

At the Headgate

by Dick York

At the Headgate

Our Jubilee year has been 2003. This Nov/Dec issue of the SFMI Prayer/News Update is the last issue of this special year. And this issue more specifically marks fifty years of ministry inasmuch as the Shield of Faith was officially organized in December of 1953. We are grateful to God that He has graciously allowed us to serve Him



Steve illustrates his message on a white board while it is interpreted into Yoruba, the common language.

over this past half century, and we trust, if Jesus should tarry, to serve Him for another half century as well.

Steve Montgomery and I traveled to Nigeria, West Africa in August to minister at a conference called *Come Ye Apart*. It is an event that happens every year in Nigeria, and is typical of some of the things that have sprung directly or indirectly from the Lord working through SFMI.

We are sometimes asked, 'How many churches does SFMI have in a given country?' Our reply is 'None.' Over the past five decades we have tried to be faithful to the concept of the Church that we believe we see in the Scriptures. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:26)." That statement suggests that disciples were meeting together before anyone named them. Paul made it clear that the churches did not belong to him or Cephas or Apollos. These apostles

made disciples and local churches were the result.

What has happened in Nigeria is typical of what we have learned to expect from the preaching of the Gospel. It would seem that God's objective in this generation is not the raising up of great and famous men or large impressive churches with magnificent buildings. It is not the building of huge and growing organizations with massive staffs and immense budgets. It is simply faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.

In 1979 we had no connection with Nigeria. It is probable that none of us could have told you precisely where in Africa it was located. But we received a letter from there telling us that a cassette tape of an Ephesians' study from the Shield of Faith radio program had somehow made its way to the city of Ibadan, would we please send others to complete the study. We did, and it precipitated a flood of requests from many others for more tapes of other studies. The number of requests was overwhelming.

In August of that year, Jack Ring, Wilbur Langstraat and I traveled to Nigeria to determine what the Lord would have us do about communicating with this new field. We were total strangers. Initially we had difficulty connecting with the addresses we had; but when we did make contact, the Lord arranged a very fruitful ministry among the many who had been receiving the teaching tapes. We were invited to return the following year to conduct evangelistic meetings



The 1980 Nigeria team, front row from left: Jim Lucas, Roger Bagley, Paul Yoo, Rick Gardner and Web Loy. Middle Row: Larry Montgomery, Skip Nichol, Pat Benz and Jim Miller. Back row: Kevin Kochman, Steve Montgomery, Gary Meagher, Jack Ring, Dick York and Zaidos Church

in one of the churches in the city of Ibadan. We declined that invitation on the grounds that there were already African preachers that were capable evangelists. However, we would agree to return if they would assemble saints who would be interested in discipleship and New Testament church principles. We would call it a workers' conference. It was agreed.

In August of 1980, we organized a team of fifteen actively witnessing believers who would be able to teach others also and returned to Ibadan



Top: Larry Montgomery with some of the early trainees and leadership. Bottom: Moses Osho, Jack Ring and Roger Bagley

where we conducted a ten-day seminar with the approximately fifteen-hundred people who showed up at the Ibadan Grammar School. At the end of ten days, we divided into teams of two and accompanied believers from all over Nigeria back to their respective towns and villages where the things taught in Ibadan were repeated for the locals. It was an effective outreach, and at the end of thirty days, many believers had been encouraged and many unbelievers had heard the Gospel.

As a result of that outreach, three



The conference messages were discussed in small group workshops such as this one.

Nigerian brethren came to Bend, Oregon, to enroll in the 1981 training session, after which they returned to Nigeria. In 1982, three men, Larry Montgomery, Jack Ring and Roger Bagley, after completing the SFMI Training, left with their wives and families to work alongside the Nigerians. The resulting Nigerian work, Ethnos Christian Mission, has trained over one hundred workers, has established numerous churches in ten previously-unreached tribal groups, and has sent missionaries to several other African countries.

During the trip to Nigeria in August, Steve and I had the privilege of speaking to the hundreds of people who gathered for the *Come Ye Apart* conferences in

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Jim Lucas' Column



REPENTANCE ... For all men

I am concerned about modern-day evangelism. There is much emphasis on accepting Jesus as Savior to receive forgiveness of sins. Jesus is Lord of all and He came to save us from our sins. He delights in forgiving our sins, but what about repentance? Jesus commanded us to repent of our sins. Have you given this much thought? Repentance seems like an old-fashioned word in this modern Gospel. Some people may think that the Bible doesn't say much about it, when in fact it is spoken of throughout Scripture and has been preached by faithful men of all ages who have had the mind of God.

Repentance is very much on the heart of God. For God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. ^{2 Peter 3:9} He commands all men everywhere to repent. Acts 17:30 Notice all men everywhere! Your financial condition, social status, position in the church, the color of your skin, or how much you know about God and his Word will not exempt you from this command; it is the will of God for all men everywhere to repent.

Therefore, all men need to understand what it means to "repent." God is not saying that all men must confess that they are sinners and be sorry. This is what Judas, who betrayed Jesus, did. When he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. The Greek verb used here "metamelomai," is a change of mind, such as to produce regret or even remorse on account of sin, but not necessarily a change of heart. Paul explains: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the

world worketh death." ^{2 Corinthians 7:10}

Jesus said: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The Greek word used here is "metaneo," meaning to change ones mind or purpose. This verb with the cognate noun "metanoia" is used of true repentance, a change of mind and purpose and life, to which remission of sin is promised. (See Easton's Revised Bible Dictionary.)

The repentance that God commands is a total change of direction. It is repentance from sin and death unto life. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will you die, O house of Israel?" ^{Ezekiel 18:31} I What happens to the old heart and spirit? It dies and is destroyed by the cross. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." ^{Romans 6:6} "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." ^{1 John 3:8b}

Fallen Adam and all his offspring are now the work of the devil, children of wrath who walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. See Ephesians 2:1-4

Sounds quite painful. And this is why many refuse the life and forgiveness that is in Christ Jesus. They are not prepared to deny themselves, or to acknowledge their depravity. If we refuse to deny ourselves, we are denying Christ's sovereign rule over us. If we fail to see our own evil nature, we are not prepared to deny ourselves or to repent of the pride that is destroying us.

This happens only when sin becomes exceedingly sinful and we, like David, say, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." ^{Psalms 51:3} Or like Job, we can say, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and I repent in dust and ashes." ^{Job 42:4,5}

Then the old man is about to be displaced, because he is no longer wanted. We have cast our eyes upon Jesus who wants to come in and make everything new. The old man, however, is stubborn, self-willed, fights unto the death and refuses to be denied.

But there is great hope, for God not only wills for all men to repent but **He gives repentance** as well. Listen to Paul: "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. In meekness instructing those who oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." ^{2 Timothy 2:24-26}

Paul speaks about those who despise the riches of His goodness ...not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance.

Jews and Gentiles have been granted repentance unto life. See Acts 5:31; Acts 11:38; Ezekiel 18:30-32 Jesus is calling sinners to repentance. ^{Luke 5:32}

It is the repentance of our will, that we may do the will of God. This is difficult for the proud, willful man; but once this will is broken we can enjoy with ease the will of God. "For it is God which worketh in us both to will and do of his good pleasure."

^{Philippians 2:13}

God calls sinners to repentance. ^{Luke 5:32} Therefore we need to preach on sin, this is the secret to soul winning. Preaching boldly the truth—for it is the truth that makes men free—let us not be afraid to preach the need for repentance from fornication, adultery, drunkenness, unbelief, hypocrisy, being lukewarm, apathy, etc. God gives repentance and forgiveness, in that order. ^{Luke 5:31} Peter said: "Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." ^{Acts 3:19}

The prophets and the apostles preached repentance, John the Baptist preached repentance, and Jesus preached repentance. See Mark 1:15; 1:4,2:17; Luke 13:1-5.

For this reason Christ suffered, that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in His name among all nations. ^{Luke 24:46,47}

Every believer needs this foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God. ^{Hebrews 6:1} Without faith toward God, repentance is in vain. However, if you have never really repented, then you haven't truly believed. What is it that hinders us from giving a full surrender to God? Is it not unbelief?

Once the foundation is laid (the will is broken), it will be easy to come back to front and center if you ever stray, like David (who had a heart after God) was quick to repent when confronted with his sin. But if you are like the rich young ruler, you will go away sad for the lack of this foundation even though you know the commands of God.

Remember the words of Jesus who said, "There is great joy in heaven when one sinner repents."

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Ibadan and in Ogbomoso, where the theme of the conferences was “The



At the Ibadan “Come Ye Apart” Conference

family, the bedrock of the church.” That is such an urgent message in Africa, as it is becoming more and more so here in the United States.

It is too often the case that men try to serve God by seeking prominence as ministers or fame as evangelists while neglecting the most urgent requirements. The apostle Paul said, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” (I Corinthians 4:1,2). Faithfulness is the key—not fame, not even success. Paul also said in his instruction to Timothy, “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.”

In Africa, as in the United States, every generation lays the foundations for the next. Sons learn how to treat their wives by watching their fathers. Daughters follow their mothers’ examples. Every generation—indeed,



Nathaniel’s family and some of the saints building a new meeting place in a tribal village. Nathaniel is one of the early trainees, now one of the leaders and a missionary to a tribal area in the North.

every individual—stands at the headwaters of a stream of humanity that flows from him. It is this realization that provides impetus for individual believers to be faithful in order to produce faithful offspring both physically and spiritually—not only faithful sons and daughters, but faithful disciples as well. These are the components of the future churches.

To illustrate this sobering fact, we used Noah’s generations for an example. Noah lived in a time when all flesh had corrupted itself. Noah, because of the grace he had found in the eyes of the Lord, was upright in his generation. In fact, the Bible describes him as a preacher of righteousness. God revealed to Noah when he was four hundred and eighty years old that in one hundred and twenty years judgment in the form of a flood would fall upon the corrupted populace. Noah was to build an ark. Undoubtedly he must have seemed like a mad man to the sinners of his day as he preached righteousness and worked to build a ship hundreds of miles from the nearest body of water.

Twenty years into his labors, when he was five hundred years old, his three sons were born. Think of the peer pressure these boys experienced from the sons of other men who had deemed Noah a crazy old man, a religious nut. Noah’s character inspired enough confidence in his sons and his wife that they stood with him—a tiny minority in an overwhelming tide of antipathy. Those young men in turn seemed credible enough to three young women that they were willing to leave their unbelieving families and take their stand with Noah’s derided clan. In the end, as

we know, the world was wrong and the faithful few were right. Noah’s family was the window through which the lineage of the Redeemer and of the redeemed was preserved.

After the flood, Noah, the Scriptures tell us, became a husbandman. “He planted a vineyard and drank of the wine and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brethren without.” (Genesis 9:20-22)

The difference in character of each of these men is obvious, and so is their product. Ham showed little respect for his father, whose nakedness was a matter of amusement and derision to him. He encouraged his brothers to concur with his behavior, which in the end was to earn him Noah’s curse. Shem and Japheth did not agree, but went to great lengths to cover their father’s nakedness.

The Law, which says, “The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, thou shalt not uncover:” was not yet written on paper or stone. But it was already written in the hearts of these men. Their righteous action resulted in a blessing from their father. Those prophetic curses and blessings are still evident to this day. Each of Noah’s sons stood at the headwaters of the generations that would flow from them, and history has preserved the record.

Among Ham’s descendants were Nimrod, whose name means *Rebel*. His enterprise included the tower of Babel, that monument to humanism and rebellion against God’s authority. There were also the Canaanites whose descent into idolatry, homosexuality and bestiality incurred God’s wrath and caused Israel, the descendants of Shem, to be sent to drive them out of their land and destroy them.

Changes come when someone in a family, in a nation, in a culture realizes that he is a gate. He stands as the headwater of the generation that will proceed from him or her, as the case may be.

Africa is much like the United States in that the strength of churches is often measured by numbers—numbers of people, buildings or dollars. The success of ministry may be measured by the degree of fame or popularity one has achieved. But it is possible to build huge buildings, draw great crowds, amass

great fortunes, conduct impressive programs and create illusions of fame and success without making disciples, which often appears a less impressive



Dick and Moses Osho preached in English and Yoruba. Everything is translated into Yoruba from English or vice versa, even in local meetings, so the people are accustomed to listening to preaching with interpretation.

enterprise.

But the bedrock of the Church is godly families. And the key to godly families is faithful men who are disciples indeed: men, who are faithful to God, can be trusted implicitly by their wives and respected and admired by their children—men who set the pace.

National character traits are deficient when compared to the Word of God. It is not sufficient, therefore, for those who are the body of Christ to live by American norms or African norms. Each believer is at the headgate of a new line of disciples of the Lord Jesus. That new line is the Church of tomorrow, the Africa of tomorrow, the America of tomorrow. A biblical church is not merely a crowd of professing Christians gathered together to be “blessed” or entertained. It is an assembly of truly sanctified disciples of the Lord Jesus who, although still in the world, are clearly not of it.

It was for this reason that the Lord Jesus commissioned those early apostles to “go and teach (or **make disciples** in) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: **teaching them to observe all things** whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

The apostle Paul’s idea of how this should be accomplished was to “**teach faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.**”



Ivory Coast Jerry and Cherry Skiles

For those readers who may not be familiar with the Skiles family and their ministry in Ivory Coast, a brief recap of events leading up to the writing of the following report might be in order. Jerry and Cherry Skiles have served as missionaries in Ivory Coast for several years, first in the Loron tribe, and more recently among the Loma people. They built a dwelling there, introduced a small clinic, taught practical things about farming, established a cashew orchard, and above all evangelized the tribe. A healthy and growing church has taken root and many have been saved and are growing in the Lord and in ministry.

Last year, after a turbulent political election in Ivory Coast, a rebel uprising occurred, which continues to provoke serious unrest in the nation. The Skiles came out of the country for what was to be a short furlough, but have been unable to return because of the extremely hostile situation. However, Jerry has continued to make forays into Ivory Coast from Burkina Faso at intervals to keep in touch with the saints in that young church, while Cherry, his wife holds the ropes for him in prayer in their Oregon home. He has just completed one such trip. Following is his report:

First, I want to thank all of you for your prayers. I am safely out of Ivory Coast and my only wish is that those in that country could be living in the freedom I have.

After traveling with no problems to a Burkina Faso town close to the border, I was met by the director of the mission hospital in Doropo, Ivory Coast. He was confident, as we started the trip together, that I would be able to get to our village without any problems. The director had to get medicines from Burkina Faso as none

are available to him in Ivory Coast, so we continued to the large hospital in Gaoua on our motorbikes. While there, we visited a businessman I know well who had been shot by the rebels at the Gogo market where I had worked with the Loron tribe. As we talked to him, he related the problems of that area. He gave such a strong warning that the director began to re-evaluate the wisdom of going to the village. Both of these men felt that I would be safe in Doropo. As I was visiting the businessman, a Loron man I knew came and greeted me. His daughter had been ill for a long time and he wanted me to see her. I was surprised to see that his young daughter had her leg amputated because of her illness. After hearing more stories of how the rebels are taxing and taking money from the Loron farmers and seeing this girl who was handicapped in a land where the suffering of the weak is magnified by the environment, I was almost in tears as I asked the Lord's help on behalf of the girl and the problems there. As we left the town, I began to reflect on things, thinking if I am seeing problems like this sixty miles from the border, what will I see when I get into Ivory Coast?

The flooding has been bad this rainy season and we had to travel about fifty extra miles due to a bridge being washed out. Traveling was difficult, but it always has been. With the motorbikes we made it.

We went through the barricade of rebels without a problem. I sent a message to Hovare that I had arrived and had him pass the message to others. I expected to see him the next day; but when I didn't see him for two days, I had to send another messenger. He came the third day, as did a few people from the Loma tribe. It was so good to see these folks, but what I heard was not good. The rebels are very oppressive. They watch the road and interrogate anyone traveling. They have beaten people and shot people. They are in complete control. Despite everyone despising the rebels, there is no trust among the people. Conversations are guarded, no one wants to be seen as being rebellious towards the rebels.

The rebels had ransacked and stolen

virtually everything in our house. I was happy to hear they had not taken the villagers' harvest. They had held the chief's son until the villagers had paid their "tax"; but, other than that, after they had taken our goods they have not been back to Bwaybiye. The rebels are living in Gogo in one of the New Tribes missionary's houses. They emptied their house as well and beat one of the Christians there.

I wish I could have been of more help as I went to Ivory Coast, but in the end I felt helpless other than to pray to God.

In these circumstances, the cultural values I have and that of the Africans come in stark contrast. I grew up with hearing, "Give me liberty or give me death." The Africans seem to accept oppression as easily as seeing the sunrise on a new day. I had to guard my own communications without letting my American values influence more than God's Spirit.

The good news is that Hovare's school is doing well. He has four other men helping with his teaching. There are two new Loma men who believe and are meeting with the others in Bwaybiye. Hovare gave me a rough translation that he has done of the book of Matthew. We will put that in a computer, check it and get it back to him for revision next time we see him.

We were staying at the hospital, and one morning we woke up to hear that during the night a local cattle buyer had been murdered. Whoever did it tried to find the money he had but were not successful. All those in the house with me had heard the shots, but I didn't.

Those who had come to see me did not want me to stay long, and they did not want to be away from their homes and family. I did not see near as many people as I hoped to. The whole trip has not been what I had imagined. I did see those whom I had wanted to see, and accomplished what I felt the Lord had told me to do; but I also have a heaviness of heart about the trip. I must encourage my own heart in times like this that our labors must be done in faith and not always with what we perceive with our own feelings.

I want to thank you again for your prayers. The Lord gave protection in

travel and kept evil from coming to me. The kingdom of Our Lord continues on, even in the confusion and difficulties this world throws at it. In the end, I am confident that the Lord works out all of His purposes for His glory.



Kenya Team Prayer

While you are reading this Prayer/News Update, the Kenya Team, comprised of Tim and Kimber Montgomery, their two boys, Steven and Trevor, and five trainees—John Blank, Robert Edwards, Jeffrey Severson, Melody Kercher and Sheila Wolf—have arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, after a very long flight.

From Nairobi they proceeded ten to twelve hours by bus on rough roads, skirting wild drivers, through desert and mountain terrain, with the last four to five hours on



The Kenya team, leaving October 30. Clockwise from top left: Tim and Kimber Montgomery (they were accompanied by their children, not shown), Robert Edwards, Jeffrey Severson, John Blank, Sheila Wolf, Melody Kercher.

Ministry date

dirt roads, to their destination among the Samburu tribes -- Marlalal, a very small town of

approximately 5,000 population in the middle of nowhere, and at the edge of a game reserve.

Culture shock will hit them immediately upon their arrival and will only get worse for some time. They will have to find a small hotel temporarily until they can locate some accommodations, and then will have to find their way around to locate furniture and appliances as needed. If they could find furnished accommodations with water, it would be a huge blessing!

Here are some prayer items for you to take to the Lord in prayer:

1. Accommodations for all of them with water. Furnished would be wonderful!
2. An available telephone line so we can keep up to date on prayer needs, etc.
3. A quick adjustment to the culture.
4. A servant heart and attitude
5. Open hearts and open doors of the local people to the ministry.
6. Wisdom as the trainees go out to share the Gospel and seek to disciple believers in the town.
7. Wisdom as Tim will be conducting seminars with the various churches in town and the outlying villages to disciple groups of believers as the Lord opens the doors.
8. Transportation, especially of a dependable motorcycle for Tim to go out to the villages. Kimber would really like to have him come home at night rather than having to stay in the villages.
9. Safety and good health for all of them.

Our prayer for them is: "... let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands ... (Ps. 90:17).

The objective is to see the Lord raise up men and women there who will become grounded in the Word of God, obey the Word, and become disciples who will in turn make other disciples who will follow the Lord Jesus.

You are our partners in the work. Thank you for your faithfulness.



Steve Montgomery

PRAYER PROFILE FOR THE CIRCLE OF SILENCE:

The Circle of Silence is not only the least-reached area of Spanish-speaking Mexico. It has another unique distinction: it is one of the few areas on the planet where the Jehovah's Witnesses arrived before evangelical Christians. Normally, this organization arrives only "after the fact," coming in behind preachers of the Gospel to poison the well with their doctrine. In the Circle of Silence, however, the Watchtower Society has been present for some time.

Arandas, for example, is a city of 40,000. The Watchtower Society has been present there for more than a decade, while witness to the Gospel has been going out there for about four years. There is an encouraging note, though. According to the census, there are 92 evangelicals, or about 0.3% of the population. The Witnesses, with twice the time in Arandas, number 94. Pray for the entrance of the uncorrupted light of the Gospel into this region choked by Catholicism and the cults.

NEWS FROM ATOTONILCO:

On the first of October, Lord willing, the congregation here enters our new

meeting facilities. The mid-size warehouse we will be moving to is considerably larger than the apartment where we've been meeting and will require a lot of modifications to be entirely adequate, but it is a big step for the congregation and everyone is excited. Peter Warren, from Household of Faith in Garland, has arrived here at a perfect time to help us put up some sheet-rock walls.

Another change for the church is taking place in these days also: Ed and Abby Drysdale have moved from Atotonilco to Tonalá in order for Ed to attend language school. They will be coming out here regularly to visit and to join in the work, but it is likely they will be in Tonalá for six months, perhaps more. Ed has been making progress with his Spanish, but it seemed the time had come for some structured-language learning. They will be living in the home of Larry and Peg Gallegos while the Gallegos are in the US.

Ed and Abby have been a great asset to the work here. Both are people oriented and make friends easily. They've won the hearts of the brethren here, as well as many of their neighbors. Two of the evangelistic studies I have (Juan and Margarita, Carmen and Enrique) are the result of friendships they fostered. Apart from being a help to the work, they have become close friends and we will miss them. Pray that they will get great profit from the schooling and that in the Lord's time they will be back with us in Atotonilco.

With Ed no longer in town to join me going door to door, Peter's presence here is even more appreciated. He and I continue to distribute New Testaments to each home in Atotonilco. We suspended showing movies on the street during the rainy season, but will soon be starting that up again. Peter has also graciously agreed to help in the cafe once a week so that Josh can join me in evening evangelism.

The congregation here has agreed to take on responsibility for the congregation in Arandas. The men here met together and decided we really didn't have any choice. If we can help in Arandas, we need to do it. Two of the men who are fairly new in Christ offered to help while at the same time

asking to be trained in how to teach and speak in public. The congregation there has their own building, which is about 75% finished. That project also needs input and guidance, so several of us went up there last week to look at the construction and prayerfully consider how we can help.

Thank you for your intercession for the Jalisco Highlands and for us.

Steve, Linda and Josh, with Peter Warren

A Letter from the Mike Ball Family who are temporarily off the field, but still very much in service.

Dear Friends,

Well, we are still in Wyoming. Up till a month and a half ago, we were making plans and preparations to go to Kenya in November to live there for six months to one year. The circumstances were such that we believed we were supposed to go. There was a family that had decided to go with us. Also, the funds were provided for all of us to fly to Nairobi. But in the midst of these provisions and answers to prayer, I did not have the peace from God about going. As preparations were being made and expectations building, the unrest in my spirit was growing. Finally, after doing a lot of praying on a long trip to up-state New York and back (you know there is a lot of time for that while you're driving, especially through the night as we did one day), we made a decision not to go.

We will be here in Wyoming for the school year. TJ and Austin will be taking some classes at the public school two miles away. Austin has started football and both will be playing basketball. The rest of the kids will be schooled at home. We are still with Shield of Faith. Our status with them is "on extended home leave." I look at it as being "on hold" for the school year. We do not plan to be involved in missions work during that time, other than Mike's going to East Africa for a few weeks in December. The reason we will remain with Shield of Faith is

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because we intend to be back on the “field” somewhere next summer and we would rather not have to go through the process of “rejoining” SFMI a few months down the road.

We do not remain with them to continue to receive funds from you who support us while we “do nothing” here in the States. During this time, we do not expect you to continue to support us. Mike, Lord willing, will be working full time. It is important that our kids see their dad working at a “normal job” so they will understand the principle of “if a man does not work, he does not eat.”

We will still be able to receive

funds through SFMI and will put funds received towards the ministry and support of Marcial and his family in Loreto, in Mexico. Speaking of which, the work in Loreto is going well. The group of disciples is growing. The entire family of Manolo (four daughters) have believed and been baptized, along with his parents and sister. One of the first home Bible studies we had in Loreto three years ago was with Manolo’s mom. They just recently were saved and baptized (both are in their 80’s).

The church is now renting a place for \$50 a month for their meetings. It is located downtown, which makes it

a central location for anyone. Marcial continues to go to Loreto from Aguascalientes three times a week (four hours round trip on a bus). Please pray for the church in Aguas. The brethren are pretty active in witnessing and discipling through home Bible studies, and are growing as new disciples are being added; but they are going through a tough time right now. As of June 1st, they have been meeting in a public park. The missionary who built the church building ten years ago came back with a small congregation to take over the church and basically said, “I’m back as pastor—join us or leave.” The summertime is rainy season there,

so they met in homes some Sundays.

I’m sure many of you may wonder about us staying here for another nine months. We believe this is the best for our family right now and have peace about doing this. I apologize for not writing in such a long, long time. We have been so unsure of our plans that we have not known what to write. We will try to communicate as we hear news from Mexico. Thank you all so much for your faithfulness in your prayers and support.

In Christ’s service, and yours,

Mike and Faith Ball and family

From time to time we receive news from other parts of the world of what is happening to believers there. Or we hear of the work of other churches or missionary organizations that provoke us to praise or to prayer or both.

It is a blessing to be



continually assured by both good news and bad that God is still on the throne and, as the Lord Jesus assured us, “The gates of hell will not prevail against His Church.”

Here is news (some of it a couple of months old) that should encourage us to pray and to praise the Lord.

A comment by a brother Sam of Sri Lanka on the beginnings in Nagaland:

I believe the planting of the seed of the Gospel began in the early 1900s with a missionary from UK. He and his family, for preaching the Gospel, were killed by the Naga King on a cartwheel while they sang, I have decided to follow Jesus. Their deaths in front of a large Naga community brought about the conviction and conversion.

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TEN THOUSAND MISSIONARIES IN INDIA’S NAGALAND STATE “POISED TO SPREAD GOSPEL”

Nagaland, one of the world’s most mysterious lands tucked in the mountainous, jungle-covered northeastern corner of India, has ten thousand missionaries poised to take the Gospel to nearby lands, said Nagaland’s Christian president, Isak Chishi Swu, while visiting California Saturday, Aug. 23. “We want to penetrate China, Cambodia,

Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and Nepal with the gospel,” he said. “We have ten thousand missionaries who are ready to go.”

Swu said the outreach is being held up by the finalization of peace talks between the Indian government and the four million people of Nagaland, an Indian state established in 1961 that borders China, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

“We want to request the whole world to pray for us that the peace process with India will be successful so that God will then release us to preach the

Gospel around the world, particularly in the neighboring countries. We are not demanding our independence from India, but we do need recognition.”

The soft-spoken seventy-three-year-old president was born in a hamlet called Chishilimi in the Sumi region of present-day Nagaland.

“In 1921 my father was one of the first converts in Nagaland,” Swu said. “God used him mightily, and he and some colleagues converted our whole tribe during a period of four or five years. Before this, our tribe was pagan.”

He says that ninety-five percent of the Naga people are Christian. Pray for Isak Chishi Swu, President, People's Republic of Nagalim — Nagaland

NAGALAND

On the border with Burma (Myanmar), south of Arunachal Pradesh and east of Assam, Nagaland is physically and conceptually at the very extremity of the subcontinent. Many of its hills and valleys, home to the fiercely independent Nagas, were uncharted until recently; and the eastern regions remain far beyond the reach of the skeletal road system, despite the fact that the forested mountains rarely exceed 3000 meters in height. Today this remains the most politically sensitive of the so-called Northeastern hill states, and is all but closed to foreigners.

INDIA'S HMAR CHRISTIANS SHOW GOD'S LOVE IN PERSECUTION.

The Hmar Christians of northeastern India are extending the love of God to their enemies, the Hindu Dimasas, who they say have recently killed many of them in a violent tribal conflict. Dr. Rochunga Pudaite, a Hmar believer and the founder and president of Colorado Springs-based Bibles for the World, says the organization is planning to supply food and also to give tribal members God's Word as a sign of Christian love.

Pudaite recently stepped into the middle of the conflict by calling on both sides to stop the violence. He said that troubles were started on March 3 when what he called Naga political revolutionaries kidnapped three people from a neighboring Dimasa village and demanded ransom. The violence continued until many on both sides had been killed.

Our friends in the area where the killings took place have just bought rice to be given to the Dimasas, he

said. I have asked that they also give them something to eat with the rice, so they bought some dal which is like a split pea.

When asked why he thought it was important to show God's love to the Dimasas people in this way, Pudaite replied, "We are commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ to love everyone, including our enemies. We have to demonstrate that love by our life and by our actions."

ERITREA, AFRICA

The following posting on Eritrea has been provided by Compass Direct. It further highlights the Eritrean government's severe persecution of evangelical Protestant believers. This time, those arrested, tortured and imprisoned in metal shipping containers, are mere youths - teenagers. Their crime - possession of Bibles.

I would also wish to remind readers that there has been no independent media in Eritrea since the government closed it all down in September 2001. Subsequent to the closures, the government rounded up its critics and imprisoned them.

This information has been leaked out of Eritrea at great personal risk to Eritrean Christians who now believe that the price of silence will be greater than the cost of speaking out.

*Elizabeth Kendal
World Evangelical Alliance*

TEENAGE CHRISTIANS JAILED AT ERITREAN MILITARY CAMP

Evangelical Students Locked in Metal Shipping Containers. *Special to Compass Direct.*

More than sixty teenage Eritrean students caught with Bibles at a compulsory military training camp have been arrested and subjected to severe punishment during the past two days. Documented reports obtained

by Compass from the tiny East Africa nation confirm that military commanders at the Sawa Military Training Camp ordered a search this week to find and confiscate any Bibles hidden among the student conscripts' personal effects.

On August 19, thirty-five Protestant students found with Bibles in their possession were put under arrest and subjected to severe torture. The following day, another twenty-seven teenage believers were incarcerated with them. Locked in metal shipping containers without any light, they are reportedly subjected to high temperatures, miserable close quarters and limited oxygen access.

"Their parents are very frustrated," observed one source. "They are not being given food properly and are deprived of sunlight and medical treatment."

In June, hundreds of grade-eleven students from across Eritrea were ordered to report for training at the Sawa military base during their summer holidays. When schools resume in late September, it is believed the students will be required to continue their academic training in the Sawa camp, rather than returning to their homes.

The sixty-two teenagers, twenty-nine of them female, represent most of the country's twelve independent Protestant congregations. All of these denominations have been refused legal status by the Eritrean government for the past fifteen months and ordered to stop meeting for worship. In a harsh government crackdown launched this past February, more than three hundred members of evangelical congregations were arrested, beaten and jailed for extended periods for worshipping without official permission.

This week's arrests bring to two hundred and thirteen the known total of evangelical Christians in Eritrea currently jailed for their faith. Among them are seventy-nine Eritrean soldiers, sixteen of them women, all jailed under harsh treatment in a military prison in Assab for refusing to deny their Pentecostal beliefs and return to the dominant Orthodox Church. Most were imprisoned in March of last year, when they were

warned to expect beatings, threats and ongoing abuse until they recanted. This summer another two Protestants caught raising funds among local believers to feed and clothe the destitute Assab prisoners were jailed along with the soldiers.

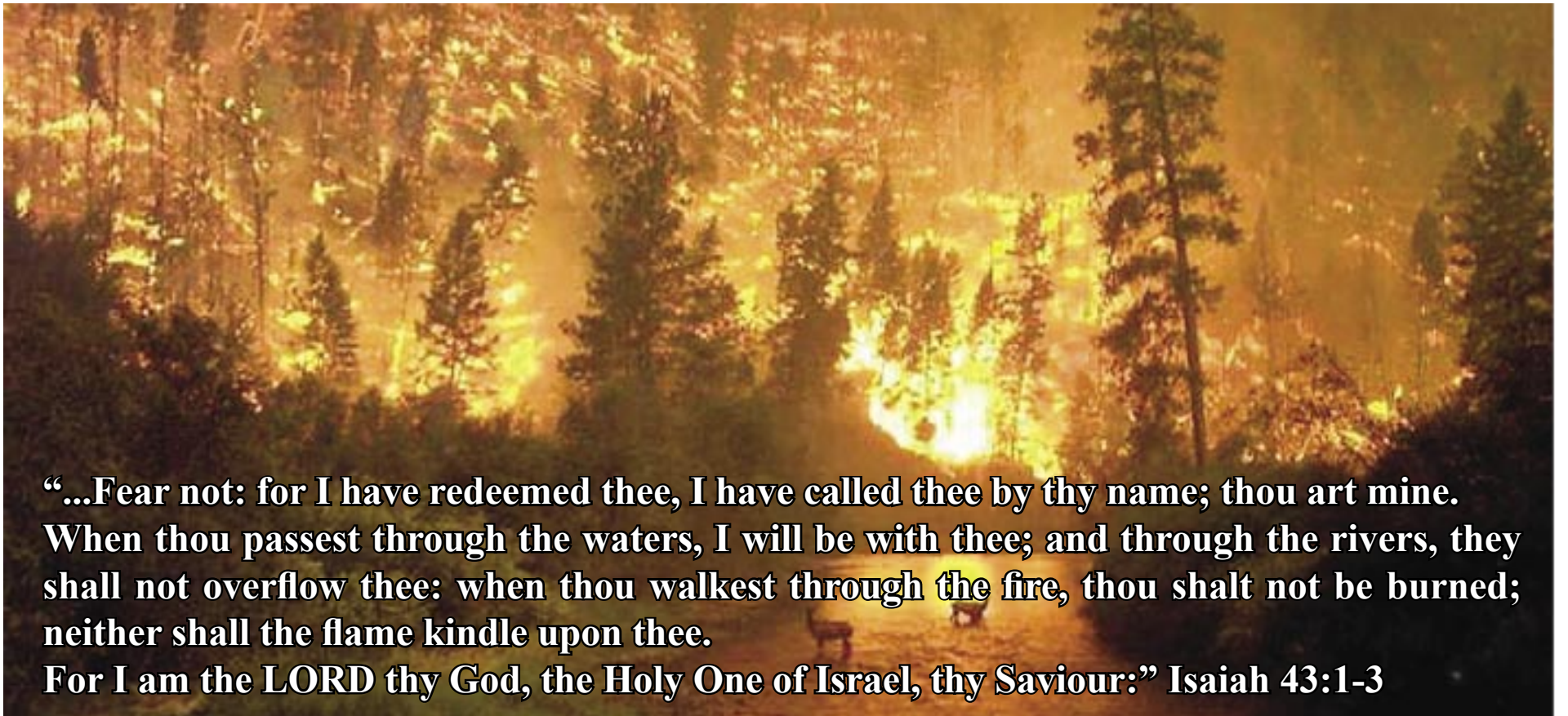
One evangelical pastor and eleven of his church members remain under arrest in Adi-Abytoo, with ten reported in Keren, five in Mendefera, thirteen in Adi-kualla, twenty-five in Nakfa and seven in Adi-Kihe.

Listed by Freedom House as one of the world's most repressive regimes, the government of President Isayas Afewerki only recognizes four official religions: Orthodox Christian, Muslim, Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran.

In a statement issued May 1, the government formally denied that any religious persecution exists in Eritrea. The country's independent Pentecostal and charismatic churches now have some twenty thousand adherents, most of them emerging from a mushrooming renewal movement begun five years ago within the Orthodox Church. But an apparent alliance between the state and the Orthodox Church has inflamed harsh resistance against the independent Protestants, who have been told it is illegal for as few as three of them to meet together in a private home.

Meanwhile, the Eritrean Embassy in London has been under siege this week by members of an Anglican church located just blocks away. Members of All Saints Church in Islington have patrolled the street outside the embassy every day, praying for a turn-around in the Eritrean government's repressive stance against evangelical Christians. In addition to stopping embassy staff and passersby to explain Eritrea's violations of religious freedom, the church members have gathered signatures for a petition urging Eritrea to honor its signature on a number of international treaty commitments to observe basic human rights.

Provided by:
Compass Direct
World Evangelical Alliance



“...Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour:” Isaiah 43:1-3

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