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KAREN BROOKES | GC3 BOARD MEMBER

EVERYONE NEEDS COMPASSION

IT'S MARCH 15 IN CHRISTCHURCH. PEOPLE ARE GOING ABOUT THEIR DAILY ROUTINES AS USUAL. THIS INCLUDED MUSLIMS GATHERING AT TWO MOSQUES NEAR THE CITY CENTRE. SUDDENLY, A GUNMAN BEGINS SHOOTING AT THOSE WHO HAD GATHERED TO PRAY. AT THE END OF THE DAY, 50 WERE LEFT DEAD, 50 INJURED IN HOSPITAL AND OUR NATION CHANGED FOREVER.

I was deeply affected by what happened. This happened in Aotearoa NZ! A little country at the bottom of the world of no global significance.

This could not have happened in New Zealand twenty years ago! Simply, we didn't have many Muslims living here or mosques built. This event showed how New Zealand has changed as a nation.

In 1983 when we first went to serve in the Philippines, we had only ever met two Filipinos. Now there are over 40,000 Filipinos living in Aotearoa NZ.

The Christchurch event reminded me how terrible sin is and how we are all affected by it. No one individual, or nation, is exempt from the effects of sin. I grieved for those killed. Unless anyone was a

secret believer in Jesus, they had all gone to an eternity without Christ.

The hard-hearted attitude of some Christians disturbed me. Facebook posts were lamenting the media attention given to the Christchurch shootings and none given to Christians suffering violence in Africa. Everyone needs compassion. Subsequent bombings of churches in Sri Lanka have been well-covered by the secular press in Aotearoa NZ.

New Zealand is a secular society. At times, it shows intolerance and even hostility towards Christians and the message of the Bible. However, we are not to react with hostility. Yes, we passionately ▶

stand for what is right. But we do it with respect, humility and gentleness.

Muslims aren't our enemies. Secular Kiwis aren't our enemies. They are all people for whom Christ died, just like me. Read Ephesians 6:12 to see who our real enemy is.

The nations have come to New Zealand. We have an awesome opportunity to befriend people different to us. Let's continue to believe that Matthew 28:18-20 also applies within our island nation.

At GC3, our primary focus and passion is the part that New Zealanders have in bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. We do this by praying for and assisting those who have been called by God to participate in the unfinished task of making disciples

of all the nations. While New Zealand has changed, so has the rest of the world. With an exploding population, there are billions of people who will never have the opportunity to hear the gospel unless someone intentionally goes to their place. Might that someone be you? Millions are living in poverty, slavery and exploitation. Is there a cause worth you pursuing to make a difference for Christ's sake?

In 1980, a young Kiwi couple went to a small tribe in the jungles of the Southern Philippines. They lived among the tribe, learnt the language and started teaching them the Scriptures, beginning at Genesis. Today there is a church in this tribe and this couple, young no longer, are still there, translating the Scriptures into the believers' language. Because of an ordinary Kiwi couple, there will

be Tala-andig people in heaven. There are still tribal groups who have never had anyone tell them the gospel story. There are still languages that have no Scriptures translated into them.

Recently, a young woman, studied linguistics at university in Dunedin. She learnt the language of the Tau-buid people in the Philippines and today is translating Genesis into that language. It is hard work preparing yourself for this ministry. There are no shortcuts, only years of study. Is this something you would be willing to do?

How can they call on the name of the Lord if no one tells them?

Jesus made it clear that we are to love those who consider themselves our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. ■

JOHN DE JONG

ENTERING INTO A CULTURE FOR JESUS' SAKE

I WILL NEVER FORGET THE CONVERSATION WE WERE PART OF SOON AFTER ARRIVING IN MYANMAR.

Rebecca and I were newbies in this culture, and the conversation was with a church leader whose home was a virtual grand central station for visitors from various parts of the country (that itself was part of her culture). Our friend was recounting how she had come across a woman, staying in their house, in her sister's room, searching through her sister's handbag. She was shocked and rushed into ... an adjacent room. I too was shocked, and I asked, "Why didn't you rush into the room and confront her?" That's what I thought she should have done in such a situation. Our friend, and her husband, and others in the circle looked at me somewhat surprised, and after a pause replied, "That would have created a very awkward situation." I didn't push the matter, but I was unconvinced. The right thing to do would have been to confront this woman and demand to know what she was up to.

"Should have done", "the right thing to do." It took a long time for me to realise that our friend's response was not wrong. Culturally, it was a different

to my response but here's the rub – we weren't in my culture. We were in her culture and her response was the right one for that context. It's not that they were willing to ignore this kind of behaviour, rather they had a different way of dealing with it. The issue wasn't finished by avoiding direct confrontation, it would still be dealt with.

This episode shows an unavoidable reality for new missionaries who have entered a new culture. Knowledge gained through courses and books on cultural anthropology and culture shock and knowing what to expect when you arrive on the mission field is essential for preparation but it's not until you are immersed in another culture that you truly realise what you're in for.

You cannot truly learn about a culture different than our own through studying it. Culture is rather absorbed by being immersed in it. It is a subconscious process and one day you realise that you have changed. You find yourself irritated by something someone from your own culture says or does ("How rude!") when it's exactly the kind of thing you yourself would have said



John is married to Rebecca. They both grew up in West Auckland and met at Lincoln Road Bible Chapel, which is still their home church. In 2005 they moved to Yangon, Myanmar, to work with the church there. They took Adam (two-and-a-half years old) and Grace (10 months) with them. Sarah and Charlotte were born over there. John taught Old Testament and Hebrew at the Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (MEGST), along with preaching and teaching in the local church. Rebecca was involved in women's and children's ministry, as well as home schooling the children. They returned to Auckland to live in October 2017, and John has found work lecturing in Biblical and Intercultural studies at Laidlaw College, based at the Henderson campus.

or done when you first arrived in the country.

If missionaries do not go through this process of entering into the culture, they will never be able to understand why things are done the way they are. They will only be able to assess things through their own ▶

cultural lenses, and as a result they will often be negative about the local culture and ministry – “they’re not doing it right.” From the perspective of the local people, your efforts to embrace their culture and learn their language tells them that you truly do love them. The opposite is also true! A fruitful cross-cultural ministry requires the outsider, the missionary, to enter into the local culture for Jesus’ sake. Isn’t this exactly what Paul wrote?

¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law

(though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor. 9:19-23 NIV).

Some practical tips for newly arrived missionaries:

- When new missionaries arrive on the field there is a nagging urge to want to do something significant in order to prove that that they should really

be there. Temper this urge with the knowledge that you don’t yet understand why things are done the way they are being done. Don’t rush!

- Make significant effort to learn the language in your early years in the culture. You can’t truly understand the culture without understanding its language. For example, in our early days we would sometimes ask our language tutor, “How do you say [such and such]?”, to which he would reply, “Oh, we would never say that!”
- Turn off the aircon in your apartment and open the doors so neighbours can drop in (like everyone else around you does).
- Shop at the local market and eat the local food (it’s delicious!) ■



HTN team

PRABHU & CHRISTINA | DAY 31 GC3 DAILY PRAYER GUIDE

SHARING JESUS IN INDIA

IT’S THAT TIME AGAIN. WE SIT DOWN ON OUR COUCH READY TO SKYPE BACK TO INDIA. WE TAKE A MOMENT EVERY SUNDAY TO SWITCH OUR MINDS FROM MISSION AVIATION FELLOWSHIP ARNHEM LAND TO THE ‘HELP THE NEEDY’ MISSION (HTN) CONGREGATION BACK IN INDIA. IT’S ALWAYS SUCH A BLESSING FOR US TO SEE GOD CAUSING THE EVANGELICAL WORK OF HTN TO FLOURISH. WE SKYPE EVERY WEEK TO SHARE GOD’S WORD WITH A HOUSE CONGREGATION THERE AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM.

Prabhu started HTN in 2012 before he joined MAF and it’s been a part of his life ever since. The purpose of HTN? The vision is to share the gospel around the world. However, for now there is a team of 40 people in India with seven full time staff in the office. These people bring Jesus to Hindu villages through their many activities whilst encouraging the ▶



Medical camp

FROM PAGE 3...

local churches. Prayer fuels the mission in India, as they head out to bring Jesus to places that are home to radical Hindus, and we fear for their safety.

With God on their side, the HTN team are always working towards reaching people in remote villages as well as supporting and encouraging local pastors. Some of the activities they use to achieve this are:

- Regular youth meetings
- Children's Bible courses
- Medical camps (A day of giving out free medicine & appointments to those who can't afford it.)
- Prayer (Regularly receiving urgent prayer requests, the team faithfully pray daily for as many as they can.)
- Festivals that last up to three days. (Well-known preachers and singers come to share God's Word.)

One of the activities they use to ensure people hear about Jesus is by holding open air meetings. With just a few chairs or maybe a mat on the ground, people will gather around as the HTN preachers set up a projector and sound system, curious to see what's happening. On the dusty ground, more people will gather as music starts to blast. Every meeting feels like an extreme party with the loudness

of the music! Often, not many people will show up to sit with everyone else, but you'll see people peeking from their windows and roof tops as the Jesus film starts to play. We only hope and pray that all who hear the commotion will have the seeds of the gospel sown.

Prem, one of the HTN team members, reassured us there is a huge impact that our activities have that we don't even know about. One starry night, as the sounds of the Jesus film blasted through the village, Prem wandered away from the crowd. He was on the lookout for the privacy of a tree since there were

man realised that Prem didn't live in the village. With relief, the man explained, "Oh! I thought you were one of the sons of the man who owns this coconut field". After being sure that Prem was not a threat to him, he confessed "I am a thief, I came here to steal."

Upon waking every morning, the man would break a coconut before his god as a sacrifice so that his god would protect him from being caught stealing. "Maybe I could believe in your god, Jesus, if He can protect me from being caught." The thief reasoned. "If your god is good, then you can pray for me and He can protect

"Jesus doesn't protect you from being caught while stealing, but He saves you from sins."

no toilets available. As he approached some bushes, he was startled to find someone lurking in the trees. There peering through the coconut trees at him, was one of the village men. He quickly asked Prem, "What are you doing here?" His voice was anxious. Prem calmly explained that they were playing a movie about God and they wanted to share about Jesus. Seizing the moment, Prem explained to this man who Jesus is. The

me from being caught while I steal." "Jesus doesn't protect you from being caught while stealing, but He saves you from sins." Prem replied. After plenty of explanation about who Jesus is and how He can save us, the thief's mind started to open up to God. Prem had the opportunity to lead this man in a prayer of confession. After the prayer the man looked at Prem and said "The people of my village need to hear about this ▶

good God too. Please come to my village and share."

The Lord works in mysterious ways. This statement is very true! Who would think that walking through the dark to find an appropriate tree would end in leading someone in a prayer of confession?!

Regularly, these brothers will go into villages evangelising, villages that are dangerous for them to be in as Christians. Although they put themselves at risk, they see the importance of sharing their life saving, world changing God, Jesus. They risk their own lives just to make more stories like this one! They work to bring others to know about Christ while also seeking to encourage the growth of other Christians. They water the seeds already planted and sprouting.

As we handed her a Bible, she couldn't stop the tears from streaming down her face. We didn't understand. She had come first in the Bible quiz that we had put together for this youth meeting. We often give Christian literature as the prize for first place. Today, it happened to be a Bible.

With tears still rolling down her face and the Bible tightly held in her hands she explained why this was so important. "I do not have my own Bible and I don't have any money to buy one. All I could hope is to win one." This young girl had heard about the youth meeting that



Open air meeting

was happening. She had been told that there are challenges and prizes. She thought, "Maybe if I can win, I can get a Bible." She prayed in her heart that this could happen, that she could win a Bible somehow. Now here she stood, Bible in hand, seeing an amazing answer to her prayers." God answered her prayer through the HTN team. We saw in this story that God uses what we consider a normal act to encourage, actually answer prayer and grow faith.

We can see the amazing work God is doing in India and that it is essential.

We are committed to being regularly involved in the work of HTN and the activities of the surrounding churches in that area. Using the benefits of Skype to fellowship, encourage and share the Word of God with both believers and Hindus, we truly believe and feel our calling is to share Jesus, through our ministry, HTN India and through MAF. We feel the endless joy of seeing God work through these ministries to further His kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. ■

Front page image: HTN Festival



Youth meeting



DEAN & KAYLENE | DAY 10 GC3 DAILY PRAYER GUIDE

DELIVERING TO JESUS HIMSELF

WE ALL LIKE TO DO THINGS FOR PEOPLE IN JESUS' NAME AND HOPE THEY WILL NOTICE THAT. BUT HOW DOES THAT WORK WHERE WE CAN'T COMMUNICATE THAT TO THEM, AND THEY HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS?

Kaylene and I finished up our six years flying with Mercy Air in Southern Africa and came home to NZ for our son's wedding. We had only been back a couple of weeks when I noticed in my weather apps (which I'm still addicted to following) a major weather system starting to develop in the straights between Mozambique and Madagascar. Within a few days this had blown into a cyclone named Idai and was heading for the East Coast of Mozambique.

The storm path swept right into the coastal city of Beira, the second largest city in Mozambique, and tore the coastal region to shreds with hurricane force winds. The hangar in Beira where we often park the helicopter in between outreaches, was blown to pieces and every aircraft inside, including a number of helicopters sheltering there were damaged, some seriously. Fortunately, our helicopter was further Northwest at Tete, avoiding the worst of the storm,

while Joel & Philip, the Mercy Air pilot and engineer who had taken over from me waited for a flight permit to enter Malawi. When this permit failed to come through, Joel & Philip returned to Beira.

As they flew back, they saw the full extent of the damage. The area inland from Beira was just one enormous sea of water. They immediately set about survey flights of the area and gave the government an update then commenced rescue flights, literally plucking people from trees and rooftops by longline and lifting them to the nearest high ground. INGC the government disaster relief agency, then made emergency food aid available to them to drop to people in these isolated spots, many of them on no more than a tiny island surrounded by miles of water.

I contacted Mercy Air and offered to come back and help, an offer which was gladly accepted. Kaylene and I had started our deputation meetings



road trip in the North Island and were in the far north. We dropped everything, cancelled our later meetings as we drove, and started a 19-hour journey back to Christchurch.

A day later I arrived in South Africa, picked up the other Mercy Air helicopter and flew into central Mozambique to start disaster relief ops. Things got very busy very quickly as the international community responded and Beira airport soon choked with large transport aircraft and helicopters as the extent of this disaster unfolded. I was fortunate to get posted inland to one of the badly flooded areas, where a group of South African farmers had started their own ▶

relief operation in support of the local population. This ballooned into something much bigger as we discovered more and more communities up the flooded Lucite River were also affected. By now it was nine days since the storm had hit. Many of these people had spent three days and two nights on the roofs of buildings or up trees, which, they found to their horror, they were also sharing with snakes and terrified monkeys, all desperate for a place of refuge above the rising water. Many people had had no shelter and nothing to eat for these nine days.

We were also blessed to have GC3 and SIM fundraise towards this relief project and we were able to contribute towards the purchase of 50 drums of fuel for our helicopter. As the relief effort gained momentum, UN World Food Program started supplying food aid and household shelter kits to us. They were a well organised team and in a week we had delivered 175 tonnes of food, along with other aid. On our best day, I delivered 40 tonnes by underslung loads to the five communities we were servicing in the Matarara area. Mozambicans are resilient people, somewhat accustomed to the vagaries of African weather and losing what they had.

Each morning I would drop off a medical team and one of the local guys to survey a village and find out what the needs were, what food they still had, what damage they had sustained and what loss of life their community had experienced. Being local and speaking their mother tongue, Ibrahim was not easily swayed by exaggerations as were some foreigners deployed by certain aid groups. Sarah, an American nurse who has been a missionary in the area for ten years, coordinated the medical clinics on the ground while I delivered food and supplies by air. I flew several hours most days only landing in these villages briefly after each six trips to retrieve my cargo nets and take them back to be refilled, so I never got to meet these people or interact with them. Some days I felt sorry for myself, that in spite of my best efforts and good intentions to bring them help in Jesus' name, these people had no idea who I was, what motivated me, or that hundreds of Christians had donated to buy this food and sponsor this helicopter. It could have been Mohammed flying the helicopter for all they knew! After one of these medical clinics in the village of Pambanissa,



Sarah wrote this account.

The emotional trauma of the experience is the one thing that we knew we were not able to help heal in these communities. Partly because of our abilities and also part of it the cultural stoicism. A lot of people do not know how to express feelings. They just move on. The seed packs required them to start thinking of the future even though their hearts were still hurting, and their mind was remembering the fear. The third community however was different. There were not just tears but some of the older women gave out sobs of pain and fear. The men were wiping tears away. After I said 'Amen' a silence remained until the helicopter landed with more seed packs. Afterwards, the community leader (government appointed), the chief (community appointed) and the teacher of the local school all came to me and pleaded that I send someone back to them to teach them about God. The community leader promised to help facilitate in whatever way possible. He is a believer and just kept saying that his people need a change of heart and the only one who can do it is Jesus. The other two were personally expressing a desire to know more about God and what the Bible says. This went on for 20 minutes. From what I understand, these pleas are coming from a community whose hearts have been very closed to the gospel for years. It is called Pambanissa. Our team is planning an outreach there hopefully next month. There is a South African man, Jaco, going there with his



family next week. Mozambique has a lot of pockets of communities where the harvest truly is ripe.

Sarah and the medical team had been able to connect these people with God. When back in NZ I was lamenting to a close friend my feelings of inadequacy at being unable to communicate to all these people that I had delivered all this aid in Jesus name. He thought a moment, then reminded me of Jesus words in Matt 25:40 ***The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'***

Though thousands of Mozambicans may not have known who provided their life saving aid, what greater privilege could I have had than to deliver it to Jesus Himself. ■

IS COMMENDATION RELEVANT TODAY?

SO, WHAT IS COMMENDATION, ANYWAY? IT'S A WORD WE DON'T TYPICALLY USE IN OUR EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS, IS IT? THE OXFORD DICTIONARY PUTS IT THIS WAY, "AN ACT OF COMMENDING OR RECOMMENDING (ESP A PERSON TO ANOTHER'S FAVOUR)"

For me that's a clear explanation that fits well with the term frequently used in the Bible around the life of the early church. In this setting, apostles and teachers moved from one place to another, bringing the gospel message and encouragement for holy living to the people in churches where they weren't known. For example, Paul 'commended' Timothy and Epaphroditus (Phil 2) to those meeting in the church at Philippi. It was as if Paul was establishing their creds. He is asking the Philippians to receive these men on the same basis and with the same confidence as they would have received Paul himself. He writes in a way that they should receive and respect these men they did not know and trust, purely and simply because he knew and thrust them. He was vouching for Timothy and Epaphroditus. He was guaranteeing their spiritual *bona fides*. A strong relationship sat behind it, enabling Paul to do and say what he did in recommending them to the Philippians.

Fast forward to our world today! What relevance does commendation have now?

At GC3 we are excited! God is at work, tugging at the hearts of His people to

abandon their 'Kiwi Comforts' to go and take the gospel and God's call to holy living to people across the globe, often in difficult and dangerous circumstances. More and more we are seeing people responding to this challenge.

But have you ever wondered how that looks for people in the receiving community? Natural questions for them might include, "What right have they got to come to us?", "Are they coming with a servant heart?", "What exactly are they coming to do?", "How can we check their suitability and their Christian maturity?", ... and so the list goes on.

Who better is there than the local church elders to address these sorts of valid questions? They are people who can be trusted, and they have or can develop the relationship in order to work through 'the tough questions', vouching for the suitability of the person or people going. They can 'commend' or recommend "a person to another's favour". There is confidence that they will be honest in their assessment. There's a foundation of confidence that can be relied on.

Is God Calling You?

OUR COMMENDATION PROCESS



That's why we believe there remains a strong case for commendation today, and that is why we have a booklet available entitled the "Commendation Process". Whether you are responding to God's call on your life or are in church leadership and have been approached by someone who is, you'll find this is an invaluable resource. Ask for your free electronic copy by email to operationsdirector@gc3.org.nz. In it you'll find useful information as well as a helpful checklist to ensure all aspects of care and support are covered off. We're here to help and support you and will love to journey with you through a partnership in reaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus. ■



PLEASE INFORM ME ABOUT:

- GLOBAL CONNECTIONS IN MISSION GC ASSIST GC AID

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|---|---|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Safety for Mission Partners | |
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- How I can help fund mission
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