



CONNECT

THIS ISSUE:

pg1

MADE FOR MORE

pg2

WHAT TYPE OF LEADER DO WE
NEED?

pg3

HOW DID I GET HERE

pg5

A TIME TO CELEBRATE



RUSSELL THORP | MISSIONS DIRECTOR, GC3

MADE FOR MORE!

WHAT IS THE STORY WE TELL OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER ABOUT WHO WE ARE?

Storytelling plays a noble and historic role in our lives and in society. Stories give us a narrative to guide and instruct us. They are crucial to our knowing who we are; they provide a sense of identity.

The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to Ephesus which is filled with the story about believers and followers of Jesus. In Ephesians chapter two he writes ⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God's

masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (NLT)

Doing good things is part of what we are about. God has gifted his church with special gifts (4:7,11), apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These gifts are for the building up of the body and for our mission in the world.

Paul shares in Ephesians the mission he has been given and now is ours to share also (3:6-9), ⁶ And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the

Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. ⁷ By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News." Note v8 "the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ." And v9 "chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan". Then also ¹⁰ God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." What a story to tell. ▶

Each of us who have been graced with this story are to be bearers of this “good news”. In fact, the grace we received expects us to return honour and glory to the one who has extended that grace. How well are we doing this? Could we be more strategic, knowing the challenges we face? What possibilities exist with the people we have?

Recently I spent some time with the leadership of one of our church communities. The reason was to facilitate

a conversation about mission locally and internationally. We looked back at the past, thought through the present, and drew on learnings and possibilities to begin to envision a future that would inform them to be more strategic in their sending and partnering as a church. We looked at the great things that had been accomplished as well as the bad and the sad. It was a conversation full of good stories of Kiwis being Kingdom people, sent from this church to the community and the world. The lessons were rich and timely for those younger leaders who

had not known the history of their church community. One of my roles as Missions Director is to come alongside and facilitate these sorts of conversations. We don't have all the answers, but we can help you clarify your mission focus.

We would love the opportunity to come alongside you to facilitate a conversation as I've outlined above. **We have been made for more!** Let's explore that together. To do this, contact Russell Thorp at missionsdirector@gc3.org.nz or by phone on 021481088. ■

FELIX MUCHIMBA

WHAT TYPE OF LEADER DO WE NEED TODAY IN THE CHURCH?

ONE THING IS CLEAR. THERE IS A SERIOUS LEADERSHIP MELTDOWN IN THE CHURCH TODAY. ALL ACROSS THE CHRISTENDOM CONTINUUM THE CRY FOR THE NEED FOR VISIONARY LEADERS WITH INTEGRITY IS BEING ECHOED.

For years we have been training leaders who only know how to maintain the status quo. They may answer a few questions but do not know how to ask intelligent questions and cannot think outside the box. It is evident that we don't have leaders who can think for themselves and come up with new ways of doing things – leaders with a vision who are innovative. If the church is to be effective in community transformation and missions, we need leaders with the following qualities:

1. **Spirit led and filled:** Many of those in leadership do not qualify to be leaders. They ascended to leadership probably because they are good friends with the leaders; they make good donations; are charismatic; have been in church the longest etc. This list is endless. In some cases, we end up with the wrong people in leadership because the selection or appointment system and leadership structure are faulty. The qualifications as outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are non-negotiable. A leadership that is not praying is straying. We do not need men and women of standing in society but men and women of kneeling into leadership.
2. **Informed:** It is not enough simply to be knowledgeable in the scriptures, important as this is. A leader must be acquainted with trends in the

world today and be confident enough to engage with these issues from the biblical perspective. Grappling with issues such as politics, economics, popular culture, people movement, the environment, technology and science and many other disciplines should form part of the Position Result Description (PRD) for every leader.

3. **Risk Taking:** Many of our churches have been in maintenance mode for years and years and no significant change has been seen. Leaders are contented with the status quo. As long as they can have their services and midweek meetings and 'defend the doctrine' – nothing bothers them. If your church is not impacting the community and not involved in missions you may as well question why you exist. You must ask yourself the question, "If this church closed today would the community miss us?" Risk taking involves much prayer and listening to God and then moving the direction God is prompting you even if that direction seems impossible and uncomfortable. It's about moving outside your 'comfort zone'.
4. **Listening:** Too many of our leaders think they have the monopoly on wisdom. They forget that the Holy Spirit speaks to each believer who cares to listen. Leaders must listen to a cross section of age groups and



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ministry leaders. Stubborn and arrogant leaders are a recipe for stifling church growth.

5. **Developing other leaders:** One of the first attributes of a good leader is to develop other leaders. Leaders develop leaders. The leaders must mentor and disciple others to take over from them eventually. Leadership is seasonal, generational and temporal. Moses mentored Joshua. Paul mentored Timothy and Silas; Jesus mentored the twelve. Some leaders have been in leadership for years and no wonder they have become stale. Their shelf life is long past.

These are but a few ideas that we need to pay attention to if we are to be the kind of leaders that God and the church expects us to be. Godly leadership that has the passion for the lost world is in short supply today. May God raise such a leadership. ■



Photos courtesy of Partners Relief and Development.

INTERVIEW BY MELANIE CROSSBIE | GC3 YOUTH DIRECTOR ASSISTANT

HOW DID I GET HERE? (PART 2)

THIS ARTICLE IS BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH KATIE, A SOCIAL WORKER WITH A PASSION FOR JUSTICE.

Tell us about the work you're doing with Partners in Thailand and Burma.

Currently I'm settling into my role at Partners and figuring out what it is going to look like. At the moment, a lot of my time will be spent compiling a mental health curriculum for fourth year medic students working in Burma. So far this has included pulling together resources, making connections with people in Chiang Mai, and looking into how people in Burma see mental health/illness. Alongside this I am working with staff at a migrant centre in Chiang Mai, testing out some of the mental health teaching and joining in with a few of their community development activities. Recently I've had the Headspace team visit, as well as a youth team from Palmerston North Central Baptist. It was a privilege to see the youth learning about some of the projects which Partners supports. I've also been into communities in Burma to learn more about the existing projects and the mental health needs.

You've waited till you were qualified and registered before heading back to

Thailand. What have been the benefits of that?

As much as it was frustrating at times, getting qualified and registered before heading out has had a number of benefits. I have gained good experience in mental health, paid off my student loan, and become part of a professional body which provides safety for me and the people I work with. Just taking the time to learn and gain experience has given me a deeper sense of confidence in my ability to empower the people I walk with through the use of a professional knowledge base. While social work here can look quite different to New Zealand, that base knowledge of approaches that I have learnt are still useful, as are different tools that I can access such as supervision.

What's it like having studied this in a New Zealand context and now using it in a different context?

It can be difficult! Translating what I've learnt into a different cultural context can take quite a bit of work. I believe that it's important to find out about the culture and the way they do things to be able to



understand what might work for them and what could be helpful. There are two basic social work principles that transcend cultural context – one is connecting with people and the other is empowerment. The basis of social work has taught me that the people we work with know themselves better than we do and that to empower them we can't just dump solutions on them. The same principle applies to working with communities in a missions context. I don't need to give communities and individuals solutions. It is better to empower them to find their own answers. I think really the difference (and the difficulty!) is in the details. The principles of working alongside people are useful across cultures.

As you've headed back to Thailand and Burma, what have you found difficult?

The difference between a dream and reality has been a challenge for me. I had an almost romanticised vision of what it would look like to fulfil this goal which I had been working towards for so long. I thought that if I was doing my 'dream job' that I would always feel passionate about my work. However, the reality of moving to a new country is that I'm experiencing and processing so many



new cultural situations and am more tired at the end of the day. On top of the new cultural situations, I am constantly learning about the vastness of the issues with drugs, alcohol, and mental health in Burma which can be overwhelming! As well as the new, it's also been hard to leave behind my established life and community. I've found that staying in touch with my community at home and being intentional about finding a good church community here has been helpful as I face these challenges.

Do you have any advice for people looking at doing some study to later use in an overseas context?

Find what fits you! I felt social work would be something that would fit well for me to use in a cross-cultural context. If possible, find other people who are doing what you want to do or have done it, to guide and encourage you. It is especially helpful if you can find someone currently practicing in that profession overseas. Remember that there are increasingly more possible professions to use in a cross-cultural context so don't feel that you have to stick to the traditional ones. Don't forget to do the 'little' things either. Make friends with people from different cultures, get involved with a supportive church, and of course, pray!

What have been some personal highlights since you've been back in Thailand?

Seeing the community workers starting to understand some of the mental health contexts has been a highlight – it's been a great testing ground for the curriculum. It's also been lovely just getting to know the staff better, especially getting to hear the stories of local staff. I love hearing how people have been empowered by projects which Partners has supported. Trips are also a highlight for me, just getting to hear more of these stories, meet new people and see more of the country. I met a mother of four who has spent her life working as a community health worker and has had a significant impact on her community through establishing clinics and facilitating the provision of healthcare services such as immunisation and minor eye surgery. It's also been a great chance to connect with like-minded people who want to see change for those around them.

And finally, how do you see God's kingdom being built through the work of Partners?

I remember hearing a speaker say that God is a God of order, but that sin brought disorder to His perfect 'order'. God has given us the privilege of helping

him restore that perfect order. In Isaiah 58, God asks us to "Loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke", to "share your food with the hungry and provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood". These are some of my favourite verses because it describes how social work fits so well with what God is asking us to do. Social work is all about supporting people to live well and empowering them to live full lives. Being new to this work – particularly in Thailand – I haven't quite figured out what it looks like to be building God's kingdom in a Buddhist context, but I hope that through the teaching and showing God's love in action that some of God's original perfect order might be restored and that people would come to know healing through knowing God. Being a Christian is so helpful as a social worker as it gives me hope when it feels hopeless and encourages me as I know that I am part of something bigger to bring God's creation back to order. ■

If you want to know more, Katie can be contacted on katie.bardsley@partners.ngo or you can visit <https://www.partners.ngo/nz/>





SEFTON MARSHALL | GC3 OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

A TIME TO CELEBRATE...

GC3 HAS A LONG HISTORY OF ASSOCIATION WITH MANY MISSION PARTNERS. DURING THE PAST 118 YEARS, SUPPORT HAS BEEN PROVIDED TO MANY KIWIS WHO HAVE GIVEN THE BEST YEARS OF THEIR LIVES TO PRESENT THE 'GOOD NEWS OF JESUS' IN CROSS-CULTURAL SETTINGS AROUND THE GLOBE.

Responding to the call of God on their hearts, the ingenuity these people have contributed in tandem with the Holy Spirit has meant their ministry has had significant impact for building God's kingdom here on earth.

One remarkable statistic of such dedication is from an analysis of the entries in our Daily Prayer Guide. An exercise tabling the length of active service of all adults currently listed there produces **a grand total in excess of 3,200 years!** We think that is a phenomenal record.

In past issues of GC3 Connect we have captured the fascinating stories of some who have contributed many years of missionary service. And to mark a special occasion for Graham and Betty, We have asked them to write of their reflections and experiences of their past fifty years in Guatemala. Here's their interesting tribute to the faithfulness of God in their lives and experience. ■

GRAHAM & BETTY | DAY 19, GC3 DAILY PRAYER GUIDE

50 YEARS OF SERVICE

WE WANT TO THANK AND PRAISE OUR WONDERFUL HEAVENLY FATHER, WHO FOR FIFTY YEARS HAS FAITHFULLY GIVEN US THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING HIM IN GUATEMALA. AS A YOUNG COUPLE WITH TWO SMALL CHILDREN, RHONDA 3 AND HARVEY 2 YEARS OLD, WE LEFT NEW ZEALAND BY BOAT FOR THE STATES, FROM WHERE WE FLEW TO GUATEMALA.

It was a new country, a new language, new people and customs. Everything was new. It was a step into the unknown, with concern for our children's safety probably being one of the biggest factors to face. It was so wonderful to have Ben and Helen Goatley there to help us through that first year. Graham had attended school in Owaka with Ben, many years before. Our families, to this day, are still very close. We moved into Ben and Helen's rented home next to the "Sala" (Hall) while they took more convenient lodgings for their family.

There have been many wonderful moments when we have seen the

Lord working to bring people into His Kingdom. Many others where we have seen people grow in the Lord. After 18 months Graham was able to take over the printing press that Gray Russell had maintained, and began editing the magazine, "Contendor Por La Fe", which went to all Spanish speaking countries. Gray and Win sold us their home and the printing press, moving to live and work in Antigua. Graham very quickly learnt to set type, proof-read in Spanish and run things. Later much of the time was spent in constructing the camp 45 minutes out of the city while continuing to teach and preach. ►



FROM PAGE 5...

Graham often said, "Our safety does not consist in the absence of danger but in the protection of the Lord". We have seen the Lord so wonderfully protect us in many instances of danger, like being held up at gun-point on occasions, having the property being broken into while we slept, with thousands of dollars worth of goods stolen, being caught up in shoot-outs and riots, civil war, and more. He has helped and given wisdom where there were very serious problems. The Lord gave us words of comfort, encouragement and very real discernment through His Word when it was something far beyond us to deal with, naturally speaking.

Together we have employed innumerable hours counselling and guiding couples as they sought marriage and others in the context of a troubled marriage and have seen the far-reaching results of this time well spent. Graham is one of

very few, apart from lawyers and elected officials, to have the authorisation to conduct the legal aspect of weddings.

Betty has been involved in teaching (which is her passion), with Bible studies for women, children, supervising and superintending Sunday School and preparing lots of holiday programs for children as well as retreats for spiritual growth.

Hospitality has figured prominently in the implementation of the commission to make disciples and is an aspect of service in which we have sought to give an example, as very few employ it in this culture except for family members.

We can only humbly thank the Lord for all He has done. We thank Him for a wonderful family, Rhonda, Harvey, Andrew and Martin, who faced many of these things with us; for parents and family who willingly encouraged us to leave them at cost to themselves, as well as our home

church in Putaruru which has been there for us in every way so faithfully all these years. Many other churches and people have prayed and given to the Lord so that His Work could continue also.

We acknowledge our wonderful Christian family in many parts of Guatemala who so warmly welcome us, pray for us and encourage us. We love every one of them so dearly. The Lord has been so good to let us see so many grow in His paths. But, without a doubt, there is a lot we have not seen as the Lord of the Harvest does His sovereign work in hearts that have allowed His Word to enter.

On the 22nd of November, 50 years to the day of when we arrived in Guatemala, we had a service of thanksgiving to the Lord where we invited neighbours, friends and Christians, as a witness for what the Lord has done and as a means of outreach to those who do not yet know the Lord. ■



PLEASE INFORM ME ABOUT:

☐ GLOBAL CONNECTIONS IN MISSION ☐ GC ASSIST ☐ GC AID

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FIRST NAME:	MR / MRS / MS / MISS
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- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily Prayer Guide | <input type="checkbox"/> GC3 Connect Newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Info on commendation | <input type="checkbox"/> e-Connect |
- ☐ How can I find out more about cross-cultural mission opportunities?
- ☐ How I can help fund mission
(Please accept my gift of \$ _____ for _____)

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