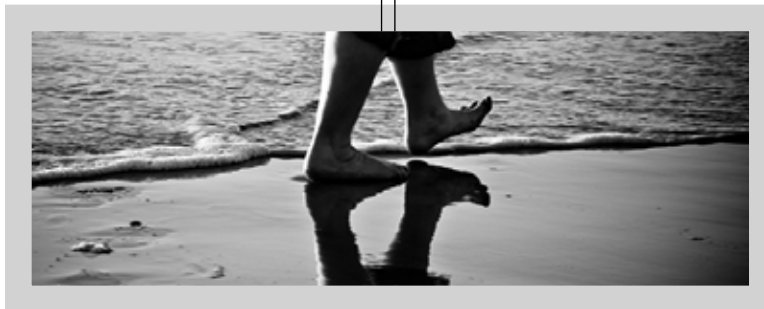


THE POINT

JUNE / JULY 2009 • VOLUME 1 / NUMBER 2 • A PUBLICATION OF STONY POINT CHURCH



Saving the World FROM THE EDITOR

As you grow older, it's funny what you remember. My grandmother had a thing for beautiful feet. By the time I came along, hers were horribly misshapen by calluses, corns, and bunions. They were very high mileage feet. But whenever the name of this cousin or that aunt came up in conversation, Grandma could be counted on to remind us all just how beautiful her feet were. Like Grandma, God also has a thing for feet. Not because of their physical beauty, but because it is feet that spread the good news of His love and rescue down the street and around the world.

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Romans 9:14 & 15).

In this issue of *The Point*, some of Stony Point Church's leaders and thinkers offer their perspectives on our mission to save the world. To provide a Biblical frame of reference, we'll start with Jesus' final command to His disciples and end with His prayer for their effective missionary witness.

Therefore Go! *Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

MATTHEW 28:16-20

"Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." WILLIAM CAREY



Sending, Supporting, & Going

LYNN LILES

For every person who goes out in missions, there are many more who send and support. I have done a lot of sending and supporting of mission projects over the years at Stony Point Church. My participation in our recent mission to Dornoch, Scotland gave me an opportunity to also be one who goes.

As a sender and supporter, I have prayed, contributed financially, and helped in practical ways to get the team out into the mission field. For the past ten years, I've supported and sent my own children to Maine, Fairmont, and Scotland. Working in the church office, I have sent and supported individuals and teams, locally and all over the world—Loaves and Fishes, Food Pantry, Fairmont, Scotland, and Uganda, to name just a few. I've copied and bound coloring books, pastoral training materials, and songbooks. I've packed medicine and medical equipment, purchased supplies, and collected shoes. I'll never forget the summer I had just twenty-four hours to buy fifty air mattresses for the Fairmont mission team. These practical things are necessary and impor-

tant to mission projects and are certainly things I can do. Most times they are just bite-sized pieces of a much larger effort. All of these contributions have been personally rewarding. I have always felt very appreciated and a part of every team.

But my experience of going with a team takes missions to another level. That other level is the people part of the project. It's the relationships.

We live in a hurting world. And Scotland is no different. People there are suffering from depression and alcoholism. Many, especially young men, take their own lives. Child neglect and abuse are rampant. The parents of these children don't seem to know or care where they are or what they are doing. It seems that to these parents, the children are a burden.

Seeing firsthand the joy on these lonely children's faces when they received some love—a little attention, a small gift, or help with a Bible verse—was a blessing. In our class, it was obvious that the kids who have attended Bible Clubs in James and Jennifer Murphy's home knew answers to questions about God and had great confidence and energy in sharing. The last night we were in Dornoch, we were in the mini-bus dropping off a teen at her apartment. Several younger children ran out when they saw the mini-bus and started calling out to us. When our teens got off the bus to say goodbye and hug them, the Dornoch kids tried to get on the bus or even ride on the bumper to go with us. Someone said this is the way it is in Uganda. Many times I have heard that children everywhere are hungry for the love of Christ. Looking into their eyes and knowing their names makes it real.

While our team was in Dornoch, we also reached out to its older citizens. We visited a couple of assisted living facilities and hosted an

afternoon tea at the Dornoch Free Church for elderly women. At each event, we sang songs about Jesus and gave testimonies. We visited one-on-one, holding hands and praying together. We did our best to encourage them in the Gospel. For some in the assisted living facilities, their only personal contact with the outside world and with the Gospel is with visitors like us.

Last, but not least, there is the special relationship between our team and the Dornoch Free Church teachers. The bond started in our team meetings as we prepared and prayed for our partners in Dornoch. It continued in anticipation during our flight to Scotland. And it grew in our Holiday Bible Club team meetings each evening. We watched our Dornoch co-teachers struggle—like us—with fears, failings, and fatigue. Together we prayed, pressed on, and overcame. We became effective partners in ministry and true friends. During our time in Dornoch, we were reminded that more is caught than taught. That is true for our own youth. Our children have caught many good things by participating in intergenerational ministry, discipleship, fellowship, and missions at Stony Point Church. The only way to catch these good things is up close and personal. It's in relationship.

As senders and supporters, we have a good grasp of the needs and the process that gets things accomplished. As one who goes, we gain a better grasp of the relationship and people issues—the matters of the heart. So, I challenge and encourage you to be a missions sender and supporter. God bless you. We need you. And someday soon, be one who goes out into the mission field. Like me, you'll discover that the rewards far exceed the sacrifices. *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."* (Matthew 9:37a) ●



A Heart for Missions

MARY JO ELLIS

Growing up in the church, I routinely heard people pray “and bless the missionaries on foreign fields.” One of the best reasons for inviting our missionaries to visit Stony Point Church from time to time is to remind ourselves that they are real people living real lives in real places serving real people. Seeing them and hearing their stories helps us develop a heart for missions. A heart for missions – it’s definitely one of those “Christian-eze” phrases. What does it really mean? What does it look like?

In the Bible, heart means much more than mere emotion or sentiment. It almost always refers to our whole being - emotions, thoughts, and actions. Mission means to send. So literally, a heart for missions is a whole-being commitment to sending Gospel messengers out from the Church into the world to expand God’s Kingdom.

As Jesus commanded, *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.”* (Matthew 28:19) A heart for missions is a deep longing to see that verse accomplished and for that longing to shape every aspect of our lives: how we give our money, spend our time, use our gifts, think and pray, what we say and how we say it. A heart for

missions is a willingness, even an eagerness, to be sent.

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:20) A good indicator of what’s important to me is what I spend money on and how easy it is for me to give it up. Is it easy for me to give money to Missions? Pastor Kenny Robinson, from Fairmont, West Virginia, says that “If you aren’t a missionary, you need one.” So in that sense, we’re *all* missionaries in the field God has placed us. Do I spend my time sharing the gospel? Am I knowledgeable of the culture in which I live so I can be an effective missionary?

Even though not every believer has the gift of evangelism we are all called to develop a heart for missions. A heart like Isaiah’s that says, “*Here am I, send me.*” ●



AFTER THE MISSIONS CONFERENCE:

Your Next Step

JOHN MORGAN

After a weekend focused on missions, some of you may be asking: Does God want me to be a career missionary?

Good question! But don’t expect God to answer it in one action. God may want you to investigate missionary service because of what you will learn in that process, even though you may never become a career missionary. So, if you are asking the question, the answer is probably, “Yes, you should investigate.”



Here is an easy-to-say, hard-to-live formula for helping clarify this question:

1. Get up in the morning.
2. Commit to following Jesus that day.
3. Seek to know God’s will by reading the Bible and praying.
4. Do wholeheartedly what you know God wants you to do.
5. Go to bed.
6. Go to number 1.

If you consistently follow this formula, God will eventually make it clear if He is calling you to be a career missionary. But even if He is not, along the way you will grow in grace and God will use you in ways you can’t foresee.

God is much more interested in your heart than in your vocation. He wants you to turn your life over to Him. It’s like giving Him the checkbook to your life with every check signed. He can write checks, large or small, on any day, at any time. God will then take you through experiences which reveal and reshape your heart. He will show you the kinds of service you have a passion for—and that will be part of any call.

Wholehearted obedience always leads to more revelation. If you are not already obeying what you know to be His will, why should God

tell you more things to do? If you are not already serving Him where you are, what makes you think you will be effective somewhere else?

When you see an unmet need and it tugs at your heart, put your heart into meeting that need, even if you feel unqualified. Put your heart into following Jesus daily and trust God to make the next step plain. ●

On Being Liked

“If your driving motive in life is to be liked and loved, you will find it almost impossible to be a Christian. Missionaries—all of us!—are people who have decided that being loved by God is enough to enable love. We don’t need to be loved by others. It feels good. But it is not essential. Loving, not being loved, is essential.”

— JOHN PIPER

Congregational Missions & You

FRANK CRANE

To appreciate my perspective, it would be helpful to know a little of my personal background. I am the child of missionaries who, like Hudson Taylor, immersed themselves for life in the Chilean culture to which the Lord had called them. I entered adult life

seeing short-term congregational mission trips as, well, cheap and crude imitations of the real thing. And that was my guiding bias until one day in the early 90s when a Stony Point elder challenged me, “As pastor you need to set the example by going yourself on a mission trip.” I went—grudgingly. I’m sure the Lord was not honored, but He used that first trip to Prague to change my heart.

On a short-term congregational mission trip—to the Czech Republic, Uganda, Scotland, West Virginia, or wherever else—one learns how to live all of life in mission. You wouldn’t apply for a mission trip if you didn’t believe God had called you to it. Is not life a calling? Then, on that mission trip, you have no choice but to live by faith. Are we not to live by faith all our lives? You are, in congregational missions, immersed—if only for a short time—in a strange and sometimes hostile culture. Isn’t all of life a battle against hostile forces? On a mission trip, your focus is on the relationships you go to build and the tasks you go to accomplish. Joy is a by-product of being busy about the mission before you. And so it is in all of life.

I don’t suggest that we ever participate in congregational missions for what we will get out of it, but when a mission is well-designed—in support of and cooperation with churches and missionaries already on the field—God blesses both the *served* and the *servers*.

So put going on a congregational mission trip on your “Bucket List” (you know, the list of things you must do before you kick the bucket) and learn how to live a life of missions at home. ●

Are You Weak Enough?

MARGARET KELLAND

I attended a Missions Conference last year. One of the speakers asked this question: “Are you weak enough to serve the Lord?” It was a question that I had certainly never thought about before, but one that has stuck with me ever since. For someone who has always worked hard to be strong and independent enough to deal with whatever situation might come my way, it remains a challenging question.

What does it mean to be weak enough? Why would I want to be weak? I have always considered weakness to be a flaw, not a qualification for serving God. When I am strong, resourceful, and capable, I think that I can take care of all that needs to be done. I may give lip service to trusting in and depending on God, but in the back of my mind I know I can always step in and take care of things if God can't or if He chooses not to solve my problems in the way that I think is best. When I sense that I am weak, I know that I have to trust and depend on God because if He doesn't come through, I don't have any resources. Trusting God is my only option.



The Israelites experienced this sense of weakness when they were camped next to the Red Sea with the Egyptians about to overtake them. They had no strength or power. They were defenseless and knew that their enemy would show them no mercy. They feared that Moses had led them there to be killed. But God demonstrated His power in the midst of their weakness and saved them from the Egyptians. For generations, they retold this story to remind their children of God's power and faithfulness.

In college, I had the opportunity to spend two months in Japan as a summer missionary. When I first heard about this opportunity, it sounded very exciting. But as the time came near, it grew less and less appealing. I kept hoping that roadblocks (delayed passport, difficulty raising support, etc.) would keep me from going, but God kept working out the details. When it came time to go, my family took me to Dulles to catch my plane. What none of us knew at the time was that I had also caught a virus from my sister. With the friend who had gotten me into this mess, I flew to Los Angeles where we met up with a group of strangers who made up our mission team. Because our flight didn't leave LAX until the next morning, we all had to spend the night in the airport. I soon began to experience chills and fever. There was nowhere to lie down or even get something to drink. By the time we were on the plane to Japan, the virus had settled in my stomach and I was really miserable. When we landed in Tokyo, it was very hot. There were people *everywhere*—I do like my space. The smell of the food made me sick all over again. And I couldn't understand anything that was being said. I feared that God had brought me to Japan to die. Just like the Israel-

ites, I had no strength or power to take care of myself. But just as He had done for the Israelites, God demonstrated His strength in the midst of my weakness. In those two months, I felt closer to God than at any other point in my life.

I found that when we know we are weak and have no choice but to trust God, we experience a kind of freedom. When I think I can solve a problem or mend a broken relationship, I have to spend my time and energy working on the solution. Sometimes it works out. Sometimes it doesn't. Either way, I have to deal with the stress, anxiety, fear, depression, failure, anger or hopelessness. That takes a lot of time and energy. But when I trust God and let Him be the One responsible for my life, I have more time and energy to follow His Spirit as He leads me into paths of service to others. I can cook meals for Loaves and Fishes, take care of kids in the nursery, lead a Cat Club, teach in Uganda, write letters to discouraged friends, bake cookies for prisoners, repair homes in Fairmont, or share Jesus in the Bronx projects. And where there is freedom to follow His lead, there is joy in serving. Japan was such a wonderful time in my life because, in my weakness, I knew that I was living the life that I had been created to live.

Japan wasn't always fun. It wasn't always easy. I shed many tears. I was in some difficult situations and my feelings were deeply hurt. But God was still the One in charge and He brought me through all of it.

After they crossed the Red Sea, the Israelites struggled for forty years in the wilderness. We still have our lives to live in this troubled world. But when I remember Japan, I know that God's strength will be evident if I will simply be weak enough to serve Him. ●



Fairmont Has Changed Me STEVE ELLIS

My experience in home repair mission projects started in Maine. Our team was always split into several smaller work crews, each with its own jobsite and assignment. There was not much of a focus on completing these projects. The unfinished work from one crew was simply left to be completed by another crew the next week.

One year, my crew was assigned to finish some repairs that had been started the previous week. The house had been struck by ice sliding down the side of a steep hill. One wall had been knocked off its foundation, leaving the house open to the outside world. But our host family was not all that concerned. The damage had occurred several months earlier and they were quite accustomed to being visited—almost nightly—by raccoons.

I well remember my first home repair mission project in Fairmont, West Virginia. I had done similar work projects before and never really stressed about getting the work finished.

But in Fairmont, there was lots to do and teams were expected to complete their work. That year we were assigned to serve Doris Yost, whose home needed major repairs and painting. It had not been painted in over 25 years. At the end of the first day of scraping and priming, we began to get a handle on the scope of the job and I was in the midst of a major stress meltdown. There was no way that we were going to finish painting Doris's home by the end of the week.

I knew that we had the option to work a half day on Wednesday and take the afternoon off to go tubing in the river, swimming at the wave pool, or just taking it easy. But I was already thinking that I wanted to work all day every day to make sure the project was completed. During our team meeting Monday evening, I voiced my concern. Keep in mind that I was not the only one who was working. We had a team of about 40 people, a good mix of adults and teens. After some discussion, a young Harrison Jones spoke up and said, "My mom always taught me to get my work done first and then I could play." The team decided to act on this wisdom and work a full day on Wednesday.

The result was amazing. All of the work was accomplished. Not only that, but we also had time for an extra blessing. Doris was so moved by our visit that she called her Pastor and asked him to baptize her. So we all drove out to her sister's house where there was a swimming pool. The Pastor did a little preaching. Then we sang *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* as they waded into the water and Doris was baptized. This was, without a doubt, the highlight of the week. At the end of that week Doris told us, "You guys came as strangers and are leaving as friends."

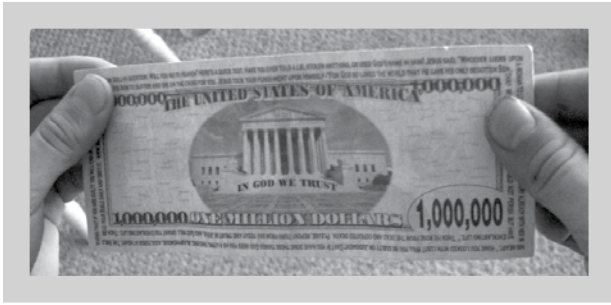
We returned to Doris's house the next year

and did another huge project that also had many signs of God's hand working in it. At the end of that week, Doris told us through tears, "The first year you came as strangers and left as friends. This year you came as friends and are leaving as family."

When we go to Fairmont each summer, we always return to Doris's house on Wednesday evening. She opens her home to us and her neighbors for a block party. These parties have been great times of blessing, not only for Doris and her neighbors, but for many other MTW teams who come to eat and celebrate with us.

It has been said that we go to change Fairmont. But, the bottom line is that Fairmont has changed me—making me, I trust, a little more like Jesus. My only regret is that I did not start going 30 years ago. ●





Missions: A Sacrifice?

ZAC COLLINS

As Christians, are we called to a life of sacrifice? Is the pastorate, full-time ministry, the mission field, or even daily, local service a sacrifice? We sometimes hear stories of a world-class athlete who turns down a big university scholarship to pursue a degree at a small Christian college. Or of a doctor who, making money hand over fist, chooses to set it all aside to practice medicine in a poor third-world country. Or of a successful businessman who abandons his career at its peak to attend seminary. How do we respond to these stories? “Wow, look at what they sacrificed for the Lord! I could never make a sacrifice like that.”

Sacrifice is a verb. It’s an action word. We often think of it as meaning *to surrender or destroy something that is prized or desirable*. To lose something we love. To give up something we need. But the full definition of sacrifice is to surrender or destroy something that is prized or desirable *for the sake of something considered to have a higher or more pressing claim*. We often forget the second half of the definition. Our flesh and culture have trained us to live by the connotation rather than the denotation of the word. We focus on what is lost rather than what is gained.

If someone asked you to hand over \$100, you’d be unlikely to do it. But if it were in exchange for \$1,000,000, you wouldn’t think twice. You would immediately make the sacrifice. You wouldn’t resent or lament your \$100 loss. You would appreciate and rejoice in your \$999,900 gain.

Should not that same principle apply to the sacrifices we make for the sake of seeing God’s Kingdom grow?

May we, by God’s grace, be a church that takes the long view. May we willingly see past our small sacrifices to the higher, eternal gain. It’s this perspective alone that will motivate and sustain loving service to our neighbors and our witness to the Gospel around the world. It’s this attitude alone, like Christ’s, that humbly sacrifices treasures, however precious, for that which is priceless—the rescue of sinners and the restoration of the world. ●

Why On Earth Uganda?

JOHN KELTONIC

In June, for the tenth consecutive year, our church will be sending a team to work for two weeks in Uganda. These trips have never been in conjunction with any missions agency or organization, but are the direct result of one missionary who visited Stony Point almost eleven years ago. This missionary spent all of fifteen minutes holding up some bent pictures of children in need, talking about the work God was doing in a tiny orphanage in the middle of nowhere, Uganda. Although she made no request for a team and no team had ever gone to work at this orphanage, over a dozen of us felt compelled—even called—to go. And so, go we did.



With virtually no idea of what we were doing, or how we might be used by God.

We needn't have wondered. For reasons we may never understand, God chose to bless our work at Canaan Children's Home far beyond anything any of us could have imagined. Today, the orphanage is almost unrecognizable to those who were there for that first visit. Under the stewardship of Pastor Isaac Wagaba, the number of orphans has grown from less than thirty to more than a hundred. Back then, the orphans had to haul water over a mile twice a day from a polluted water hole to the orphanage. Now a well on the grounds of Canaan provides clean water. All of the orphans have clean clothes and three meals every day. They go to school, have their own shoes (you'll see why this is an extra blessing in a minute), and are up-to-date on their immunizations. The physical size of Canaan has more than quadrupled and now includes a 10-acre farm, a clinic, playground equipment, several new buildings and additions, and even

an elementary school for the orphanage and its village—Buziika.

Our team has worked not only in Buziika, but many other villages as well. We've provided teaching for hundreds of area pastors and youth leaders, made numerous visits to local Ugandan schools, and even ministered to those in prison. We've taught construction techniques, beginning business basics, and helped build a chicken coop, which is now being used as a classroom. We've had Bible Clubs for children every year, with the number of kids attending sometimes topping 800 a day. We'll never know for sure how many were led to Christ, but over the years almost 400 of these children have joined churches in their local villages and some have even led their parents to Jesus. The medical component of our work has provided mosquito nets for the entire village of Buziika and many other places, brought several tons of medical supplies for the Jinja Children's Hospital, and provided health care treatment and education for local Ugandans. The list of ways that God has chosen to bless this work is virtually endless and growing every year.

But back to the title: *Why On Earth Uganda?* Despite all of these great success stories, aren't there places much closer to home that need our help just as much? What good can a small group of Americans really do to truly address such an *overwhelming need*?

The answer may lie in the definition of the word *need*, itself. Anita and I have taught reading to inner city children in Richmond, where \$20 would buy a great book for one of the students. A pretty good deal. Where we work in Uganda, that same \$20 in medicine will save the lives of three children. No kidding. Very few Americans have the same definition of *need* as

the average Ugandan. No one in the U.S. goes without a Bible because they can't afford one or has their child turned away from Bible Clubs because the building is already so overcrowded that nobody else will fit—with even the trees full of children trying to look in the windows. Here, no one dies because they can't afford a typhoid shot (it's \$6.41 at your local health clinic if you can afford the shot, free if you can't). No one in the U.S. dies of malaria because they can't afford a mosquito net (\$5.20). No one in the U.S. dies because they can't get food to survive. Starting to get the picture? Depending on where you live, *need* has a very different definition.

Children here in the U.S. would consider shoes



a *need*. No child in Uganda does; shoes are a *want*—a highly desired, but usually unaffordable item.

Does this mean that our church's focus shouldn't be local? Nope! This is not a case of *either/*

or, but instead a case of *both/and*. God is clearly blessing our work locally as well as internationally. We are called to both.

So, here's the bottom line—we go to Uganda because that's one of the places in the world where 1) help is needed the most, and 2) the help does the most good. Maybe this illustration will help: Imagine you see ten people struggling to carry a huge log. Nine people are on one end of the log, and one person is alone at the other end. If you want to help, where do you go? ●



Missions Will Be No More

JENNIFER MURPHY

When God began to reveal that he wanted us to be missionaries, no one was more shocked than me. As a child I didn't know any missionaries, but I had heard about them at church. They were the smiling faces on those MTW cards all over our refrigerator. They were super-Christians—incredibly holy and happy to give up their normal lives to suffer in dire circumstances because they loved Jesus so much. To be honest, they seemed rather strange to me. And I definitely didn't think that I fit that mold.

God has graciously taught me many things over the past two years as James and I have served in Scotland. One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that God can use anyone. His plans for us are so much bigger than our limited opinions and short-sightedness. If he chose me—inexperienced, sinful, loving-my-normal-and-comfortable-life me—to be a part of his work across the ocean, he can use absolutely anyone. I am so grateful that he chose us. To be able to see, firsthand, the way God is moving in a tiny village in the north of Scotland has been such a privilege and an honor.

After the short time we've lived in Scotland, do I fit that stereotype I had of missionaries? Absolutely not! I'm not incredibly holy. But God has been working (over time, it seems) to sanctify me "through and through" (1 Thessalonians 5:23) by showing me my sin and my need of Him. Have I been happy to give up my comfortable life in Richmond? If you know me, you'll know that leaving friends and family was one of the hardest aspects of moving to Scotland. Am I rather strange? Actually, yes—I am. Mine is the kind of strangeness that comes with the realization that I wasn't made for this world and that I don't totally fit in—not in America or Scotland or anywhere else in this world that God might lead us. My real home is in another world. And the promise of an eternity spent in utter joy and constant worship of my Maker and Savior is the hope that we get to share with others. What a privilege! Whether it's walking to your next door neighbor's house to tell them about Jesus' love and sacrifice or taking the Gospel to a foreign country, God has chosen all of us to be missionaries.

John Piper, in "Let the Nations Be Glad," describes what will happen to missions when Jesus returns and those who belong to Him will finally be Home. "When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever." That will be such a glorious day!

But, for now, there are still many who need to hear the Good News. The world is full of people who, deep down, are yearning to trust in and worship someone other than themselves and their worldly possessions. Do you know anyone like that? If so, go. ●

Impact

TOM HARKINS

Stony Point Church is indeed missions conscious and missions directed. We are committed to reaching our neighbors and the world with the Gospel. By God's grace, we are making an impact. But what is the impact on someone from our church who goes on a congregational mission trip? My own experience in congregational missions, over a decade ago, has significantly shaped my life.

In the early 1990's, I befriended Jonah K., a Christian missionary to his own Islamic nation in Asia. At his suggestion, I traveled with a group of Americans to visit Jonah in 1997. Jonah introduced us to people who had committed their lives to sharing the gospel under extremely dangerous conditions. Those conditions have only gotten more risky in recent years. Jonah and his team must be very careful. And they are very brave. They also really trust the power of the gospel to transform lives. Together, they have brought many people out of the darkness of Islam to the light of Christ.



My experience in this foreign land had two opposite emotional dimensions. Half the time, I was scared out of my wits. The other half, I was marveling at how the Lord uses even a wretch like me to advance His kingdom. By the end of the trip I was fearlessly walking the streets of this militantly Islamic country, praying for the Spirit of God to bring light to the spirit of darkness.

When I got home, I spent the next ten years serving on the Stony Point Mission Committee. During that time, I worked to increase support to our missionaries and to expand the number of missionaries we support. Most significantly, I helped launch our first home-grown missionary couple, James and Jennifer Murphy, into the mission field. I take no credit for their success in Dornoch, Scotland. I was just in the right place at the right time to offer encouragement and support when the Lord called them.

By exposing you firsthand to what God is doing in the world, a mission trip will change you. You can read and hear all about it, but seeing it for yourself and participating in the work will profoundly change your perspective. It did mine. And God used that impact to transform my life for good. ●

The World Next Door

STEVE CONSTABLE

It's a dangerous business going out your front door,' JRR Tolkien wrote in one of his books of the adventuring hobbit, Bilbo Baggins - 'and if you don't keep your feet there's no knowing where you might be swept off to...' Of course, you might decide that you'd much rather stay at home in safety and forego any adventures. But I think, particularly if you're a Christian, you would be much the poorer for it.

Missions has, since the beginnings of the Church, been central to Christianity's identity. It's what we do—we mission. "Go," Jesus said, "to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20) It was His to command us to do so. In Matthew's account, the final thing Jesus does before He returns home to heaven is to command His disciples to follow His example—to leave the comfort and security of home to go out into a broken world with the hope of His Gospel.

The word *missions* simply means an activity upon which one has been sent. In the wake of what Jesus has said and done, there can be little doubt that of the few things being a Christian can be boiled down to, being a missionary is one of them. That's true not just for a select few, but for all of us. If you are a Christian, you have been sent to share the good news of Jesus' Lordship and Rescue wherever your feet might take you.

The question, when you think about your obligation to world missions, is not *if* but *where*?



To put it another way, regardless of whether you go before and are approved by some denominational missions board, everyone who is a Christian is called to missionary work. Practically, that means that some of us will go to a mission field far from home for a week, for a summer, or for all of our lives. It means that many of us will be both engaged in supporting missions through prayer and financial giving. And it means that all of us, day in and day out, will do missions where we live—in our homes, in our communities, and in our city.

Until about thirty years ago there was little doubt that the front-line in Christian missions was the developing world—places like Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Indeed, over the course of two centuries, from William Carey to Jim Elliot, the Western church has gone to them. First as evangelists, then as church leaders, and ultimately as facilitators, as God has grown national churches that send out missionaries of their own.

But the world has changed. There will probably always be a need for international missions, but it's now the West that needs evangelizing and its churches that need supporting and facilitating. It's the West, and even America, which now finds itself in need of saving. In London today, the biggest churches are, in many cases, the ones that have been planted by foreign missionaries coming to win again what was once a Christian culture. Who knows how long it will be before America finds itself in the same position? Rather than imitate the folly of the man who gives away all he has to the poor only to find himself destitute and in need, we have the opportunity as a local church to focus now also on reaching our own lost neighbors.

Dimas Salaberrios's rousing call at our May

Missions Conference to pay attention to our own city came, I think, at just the right time for us as a congregation. You see, no matter how well SPC's leaders cast the vision and make plans to commit ourselves to an increasing focus on local missions, sooner or later it comes down to the personal conviction and responsibility of each member. When it comes to reaching our neighbors and city with the Gospel, every one of our relationships with unbelieving family, friends, and co-workers matter. The beauty and functionality of our church building matters. The way we talk and sing in worship on Sunday mornings matters. Our clear theological focus on the Gospel—that one overriding element in worship and Christian education which if you get it will overturn your world whether you're new to Christianity or years acquainted with it—matters. The high priority we place on hospitality and mercy communicates, to a watching world, volumes about what we believe. And it matters, because in God's power working through us as a church, that watching world can be saved.

If we are to fulfill God's call to us as a generation of Christians, it may not be first to look to foreign lands—but to simply look out of our own front doors to the homes around us, to our workplaces, to the backyard parties and kindergarten picnics, to driveway basketball games, and there answer God's call: Who will go for us? Here I am, send me! ●

Behind Closed Doors

HARRISON JONES

Harrison, an SPC member, is currently teaching in an English Boarding School. This past April, he traveled north to join a SPC Mission Team in Dornoch, Scotland. Harrison taught the oldest class in the Dornoch Free Church's Holiday Bible Club and banged on the drums in the HBC band. You can see hundreds of photos and an excellent video documenting their time in Dornoch at our church web site. Harrison took the beautiful shots of the sunset at the Portmahomack Firth Lighthouse. —The Editor

With good reason, lots of people have been talking about Stony Point Church's recent mission project in Dornoch, Scotland. Many in the congregation were praying and many prayers were answered. But there are some things about our week there that you may not know. I will share a wee bit of what I saw in Dornoch—behind closed doors.

You might have heard someone say that we went to Scotland to change Scotland, but Scotland changed us. I want to make a slight adjustment to the phrase. "We went to Scotland to change Scotland, but Scotland *prayer* changed us."

EJH Nash, founder of Iwerne ministries to private schools in England in the 1940s, is quoted as saying, "The source of every work of God can be traced to a kneeling figure behind a closed door." He taught that God tends to work himself into situations and environments where much prayer is being offered up.

Oswald Chambers, a Scottish minister from Aberdeen, also writes extensively on prayer. His key insight into prayer is that it is not so much about sending God a wish-list (like children mailing letters to the North Pole and expecting a load of answered prayers under our trees)



but prayer is more about being in God's presence, receiving His forgiveness, and enjoying His grace. Prayer doesn't so much transform the world as it transforms us. And having been changed by God through prayer, we go out to love the world and work to change it in His power. I saw this dynamic played out again and again during our time in Dornoch.

Prayer was our most powerful secret weapon. We prayed in our holding-hands-group ten minutes before the Holiday Bible Clubs got started. We prayed with students once they arrived. We prayed before we taught our lessons in the classrooms. We prayed after we taught our lessons. We prayed for our snack. We prayed for our school supplies. We prayed for the bouncy castle. We prayed on the plane, at the church, in the van, and in our host's homes. We prayed late into the night in the Murphy's conservatory. We prayed together at the lighthouse of the Portmahomack Firth under the most beautiful sunset. I would not be surprised to learn that many of our team members and hosts had carved out small parts of their mornings and afternoons to pray alone. We prayed for the salvation of the kids, for the unity of the team, for the future of the Free Church, and for the town of Dornoch. We prayed big prayers. We were afraid that if we asked God for peanuts, that's what He would

give us. So we prayed for elephants and waited for the stampede.

Can we pray too much? We've all been in the room when that one prayer goes on so long that our closed eyes in prayer become our closed eyes in sleep. Perhaps if the prayer warrior laces his prayer with embellished spiritual truths to flex the esoteric loquacity of his ostentatious lexicon (as I have just done), that prayer can go on too long. But otherwise, I don't think so. Because there is never too much God to receive, His people never tire of praying. And the more we understand how crucial really living the gospel is to seeing God work effectively, the more we realize that we don't have as much gospel as we really need. So we pray in all situations without ceasing.

The future of the Dornoch Free Church will be fascinating to watch. While our team was there, we literally tried to pray the hell out of that church. As difficult as change can be for a church, including our own, we have to believe God when He says, "Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24) and "If we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5: 14-15).

We do believe that God can lift up the town of Dornoch through the ministry of the Dornoch Free Church. These are big prayers. Our God is too small if we believe that He can't do wonderful things in the courageous hearts of His people there.

We prayed and received grace to run a good HBC. Our friends in Dornoch received grace to do what they did not think they could do. Their next step is to keep praying and to see what else God

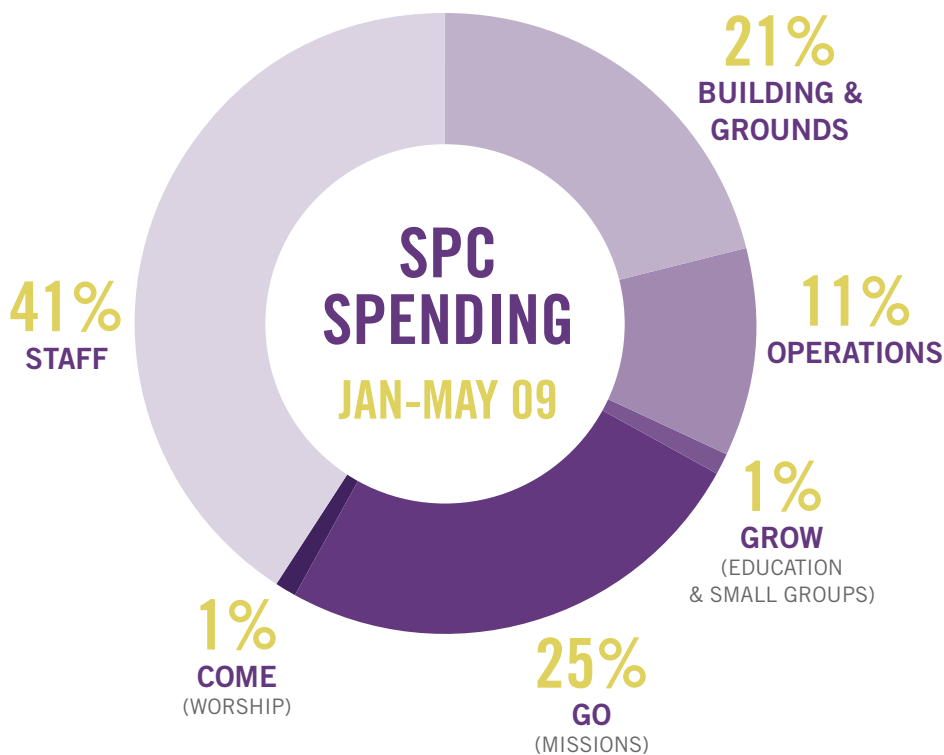
has up His sleeves. The essential thing is this—if we think we can do it on our own, we won't. And if we think we can't do it, we're right. It is a difficult, wonderful walk to balance.

How can we help the Dornoch Free Church in the future? We've taught them to fish. We've helped them plant their own seeds. Now God needs to rain on that congregation. And we need to pray that He will. So let's keep on encouraging the Dornoch Free Church with our love and support. But, most importantly, let's continue to be that kneeling figure of Matthew 6:6, behind closed doors. ●

JESUS' PRAYER | JOHN 17:6 -26

I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them Your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in me and I am in You. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that You have sent me. I have given them the glory that You gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and You in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ✠



UPCOMING

6/27 - 7/11 Uganda Mission Project

6/28 Blood Drive

7/9 Youth Virginia Beach Day Trip

7/12 Church Picnic & VBS Kickoff

7/13 - 7/17 Vacation Bible School

7/25 - 8/1 Fairmont Mission Project

8/2 - 8/7 Church Hill Mission (CHAT)

8/4 Youth Virginia Beach Day Trip

8/30 SPC Vision Dinner

9/5 Labor Day Picnic at Kerith Farm

What's The Point?

Way back in the day, God promised Abraham that He would both bless and make him a blessing to his neighbors and the world. With that, God set the pattern for the authentic holy life that has persisted through the centuries. But what God didn't tell Abraham was just how much more cool it is to be a blessing than be merely blessed. That's something Abraham had to learn. It's a lesson that many of us at Stony Point Church have also learned, and others are coming to know, through service to our church and to our hurting, often unbelieving, neighbors around the world.

We hope that this issue of *The Point* has enlightened and inspired you to deeper measures of faith in Jesus and higher levels of commitment to the King and His kingdom—especially in missions. We hope that you will GO!

Some of you may be thinking thoughts that bounced around in my head for about forty years—I'd really like to serve, but I know I am not ready. My gifts and talents are few. I don't know enough! My faith is too weak! My sin is too strong! I'm too busy!

For you, I have one word of encouragement: GROW! Get some pastoral counseling, develop habits of personal devotion, study your Bible, build friendships with stronger Christians, and get yourself into small groups and classes that challenge you in your greatest areas of weakness. And whatever your perceived strengths and weaknesses, make yourself available to God for service right where He has you. Be warned: He will expose new weaknesses. But He will also reveal many hidden strengths.

Our next issue of *The Point* will focus on the theme of Christian Growth. Please pray for our contributors as, in the next month or so, they write short stories and essays designed to bless us, even as they have been blessed. That, after all, is the point.

If you would like to submit a short story or essay on Christian Growth for publication in The Point, please email it to mr.b@stonypointchurch.org. Although we cannot promise to publish all submissions, we do promise to read and appreciate them. Our deadline for submissions is July 10.

