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# CHRISTIANITY IN *action*

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## CHANGING LIVES



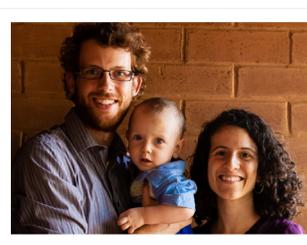
### A JOURNEY OF FAITH

By Greg Cranston

I went to Iowa State University in 1974 hoping to also grow in my faith. Before school began, I met the Great Commission church in Ames. I knew I had found what I was looking for. After college, God led my wife, Rachel, and me to stay in Ames. We needed and appreciated the strong marriage and family input we received there.

In 1984, we moved with several others to plant a church in Iowa City, Iowa. We loved the excitement of a new church plant and learned a lot. After several years, God used financial pressures and a very unfavorable home schooling climate to motivate us to look for a GCC church in another city. We had to keep our home schooling “undercover” because the state of Iowa was putting people in jail for home schooling if you were not a state accredited teacher. I see now that this was all in His plan, even though it broke our hearts to leave Iowa City. Our move to Columbia, MO was a great relief since Missouri had a very favorable home school law. In Columbia, we linked in with Valley View Community Church serving in music and small groups.

As a young man, I had hoped to be an elder someday. (I now see that there was a very good reason that I was not recognized as an elder at 23, 33 or even 43 – I wasn’t one!) When Herschel Martindale moved to Columbia, I expressed my desire to do the work of an elder. He mentored me and I was recognized as an elder when I was 53. Recently God has led us to move to the St. Louis area and help lead LifeSpring Community Church. Shepherding God’s people is the best “job” I have ever had.



### CALLED TO TRUST HIS PLAN

By: Corey and Rachel Shain

When we left for the West African country of Mali in early 2012, we had everything figured out. We would be language workers sent by Wycliffe Bible Translators to serve among the Dogon ethnic group of Mali, where Bible translation will likely play a crucial role in church growth in a largely animistic culture. We’d read a ton of books on the Dogon, watched every documentary we could find about them, had corresponded with Dogon church leaders over the internet, had told everyone that this was where we were going. When some signs of increased kidnapping threats in Mali appeared just two months before our departure, we quickly brushed off the thought of changing course. We arrived in January and immediately dove into language and culture learning. We started adapting to the food and dress, went to live for a time in a village, etc. Then one day near the end of March, gunshots were heard downtown across the river, and (to make a long story very short) there was a coup d’état and all of us expatriates had to get out fast.

We’d set out as missionaries under the assumption that our work for the kingdom of God was what mattered. And we of course still think that it matters a lot, no matter what our profession is. But we’d overlooked the possibility that one reason God gave us this particular calling might have been to transform us as well, and that he was lovingly taking us through these lurching changes to show us how much we’d been relying on ourselves, and how little we really had control over.

Now we are working in Cameroon rather than Mali and a lot of open questions remain about what our lives and work will look like. But this past year has taught us the value of letting God answer those questions as He chooses, rather than rushing to do so ourselves. We long to be able to say with Paul that we’ve “found the secret of being content in any and every situation.” (Phil. 4:12). While we still fall very short of that, we’re grateful to God for taking us one step closer.

# MISSION USA

## SUMMER OUTREACH: WICHITA, KANSAS

By Tom Brown

*In May of 2012 a team of students and singles from Vintage Faith Church in Manhattan, KS moved two hours south to Wichita, for the summer. The purpose of the ten week program was to scout out the city as a potential location for a future church plant from Vintage Faith.*

Wichita is the largest city in Kansas, the home of Wichita State University, and of many friends and family members dear to Vintage Faith students.

The team members picked up full-time work and lived together in an apartment complex in the heart of the city. The

weekly schedule for the summer included an organic Sunday morning worship service in a neighborhood park, a small group Bible study and Alpha Course outreach dinners. The neighboring apartments and work places around the city provided many good opportunities to build relationships.

In addition to the weekly schedule, the team participated in various outreach events – barbecues, sports, movie nights, and evangelism in the parks. A strength of the team was a passion for music, and involvement in the local scene was a great place to meet people and make connections.



The greatest success of the program was the depth of love and hospitality the team shared for the locals from Wichita who joined the program. The end result of the program was a decision to take the next step and send a church planting team in June of 2013!

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## FROM AMSTERDAM TO ASHEVILLE TO AUSTIN

By Todd Watkins

*After seven years of living as missionaries and church planters in Amsterdam, the Lord led us to Asheville, NC. A year and a half into our new mission things became uncertain. The new church plant we joined never materialized, finances became very challenging, and I found myself working a second job to make ends meet.*

We believed God led us to Asheville, but what was going on? Over the next year and a half our faith and trust in God were put to the test.

Late one night I found myself lying on our family room couch crying out to God. As I prayed a thought came to mind, “leave no stone unturned.” To me that meant I

should contact friends in Colorado. As a result, I found myself in conversation with a number of pastors. During the conversation I was informed of a church in Austin, TX that was in need of help and was asked to pray about an opportunity there. This simple request changed the course of our lives.

After a couple months of seeking God and talking with Mark Hagen (the pastor in Austin) God made it clear that he wanted us to go. Still, there were challenges ahead: one, we didn’t have the funding to go, and two we had to sell our house. Yet God in his sovereignty overcame our challenges. Generous funding was provided, plus our house sold in less than a week. God was in this move!



We’ve been living in Austin, TX for about four months now. We are trusting God to do a new work here and by His grace have already seen some early fruit. The church is moving forward in faith and we are excited to see what our God is going to do!

# INTERNATIONAL

## WELL DRILLING IN TANZANIA

By Matt Gordon

*This past May a team of nine, representing several GCC churches in the Southeast, headed to Tanzania to help launch a well drilling training and church planting initiative. During the course of our 24 day trip we flew to Mwanza in the north part of the country to work in nearby villages.*

The first several days we spoke at a church service and met with several different groups of pastors and leaders from surrounding villages. The highlight of the time was providing transferable discipleship training for 30 church leaders. They were eager to take notes and put this training into practice. We then provided hands-on training in water well drilling in the villages of Luchili and Nyakasungua. Each of the wells we drilled took about three days of hard work drilling through course sand and gravel. We ended each of the days by having a team member share

the gospel as we did an evangelistic Bible study with the villagers who had gathered, up to 150 each day. Ten villagers put their trust in Christ during these training days.

We left the villages encouraged that two wells had been successfully drilled. More importantly, we had trained six faithful men in the villages to be able to drill wells after we left. Geophrey, the president of the newly formed Water For All Nations – Tanzania, will occasionally travel from Dar es Salaam to the Mwanza area to continue to train these men in the drilling process. From back in the US, Lee, the vice president of WAN, will coordinate ongoing discipleship training, with the goal of traveling to Tanzania every six months. By God's grace, our plan is to use this transferable, inexpensive method of well drilling as a means of getting our foot in the door in remote villages. We will raise up local men and women who will



be equipped in both well drilling and church planting, who will play a vital part in this ministry in the days ahead.

God used this trip to impress on me 2 Corinthians 8:12, *“For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.”* Each day brought the need for much flexibility and steps of faith, and God met us each time. I am eager to see what God has ahead for our involvement in His work in this region.

## THE REAL MISSION FIELD: OUR CHILDREN

By Jack Stockdale

*When Jack and Joan Stockdale moved to Poland as missionaries several years ago, one issue was: How would this affect the children? Years later, they would say that God has blessed their children greatly through their move overseas. As a father who is deeply interested in seeing his children follow Christ, Jack gives the following insights on three key principles that Christian parents should remember.*

The first one is prayer. Often times Christian parents can gloss over it as a “given” and yet many parents neglect to pray for their children on a regular basis. Joan and I placed regular, united, desperate prayer for our kids at the top of our ‘To Do’ list.

Though they often can't address it in a mature manner, kids seem to have a sixth sense to detect hypocrisy. The second

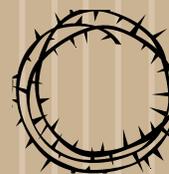
principle is that you can't hide “the real you” from them. You can't persuade them to have the Word of God on their heart if it isn't on your heart. You won't get them to be genuinely thankful people if you aren't genuinely thankful. You won't succeed in getting them to refrain from manipulating people unless you exhibit the faith necessary to refrain from it. The list goes on.

Lastly, the forces of this world which permeate every institution in society and from which we cannot hope to forever shield our children, threaten to drive them to live for self. All the Christian meetings, conferences, retreats, and concerts our kids might attend cannot take the place of them actually seeing their parents radically live out their faith.

Abraham left comfortable, prosperous Ur



and *“lived as an alien...dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob.”* Our commitment to the spread of the gospel has led Joan and me to make certain moves which gave our kids a front row seat and firsthand experience in seeing the genuineness of our faith.



# INSIDE GCC

## GCC PASTORS CONFERENCE

JUNE 17-19  
KANSAS CITY MISSOURI

Did you know that each and every one of us has a unique, special and critically important role in the history of the world? Did you know that you are as significant and as important to God's plan as Esther or John the Baptist? "How?" you ask.

Join us for this year's Great Commission Churches Pastors Conference and discover the impact we can have when we "Just Sow It!"



## MEET A GCC PASTOR

THIS EDITION: MARK BOWEN

Judi and I have enjoyed 30 years of marriage and God has graciously given us 5 children (ranging in age from 14 to 28) to help grow us to maturity. We've been privileged to serve in ministry at Evergreen Church and with the Northlands Region since 1993. Ministry has been a lot like marriage and parenting – more difficult and purifying than we expected. But what a blessing at the same time!

John 17:3 NASB *"This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."* I have loved this verse for many years because it always re-centers my wandering heart on the essence of what eternal life is: a reconciled, loving, true relationship with the living God.



Mark and his wife Judi.

Listen attentively. Some of the best advice that I've received in recent years comes from Henry Cloud: *"Born foolish and prone to evil, human beings only become wise through the fear of the Lord. We conclude: 'I've had enough of self-inflicted wounds to recognize that God alone knows all, sees all and understands all, so I commit to listening attentively and being open to correction. Always.'"*

## CHANGED LIVES

JOHN HOPLER - DIRECTOR, GREAT COMMISSION CHURCHES



*In 1970 when the Great Commission churches movement began, the early members were dedicated to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is now 43 years later--and as an association of churches, we continue to "just sow the gospel."*

In 2012, a number of GCC pastors asked this question to the people in the churches they are serving: "Have you shared the good news of Christ with anyone this past year?" Typically, 70% or more of the members have done so.

This what we see in Acts 8:4: *"Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word."* It has been pointed out that the ones doing the sowing of the gospel were the members not the apostles, who stayed in Jerusalem (v.1). So too, we aspire to follow the New Testament pattern where whole churches are sowing the gospel wherever they are--with family, friends and neighbors.

The Church of Jesus Christ has a golden opportunity today to share the greatest news ever given to man, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Today we have the capability of reaching every man, woman and child with this marvelous message. We can do it... we really can.

Warren Wiersbe said, *"You are a Christian because somebody cared. Now it's your turn."*

Yes...it's our turn. Join us as we "Just Sow it" in 2013.

