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SPRING 2022



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KURDISH REDEMPTION LEGEND BUILDS BRIDGE TO JESUS

Reaching Kurds in the UK

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN
MY LIFE, I FEEL HAPPY

Ireland

WAYS TO DEVELOP
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR
YOUR MISSION WORKERS

Church Resources

The fight of our lives

Michael Prest, Director, UFM Worldwide



Many of us have grown up only ever knowing peacetime ... yet God says, we are at war. We follow Jesus, the Prince of Peace, yet he calls us to fight. And the battle that rages is not just for a time – no, it's the fight of our lives.

In Ephesians 6 we hit these realities head on, with talk of strength and struggle, of standing firm and standing your ground, of armour, power, shields and swords.

Our greatest battle is not against a pandemic and our greatest enemy is not a bunch of people. No, “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”

(Ephesians 6:12). Put simply, our great enemy is the devil and the forces of evil that work alongside him (6:11).

When the allied forces were preparing for the D-Day landings, they famously installed a decoy army of inflatable tanks and dummy landing craft. They were placed along the coast in South East England, to make the enemy think the invasion would be attempted via Calais. The diversion worked and the enemy wasn't clear from where the attack would come.

Yet in the battle we fight as believers, there is no great surprise about how the devil will attack us. One of the great themes of Ephesians is that God is building a new humanity (2:14, 15). The result is a church, a people (3:10), who will, by living in unity and living distinctively, make known to the

rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm the manifold wisdom of God.

Simon Austen writes: “It's as if Satan, defeated by the blood of Jesus on the cross, looks at the church and in seeing a picture of the future, realises that his days are numbered.”¹

Of course he hates that, and so as the devil schemes against God's people (6:11), this is where he will attack.

First, he will attack our unity – how we love one another.

In Ephesians 4:3-6, Paul urges us to make every effort to maintain the unity that is ours in Christ Jesus. The devil hates our expressions of unity! They speak to the world about the transforming power of the gospel, so he will do everything to tear you apart from your brothers and sisters.

Be on your guard!
He would love to divide
your church or mission
team. It might not take
much – someone upset
when their preference
for Covid rules or a
church refurb doesn't
get the nod; someone
taking great offence at
a misguided comment.

As many of you know
too well, the devil is
really, really good at this.
One of the hardest and
saddest parts of my role
is watching this happen:
relationships destroyed;
time and attention
distracted; witness to
the lost side-lined.

Secondly, he will attack how we live – our new humanity.

The Christian, Paul
says, being found in
Christ Jesus, is to live
like Jesus. We're to put
off the old self and to
put on the new self,
created to be like God in
true righteousness and
holiness (4:24).

This battle isn't just
happening in our
Christian activities – on
the mission team, at
the preacher training,

or at the kids' club. No,
the battle is raging in
our hearts. The devil
longs that we'd put
the old self – marked
by impurity and greed,
anger and falsehood,
immorality and foolish
talk – back on.

It is a battle that
plays out in our
bedrooms and
our boardrooms
as much as
in our Bible
studies; on our
smartphones
and in our staff
rooms, as much
as on our special
times of mission.

Let's not be complacent
– we're fighting a battle;
we're waging a war. May
God help us and those
we support in mission,
to keep putting on the
full armour of God, 6:13,
"so that when then
the day of evil
comes, you may
be able to stand
your ground,
and after you
have done everything,
to stand."

Michael

1. Simon Austen, *Teaching
Ephesians*, 118.



FEATURES

**Walking with the
church in India in
Covid's devastating
second wave**

4

**For the first time in
my life, I feel happy**

6

**Hungary's changing
gospel needs**

10

**When discouragement
knocks on your door**

12

**Kurdish redemption
legend builds bridge
to Jesus**

14

TRICKY QUESTION

**When is it time to
hand over a Western
mission structure?**

8

CHURCH RESOURCES

**Ways to develop
emotional support for
your mission workers**

16

FOCUS ON

Togo

19

WHAT'S IT LIKE .. ?

**Serving in the midst
of bereavement**

21

NEWS

New to UFM

18



Walking with the church in India in Covid's devastating second wave

Merv & Kim serve in Bible ministry and leadership training in the UK and South Asia

Suddenly borders were closing, curfews were implemented and conferences cancelled. We left with heavy hearts, not knowing when we would be able to return, or how we could help.

India had one of the strictest lockdowns outside of China. Places of worship, shops, everything was closed down overnight, causing hundreds of thousands to lose their livelihoods.

I had just returned from an encouraging pastoral training trip to Manipur, teaching Naga Baptist association pastors and evangelists when Covid hit the headlines.


It was only a couple of years after Kim and I had been thinking about approaching pensionable age, and were leaning towards being in the UK more often and having less extended stays in India. However, I was getting more and more opportunities to

minister and help train national pastors, both in India and Nepal. But now we were back in the UK through no choice of our own.

We arrived the day that the UK lockdown was announced. Cwmdare Mission, a small congregation seeking to reach a needy Welsh valley neighbourhood, asked if I could help them with online ministry. Now I have been called to be their pastor, and I have also linked up with the Open Air Mission team for South Wales and regularly share the gospel with them.

Did we leave behind our ministry in South Asia? Not at all! All the while, more and more opportunities opened up to minister to pastors in India and Nepal online. New contacts have been made and new conferences for Pastors' Training International undertaken on Zoom.

We felt more than a little conflicted over leaving India at such a desperate



time. However, the Lord has enabled us to provide financial and spiritual help to our dear brothers and sisters.

Most Indian and Nepali pastors are independent and they rely on weekly offerings for their support. In lockdown, their congregations and support ceased overnight, causing great hardship to many. By God's

On one occasion, four pastors were tuned in from Covid-acute wards

grace, however, we were able to channel gifts to those in need and heard moving testimonials of funds received at "just the right time".

Villagers and slum dwellers are mostly day labourers, so their income dried up in the lockdowns, but our gospel partners provided food parcels for over 2,400 desperate families.

Then the second Covid wave hit India. We saw terrible images of people dying in hospital car parks and spending days looking for oxygen cylinders for gasping relatives. I was asked to do a monthly encouragement ministry for pastors and their families over Zoom. On one occasion, four pastors were tuned in from Covid-acute wards. Days later, two of them had passed into glory. Little did we ever imagine the Lord would use us to prepare His saints for entering eternal glory in this way.

Out of the same group of pastors, a house church was broken up by Hindu extremists and the whole extended family were beaten up and hospitalised. They all logged onto our Zoom family devotions the following week and testified to the Lord's goodness in keeping them alive.

We have been tentatively planning and praying about returning to India in Spring 2022, but new lockdowns and restrictions have again been brought in, throwing all of our plans into confusion. Yet we know that as long as we do not lean on our own faulty and very frail understanding, but acknowledge His wisdom and His perfect plan, then He will continue to guide our paths.



"For the first time in my life, I feel happy"

Seth and Jessica Lewis, with their three children, work in church planting in Carrigtwohill, Ireland

Mariama* was deeply depressed. Her future looked hopeless. She wanted to die because living seemed so hard.

Mariama was in danger in her homeland, and that's why she came to Ireland. Her history is a drawn-out tragedy. When she arrived, she had nothing except her daughter, who was about to be born in a foreign land. The midwife who helped with the birth was kind, and so Mariama's daughter was named after her – a traditional Irish name.

When the first round of restrictions hit in 2020 and everyone had a travel limit of 5 kilometres (and we thought the pandemic would probably last a few weeks!), our Bible study group offered to help bring supplies to residents at a local refugee centre. That's how we met Mariama. She needed some basics for her baby. When I dropped them off, I told her about our group.

The next time, I offered her a Bible, if she wanted it. She said yes. Then more people wanted them. Now

we have given away more than two dozen Bibles to refugees who asked for them. We have done Bible studies with some as well, including Mariama.

When we met Mariama, she had been in Ireland for a couple of years and had yet to receive her initial interview to determine if she would be allowed to stay. Without official status, employers did not want to hire her. Without work, she would not be able to find a place to live outside the refugee centre. She was stuck.

We worked for months to advocate for her but with no progress until early 2021 when we heard that she



was finally being scheduled for an interview. But then Covid numbers soared and all interviews were cancelled. After that, all we could get were repetitive answers about closed offices and safety, and “we are not providing remote interviews at this time.” We told Mariama we would pray, and we all did even though we couldn’t see a way through.

... she saw the hand of God at work, directly answering her prayers in a powerful way

Then one day last July, the news came: Mariama finally had a new appointment for her interview. We were all delighted, until news came through that they had decided to postpone it again. We kept on praying, and God answered: the original date was restored at the last minute.

We knew that afterwards there would be more waiting. Decisions on refugee status take months in

Ireland, sometimes a year or more. After that, an official letter has to be issued, usually adding more months of waiting. But not for Mariama: her positive decision came through in three weeks, and her official letter a few days later. No-one at the refugee centre had seen anything like it, and they refused to believe it until they had seen the papers in her hand!

Mariama – who by this time had started attending our church and reading her Bible daily – was overawed as she saw the hand of God at work, directly answering her prayers in a powerful way. Her new faith in God was strengthened as she experienced his obvious care and provision for her.

Now, Mariama is in nursing school, and every Sunday she comes to church with her daughter. She still lives in the refugee centre and her life is still difficult in many ways, but there is a difference: it doesn’t feel hopeless anymore. As she put it recently, “For the first time in my life, I feel happy.”

*Names and identities have been changed





When is it time to hand a Western mission structure over to the local church?

Michael Prest reflects on changes in the national church in Brazil

As the church in many parts of the majority world continues to grow, so the relationship of Western mission agencies with national churches changes. So, when do mission workers hand a mission over? A striking example for us has been in Brazil.

UFM workers have served in Brazil since 1923, initially as part of the Heart of Amazonia mission before the formation of UFM in 1931. In North East Brazil, UFM has worked since 1967 in partnership with two other Western mission agencies – SAM Global from Switzerland and Crossworld from the USA – in a collaboration called MICEB.¹

It is wonderful to reflect on all that the Lord has done in and through many who served sacrificially in the years that followed. What a joy, for example, to see the growth of AICEB², with which so many mission partners served – a Brazilian denomination now numbering nearly 600 churches.

Over recent years, numbers of Western mission workers in Brazil have continued to decrease. All remaining UFM mission partners in Brazil have been serving in Brazilian churches and projects, under Brazilian leadership. With this natural transition, the need for the old Western mission structure of MICEB became increasingly redundant.

Transition to national leadership

It was a privilege therefore, to be part of a special nationalisation conference for MICEB in November 2021, held at the SCEN³ Bible College in São Luís. The leadership of MICEB was passed from the three Western mission agencies to Brazilian leaders from the AICEB denomination.

The mission has not closed, it has simply changed - no longer sending mission workers in, but out! The vision of the new leaders is to see MICEB operate as a mission arm for AICEB, helping send Brazilian mission workers within Brazil and abroad.





The nationalisation process has been long – it takes time to carefully work through so many years of history and the structures of a work that have developed over time. Yet, praise God for this new phase in the story of MICEB. May God continue to raise up many workers for the harvest field from Brazil. To God be the glory, great things he has done!

Opportunities for future partnership

The Brazilian leadership are keen to build on the rich history of MICEB and pursue ongoing partnerships with UFM, SAM and Crossworld. Some possible areas for future partnership could include:

- offering mission placements for Brazilian Bible college students to test mission gifts overseas

- linking Brazilian and UK churches and pastors for mutual learning and prayer
- assisting in mission training for Brazilian mission candidates
- partnering to provide pastoral support for Brazilian mission workers serving in Europe.

Please pray for these discussions and exciting opportunities!

Photo, top: handing over to the new MICEB leadership team, with new President, Pastor Fabio Oliviera. **Photo, bottom:** the student body of SCEN, with many eager to serve in mission.

1. Missão Cristã Evangélica do Brasil, the 'Evangelical Mission of Brazil.'
2. Aliança das Igrejas Cristãs Evangélicas do Brasil, the 'Alliance of Evangelical Christian Churches in Brazil.'
3. Seminário Cristão Evangélico do Norte, the 'Northern Evangelical Christian Seminary.'



Hungary's changing gospel needs

Tamás and Berta Burjan serve in Hungary with their two daughters

My job as a certification engineer may not sound enthralling. However, after I take off my engineering hat, I am involved in a different work altogether, serving in the life and ministry of three churches in the Reformed Church of Hungary.

The largest of these is in Nagykáta, east of the capital, Budapest, and we have two smaller daughter-churches. In the past five years our church has had three different pastors, and yet God has used these changes of leadership to strengthen the church. The ministerial leadership works really well together, and as leaders we strive to work for the glory of God. The spirit of the team reflects the spiritual maturity so needed in today's churches in Hungary.

Challenging times

The situation caused by Covid-19 was difficult for us, as for many churches around the world. Between one Sunday and the next, we had to stop our regular services and move to the internet, a sphere less familiar to many, especially the older generation.

Statistics as to how many listened to the preaching were encouraging, but we did not know if they were from our church or just “visiting” by clicking on the church's YouTube link.

During this time, we learnt to rely on God and trust that He was using us as His means to maintain and nourish his flock. We had to learn that He has ownership over His church, and our ministry had to continue faithfully even when the set-up was so different.

Sometimes it was only the caretaker who set up the church hall and remained to sit through the service

When the church was finally free to meet again, it had changed – some had stopped coming, but new people started to attend. Please pray that the new ones will be established in their faith as the most foundational truths of the gospel are explained.

Need for wisdom

Hungary is a changing nation; Christianity is becoming shallow



because many people claim to be a Christian of some sort. We need wisdom in how we proclaim the superiority and uniqueness of the message of salvation with its clear demands for true repentance and a change of heart.

There have been several occasions when friends and colleagues asked meaningful questions about Christ and the Bible, which often led to them attending church services.

One church member's work colleague came in his 'Sunday best' as he didn't know how casual we are; we thanked him for dressing up. Another's friend arrived late with his children, as he didn't know where the church building was. The main thing was that they were there! The same week, we were able to discuss how they found the service and when they would return.

One of our greatest challenges was recently answered in a most unexpected way. One of our daughter churches has seen a decline in attendance. Sometimes it was only the caretaker who set up the church



hall and remained to sit through the service and hear the Word preached. Then came Covid. The services had to stop. And yet when we returned, new faces came, offered help and showed commitment.

One newcomer even had the idea of making the church noticeable by transforming the common village fence

Now there are over a dozen people and on one occasion we almost ran out of communion cups as we had not prepared for the unusual turnout!

One newcomer even had the idea of making the church noticeable by transforming the common village fence into a unique style to catch the eye of passers-by. When the day came, over thirty people were busy on a bright November day working hard to change the fence and pave the path to the church entrance.

We were both humbled and encouraged, and we look to God to do great things in the life of this daughter church. Pray for this newly-forming congregation to remain faithful.

When discouragement knocks on your door

Eduardo Lemos and Anna Marzia Frattini serve in São Paulo state, Brazil

A cold shower of discouragement makes me quiver with the thought of being trapped in the side-lines of Kingdom work. I hope my story will help inspire God-glorifying change when discouragement knocks on your door.

Years ago, I left my country of Brazil to pursue my secular ambitions internationally. I met the Lord through the expository preaching of pastors from the US and UK, and he kindled my heart to serve him through that same kind of preaching which rescued me from my meandering in spiritual deserts. I thought of Jonah, as I was sent back to where I had fled from to proclaim God's Word, which had been so poisoned inside the church as well as choked outside of it.

When I was born 58 years ago, 93% of my Brazilian countrymen were Catholics. Since then, 25% of these have become Pentecostal or neo-Pentecostal, 10% have turned agnostic or atheist, 5% have embraced other faiths, while conservative evangelicals only grew from 3% to 4%.



I returned to Brazil in 2020 to serve with the founding pastor of a financially poor, 170-member church in the coastal town of Guarujá. I have been honoured to be ordained as their pastor and to have been able to reach out to some who were detached or in the claws of unbiblical 'isms', and bring them back to God's fold. Even some rogue agnostics have also been listening by the bank of the quiet waters before the green pastures.

But the local church is made of people of different opinions and influences, and my preaching opportunities were reduced from what was initially proposed. "And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you." (Psalms 39:7)

My wife's support is precious and so are the prayers of beloved brethren



"back home". As I am humbled, I sense an encouraging breeze from the Holy Spirit keeping my faith and focus on the Lord's calling.

I keep looking to the Lord and wonder how he will consolidate my ministry. He keeps me alive: preaching in my church and nearby churches, leading a small book club, and often having neighbours over for coffee and to share the Bible and pray with them. But I prayerfully ask

the Lord to open doors for me to preach his Word more, in the hope of seeing more people transformed by it in the same way I was.

As my prayers intensify, the Lord starts broadening my perspective. I am drawn to an abandoned estate where preaching could be more evangelistically visible. I know believers who run a private school and I have discussed with them how to mentor students and use their space to preach on Sundays. I have befriended

... perhaps the Lord will use me to work with sheep of the same upbringing as me, back in my native city?

the manager of the cemetery and crematorium, considering its pleasant premises and auditorium as another option for a preaching ministry, as well as offering burial services for bereaving families who are pastorless.

There is also an international church in São Paulo in need of a pastor: perhaps the Lord will use me to work with sheep of the same upbringing as me, back in my native city?

I am seeing the Lord establishing my steps. I praise and thank him for working his good pleasure in me (Phil 2:13) and am comforted by the support of dear mission-partnering churches and Christians. "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." (Proverbs 16:9)



Kurdish redemption legend builds bridge to Jesus

Rob and Rosina* serve in bivocational ministry in the UK/Middle East*

Newroz celebration in Istanbul. Photo by Bertil Videt 2006, licensed under CC BY 2.5

*Names changed for security reasons


While you may not meet Kurds at the school gate, you might find a Kurdish 'Traditional Turkish Barber' on the UK high street who will set fire to your ears to remove unwanted hair for a princely sum! £14 a cut sounds a lot in recession-hit Iraq and tens of thousands are risking a perilous journey for these economic opportunities in the UK. But how do we connect with these people?

British Christians are adept at using British festivals to proclaim the gospel, but we are far less savvy at engaging with minorities' festivals. And yet, Newroz (21st March), celebrated by Kurds, Iranians and Afghans, tells a salvation story that bears striking resemblance to the redemption Jesus won on the cross.

Newroz is a time for family get-togethers – the Spring Equinox in Iraqi Kurdistan is marked by three days of national holiday – and we would picnic high on the hills to celebrate this 'Persian New Year'.

It was always the most exciting week; dressing in baggy trousers, enormous cummerbunds and bright sequined dresses, and driving out to the fresh streams and luscious green hills, speckled with spring flowers.

We built deep friendships with Kurdish families on these picnics ("mountain banquets" would be more apt!) We had BBQs, danced, flew kites, and played volleyball, frisbee and backgammon. Perhaps UK Christians can serve asylum seekers by introducing them to some of Britain's beauty spots, though it is unlikely to be the weather for mountain banquets in late March!



Kurds, whose homeland straddles parts of Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria, have used Newroz as a proclamation of their ethnic identity and desire for independence.

Kawa the blacksmith thwarted him by substituting a sheep for one of the young men and releasing the redeemed into a new life in the mountains

They adapted an ancient Persian legend from the epic *Shahname*, and hail Kawa the Blacksmith as a liberator and founder of the Kurdish nation.

The story goes that Zahhak the tyrant, who had snakes growing out of his shoulders, used to feed them with the brains of two young men each day. Kawa the blacksmith thwarted him by substituting a sheep for one of the young men and releasing the redeemed into a new life in the mountains. He then killed Zahhak

and lit fires on the mountains to signify the deliverance of his people.

This is a great bridge into explaining that Christ (Îsa Mesîh) is a rescuer. I made a postcard* for my Kurdish neighbours with this verse in two dialects of Kurdish and in English: God himself has come “to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” (Luke 1:74-75)

The legendary figure, Kawa, is a shadow of the true hero – the lowly Nazarene carpenter who came “to destroy the devil’s work”. He is our sacrificial lamb, who won deliverance by his blood for persons from “every tribe and language and people and nation.” (Revelation 5:9)

Now based in the UK, we are sharing the Good News with Kurdish people, and seeking to train and resource the Church worldwide to better serve them.

*If you are interested in giving postcards with these culturally relevant messages to Kurdish neighbours, please contact the UFM main office.





Ways to develop emotional support for your mission workers

Mary Hodson serves on the UFM staff team as Women's Pastoral Worker

Mental health is a familiar term to us all now, being particularly spoken about during this pandemic. We can see evidence of emotional distress around us in the community and our church family is not immune to these pressures.

As you think through how best to support the people close to you, have you thought about how you can best care for the wellbeing of your mission-partners serving cross-culturally?

We all experience and are influenced by our emotions. They are an indispensable part of being human and impact both our relationship with God and with others. They can show us a lot about what is going on deeper within someone's heart – both in terms of how they are interpreting their situation and also in how they are managing it.

Proverbs 20:5 states "The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out."

Do you have the depth of relationship with your mission partner that allows you to explore their struggles with them – how are they interpreting their situation, their feelings and associated choices?

Here are some strategies that may be helpful for you to care well for them:

Intentionally make regular time to talk

How are they really doing - physically, spiritually, and emotionally? Give your mission partners an opportunity to talk, and listen to the emotional language that they use. It takes time to build trust and openness and it comes from a relationship founded by love.

As you build up a close relationship with your mission partner, you will recognise signs of stress and what their typical patterns of responses are to these. That will help you to ask more targeted and specific questions and help them with areas of accountability or concern. When communication is regular, you are more able to follow up on concerns and prayer points.

Follow up

Help them to biblically reframe their struggles

How does their interpretation square with Scripture? How does God's perspective reinforce, expand or correct their perceptions? Help them to turn to God with their emotions and to use these to grow in relationship with Him.

Think of ways to show them love

It will encourage them no end to have little touches of unexpected love from you! Could you send a card, gift, encouraging WhatsApp message or video clips from your family?

Helpful questions to ask

What is their pattern of rest and refreshment?

Where are they getting their support at the moment and what does this look like?

How are they deepening their relationships?
What does quality time look like within their marriage or with their children?
How are friendships being deepened, particularly for those that are single?

How is their personal walk with the Lord?

Prayer

Persevere in your prayers for them, sharing their burdens and bringing their needs before the Lord. Ask them for specific prayer points and follow up on the results from these.



Welcome!



Anya Serdyuk, originally from Ukraine, is serving with UFM mission partners, Barry and Susana Davis, at the Carazo and Camoapa Christian schools in Nicaragua. She is providing class support and assisting with teaching the Bible and English. Her sending church is Chalmers Church in Edinburgh.



Philip Foster has been involved in short-term medical mission over a number of years. Philip joins UFM with a view to long-term ministry with a particular focus on hospital administration. This will initially be at a mission hospital in Togo, but he also plans to investigate other possibilities in Africa. His sending church is Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama.



Aaron and Grace Dunlop (Associate Mission Partners) are based in Northern Ireland, where Grace homeschools their five children. Aaron has established the Krapf Project, which aims to provide pastors in rural East Africa with ministry resources to help them preach the gospel clearly, teach the Bible accurately and lead the Church effectively. Their sending church is Emmanuel Baptist Church in Lisburn.



Rebekah Beetham will be serving alongside Lamin and Jayne Dumbuya in Sierra Leone for a number of weeks in April/May 2022. Her sending church is Glencroft Church in Leicester.

FOCUS ON ...

Togo

Alex and Wijneke Kanri serve in church ministry, leadership teaching and children's work in Togo

Togo is a narrow country on the West African coast, squeezed in just between Ghana and Benin. The capital, Lomé, is especially important to the region as it hosts the only deep-water port of West Africa. An unceasing stream of lorries transport goods to landlocked countries such as Burkina Faso and Niger.

Togo has a population of over 8 million, of whom over 70% are under the age of 30. These 8 million Togolese are from 42 different ethnic backgrounds and speak as many languages. French is its official administrative language.

It is undeniable that the Togolese are very religious. References to God, his grace and Bible verses are found everywhere and towns are full of churches and mosques. The vast majority of Togolese are persuaded of the existence of God



Please pray ...

- for the clear gospel to be preached in order that the lives of many Togolese will be rooted in the Saviour and be radically changed by the Spirit to live to the glory of God
- that many pastors will discover biblical theology through good books and that access to faithful theological training will improve
- that healthy gospel churches will emerge that will function as beacons of light, love and truth
- that this general but foggy 'religiousness' will gradually be replaced by a true and vibrant knowledge of the living God!



Togo is...

11% Evangelical

17% Roman Catholic

17% Other Christian

38% Ethnic religion [Animistic]

16% Muslim

1% Other

(joshuaproject.net)

8 million people

French is the official language



God's character and biblical truth is often **distorted** with ancestor worship



Lomé is home to the world's largest Voodoo market

The Monument de l'Indépendance marks Togo's independence from France in 1960



and/or the reality of an unseen spiritual world.

Unlike Europeans, the Togolese are simply too aware of the fact that they depend on influences outside of their control to survive from day to day.

In general, there is a definite openness and willingness to hear the gospel and learn about what the Bible has to say on topics such as family, morals, and creation.

Whilst Christianity in general is undoubtedly gaining influence, the progress of thoroughly biblical Christianity is hindered by some stubborn factors

Today, roughly 45% of Togolese call themselves Christian, half of whom belong to the Roman Catholic church. In addition, 16% are Muslim, 38% are animistic and 1% 'other'.

Whilst Christianity in general is undoubtedly gaining influence, the progress of thoroughly biblical Christianity is hindered by some stubborn factors. Often biblical truth gets blended with traditional ancestor and spirit worship, leaving people with a distorted view of God. There is a lack of access to solid biblical theological education and resources for pastors and church leaders, leaving them unequipped to correct the many false views of truth. Added to all of this, many churches are in the grip of 'prosperity teaching' and/or have a very unbiblical focus on the 'gifts' of the Spirit.

< Cut here, pop in your Bible, and pray for Togo

What's it like ... serving in the midst of bereavement?

Shaun Abrahams serves in church planting in Ireland

Friday 18th December 6:15am is etched in my mind. My family sat at my wife Tania's side as she gently took her last breath and her faith turned to sight.

I wept from a place in my gut I have not found since. The weight of suffocating grief overcame me. Beware – grief and trauma will exhaust your energy! My body and mind screamed at me with fatigue. Don't ignore the physiological and spiritual alarm bells, but also consider the glory: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Make it your goal to always make the right choices that will honour and glorify God. Especially in the depth of your trauma, bring glory to God. You are not off the hook because your life just got hard.

Tania and I spoke at length about my future without her.

Her bravery and trust in the Lord gave me a resolve to simply obey the Lord and cling to the Scriptures regardless of the situation.

Don't wait for the trial to hit you before you trust your Father and read His Word. Get stuck into God's word now. If you don't discipline yourself in godliness, your trials will swallow and suffocate you permanently. I echo the words of the apostle Paul: "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ" (Philippians 1:12).

At the end of July 2021, I left Tralee to serve Tipperary Christian Fellowship. The Lord has blessed us, and the church is growing numerically and spiritually. We baptized two new believers, Stephen and Cynthia.



On the last Wednesday of each month, I have a radio broadcast on www.tippmidwestradio.com. At the end of January 2022, a missionary family from South Africa joined TEAMEIRE in Tipperary. The Lord has increased the number of workers in the field.

We don't need to "feel good" about ourselves to serve the Lord and love others. Like you, I found myself needing to work my way through my emotions to ensure that my choices were God honouring and not primarily self-serving or selfish. I have had to cling to the good purposes of God: "And we know that all things work

together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

The Bible provides principles that are a strong tower for my emotions and a safeguard for my spiritual well-being. These are a few that I share with you:

- love trumps and drives out fear
- thankful prayer with contentment brings a peace that surpasses even my own understanding
- the bumps are what I climb on
- God is gracious and supplies all my needs
- rehearsing the gospel is the secret to overcoming fear in troubled times.

Romans 8:37-39, Philippians 4:6-7, Psalm 91, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, 1 John 4:8, Psalm 42:5 and 11, James 1, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Philippians 4:19-20

Upcoming Events

Considering your role in mission, or supporting others? Join us for Bible teaching, and a chance to chat, at our events.

Called to Serve: A day conference for those 'gearing up for mission'

26th March 2022

UFM online via Zoom

Irish Spring Conference: 'Declare His glory among the nations'

2nd April 2022 10am - 4pm

Craigavon Baptist Church

Scottish Spring Conference

22nd-24th April 2022

The Atholl Centre, Pitlochry

Summer Conference

1st-5th August 2022

The Hayes Conference Centre,

Swanwick, Derbyshire

Church Leaders' webinars (online)

Throughout 2022, covering a range of topics.

For more information and to make bookings for all our events, please see www.ufm.org.uk/events

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Summer Conference

1st-5th August 2022

The annual conference for the UFM family of mission workers, churches and supporters

The Hayes Christian Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Book your place at

www.ufm.org.uk/summer-conference

UFM Worldwide exists to support churches in making disciples of all nations.

Since 1931 we've had the privilege of helping churches to identify, train, send and support workers for cross-cultural mission. We currently serve about 220 mission partners in 37 countries, sent by 94 gospel-hearted churches.

UFM workers are committed to making disciples of all nations, taking the gospel to the least reached, and supporting under-resourced churches around the world.

Please be in touch anytime. We'd love to help you and your church with your world mission involvement.



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