently, a woman shared with me the story of her life journey, laying out the heartaches and joys of being a mother to a child with mental and physical disabilities. My heart was broken as she recounted the many spiritualized platitudes she has heard over the years. When you are a special-needs child's parent, the emotional realities cannot be solved with good intentions.

In some ways, she told me, it's like living in a secret and sad world in parallel to those around you. "We're all created in the image of God, but somehow it seems like your humanity slips away because the people around you—strangers, friends, family—they all refuse to make eye contact. When you are feeling alienated from your friends and just looking for something to be hopeful about, it's hard to see what God's plan is."

The Bible teaches that we are all made according to God's image, (Genesis 1:27) and that includes those with disabilities. God loves us all equally, but I believe that God gives a special grace to cope with the pain and sacrifices associated with parenting a special needs child. For many people, this grace comes through the support of teachers and health professionals.

**GOD GIVES  
A SPECIAL  
GRACE FOR  
PARENTING  
A SPECIAL  
NEEDS CHILD.**

This is the spiritual truth that I take into the classroom every day as I work with children who have special needs and their parents. I am learning to understand their needs more completely, and to see each child as a challenging but valuable gift.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve children with disabilities. I am convinced that my fellow teachers and I are being used by God to transform the lives of these precious children and to lift some of the burden from the parents who devote so much of their lives to caring for them. As the psalm says, "let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands." Psalm 90:17 (NKJV)



**Carmella Jones, MDiv, MA, BSN, RN**



**WHERE THERE IS NO** vision,  
**THE PEOPLE** perish.  
PROVERBS 29:18 (KJV)

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Recently, I had the opportunity to participate in a graduation ceremony for some of our many adult literacy students. We awarded graduation certificates to 50 of our students, some of whom had traveled many miles to get them. The other 290 certificates were given to teachers who had walked in from various villages to collect them for graduations at home. These teachers are misunderstood, not well respected by their neighbors and mostly unpaid for their efforts. But if anyone is “the salt of the earth,” it is them. (Matthew 5:13, KJV)

A verse in Proverbs reads, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Hosea 4:6 (KJV) Illiterate villagers aren’t usually destroyed for the offense, but they are cut off from information that would enrich their lives, limited in their possibilities, caught in ways of seeing things that pit them against each other and restricted in their access to God’s Word. Literacy teachers give of their time and energy regularly to transform the lives of their fellow villagers and give them a future. They introduce those who love God to his Word. What a savory taste they give to life!

The Democratic Republic of the Congo’s educational system is poor, with many graduating students remaining still illiterate. The country gives adult literacy lip service, but no financial support. It is the efforts of these committed teachers that are this country’s best hope for a better future.

**WHAT A  
SAVORY TASTE  
THEY GIVE  
TO LIFE!**

I don’t know what motivation moves each teacher. Perhaps they feel a personal calling to teaching. Perhaps it is compassion for their fellow villagers. Perhaps it is patriotism or an act of service to God. Whatever the case may be, the public recognition I was able to give these teachers was much less than they deserve.

Please pray with me for literacy in the Congo and for the teachers who are working so sacrificially to open up a new world of opportunities for their students.



Miriam Noyes

International Ministries, also known as the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, works cross-culturally to invite people to become disciples of Jesus Christ and to proclaim, through both word and deed, God's reign of justice, peace and abundant life for all creation.



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