

EKBALLO

FALL 2025



Papua New Guinea
SOWING DEEP, REAPING HOPE
PAGE 4

Czech Republic
PIONEERING DEEP ROOTS
PAGE 10

Oaxaca, Mexico
BUILDING FIRE-FORGED TRUST
PAGE 18

First Nations in Canada
HUMBLED BY GOD'S CHURCH
PAGE 28

Muskrat Dam, Ontario
GRIEF, GRACE, AND GROWTH
PAGE 32

Nangaritza, Ecuador
LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS
PAGE 38





EKBALLO

THE MAGAZINE OF TO EVERY TRIBE - FALL 2025

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CONTENT WARNING & DISCLAIMER

Please note that *Ekballo* articles may contain sensitive material, including references to violence, death, substance abuse, mental health, trauma, and sexual content. In many cases, names, locations, descriptions, and photos have been changed or altered to protect and honor those we seek to reach and serve.

TO EVERY TRIBE'S MISSION

Extending the worship of Jesus to every tribe by equipping and sending gospel-driven disciple-makers to serve on cross-cultural church planting teams.

EKBALLO IS OUR PRAYER

Ekballo is the Greek word for “send out” that Jesus uses in Matthew 9:38 when He tells us to pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers.

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© 2025 To Every Tribe. Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Cover image: Alex Sisson baptizes a new brother in Papua New Guinea



WELCOME BACK TO EKBALLO

After a period of dormancy during the global disruptions of the COVID-19 crisis, here at To Every Tribe we are excited that *Ekballo* magazine has returned! This revival is more than just a restart; it testifies God's sustaining power and a renewed commitment to sharing how the gospel is advancing through the faithful work of our missionaries around the world.

In this new season of ministry, we are thrilled to announce the launch of our first Regional Missionary Training Hub in the greater Chicago area with additional Hub locations planned for the future. This regional training model replaces our former centralized training base in south Texas. This new model of missionary training is a reimagined, more flexible approach to equipping cross-cultural church planters—one that brings training closer to local churches and communities that send them. We believe these training hubs will significantly multiply our reach and deepen our impact as God mobilizes a new generation of missionaries to the ends of the earth.

We are delighted to bring you this issue filled with powerful stories, frontline updates, and reflections from our missionaries serving across the globe. Each article in this edition offers a window into the work God is doing through To Every Tribe—calling, sending, and sustaining His people for the sake of the gospel. As you read, we pray their stories of faith and sacrifice will encourage, challenge, and move you to join in the mission through prayer, giving, and going. Let's celebrate together how the Lord is building His church among the nations!

For Jesus,



Dr. Timothy Boal
President @ TET





Papua New Guinea
SOWING DEEP, REAPING HOPE

Alex Sisson » Field Director, Papua New Guinea

V illagers whisper as he walks past. Some avoid eye contact. Others boldly curse him. One man spits on the ground in front of him and mutters, “This is what happens when you abandon your ancestors.” The Christian man says nothing—eyes low, heart heavy. He has just buried his second child in two weeks. Some say it’s his fault—judgment from the spirits, or worse, from God himself. There’s no one to correct this thinking. No shepherd to explain suffering through the lens of Christ. No fellow elder to mourn with him, pray with him, or open the Word. Only a handful of new believers are scattered in a village of over 1,000 people, trying to cling to faith amid tragedy, mockery, and crushing isolation. This is *Village G* in Papua New Guinea (PNG). And this is why we need missionaries.

I’d like for you to take a moment to think about the last time you suffered anything of consequence. For some of you, this is easy because you are currently suffering or struggling. For others, the suffering was long ago but still easily remembered. We all suffer in many ways: physical ailments, spiritual battles, persecution, untimely deaths of loved ones, and the pain of family issues. Suffering is all around us. We can’t move away from it, no matter how hard we try.

Now, as you’re thinking about this suffering, how many times have you wondered silently or aloud,

“Why, God? Why is this happening to me? Is this because of something I’ve done? Is this because of something someone else has done?”

As a Christian living in the United States today, you likely have the benefit of biblical teaching, gospel-centered music, and a community of believers to walk with you. That doesn’t make suffering easy, but it provides you with a biblical framework.

But imagine that you’re living in a remote village in PNG. You’re one of a dozen recently baptized believers in a place where synchronistic Catholic traditions have existed for 50 years, but the gospel has not. There isn’t any wonderful good news about what Jesus has done

to save you—only deep, abiding darkness. You are the only believers in a village of over 1,000 people. What do you do when tragedy strikes? What do you do when Aivo nearly dies from a physical ailment? When James dies suddenly? When Frank’s

child is born disfigured and dies a few days later? When Frank loses another child the following week? When Ezekiel loses a young daughter during this same time?

This isn’t a hypothetical scenario; all of this unfolded within nine months in one of the villages where I work. It was truly devastating. These tragedies were compounded by the absence of a pastor, a mature believer, or anyone to shepherd this little flock through heartbreak. Instead of comfort, they faced con-



**Only a handful
of new believers
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demnation. Local Catholics said one man died because he left their church. Others claimed illness and loss were signs of sin or punishment for choosing Christ. These believers were verbally abused and utterly alone.

This is why To Every Tribe exists. Yes, we have brought the gospel and we continue preaching Christ crucified. Yet the work is far from finished. The church in this village is young—only recently born—and the believers are in urgent need of discipleship, shepherding, and encouragement to stand firm under pressure.

Right now, there aren't many Americans lining up to live in the middle of nowhere in PNG. But there are some national men from another part of PNG who are willing to go—to live there, teach them all that Jesus commanded, and help ground these believers in the faith.

There's only one problem: they're not ready. Yet.

In addition to planting churches among the unreached, our mission is focused on growing and training national pastors and leaders in PNG. There are hundreds of villages like this one—recently reached, lightly evangelized, and completely unequipped to walk through suffering with gospel hope. The gospel has only been in this region for about 75 years. There has been much evangelism and the planting of churches, but little depth. For example, in the group of 14 churches I've worked with since 2010, there are many godly men and women who love Jesus deeply, but who



were never disciplined beyond the basics of being a Christian.

When I first began working with them, they did not practice communion. I had not witnessed a single baptism. Legalism reigned, and there was virtually no assurance of salvation. I don't say this to put them down in any way, but this was



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**This kind
of deep,
intentional
discipleship
takes time.**

the state of affairs. They needed to be re-grounded in the gospel: that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone—not by good works. And they needed to be taught to grow up in the faith.

This kind of deep, intentional discipleship takes time. But God is at work. Even as I write this while

on home assignment in the United States, two pastors I've trained are heading back to that same remote village in PNG. They're going to spend four weeks there—preaching, teaching, and encouraging the believers. Praise God for His work and provision!

So where do you fit into all of this?



What has God been stirring in your heart when it comes to missions? Here are three specific ways you can be part of what God is doing in PNG.

YOU CAN COME.

We need co-laborers. We need a mature Christian to train national pastors and leaders—someone with ministry experience who wants to be part of training indigenous leaders.

We need a handyman with construction experience to maintain and develop our small mission station.

We need a young “Timothy”—willing to learn and grow under a veteran missionary.



YOU CAN GIVE.

Our mission station is being developed to better equip national leaders. We have trained pastors for over 15 years, and now we need to upgrade our infrastructure. Perhaps God is calling you to be a generous partner in this vital work.

YOU CAN PRAY.

Psalm 127 reminds us that unless the Lord builds the house, those who labor do so in vain. We need prayer warriors asking for the Lord to build and bless His work in PNG.



The suffering man in *Village G* doesn't need a quick answer to his pain. He needs a gospel-soaked shepherd. He needs to know that Jesus has not abandoned him. He needs to hear that suffering is not a sign of a curse, but a part of this broken life's journey as we wait for Christ's return. By God's grace, and with your help, we can raise up leaders to walk with him through the darkness. «





Czech Republic
PIONEERING TOWARDS DEEP ROOTS

Connor Shubin » Field Director, Central & Eastern Europe

The quiet of the night was shattered. It wasn't even 2:00 AM and for the third time that night, our one-year-old daughter's cries jerked us away from the sleep we so desperately craved. I physically pried open my eyelids, willing my body off the bed. I had to reach her before her cries woke up our son, who was sleeping in the same small room. I was also concerned that her screaming would wake up the Czech family living upstairs. Disoriented by sleep deprivation, I was momentarily unsure of my own location and stumbled over to pick her up, console her, and hug her close. Everything around her felt different, smelled different, and looked different. She was feeling a need for comfort from those she loved. This was our first night living in the Czech Republic, a new chapter in our lives as cross-cultural missionaries. After nearly two days of relentless travel, our daughter's raw emotions mirrored the exhaustion my wife and I felt deep within.

With a grand total of just 20 hours on Czech soil, we woke up from that fitful night of sleep and plunged into the demanding initial steps of our arrival: validating our visas by registering with the foreign police and beginning the search for an apartment. Both felt like monumental challenges, considering our unfamiliarity with the city, our illiteracy in the language, and our profound lack of sleep. We spent six

hours of that first full day driving to and from Pardubice, our new home city in the Czech Republic, in which we had to register and experience our first appointment with the foreign police. We saw God provide again and again that day through the kindness of others who helped us when we felt weak and overwhelmed. Over the next few weeks, we continued to see God's hand of grace and provision as we searched for a flat and explored our new surroundings.

My wife and I serve as church-planting missionaries in Central and Eastern Europe. While we are navigating our first year on the European mission field, our preceding five years have been dedicated to gospel labor, pioneering this field for To Every Tribe (TET), meticulously planning our family's relocation, and laying the groundwork for future missionaries to join this ministry. TET's

eight *Phases of Pioneer Church Planting* (see page 12) offers a robust cross-cultural framework for ministry, constantly reminding us that Christ alone builds His church and our calling is to remain faithful in making disciples of Him. Each phase of church planting is interdependent, requiring progression from one to the next, yet always advancing at a pace dictated by the Spirit of God, fostering trust between us and the community members. Our recent focus has been on the foundational first four phases:



**Christ alone
builds His church
and our calling
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faithful in making
disciples of Him**

PHASES IN PIONEER CHURCH PLANTING



PHASE 1

Arrival

Showing people you are here and you care by coming alongside them to live in their world and to serve them as you do.



PHASE 2

Trust

Building trust between you and the people through your actions and conversations.



PHASE 3

Spiritual Conversations

Taking the time to understand how people process God, religion, and spiritual things.



PHASE 4

Gospel Conversations

As the Lord opens doors, sharing the whole gospel, taking the time to show how Jesus deals with our shame and guilt and has overcome the evil that is in the world.



PHASE 5

Nurture

It is important to nurture new believers in what it means to live as a follower of Jesus.



PHASE 6

Help

Being a Christian causes many people to be at odds with their family and cultures, and even be killed. Missionaries need to help them understand how to navigate the complexities of following Jesus.



PHASE 7

Discover

Throughout the discipleship process, it is important to help people understand their gifts and role in the body of Christ. One of the great joys of ministry is helping people find their place in the kingdom.



PHASE 8

Affirm

Once a disciple has discovered their gifts, it is important that the missionary publicly affirm that gift in front of all.



Arrival, Trust, Spiritual Conversations, and Gospel Conversations, with a particular emphasis on the initial two phases.

Arrival is more than the moment our feet touch the tarmac of a foreign land. This crucial phase began long before we packed our belongings or booked plane tickets. As the first TET missionaries to move to Central and Eastern Europe, we invested years in charting the course to get here. This involved extensive research—delving into the region’s history—and practical exploration, including vision trips to connect with local Czech believers. It meant meticulously gathering necessary documents with appropriate certifications across multiple US states (birth certificates, marriage certificates, and diplomas with authorized government apostilles), and diligently completing and mailing visa application forms. The core purpose of the *Arrival* phase is not merely to reach the target country,

but to arrive prepared and ready to remain there. Our aim was to ensure that our entry into the field prevented future obstacles, avoiding the need to return to the United States to fix preventable issues. This entailed securing full ministry funding, obtaining the right visas, and having a community ready to receive us. Only then could we physically arrive and begin the critical work of building trust with the local population.

Pioneering, as we have learned, differs significantly from simply joining an existing team. It demands foresight—planning not only for our own shipment of belongings, but also meticulously researching all viable options to help future missionaries. Pioneering involves thoroughly documenting every lesson we learned throughout the visa application process to ensure that future missionaries to our field are not caught off guard by the same challenges we faced.

Ultimately, the *Arrival* phase is a conscious effort to resist the urge for hasty shortcuts, choosing a deliberate, slower pace for the initial development of this field. This intentional slowness now will allow us to accelerate later, as the Lord provides ministry opportunities and new disciples. Planning a thorough arrival lays the groundwork for cultivating *Trust*, which in turn opens doors for *Spiritual Conversations*.

Our initial arrival required complete dependence on the Lord for wisdom and upon our Czech Christian brothers and sisters for help. We relied on others for translation during government office visits, for understanding subtle social norms, and even for a place to sleep each night. During this time, our primary concern was to demonstrate our presence and genuine care for the community. Actively living in their world and serving our growing church plant in culturally appropriate ways begins to develop the first layer of trust. Our commitment to our community is evidenced through our dedicated language learning, asking probing questions to understand cultural reasoning, and actively seeking opportunities to serve.

Our hearts in the *Arrival* and *Trust* phases are anchored in the principle the apostle Paul wrote about: “to become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). While culturally American, we strive to become Czech in our words, actions, and thoughts to the extent that we embody Christ



in a truly Czech context. Our eternal citizenship is not bound to any one country, but to the Kingdom of God. Ministry can only move at the speed of trust, a profound truth that underscores the foundational, though potentially slow, process of ministry within the Czech context. Developing trust requires perseverance in faith, steadfastness in relationships, and understanding that trust is not automatically granted. Discerning when trust has genuinely developed can be difficult, especially when learning to communicate in culture steeped in an indirect communication style when true thoughts and feelings are not directly expressed. As trust is slowly built, we remain confident that the Lord will provide opportunities for *Spiritual Conversations*, allowing us to grasp the deeper



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**Ministry can
only move
at the speed
of trust**

gospel longings of the people in the Czech Republic.

Once trust begins to solidify, we gently initiate conversations aimed at understanding how people in Pardubice process God, religion, and spiritual things. Though this region boasts a rich Christian history, it has largely receded, replaced by secularism and an indifference toward God. This deeply ingrained attitude will take considerable time to address with the gospel. Discussions around topics like creation, death, sin, shame, guilt, or the spirit world within this secular environment are immensely informative, though often challenging to navigate. Many people are open to exploring abstract spiritual ideas but remain closed to the absolute truth that Jesus Christ provides the framework for under-

standing them all (Colossians 1:16-17). However, it is fundamentally crucial to comprehend a person's existing spiritual worldview before sharing the gospel. Gaining insight into the local spiritual dimension, like secularism, enables us to frame the Biblical truths of grace and hope (Romans 5:2-5) more effectively and prevent potential misunderstandings. At that point, the Lord Himself will be the one to unveil their eyes to the truth of the gospel, and we will be overjoyed to welcome them into the family of God when that blessed day arrives.

Today, here in our small city of Pardubice, Czech Republic, we remain entirely devoted to Christ's glory being revealed through us, by us, and in us, so that He is worshiped among every tongue and tribe. We are part of a small bud-



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**The journey of
pioneering
gospel work,
though
challenging,
is one of joy**



ding church, currently without a dedicated meeting space. Yet, from a missionary perspective, we have *Arrived*, we are building *Trust*, and we are engaging in *Spiritual* and *Gospel Conversations* as the Lord provides. We eagerly anticipate the day when we see the fruit of this ministry: *Helping, Nurturing, Discovering, and Affirming* new believers in the church. Until then, we pray that God receives all the glory as we diligently learn the language, adapt to cultural customs, and strive to point to Jesus in all that we do.

The journey of pioneering gospel work, though challenging, is one of joy as we witness God's faithfulness in unexpected ways. This is a journey that demands faith, cultural humility, and the kind of love that only the Holy Spirit can cultivate. Our greatest desire is to see healthy, reproducing, and locally-led churches emerge across the postmodern and secularized Czech Republic and beyond—vibrant communities rooted in Christ, led by Czech believers, and passion-

ately reaching their own people with the Good News. This vision, however, demands sustained commitment, especially through the often slow and challenging early phases of building genuine relationships and cultivating trust in a secularized land.

As we continue to lay these vital foundations in Pardubice, we invite you to partner with TET in this kingdom endeavor. We encourage you to consider joining our team by bringing your unique gifts to this field or partnering financially. Both are key to continuing this front line work of sowing the seeds of the gospel. Above all, we earnestly ask for your consistent prayers for our family, our ministry, for divine wisdom in spiritual conversations, and for the Lord to raise up and gather His beloved people in the Czech Republic. Together, let us pray for a harvest that brings immeasurable glory to God. The need is great, but our God is greater, and together, we can see His church flourish in the heart of Europe. «

An aerial photograph of a town in Oaxaca, Mexico, taken during the golden hour of sunset. The town is built on a hillside, with numerous small buildings and houses. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the scene. The sky is a mix of light blue and orange, with a few wispy clouds. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains, some of which are shrouded in a light mist or haze. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

Oaxaca, Mexico
BUILDING FIRE-FORGED TRUST

Jon Lee » Field Director, Southern Mexico

I worship the god of our village: Saint Luke.” This candid and direct statement, told to me by a Zapotec man during a gospel conversation, is startling and maybe a bit confusing if you have never been to this part of Mexico, but it reveals the profound syncretism and idolatry still prevalent in this region.

As a Texan who grew up just six hours from the border, at times I tell people that I feel like a bad neighbor. Mexico is so much more beautiful and diverse than I realized until I began engaging here seven years ago. The country officially boasts 68 unique indigenous languages, but there are hundreds more distinct, non-mutually-intelligible variants within the officially recognized languages. Nowhere is this diversity more concentrated than in Oaxaca, a state roughly the size of Indiana. With hundreds of small, indigenous communities tucked into mountains and valleys, Oaxaca is the most ethnically and linguistically diverse state in Mexico. While this cultural diversity is a beautiful reflection of God’s creativity, it presents real challenges to the advance of the gospel.

By God’s grace, the Oaxacan church has grown significantly over the past century, but considerable work remains. Broadly speaking, the church is still in its nascent stages. There are many pastors who genuinely love the Lord but possess little-to-no biblical training. Additionally, there are still many unreached peoples and communities, and the ongoing need for Bible translations persists.

Our goal in the Oaxaca region is to come alongside the already-existing church to help strengthen and mobilize it, so that together, we continue to reach the least-reached peoples throughout the region. To Every Tribe’s regional church planting approach (see page 27) and eight phases strategy (see page 12) have proven invaluable, and the Lord has blessed us greatly by bearing fruit through our labors.

WORKING WITH THE LOCAL CHURCH IN OAXACA CITY

Currently, our ministry in Oaxaca is focused on two areas: Oaxaca City and a rural Zapotec community we affectionately call *Village Q*. In Oaxaca City, we are deeply integrated into a healthy local church



that faithfully preaches the gospel, has a heart for the unreached, and is firmly rooted in the Scriptures.

The natural tendency of many Americans, including us missionaries, is to step into a new church, begin analyzing, and start working to implement our agenda and possibly “fix” the areas that we believe do not align with Scripture.

However, we learned repeatedly in training from experienced missionaries that it is key to take the necessary time to build trust so that true relationships can form and sustainable gospel ministry can be done together. For us, this has involved intentionally integrating into the church’s rhythms and activities, attending worship

services, Bible studies, and prayer meetings while actively seeking opportunities to serve wherever we could. This pivotal time has provided the space to build personal relationships and genuine trust with both leadership and members, recognizing them not merely as individuals to “minister to,” but as partners to “minister with.” By God’s grace, this commitment to building trust has established a solid foundation for fruitful ministry, resulting in much influence within the local church. Today, we form part of the leadership at the church, regularly preaching, teaching, and leading evangelism and local church planting initiatives within the city.





REMOTE CHURCH PLANTING IN VILLAGE Q

At the same time, through relationships built at our local church in Oaxaca City, God has opened a door to begin the work of planting a church in an unreached Zapotec community located approximately an hour outside the city. *Village Q* has a population of about 1,800 people and had only about 15 evangelical Christians and no established church when we first arrived two years ago. True to Oaxaca's diverse nature, people in this town speak their own unique variant of Zapotec and have their own distinct customs and traditions which are deeply interwoven with a syncretistic form of catholicism. There is no clear distinction between secular and religious life: to be from *Village Q* is to be Catholic. The wor-

ship directed toward Saint Luke, Mary, and various other regional saints and virgins extends far beyond mere "honoring" or "venerating"; these figures are followed, prayed to, and worshipped as real deities who possess genuine power. Those who worship these idols consciously differentiate between "our god" and "your God" when speaking with Christians, demonstrating an awareness of the theological divide.

In *Village Q*, we have applied the same foundational principles: meeting new people, fostering relationships, and building authentic trust. This process has proven to be slow and challenging. While the people are quick to be friendly, they are cautious around outsiders and slow to form deep friendships.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24



Introducing a new resource from

DR. STEPHEN LESTON

VICE PRESIDENT OF TRAINING at TO EVERY TRIBE

From the Ground Up offers a groundbreaking guide for church planters and missionaries on the eight phases of pioneer church planting.

Emphasizing gospel-centered relationships over numbers, this book navigates the increased complexities of globalism, nationalism, and tribalism. It provides strategies to build trust and integrate with local cultures without compromising the gospel, and measure discipleship through relationships and multiplication, rather than attendance or finances. Readers learn the importance of first loving people, then making disciples, and finally forming local churches.

ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!



What sets this book apart is the often ignored relational aspect of church planting. This much needed emphasis is masterfully addressed by someone who has been there and done that and has skillfully enumerated how to engage church planting in this important manner.

DR. MARVIN J. NEWELL

Ambassador at Large at Missio Nexus



FROM THE GROUND UP

THE
RELATIONAL ART
OF CHURCH
PLANTING

STEPHEN LESTON

Nevertheless, God has provided numerous opportunities for us to serve the community, allowing us to build trust with individuals, families, and, in a broader sense, with the community as a whole.

A notable example of God's provision for building trust occurred last year when a wildfire erupted on the mountainside adjacent to the village. One of the local believers contacted us, requesting prayer and informing us that the men fighting the fire on the mountain needed food and water. As quickly as possible, we loaded a vehicle with supplies and traveled to the village. Upon arrival around 8:00 PM, a group of men were preparing for the next shift to combat the fire. Recognizing the need, and after a quick prayer, we decided to join them. From 9:00 PM until nearly 6:00 AM the following morning, we climbed the mountain and worked side-by-side with the men, using machetes, shovels, and other tools to clear brush and cover the fire with dirt. Tragically, the fire persisted throughout the week, and hours after we came down that morning, five men from the village became trapped and lost their lives, none of whom knew the Lord.

Yet, in the midst of this sorrow, God was actively at work. Our church in Oaxaca City became involved, and collectively, we provided food, water, headlamps, shovels, and other essential supplies to the community to aid in extinguishing the fire. We were present daily in the town square, engaging with and praying for the town leadership and others. Through this tragedy,

God opened a significant door for visible service and accelerated the building of trust that might otherwise have taken years. To this day, people stop us and ask us why we climbed the mountain that night, providing invaluable opportunities to share the gospel and speak of Jesus' sacrificial love.

God continues to open doors for us





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**a wildfire
erupted on the
mountainside
adjacent to
the village**

in *Village Q*, particularly with influential families. Our favor with the municipal president and his family has led to medical outreaches and even a public worship service in the town square this past March. Christ is actively building His church among this people group. In the last year, two people were baptized and several others are learn-

ing about the gospel and actively counting the cost of following Jesus, a cost significantly higher than what is typically encountered in the United States.

Believers recount stories of persecution endured for their faith. Until recently, followers of Jesus faced beatings and imprisonment, especially for not participating in local



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**the Lord is
zealous for His
glory among
these people**

Catholic events. While such physical persecution has diminished, ostracization and community rejection persist. New believers may face family rejection and expulsion from their homes, losing friends and becoming objects of ridicule. In a society where community is paramount, this experience is profoundly painful.

Thankfully, the church community is growing. Weekly worship services are held in the home of one of the local believers, with attendance ranging from 15 to 25 individuals. We make a concerted effort each week to cultivate a strong community, ensuring that the church feels like family, providing a place of belonging for those rejected by their former social circles. Each Sunday, the gathering includes a shared meal, followed by worship and Bible study. This familial approach has significantly helped new people

feel more connected and at ease.

Our ultimate aim is to see an indigenously-led, gospel-preaching church firmly established on the Word of God. While the journey ahead is long, we have unwavering confidence that the Lord is zealous for His glory among these people. By His grace, the church will continue to grow as more come to faith in Jesus.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Our work in Oaxaca is a testament to God's faithfulness and the power of the gospel. The progressive entrance approach, which involves establishing a platform community as a base of operations, fostering network communities for credibility and indigenous partnerships, and then venturing into the remote community for direct church planting, has proven instrumental. The emphasis on building relationships



REGIONAL APPROACH TO CHURCH PLANTING

The progressive entrance, regional approach to church planting enables missionaries to set-up a support system needed for long-term church planting in unreached and complex areas.



Platform

Communities (often churches) that serve as the base of operations for missionaries and nurture newly planted churches in remote communities.



Networks

Communities where missionaries evangelize, make disciples, and gain cultural knowledge, building the relationships necessary for gaining access to remote communities.



Remote

By entering into unreached, remote communities with the support of the platforms and networks, missionaries are bringing partners from the region that will help them with outreach, disciple-making, and church planting.

through the eight phases in pioneer church planting guides our work, recognizing that ministry truly moves at the speed of relationships. We have seen firsthand how these phases serve as an effective framework for discerning God's movement and responding with spiritual flexibility.

The gospel is indeed growing in Oaxaca, and the church is being established. Yet, much work remains. We earnestly request your continued prayer for the church in Oaxaca. Your financial contributions and prayers actively participate in this vital gospel work. The support we receive, in all its forms, directly fuels the advance of the gospel in Oaxaca. Ultimately, God is the primary missionary, and His plan for these regions is sovereign. Therefore, we serve as His instruments, trusting in His divine leading for all fruit and progress. «



First Nations in Canada
HUMBLED BY GOD'S CHURCH

Marshall Lewis » Field Co-Director, First Nations in Canada

At To Every Tribe, we believe Jesus's mission to save the world and the local church go hand in hand. We believe this because of the things Jesus said to his apostles and the way the apostles worked to fulfill his mission after he had ascended into heaven. Jesus told Peter that he would build his church, and Satan would not be able to stop him. To Every Tribe missionaries are working to strengthen existing churches and plant new ones where needed, so that those who become believers have a local gathering of their new brothers and sisters in Christ to grow with.

For the last five years, I've worked as a missionary in a small town in Northwest Ontario, Canada, called Sioux Lookout. My goal as a missionary in Canada is to see First Nations people believe the gospel and become members of a biblical, First Nations-led local church. The reason that First Nations church leadership is a goal of mine is because it's the Lord's plan to not only save people from every language and tribe on earth, but also to give spiritual gifts to all who believe. This means we should expect that there will be some men from every tribe who will believe in Jesus and receive spiritual gifts of leadership and teaching to serve their own people as shepherds and teachers.

When we moved to Sioux Lookout, I learned that there was already a small, First Nations-led church that was meeting every week for services. I was eager to visit the church and experience one of their services. During that first

visit, I remember my family being invited up to the front to introduce ourselves and share whatever we wanted to. What felt different and a little uncomfortable that first time has now become one of my favorite things about being a part of a First Nations-led church, because I see it in the New Testament and I've experienced its goodness firsthand.

Before becoming a missionary and joining a First Nations-led church, I had mostly been part of churches with a more structured order of service, where a few predetermined individuals, such as pastors and worship leaders, would lead in speaking or singing. That model shaped me in many good ways, and I am grateful for it. It was in those churches that I was nurtured in the faith, equipped for ministry, and shaped with a heart to pursue missions. But being part of this First Nations-led church has helped me see how Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 14:26 can also play out in a different way: "What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up."

Paul says, "Each one..." Not just the pastor, elders, or worship leaders. Each person in the church is there with various abilities and gifts to use during the service. Seeing this lived out in Sioux Lookout has helped me understand Paul's words in a new light. I've watched brothers and sisters share songs, testimonies, and short teachings, and I've been encouraged by how the Spirit works through many voices. Because we all are imperfect,

every message we hear should be weighed against Scripture, which is our final authority. That which is true and good should be held on to; that which is false and evil should be rejected (1 Thess. 5:20-22).

This experience has also helped me realize how valuable it is when multiple men are invited to regularly share from God's Word. I see how it prepares them to be ready to serve and teach should the need arise. I am deeply thankful for the pastors I've had who faithfully taught me the Word of God and modeled shepherding well. At the same time, I've also seen the blessing of inviting multiple gifted men to regularly share, so that many can grow in their ability and be ready to speak the Word whenever there's an opportunity.

I never realized how much my own church background shaped me until I stepped into another cultural context. Being part of a First Nations-led church has opened my eyes to things I wouldn't have noticed otherwise. These experiences have been a gift to me, and I pray that in sharing them, they might help us all benefit from God's good work in our First Nations brothers and sisters.

This biblical practice of multiple church members reading and teaching Scripture, singing a praise song, or giving a testimony each service is just one example of the many ways I've been grateful to have joined the existing First Nations-led church in Sioux Lookout. I've been able to see how they do things in a way that I likely would not have been able to if I was a part of the leadership team or trying to form a new local

church where I was making a lot of the decisions. This experience will be invaluable as I'm now planning to move my family up to Cat Lake, a remote First Nation reserve with a newly formed church that I want to help grow. This small church in Sioux Lookout will always be an example in my mind of the beauty of a First Nations-led church, and a reminder of what God is able to do among his people. I will also be able to lean on the friendships that I have made when I'm faced with various challenges. We are currently looking for teammates to join us in Cat Lake, so if you're willing to live in an isolated place and patiently endure difficulties while lovingly hurting people that they might find true comfort and salvation in Christ, get in touch with me.

I've had the opportunity to meet First Nations brothers and sisters from all over this part of Canada, as they attend this church when they are down visiting from their various reserves to the north. Thanks to the practice of having multiple people share each service, I've been encouraged and built up in my faith by many of them as they have used their spiritual gifts to edify the body. I've also been entrusted with the opportunity to share from God's Word at many services. When I first started attending the gatherings a few years ago, the messages were all topical and from different places in Scripture. I decided to take a step of faith and try teaching verse by verse through a book, something I had never seen done at this church before.

I've now spent most of the last two years teaching verse by verse

through the book of 1 Corinthians any-time one of the two pastors asks me to share. The church's desire to continue hearing the Word taught in this way, even when the teaching style differs from what they're used to, shows their genuine hunger for God's Word. I trust God has used this exegetical method of teaching his Word to help the church. The pastor

has recently started his own verse by verse teaching through the book of Hebrews. This makes me believe that he has also seen the benefit of this method of teaching the whole counsel of God's Word. While there have been moments when I haven't fully agreed biblically with what was happening in a service, I've come to realize that this is part of the Christian life no matter which church you join. I've come to realize no church has it all together. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, and that's true everywhere. But I've come to see this as part of God's design — because together, across cultures and contexts, the church reflects more of His wisdom and beauty than any single congregation could on its own. It's also possible that my own perspective is flawed. It's definitely changed over time.

This experience has reminded me of my own tendency to undervalue churches that differ in non-gospel areas of doctrine or practice, and



God has been patient to teach me through it. Looking back, I'm grateful for every church I've been part of, because in different ways each one has shaped me and strengthened my walk with Christ. While sound doctrine is very important, it's not the only ingredient to a healthy church full of love and joy and the Spirit's fruit. I've found that sometimes I

might disagree with a church's statement of faith in certain areas, yet see in that same church people who are deeply hungry for God, devoted to prayer, and sacrificially loving in ways that challenge my own walk.

I have been humbled to realize that people with different biblical interpretations or convictions than mine might be equally or even more full of the Spirit and God's love. I've wondered before why God allows such differences among his people when he could easily conform all of our thinking to be more uniform if he wanted to. I think the reason is that he loves unity in diversity and wants the church to reflect him in that way: unified in love while being diverse. Where I once mainly saw differences between churches as a challenge, I'm learning to see them as part of God's plan to glorify himself in diversity. May God grant us all more love for one another as we dwell together in diversity now and forevermore. Amen. «



Muskrat Dam, Ontario
GRIEF, GRACE, AND GROWTH

Todd Simpson » Field Co-Director, First Nations in Canada

Today marks the 35th funeral we have attended in the eight years we have lived on the Muskrat Dam First Nation Reserve in Canada. While a third of the funerals we attended were in other reserve communities around us, 48 people we personally knew have died since we moved here. Our small community consists of 250 to 300 people, and everyone here is family to one another with partners and spouses coming from surrounding communities. I can't count how many other deaths have occurred in the reserves directly around us in the same amount of time, but it must be an additional 200 at least. Thinking of those 48 people we knew, maybe as few as six of them died from age-related incidents. The remaining 42 died from medical complications, accidents of some sort, house fires, drug overdoses, and many suicides. Grief is not just a momentary visi-

tor here but a constant companion.

Last year, a 19-year-old young man took his life. It was like a shockwave that stunned and devastated the community. A month later, I went on a drive with one of the young man's friends as I heard he was deeply struggling with the loss of his friend as well as another friend who had recently passed

from another community. We slowly crept along the forest road as we sat in silence. After 30 minutes of silence, I asked what he missed about each friend that he had recently lost. The young man began to share stories about each friend and what

he missed about them. He shared stories about the two people that I knew he lost, and he continued. When he got to his fourth friend and their story, I sat bewildered. I stopped the truck, turned to him, and asked, "How many friends have you lost recently?" He looked up at me and said he had lost nine friends



Grief is not just a momentary visitor here but a constant companion.



in the last 12 months from suicides, accidents, overdoses, and homicides. These friends were throughout our region, including former high school classmates, cousins, and others he had met along the way. They ranged in age from teens to 30-somethings. I was stunned and overwhelmed, and I immediately burst into tears. I cried out to God with the loudest voice I could, with my young friend sitting beside me, and pleading with Jesus to deliver my friend from his anguish. We both yelled and cried until our tear wells were dry and our voices raspy. Our joint lament to the Lord is something I will never forget. My friend is struggling to this day; please pray for him.

Suffering is not only connected here to death but to generational suffering from traumatic practices meant to assimilate the people into the dominant Canadian culture. This led to abuses of all kinds at residential schools run by the churches for the government, removal of children from communities from the 1950s through the 1980s, along with sexual abuse from a travelling priest flying in and out of the northern reserves in this region for 25 years, not to mention the effects of the Fall in people. Sorrow is the air we breathe because suffering is constant. Much of the suffering from these events came through “the messengers” of Jesus. While some may consider Jesus a wonderful name of the Savior they follow,

for many, his name reminds them of the traumatic experiences they or their loved ones experienced by those who were to represent him. It has resulted in relational fracturing of self, with others, and with the Lord.

THIS IS WHERE GOD HAS PLACED US.

For Diana and myself, what were we carrying in our hearts? We went, sensing a call from the Lord. We have a love for Jesus, his gospel, and his church. Our sending church affirmed us, and the Lord directed our steps in a way we could never have planned, leading us to be invited by the Muskrat Dam Chief to live in this isolated community.

All aspects of life in Muskrat Dam are different from what we had known. We learned quickly that whatever our gut instinct told us, we should probably do the opposite. It is an entirely different world. Building trust and forming meaningful relationships took a lot of time and intentionality. We

learned how to do it along the way in a new culture. The work felt meaningful and purposeful, bearing witness to Jesus, but was I being a witness? We know it is the Holy Spirit who is doing the heavy lifting, but

what was emerging in my heart was something that had been in the suitcase of my heart, which I had brought along for the journey and did not know was there.

Fears began to rise, emotional



I was stunned and overwhelmed, and I immediately burst into tears.



pain was surfacing, everything was changing, and everything was different. My attempt to gain control fell flat. We experienced so much loss, and the cost of following Jesus here seemed to get higher and higher. Safety, security, and control were fleeting ideas that I once held dear, and I was unaware of how tightly I had held them. My wrong strategies, my sins that I was completely unaware of, such as people-pleasing, pride, self-sufficiency, and a desire for control, began to reveal themselves as masters I was serving. A crisis arose, and I didn't know what was happening.

Who is this person in the mirror? How could I think God had called me to be a messenger of the gospel for the growth of Jesus' kingdom

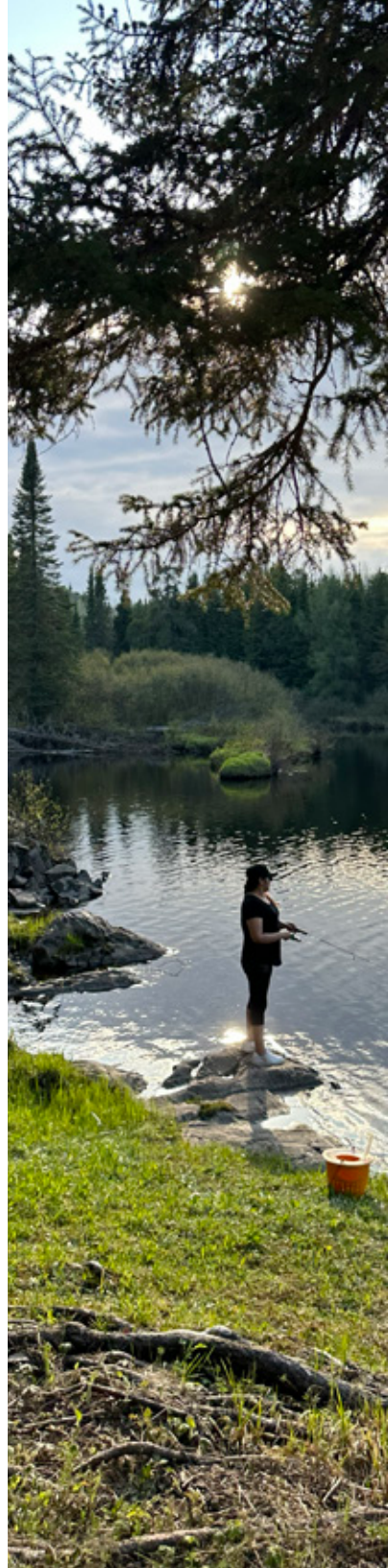
here on earth? Living cross-culturally for the sake of the gospel exposed my heart to relational fracturing of myself, with others, and with the Lord.

An indigenous brother in the Lord from another reserve community was observing my inner turmoil as I shared my pain. Through this brother, as well as a discipleship course that focused on the effects of childhood trauma and suffering, my life and our family's lives were changed. It was through suffering that the Lord, in His kindness, revealed many things that needed to be pruned out of my life. As I began to walk through my own stories of my past, I began to see threads of how I had chosen to try to take matters into my own hands to numb my

pain. Before the Lord opened my eyes, I was essentially living like this: “Jesus, I know your death on the cross covered all of these sins in my life, but there is this group of sins over here that I don’t believe you are big enough to handle; I will look after saving myself on those.” I began to learn how to forgive those who had hurt me in the past. I began to publicly confess my sins in front of others, repenting of anything the Holy Spirit showed me. Uncovering areas of unbelief allowed me to identify lies I had believed. Confession and repentance allowed me to hold on to what God says is true about who I am in Christ. I will continue to spend the rest of my life in this process. As Diana and I began walking in this process, Jesus freed me from areas of bondage. I am free to feel; I am free to be present in the moment. The gospel tastes sweeter than it has ever been because I have been forgiven. I am a son of God. My wife has been experiencing the same transformation.

Thankfully, the Holy Spirit is doing the work. We strive to be faithful stewards of what God has given us and is teaching us. This transformation has shifted our focus from “doing” to “being.” Jesus helps us not just parrot words but gives us the words to speak from the overflow of what he has given us. We still have fears and life is still chaotic. Grief is a muscle we are learning to work—it is a constant exercise and not an emotion to be buried. Temptation lurks around every corner to disbelieve the gospel and take matters into our own hands. Throughout the day, it often feels like a moment-by-moment plea to the Lord: “Go before us, show us what you want us to know about this situation, and tell us what you want us to do.”

What amazes us and is a gift from the Lord is the pruning process that he took us through. It is the very same jour-





ney we can walk with the community of Muskrat Dam First Nation. As the Lord allows and brings people across our path, we can share how we once trusted in our own hands to find salvation for our souls. We can testify to the healing Jesus offers from suffering. Relational pain and fear are still present. There are moments when we feel like we are falling, unsure if Jesus will catch us. Yet what amazes me is how the Holy Spirit prompts the Church abroad to encourage us in those exact moments. This builds our faith in Christ. Thank you, reader, for being the Church to so many missionaries out there.

My indigenous brothers often offered me counsel, and one of them shared a phrase that resonated with others: “Be Jesus with flesh on.” Jesus incarnated himself to us. He is acquainted with our grief and our suffering, though he never sinned. Perhaps the difference from our beginning in Muskrat Dam until now is best described as a photograph of a beautiful waterfall. Looking at the photograph, I can see the waterfall’s beauty, I can describe the colors, and I can understand why the waterfall is so amazing. I would encourage others to look at it. But now I am not just looking at a photograph, I am actually standing in the waterfall and feeling the power of the water flowing over my head. I can smell the misty vapors, feel them tickle my nose hairs, and be refreshed as the water satisfies my thirst. I can feel the wind of the waves as I walk around the falls. I want to encourage others to also be transformed and refreshed by the living water. Thankfully, the Lord can work through us whether we just have a picture to share or when we share out of an overflow. Ultimately, how he saves will result in his glory alone. To Christ be the glory in Muskrat Dam First Nation. «



Nangaritza, Ecuador
LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

David Stroup » Field Director, Ecuador

As I reflect on the past eight years here in Ecuador and the work the Sovereign Lord has done to establish His Church in this remote corner of the world, my heart overflows with praise and gratitude. In God's kindness, the light of Christ has come to shine in a place that once knew only darkness—where no gospel-proclaiming church had existed until recently.

My family and I live in Nangaritza County, Ecuador, where the foothills of the Andes mountains transition into the Amazon jungle. Our town, Guayzimi, is the largest in our county, with a population of around 4,000 people. If you drive south on the only road for about three hours until it ends in the middle of the jungle, you will arrive at Mariposa, one of the many small indigenous Shuar communities that are interspersed throughout the jungle. Along the way you will come across some Saraguro communities as well—another indigenous group. The larger towns like Guayzimi are mostly inhabited by the majority Mestizo people, who have a mixed indigenous-European heritage.

For thousands of years, people here have lived and died without knowing Jesus Christ. The religion of most is a blend of animism, secularism, and nominal Roman Catholicism, with a strong focus on the worship of Mary. More recently, cults such as Jehovah's

Witnesses and Oneness Pentecostalism have arrived and grown. But the common thread in all these beliefs is the pursuit of righteousness through the law—trying to earn God's favor by doing good works. The vast majority of people here have not come to understand the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the glorious news that the righteousness of God is attained not by the law, but by faith in Christ.

It is in this context that we have labored, longing to see the Lord establish His Church here. And He has answered our prayers. Over the past five years, little by little, God has gathered His people together, and we now meet together several times a week around the word of God, as we read His word, pray His word, teach and preach

His word, sing His word, and see His word lived out as we seek to obey it together and observe the ordinances.

What a joy it has been to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ alongside our brothers and sisters here in the Family of God Christian Church. It is such a blessing to see all the believers take initiative to serve one another, whether by praying for one another, preparing meals, teaching the children, leading in worship, preaching the word of God, or giving sacrificially when needs arise. Christ has truly knitted us together as a family in Him.



For thousands of years, people here have lived and died without knowing Jesus Christ.



Outside the building, as a church we have engaged in outreach through various means. This includes proclaiming the gospel to our neighbors in our personal relationships, as well as participating in more organized programs such as English camps and classes, kids Bible clubs, delivering food baskets, and helping alongside the local government when emergencies have arisen.

One example of the Lord's mercy can be seen in the lives of Carlos and Susana, a young Shuar man and a Peruvian woman who are now a beloved brother and sister in Christ. Carlos is from the Mariposa community which I mentioned earlier. We met them shortly after we arrived in Guayzimi while

searching for land to buy. Carlos sold us some of his land, and over time, we became close friends. He taught me how the Shuar people farm bananas and plantains, and we had several conversations about the gospel.

After some time, Carlos was imprisoned, and, while inside, the Lord miraculously saved him. During this time, one of their young daughters passed away, and we were able to minister to Susana as she was searching for answers. When Carlos was released, he was a new man, and went around sharing his testimony of salvation with all of his family and friends. He asked us to baptize him, and later Susana believed in Christ and was baptized as well. Although they are

not able to join our church family every week since they live so far away, they have been such an encouragement and blessing to all of us as we follow the Lord and mature together.

Today, Carlos continues to speak the word of God boldly among his neighbors in the communities upriver. In his own community of Mariposa, which celebrates a multi-day feast to Mary every year, Carlos has openly called his neighbors to put away such idolatry, teaching them from the Scriptures. This stance has led to backlash and harassment from those who were once his close friends. However, during the recent planning meeting for this year's August feast, Carlos once again shared from the Scriptures why the Lord was displeased with their celebrations. This time, the consensus among the people was that what Carlos spoke from the Bible was true. Now the community is deliberating its next steps, engaging in discussions with both the Catholic priest here in Guayzimi and Carlos himself. Please pray for Carlos as he instructs them in the way of the Lord, and that the Holy Spirit would cause the people of Mariposa to be born again to new life in Christ.

The Lord has lavished His grace upon us, and we rejoice in how He has worked to establish His Church in Nangaritza County. But the fields are still white for harvest. Most here have still not heard the gospel. We know of at least 30 other communities in this region still in darkness. Will you join us

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Today, Carlos continues to speak the word of God boldly among his neighbors







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We know of at least 30 other communities in this region still in darkness.

in going to them and announcing the only message that is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes? We invite you to help plant, water, and wait for the Lord who gives growth. Are you willing to lay down your life for the bride of Christ, being poured out as a drink offering as you labor to present everyone mature in Christ?

Each of us has been given gifts to be used in the service of our King. There is room for all believers to be involved in the work of the ministry here, for building up the body of Christ. Please remember Nangaritza County, Ecuador in your prayers, and ask God how He might use you in His mission to the nations! «

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