

Growing the Gospel

"Seeds Planted"

STORIES FROM THE MISSION FIELD

ANDY AND TINE VANDERLAAN

Andy had the privilege of chaperoning a few of his students to a Student Leadership Conference held in Budapest, Hungary. There were 350 high school students from all over the globe worshiping and hearing from God's Word. On the bus ride from the city he talked with a student from the Netherlands who said that her school and family are Christian in name only but few actually care much for, or talk about, their faith. She had the opportunity to visit two international Christian schools in Europe, like the school Andy teaches at and was shocked to see kids her age talking about God and actually taking their faith seriously. From these interactions with kids her own age she heard the gospel and decided to be a Christian. She is a living testimony of the importance of living out our faith in reality. No one is too young to be a witness for Jesus and we never know who God will use to bring more people to Him.

CLIFF AND CRISTINE WIENER YWAM PERTH

In a recent missions conference for YWAM Perth, Cliff and Cristine were able to hear reports on their work in China, which has grown immensely since they were working there in 2008. Their family's work in China for 6 years was like a seed planted in the ground. This seed has grown into many, many full-time Chinese missionaries, now traveling to other nations to share the Gospel and plant more "seeds". At YWAM Perth, Cliff and Cristine are busy planting and watering seeds, as many young people are coming to be trained and find their specific calling in the outworking of the Great Commission.

TIM AND STEPHANIE STEEN

Tim and Stephanie are planting seeds at the school where they work and volunteer. They continue to build relationships with the students by holding an after-school board game club once a week, playing with them on the playground, and coaching them in football. Each of these events is an opportunity to share God's love with them, and something they try to do liberally. Tim specifically thinks of some of the football players on his Under 11 team last year. As it wasn't always easy to get them to understand the concepts of teamwork, respect, sportsmanship, and why there is a deeper spiritual meaning behind those concepts. But this year, the returning players are becoming leaders of these things for the newcomers.

The most "explicit" chance to evangelize and plant seeds was probably Tim's opportunity to speak during an assembly during the spring last year. The topic was forgiveness, and Tim was able to share some of his past struggles to "fit in" when he was in school to the middle schoolers of HOPAC, and talk about the need for being forgiven and forgiving others. He was able to share the awesome story of God's complete and total forgiveness available for every one of them.

Perhaps where we've seen our greatest reward has been in our volunteer work with the Sala Sala Kids Club. Once a week, after school, local children come to HOPAC for an hour and a half of play time, Bible message and a snack. There are over 120 kids each week and it is a madhouse of chaos! But despite the language and cultural barriers, these kids are slowly finding their way into our hearts. We're learning their names and it's such a joy to see them come each week.

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EVY SMITH

Ummu has been a believer for many years now and one of her frequent prayer requests is that her children would grow up to know, love and follow Jesus. Her oldest daughter, 12 year old Aysata, has always come with her mom to the time of Bible study at a place in the village. She would often just sit and listen or take care of her younger brothers as her mom would read and the group would pray together. Aysata has never said much about wanting to know more about Jesus..but she always comes along when the meetings occur. She has even been teased about being a Christian by the other kids in the village.

This past year she asked if she could come along to the Fulani conference. Aysata wanted to hear more and see what it was all about. She met other young Fulani followers of Jesus and is showing an interest in the Gospel. She has also come along with her mom to spend time in the capital Bamako studying God's word. God has heard Ummu's prayer for her daughter and everyone is excited to see what God is going to do. The seeds have been planted a long time ago and now we've begun to see the fruit in Aysata's life. Please continue to pray for Aysata, that she comes to know, love and follow Jesus.

DAVE GIFFORD

This year was a home service year, so from January to June Dave and Blanca were "watering" their relationships with individual and church supporters. The fruit they saw there was a phenomenal growth in their financial support. Other fruit they hope to see is responses to the invitation to churches to have two teams next summer, one to do construction at the seminary, and another for college-aged students to come to Mexico City for a conference on calling and vocation in global perspective.

In another planting, Blanca taught an evangelistic cooking class, and the seed bore fruit in Raul, Alma and their three children. Through the cooking class they joined the church. Their family was baptized this past spring.

REV JIMMY LIN

Cathy is a sales manager of a clothing retailer in Shenzhen, China. She is in her thirties, a young mother of two. She used to be a Back to God listener on radio and is now a subscriber to our Chinese Today wechat (social media outlet in China). Cathy was a victim of domestic abuse that eventually led to divorce.

In February of this year she was very touched by one of our devotionals about family and felt guilty about her marriage. Through communication with the editorial staff she became clearer of what the Bible says about divorce and about remarriage. The staff was also able to introduce her to a Christian marriage counselor in her area. Cathy found that connection very helpful and she wanted to do something in return. The end result is that she has become a volunteer for the BTGMI Chinese to find appropriate pictures that match the message of each day's devotion in the Chinese Today.

It is hard sometimes to figure out how God works but He is doing things "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Eph.3:20) and all we could do is to stand in awe and give Him all the glory!

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MIKE VANDERDYKE

Evangelist S. was sent by the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria to live in an Isawa village in northern Nigeria about 3 years ago. The Isawa are a people group in northern Nigeria who give special honor to the prophet Isa (Arabic for Jesus) through their reading of the Koran. Evangelist S and his family were faithful witnesses for Jesus in this village. They quietly told others about the love of Jesus and what he had done to bring about forgiveness of sins and redemption. They taught the Bible to many who were interested. About 6 months ago, Evangelist S started to experience heart problems. He tried various treatment options, but in the summer of 2014 he passed away. Thank God for the seed that Evangelist S planted among the Isawa people. Pray that this seed will continue to bear fruit.

REV LARRY SPALINK

On September 16, a very "delicious" fruit fell from the tree that has been growing, as a group of musicians and artists formed themselves into an organization called "IBUKI-Christian Artist Network" and they put on a wonderful worship celebration using all sorts of musical talents and graphic arts, praising God through classical music and rock (and everything in between!) and through a gallery of art some of them had produced. Only a fraction of the talent that resides in the church was displayed, but everyone there realized that something very special had happened, the likes of which the Reformed Church in Japan has not seen before! The best part of it was that it came about not through the leadership of the pastors or church organizations, but through a groundswell of desire to serve God's kingdom, seeds that the Holy Spirit himself has planted in the hearts of his children, seeds that Larry, Ruth, and others have been watering and encouraging. They Spalinks are just really pleased and eager to see where this is going to lead!

SCOTT REESE

Scott just "accidentally" came across an old friend at the health food store. When this friend was a child Scott used to bring food to his house ... Scott was reminded of the time many years ago when he was working with an outdoor vbs in Ford Heights. On the way to vbs the back window of Scott's car exploded (probably shot out but no bullet found) When the vbs program began, a car load of guys came by yelling threats. The brother of the friend Scott used to bring food to just happened to walk by at that moment, he just happened to be the leader of the main gang there, and he just happened to remember how I helped his family as a child - soon the situation was reversed as he announced he'd take care of anyone who messed with "Pastor Scott" So many times God in His miraculous timing has delivered, helped, and encouraged.

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DAVE FOSTER

Would setting up a "Free Prayer" table at Columbia College Chicago really work? It turns out that it consistently does! It works because people stop and ask for prayer and meet Jesus, It works because the students that LeAnn has been inviting to take the risk to serve are finding that people are responding well and God is showing up. They have been consistently doing this each week in various high traffic areas of Columbia College Chicago. LeAnn is doing phenomenal work, leading students boldly into taking risks to bring the presence of God and create places of worship in unexpected places. People who are not pursuing God are finding that God is pursuing them with love.

CHRIS LANGKAMP

One of the seeds that God has planted into Chris Langkamp's ministry this year is the development of a new soup kitchen in Berwyn. The grand opening was on October 11. 3 years of seed and watering and now the tree is going to sprout!! Praise the Lord! This is going to be Berwyn's only soup kitchen.

BEN SPALINK

A seed Ben planted was an evangelistic relationship with a friend. This friend was in a band, so about 7 years ago, when Ben and Christy were new to the city, They made it a point to attend as many of his shows as possible. They were big time groupies for a couple years until kids. Ben and Christy made friends with the entire band, and many of their friends as well, almost all of whom were not Christian. This band has now made it big and are touring around the country. Hopefully God can take those seeds and do something awesome.