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The Power of Partnership

MTW & Park Cities Presbyterian Church

By Katie Weaver



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The Power of Partnership

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What do a house church in Southeast Asia, a large congregation outside of Tokyo, and a small community church in West Africa have in common?

They are all fruit of the big dreams, prayer, and partnership between Park Cities Presbyterian Church and MTW. >



In 1997, Park Cities Presbyterian Church (PCPC) in Dallas set forth a lofty goal: to plant 50 churches in the U.S. and 50 overseas by 2020. They called the project the "2020 Vision," not expecting to reach the goal by 2010, a decade ahead of schedule. In fact, Park Cities has planted 103 churches, as well as 12 RUF chapters, in the 13 years since the project's inception.

"We wanted to find the best ways to grow the kingdom," says Curt Dobbs, senior director of missions and church planting at Park Cities, "and the best way to evangelize is to plant churches." But with such a big goal, PCPC knew they needed help.

Making Connections

To accomplish their goal of planting 50 churches overseas (called the PCPC World 50), PCPC's missions team enlisted the international experience and connections of MTW in addition to a few other agencies. "Our areas of interest," explains Curt, "included countries in the 10/40 window and those with unreached people groups." Park Cities also wanted to cultivate ministries that could be indigenous-led, would include theological education, and could receive short-term mission teams.

MTW currently partners with Park Cities in countries including Peru, Ukraine, Japan, and the Philippines. "Most of our church plants," says Curt, "are where the populace is less than one percent evangelical."

Acting Locally

"When Park Cities approached MTW, I was working with several projects in the Philippines and Thailand," explains Paul Taylor, MTW's international director of the Asia/Pacific region. "They really bought into our vision there and wanted to plug in." Park Cities had an existing ministry among Laotian refugees in Dallas, so their leaders felt particularly drawn to that people group. With Taylor's counsel, PCPC's projects among the Laotian people in Southeast Asia took off, and, by God's grace, within five years they had started nine churches.

By The Numbers:

Number of Churches Started	Projects To Date
Batangas Province (Philippines)*	9
Thao (Thailand/Sensitive Country)	11
Peru*	7
Makuhari (Japan)*	1
Kiev (Ukraine)*	1
West Africa*	14
South Asia (Sensitive Country)*	2
SE Asia (Sensitive Country)	developing
SE Asia (Sensitive Country)*	5
Other churches not a part of official W50	
Projects (Moscow, Mexico City*, Japan)	3
Total:	53

*indicates MTW-affiliated projects

Another example of the power of partnership is in India. In 2007, MTW connected PCPC with Pastor A., now MTW's director of new ministry development for South India. "Park Cities helped us start two churches in Bangalore and is very helpful in our larger ministry, in which we expect to start 1,000 churches in 10 years," says Pastor A. He hails the importance of such a relationship, particularly in the area of training, which enables multiplication. "They will send guys here for about three weeks to do teaching—that's a sizeable contribution," acknowledges Pastor A. "We've been able to expand our work considerably knowing PCPC is there to stand along with us."

Thinking Globally

MTW's partnership with Park Cities offers a number of benefits, according to Paul Taylor. "The tangible part of it is obviously finances and sending short-term teams," he says. "The intangible is the encouragement. It's the sense that we are not in this alone and that somebody in the U.S. really knows and loves the people that we are working with."

Of PCPC's 10 initial international church-planting projects, most have multiplied and several are now self-sustaining. For example, in West Africa, where PCPC partners with MTW, the initial effort has multiplied into 14 congregations. In Ukraine, Park Cities' official commitment is over, but the church maintains relationships with the MTW missionaries and church leaders, and still sends short-term teams. On the whole, MTW has been directly involved in nearly 75 percent of the international churches planted through PCPC's 2020 Vision.

PCPC dreamed large kingdom dreams in 1997—not only of planting many churches, but of planting those churches in challenging places. Some might have thought they were over-reaching. Yet God blessed the vision He'd given them. As a result, God has called many to Himself, established churches who will multiply themselves, and strengthened a congregation's willingness to step out in faith and trust God. ■



Japanese Church Plant is Planting Faith

Recounted by MTW missionary Craig Coulbourne

"Park Cities was involved in planting a church in Makuhari, outside of Tokyo. We happened to visit this church on March 13, two days after the tsunami hit. There had been three women who had been coming to the church without their husbands. Sunday, their husbands came. One of them said, 'I think maybe God has something to say to Japan and I'm here to find out what it is.' Another of them told us, 'I think I should be praying for our people and so I came to church today.' And those three guys have continued to come to the church and at least one is bringing his children."

Advancing the Church in West Africa

By Melanie Benedict

When a well-known Muslim holy man in West Africa learned that his 18-year-old son Abou had become a Christian, he was outraged. Not only did he disown Abou, he declared him dead and even held a symbolic burial service. Now, nearly 20 years later, Abou is a respected West African pastor who has planted six churches among the tribal peoples of his predominantly Muslim country, and—through a partnership with MTW—he intends to plant many more.

A natural evangelist, Abou, along with his wife, infant daughter, and two other men, recently walked through 18 tribal villages sharing the gospel door to door. As a result, Abou determined that 11 of the 18 villages were open to the gospel. Recently his team, with support from MTW, began to actively focus their church-planting efforts on six of these villages.

Frank, a worker with MTW's ministry to Muslims, became connected with Abou two years ago after Abou contacted MTW in an effort to connect his newly-formed churches to the Presbyterian Church.

"Abou has a deep passion to reach [his tribe] for Christ and other people groups as well," Frank said.

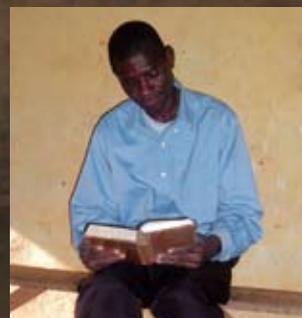
"He has a real missionary heart. It's been a joy to get to know him and be able to help him realize his vision."

To date, Abou—who received his MDiv at an MTW-affiliated seminary in Manila—has planted six churches and raised up indigenous leaders from within each tribe to lead them. Frank credits Abou's background with much of his success. Abou is a former Muslim. He came to faith at age 18 through a Korean Presbyterian missionary who then took him in when his family declared him dead. "Around the world, most Muslims come to Christ more readily when they hear it from a former Muslim," Frank said. "Culture plays a big role as well. There are so many cultural things that we miss as Westerners."

In addition to helping Abou and his team plant six new churches, MTW is working to provide theological education for the leaders of these newly-formed churches. While Abou is well educated—he has an MDiv and a ThM—his people are not. "The leaders are not trained," Abou said. "If they aren't trained, we will have no churches. That has been my cry for a long time."

This fall Frank and another MTW worker plan to travel to West Africa to offer theological training through the MINTS (Miami International Theological Seminary) program. Another group will conduct additional training there in 2012.

"My hope is that the church planting will grow and that God will mature the churches," Abou said, explaining that churches sometimes fall apart down the road. "My prayer is that the churches will be strong." **N**



Hope for Japan



by Susan Fikse

“There will be a time
when God chooses
to work with power
in the nation of Japan.
We prepare for that day.”

*The Japanese
characters for Hope.*

photos: Mary Coulbourne, Matt Chase & Peter Bakelaar

Only a few months prior to the March 11 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, MTW missionary Michael Oh spoke hopefully about God's work: "I'm very optimistic. There will be a time when God chooses to work with power in the nation of Japan. We prepare for that day." That hope and optimism was clearly founded in God and not in any human ability to share the gospel where less than one percent of nearly 123 million residents are evangelical believers.

With nearly a million young men withdrawing from society, more than 30,000 Japanese committing suicide each year, and increasingly common incidents of teenage prostitution and child pornography—under its dignified exterior, Japanese society conceals a deep brokenness.

Today, as MTW missionaries and Japanese Christians minister the gospel of Christ in the areas most devastated by the events of March 11—also the most unchurched areas of the country—they witness tender shoots of hope sprouting from the rubble of tragedy.

Japanese coastal residents desperately need. Her connection with the New Life Church was established, and it's our hope and prayer that this will be the beginning of new life for Mrs. F. ... new life in Christ."

Cultivating Beauty

MTW missionary Roger Lowther brings hope for the future in the form of music, traveling to shelters in the north with Tokyo musicians. Normally, he reaches out to the arts community in central Tokyo through Grace City Church, and appreciates how important beauty is to

brought into the community, and learn to love the same God as Christians worship."

Growing Relationships

This same outlook drove Abi Lowther, Roger's wife, to ask moms in their Tokyo community if they would be interested in helping with the relief work that Grace City Church was coordinating. "I learned the power of a woman's cell phone," Abi told the *Japan Times*, saying word spread amazingly fast, from one friend to another. One neighborhood resident, Kikuko Nishimura, said, "There were many who felt the same way, wanting to do something for the disaster victims. We didn't know what to do as individuals, so it's great that someone stood up to start."

"The most exciting part is that hundreds of members of the community are involved in Grace City Relief, led by pastors and Christians," says Roger. "When you consider how rare it is for Japanese to even meet a Christian, it's amazing how many now have



As they walk alongside the brokenhearted through the ugliness of a water-ravaged landscape, they envision gardens replacing the devastation and wonder: Is this the day for which we've been preparing?

The Sowing of Presence

In the days and weeks following March 11, MTW missionaries Wayne and Amy Newsome traveled from their Nagoya environs north to the area where the tsunami took its greatest toll. In Kamaishi, they connected with Mrs. F., a woman who courageously helped her elderly mother to safety, only to realize her husband was lost as the tsunami struck their home. At first, helping to salvage seemingly meaningless items from the rubble of Mrs. F.'s home seemed unimportant; however, the team eventually realized the value of their presence with her. "As meaningless as the actual work may have been, the doing of that work, side by side with her, was full of meaning," Amy observed. She felt comfort, encouragement, and hope for the future, something the people of Kamaishi and other

Japanese culture. "Probably more than any culture in the world, the Japanese love to be surrounded by beauty," says Roger, a classically trained musician.

"Now, they are surrounded by ugliness. Everything is caked with mud. Everything beautiful was destroyed." After playing at a shelter, Roger met a man who told him, "Thank you for the food and for the place to sleep. But thank you most of all for the music—that is what I really craved."

"As a Christian, I believe that God gave us music to show us His beauty," explains Roger. "When I play music and talk about God as the source of beauty, there is an amazing power behind it." In the coming weeks, a gospel choir from Grace City Church—composed of Christian and non-Christian members—will be traveling to perform in shelters. "Imagine a few Christians taking a bunch of non-Christians on a mission trip!" describes Lowther, almost in disbelief. "Our prayer is that as people sing these songs and work alongside Christians, they would be

a significant connection with us. Our ultimate hope is for more worshippers of Christ."

Hoping in Christ

As MTW forms a long-term strategy for partnering with churches and planting new ones in the northern Tohoku region, missionaries look to Christ to nurture the green shoots of hope they continue to witness. "We are praying that God will open doors for us to grow the church as a consequence of the disaster," says Bob Drews, MTW missionary in Tokyo. "We know that if these doors open, it will mean hard gospel labor for many years, so we will also need His sustaining grace."

Looking toward the future, Christians in Japan are more hopeful than ever that Christ will raise beauty out of the rubble. "All of us here feel it ... one of the most exciting things God is doing in the whole world," says Roger. "It is such a privilege to be part of it!" ■

For more information about MTW's efforts in Japan, visit www.mtw.org.



*“How can we turn
apparent weaknesses
into strengths?”*

*“How can we
better meet needs
and show mercy?”*

*“What does the church look like
in a postmodern society?”*

Europe International Leaders Forum

by Marty Davis

photo: Bob Burnham

Do you remember Eyjafjallajökull?

MTW team leaders and national partners in Europe definitely remember it, not only as the April 2010 volcano that erupted in Iceland, but also as the cause of the cancellation of their much-anticipated leadership forum in Edinburgh, Scotland. Nevertheless, the group of 35 participants from 11 countries was able to meet almost exactly as planned—just not until March 2011.

The International Leadership Forum (ILF) is an MTW leadership training event for the purpose of strengthening relationships, discussing the expansion of the Church across Europe, learning from each other in the areas of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting, and receiving spiritual nourishment.

According to MTW missionary to Ukraine Bob Burnham, some of the questions tackled by the group were: “What does the church look like in a postmodern society? How can we turn apparent weaknesses into strengths? What are the hard questions that Europeans are asking right now about life and how can we show the relevance of the gospel in light of this? How can we better meet needs and show mercy?” A panel of national partners shared experiences in reaching postmodern Europe and fielded questions from MTW team leaders.

The group was also able to observe ministries in action, such as the Free Church in Kirkcaldy located in an area with the highest percentage of drug users in Europe. A presentation on community development was led by Rev. Neil MacMillan who also led prayer and worship each of the four mornings of the conference. In Dundee, the group heard from national partner David Robertson on the subject of apologetic evangelism.



Bob Burnham spoke of walking through a cemetery in Edinburgh where he came upon an embedded stone in which the word “Eternity” was carved. Perhaps this sobering word shines a light on the ultimate goal of the forum—working together to more effectively present the gospel to the postmodern cultures of Europe. ■

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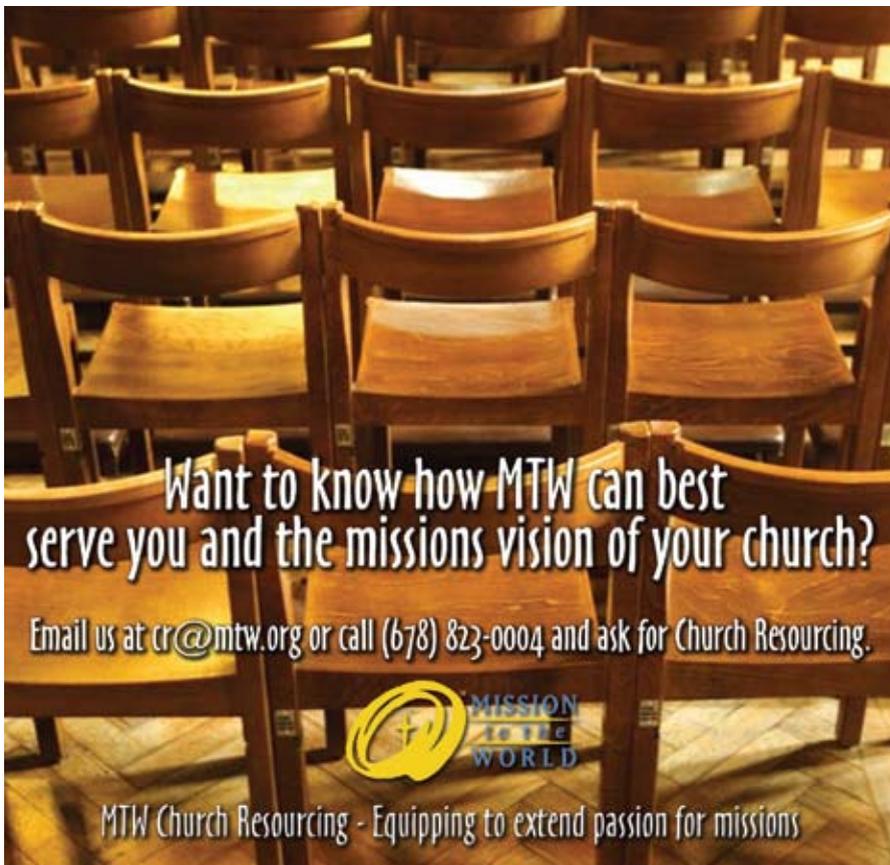
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FROM THE COORDINATOR

DO YOU FEEL LIKE A LIGHT?

I enjoy trips through caves—especially the point when the lights are turned off. Suddenly, you realize there is something darker than the darkest night. We should think about the fall of the human race in the same way. When our father Adam sinned, he turned the lights off.

We live in and serve God in a world lost in darkness. All of creation is "off the tracks." As we serve God in this broken world we expect to encounter suffering, injustice, violence, unkindness, sickness, and sin. God tells us that we are to be His children—children of light in this world.

Light, first of all, exposes darkness. From experience and by the authority of God's Word, we are able to stand and resist the many forms of darkness: unkindness, lack of integrity, and greed among them. And we should not be surprised or overcome by sickness and other forms of suffering when they become a part of our own personal experience.

Secondly, we should not be surprised by the hostility of the world toward Christ and His people. Fallenness by definition creates a darkened heart and mind toward God. One proof of the validity of the gospel is the opposition it encounters in our dark world. As the Bible says, "Men love darkness rather than light." We should not be surprised or discouraged when men tolerate the Koran but ban the Bible, or when the Church is seen as an enemy to the civil order and Buddhism is seen as chic and in vogue.

Thirdly, God uses the darkness we encounter to shape us and mold us into the likeness of Christ. Paul says he encountered an attack from Satan, but he rejoiced in the humility it created in his life (2 Corinthians 12:7). James tells us that the darkness of suffering produces Christian character (James 1:2-4). God uses the darkness to make us patient, give us courage, and strengthen our faithfulness. Recently I prayed with a dear Christian

worker whose daughter is in the grip of Satan. Her heart was so deeply troubled for this child she loved. If she could, she would trade places with her daughter. Yet, she also said, "I am so thankful for the way God has used this in my life to show me the darkness in my own heart and also to draw me closer to Him. God is so much more precious to me because of this."

Christ came as light to this dark world. Remember the words of the angels on the first Christmas morning. By overcoming the darkness on the cross, He has brought saving light to all mankind. We are here for a purpose. By the power given to us by the risen Christ we are able to extinguish the darkness we encounter. This is what missionaries do all over the world. And this is what believers do every day as we let the power of Christ work in and through us.

Paul D. Kooistra



Dr. Paul Kooistra